

Mapping EU diplomatic practices and EU diplomatic performance in Eastern Europe

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Abstract

Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, this paper explores practices of European cooperation abroad, shows how EU diplomatic actors identify a common approach and emphasizes the capability issues faced by the EU in these countries. Findings show that the EU delegations became central actors in representing the EU as a whole, became communication hubs on the ground and took the lead on the cooperation with the EU member states' embassies. Empirical evidence on the latter revealed that, in practice, the Delegations continue to conduct aid-driven diplomacy, as a legacy from former Commission representations. While being prescribed to cooperate on the ground under the Lisbon Treaty, diplomatic practice indicated that the current coexistence of national and EU diplomacy opts out of the common approach in favour of parallel actions by the individual member states. The Delegations in these countries have grown in size and, most importantly, have diplomats as staff members; however, the development of the Delegations also came with the so-called Brussels 'turf-war': an institutional issue on the ground that echoed Brussels inter-institutional dynamics. As result, EU leadership on the ground remains under question, coupled with the lack of direction in relation to a strategic approach between the EU and its member states.

Introduction

The 2013 review of the EEAS² highlighted as one of the strengths the enhanced partnership with the member-states, and the 2015 EEAS strategic planning review³ emphasized that against the background of the challenges in the neighbourhood EU diplomacy should seize the

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² The full text of the EEAS 2013 Review can be accessed here: https://eeas.europa.eu/library/publications/2013/3/2013_eeas_review_en.pdf

³ The full text of the EEAS Strategic Review 'The European Union in a changing global environment' (2015) can be consulted here: <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/strategic-review-european-union-changing-global-environment>

opportunity for coordination between national and EU level in order to obtain a more effective collective effort. In third countries, the former Commission representations have been transformed into Union Delegations that amount today to circa 139 Delegations and Offices, representing the European Union and maintaining relations with single countries, groups of countries and with international organisations (Austermann, 2014; Baltag & Smith, 2015; Drieskens, 2012). Similar to the EEAS, the Union Delegations are staffed, in different departments, with a mixture of personnel from the EEAS, the Commission, but also local employees. Similar to member-state (MS) embassies, EU Delegations are tasked with traditional diplomatic functions: to represent the EU as well as explain and implement its foreign policy. Outside Brussels, the EU's diplomatic capacity remains represented by member state embassies and the EU delegations (now under the EEAS). It is the latter two that represent the EU diplomatic actors in third countries. With the inauguration of the EEAS, the Union Delegations and member-state actors are expected to cooperate, exchange information and contribute to formulating and implementing the 'common approach'⁴.

Taking into account that the EU and its member-states often share legal competence in the area of foreign policy, it is important to shift the research focus to developments post-Lisbon and to understand how and whether the changes brought about have had an impact on EU diplomatic performance. This means that any discussion about EU diplomatic actorness is closely linked with the focus on performance and diplomatic practice. This becomes even more relevant now that the EU's institutional design has acquired the EEAS which "will help strengthen the European Union on the global stage, give it more profile, and enable it to project its interests and values more efficiently" (EEAS, 2016, para 3). For EU diplomacy specifically, the introduction of the EEAS reinforces the aim of a stronger, more efficient and coherent European Union since the unification of the diplomatic efforts of the European Commission, the Council Secretariat and that of the EU member states is embraced. Subsequently, in third countries, EU diplomatic performance, represented by the EU delegations and MS embassies, is of key importance to research.

The need for reform in EU diplomacy pre-Lisbon related to the coexistence of EU and MS diplomacy with parallel rather than coherently intertwined direction: issues related to institutional competencies and diplomatic representation abroad; institutional as well as national and EU level power struggles; and general confusion regarding leadership in diplomatic activity on the ground just to name a few (Baltag, 2018; Smith, Keukeleire & Vanhoonacker, 2016; Telò & Ponjaert,

⁴ Art. 32 of the Lisbon Treaty stipulates that both the MS embassies and the Delegations "shall cooperate and shall contribute to formulating and implementing the *common approach*" in third countries

2016; Baltag & Smith, 2015; Petrov, Vanhoonacker & Pomorska, 2012; Smith, 2013a, Smith, 2013b). In this sense, the Lisbon Treaty introduced a number of changes to EU diplomacy in Brussels and on the ground: the EU acquired legal personality; there was established a single institutional framework for external relations; Delegations were taken under the authority of the High Representative (HR/VP) with the Heads of Delegations coming from the EEAS; Delegations took over the functions of the rotating Presidency, and were tasked with working out the relations between national and EU diplomatic representations abroad⁵.

The issue of coordination between EU diplomatic actors in neighbour countries is not uncontested: in practice member states are reluctant or cautious in embracing the new setting of cooperation in pursuing their foreign policy objectives (Blockmans, 2012; Comelli & Matarazzo, 2011; Petrov, Pomorska, & Vanhoonacker, 2012). Therefore this research taps into the specific post-Lisbon aspect of EU diplomatic actorness, *questioning the EU's diplomatic performance* abroad and, in particular, *the dynamics of the practice of EU diplomacy exercised by MS embassies and EU delegations*. The study of international practices is significant as it allows to focus on what practitioners do; and uncovers the many faces of world politics which is “made up of a myriad of everyday practices that too often get overlooked in scholarly research” (Adler and Pouliot, 2011, p. 2). With the turn to practices research can understand ‘the big picture’ via the ‘stories’, the details from those stories and via conducting ‘slow research’ (Bicchi & Bremberg, 2016; Kuus, 2015). Even more so, a practice-based research has the capacity to describe important details and features of global politics as something that is routinely made and remade in practice (Nicolini & Monteiro, 2017). It uncovers aspects of everyday European integration both ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ and provides us with a deeper understanding of this process (Adler-Nissen, 2016). The added value of practice-oriented studies is in uncovering what is happening ‘on the ground’ (ibidem, p. 99) as is the aim of this research.

The practice turn and EU diplomatic performance

In this paper, diplomacy is seen as set of practices. The study of diplomacy, therefore, is not reduced to theory but rather can be fully captured through uncovering practices as there is knowledge within the practice (Pouliot, 2008). Scholars that are interested in the practice turn in EU studies have also pursued the argument that there is a huge body of background knowledge in daily practices to be uncovered by researchers (Pouliot, 2008; Adler-Nissen, 2016; Bicchi &

⁵ See TEU, art 4.3.

Bremberg, 2016). Bicchi and Bremberg (2016) in discussing practice approaches in the case of European diplomacy point out that “practices are best understood as “accounts of” European diplomatic practices, rather than “accounting for” them” (Bicchi & Bremberg, 2016, p. 395). Hence focusing on practices as unit of analysis facilitates moving beyond explaining how certain processes take place in EU diplomacy and moves attention to patterns of actions, especially relevant to research since there is no common agreement on what the practice of diplomacy generally means. Diplomacy is understood here as a practice of daily interactions with a specific trait of “European diplomacy is fuzzy at its borders” (Bicchi & Bremberg, 2016, p. 369) and that seems to carry “the tension between the aim of forging “an ever closer union” and trying to keep their separateness visible” (Adler-Nissen, 2014 as referred to in Bicchi & Bremberg, 2016, p. 396). Therefore, the incorporation of the practice approach in the analytical framework of this research facilitates a better understanding of what is happening on the ground where European and national practices intersect.

Whereas in international relations the ‘practice turn’ started from understanding textual practices, this paper subscribes to the definition of practices understood as ‘competent performance’ which incorporates both actions and behaviour thus including the material dimension of a deed performed and the meaning of that deed (Adler & Pouliot, 2011). As Adler and Pouliot (2011) conceptualise, “practices are socially meaningful patterns of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world” (p. 4). Understood in terms of performance, practices are not identical to preferences or beliefs, they have patterns, i.e. occurring over time and space, that structure interaction among actors. When defining practices as performance, scholars explain that a practice is identified by history, social constituency and perceivable normative dimension (Nicolini & Monteiro 2017) and can be more or less competent or can be done correctly or incorrectly (Adler & Pouliot, 2011). EU diplomatic performance can therefore be measured not only by looking at the clear-cut outcome but also by accounting for processes and establishing patterns of actions and how those (in)form EU performance.

Looking at performance implies examining and evaluating EU diplomatic practices against pre-set goals (*effectiveness*). It allows to learn about the relationship between the national and EU levels in the new post-Lisbon setting, where the EU delegations perform traditional and new diplomatic functions: representing the European Union and also cooperating with national embassies (*relevance*). Finally, it allows to conduct a screening of capabilities and to understand how these pertain to the diplomatic realm (*capabilities*). These three criteria guiding this research are operationalised through linking organizational studies, EU international actorness studies, the

practice of diplomacy and the practice turn in international relations (IR) and EU studies. In its analysis, the paper looks into the relationship between EU and MS in three Eastern European countries: Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus; where the consolidation of the EU's system of diplomacy relies not solely on Union Delegations, but also on MS embassies. The case studies include the biggest and oldest established Delegations (Ukraine: 1993) and the smallest and most recent ones (Moldova: 2005 and Belarus: 2008) in the neighbourhood. Ukraine is the biggest Delegation out of all established in a European Neighbourhood Policy country; while Moldova and Belarus are the smallest after Libya, Syria and Israel. And, since the Treaty⁶ foresees the cooperation between the two, the paper uncovers the particularities of the practices of European diplomatic cooperation among EU delegations and national embassies in these three Eastern neighbours. The results of this research are based on the analysis of field-work data collected⁷ in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus that allow to zoom in on the practices of EU diplomatic performance in Eastern Europe.

Effectiveness

Goal attainment is probably the most common interpretation of effectiveness, although its analysis can raise some challenges, especially when the goals are not clearly formulated, contradict each other, overlap or are scattered across different priority hierarchies (Gutner and Thompson, 2010). Effectiveness is generally defined by the extent to which an organisation is able to fulfil its goals (Behn, 2003; Lusthaus et al, 2002; Gutner & Thompson, 2010).

As a diplomatic actor, the EU's purpose is to secure its foreign policy objectives; in third countries, this is to be done via its diplomatic machinery. Some even argue that “without outputs that are effective in meeting their objectives and influencing international outcomes, the EU would lose internal confidence and outward influence as an international actor” (Ginsberg, 2001, p. 444-445). From this perspective, the EU's ability or failure to link means and ends in a specific external context feeds back the notion of effectiveness. Effectiveness is related to what EU scholars initially categorize as presence (Allen & Smith, 1990; Bretherton & Vogler, 2006 and others), *i.e.* the EU's relationship with its external environment. It is also important to acknowledge that it is a challenging task to evaluate EU goal achievement. In discussing the

⁶ See TEU, art 4.3

⁷ Between 2013 and 2016 field-work for data collection was undertaken in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. The author conducted 48 in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives of the EU diplomatic community: 12 EU diplomats (out of which 7 EEAS and 5 Commission), 34 national diplomats and also 5 local staff members. Interviews were also conducted with civil servants and civil society representatives from the three countries (cca 40).

dimension of effectiveness as goal achievement, Jørgensen et al. (2011) put an emphasis on the fact that “objectives can be so broad as to render them nearly meaningless for an assessment” (p. 604).

To examine whether the EU secures foreign policy objectives is a challenging but not an impossible task. It is the Lisbon Treaty as well as EU’s ENP agenda in Eastern Europe that serves as reference point. Building a ‘ring of friends’ in Eastern European countries does not happen without the activity of the EU diplomatic actors, namely the Union Delegations. On the ground, these are tasked, according to the Lisbon Treaty, *to represent the Union* (art. 221 TFEU) and to *closely cooperate with national diplomatic missions*, including on the ENP agenda. The post-diplomacy Lisbon practices regarding the legal personality of the EU on the ground have been of interest to scholars of EU diplomacy (Duke, 2016; Vanhoonacker & Pomorska, 2016). One important development since the inauguration of the EEAS is that Union Delegations, on the ground, are representing the EU in all aspects of external action.

To understand, then, how the EU becomes a diplomatic actor on the ground, an investigation of how both EU and national diplomats understand the ‘representation of the Union’ function given to the Delegations and what sort of role the Delegation plays after the inauguration of the EEAS is necessary. Scholars that study diplomacy from a practice perspective argue that “European integration over time has led to certain diplomatic practices “anchoring” others in a European setting” (Bicchi & Bremberg 2016, p. 398). In this sense, the focus is on the repeated interactional patterns among national and EU level diplomacy on the ground and how these, in turn, make changes in European diplomatic practices possible; such as the Union Delegation representing the EU in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. Therefore, an investigation of how EU and national diplomats participate in diplomatic practices grasps the process of daily diplomatic activity and shows regularities or irregularities over time (Adler & Pouliot, 2011) in relation to the established goals.

Relevance

Assessing performance in relation to ongoing relevance implies the extent to which it meets the needs and requirements of its stakeholders and is able to maintain their continuous support (Lusthaus et al. 2002; Mitchell 2002; Barclay & Osei-Bryson 2010; Bourne & Walker 2006). To extrapolate this dimension to the EU, relevance is assessed vis-à-vis EU member-states themselves. Relevance vis-à-vis MS links back to such functions as delegation and cooperation.

For the EU as a diplomatic actor this aspect is especially relevant post-Lisbon since in Brussels, the EEAS linked national and EU diplomatic efforts and expectations were high in relation to cooperation with member-states on the ground. Whether EU stakeholders find it relevant can be assessed in relation to the extent to which all parties engage in acting collectively. In practice, for the EU as a diplomatic actor this implies engaging in multilateral diplomacy. As Watson (1982) emphasized, in multilateral diplomacy *cooperation* is key - the decision taken by one actor affects another one as well as the performance of one state has certain effects on the performance of another one. In this sense, the co-existence and interaction of a multitude of actors on the ground depends on the diplomatic machinery designed by the EU through the Lisbon Treaty that takes into consideration functions of diplomacy such as communication/dialogue, interdependence, recognition and others.

Scholars have emphasized that when important national interests are at stake member states often opt to avoid EU-level instruments and act unilaterally with member-states often choosing to act according to their respective economic (mainly energy and trade) or security interests (Rummel and Wiedermann 1998; Bosse & Schmidt-Felzmann 2011; Thomas 2012). Cooperation with member-states can be interpreted as a new and core diplomatic function of a diplomatic representation such as the Delegation. The issue of leadership, for which the EU has been criticized pre-Lisbon is addressed by this function. These are linked to the concept of field that is a key notion in Bourdieu's (1997) theory of practice. Fields are made of unequal positions and refer to players that are dominant and others that are dominated and to the power relations that derive from their interaction and "are defined by the stakes which are at stake" (Jenkins 2002 as cited in Pouliot, 2008). By assuming the function of the Presidency, also in political affairs, via showing strong leadership and through engaging in cooperation, a more strategic approach between the EU and MS actions on the ground can be assumed. The Treaty itself entails that EU diplomatic actors, both the MS embassies and the Delegations in third countries "shall cooperate and shall contribute to formulating and implementing the *common approach*" (art. 32). Therefore, in this research, the issue of corporate practices is of relevance; these are not the actions of a single actor but rather of a community of actors, whose members enter patterned relations due to their similar background dispositions (Adler & Pouliot, 2011). Academic literature has pointed out that it is this "mutually exclusive juxtaposition" of the EU and national level has been contested throughout the European integration theories (Bicchi & Bramberg, 2016, p. 396). And this is what the empirical analysis will be looking at: the cooperation between the diplomatic actors on the ground and the corporate practices that exist.

Capabilities

Lastly, organisational management and the practice turn in IR literature talks about resources. When it comes to (diplomatic) actorhood, scholars discuss the EU's capabilities or capacity (Smith, 2015; Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, Barston, 2013). As defined by Bretherton and Vogler (2006), capabilities refers to EU's ability to mobilise or use resources in order to effectively react to its environment. An assessment can be made based on the EU's ability to use appropriate instruments and techniques that will add value to diplomatic actions on the ground.

Establishing and maintaining overseas diplomatic offices is not solely linked to one's international identity but represents an essential resource as a means of communication, source of information, and key contact-point for promotion of interests abroad. Information and communication is a key resource for both strands of literature: for the practice turn accumulating diplomatic capital in the form of information links to influence (Adler-Niessen, 2008), from an organisational management perspective, information becomes an asset that makes it possible to perform or make others do things (Rieker, 2009). The obligation of both national embassies and the EU Delegations to "step up cooperation by *exchanging information and carrying out joint statements*" (art. 35) as well as to cooperate in *ensuring that EU positions and actions are complied with and implemented* (art. 35) rely heavily on communication, a quintessential function for diplomacy (Neumann, 2008). In both bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations communication is omnipresent; the diplomatic community relies on information-gathering, information-negotiating and identifying other actors' intentions especially in an era of complex international relations (Nicoloson, 1963; Berrige, 1995; Leguey-Feilleux, 2009). Moreover, diplomatic capabilities imply sharing of information such as exchange of political information (Rijks & Whitman, 2007).

Through examining the EU's diplomatic capabilities, the assessment of performance explores whether the EU's instruments are fit for purpose in supporting the conduct of the EU's foreign policy and whether there is a distinction between European and national diplomatic resources (Rijks & Whitman, 2007). Without creating, sustaining and mobilizing capabilities, little aggregation of individual or collective purpose can be accomplished (March and Olsen 1998). Organisational management literature puts emphasis on several dimensions of capabilities, one of which refers to competencies and knowledge on the part of individuals, professions and institutions. Individuals have competencies from their education and training while institutions encrypt knowledge in rules and traditions. Competence and knowledge is therefore a result of a combination of recruitment policy, leadership, skills, training programs and the extent to which it draws upon policy analysis provided by institutes. The practice turn in IR literature also discusses

diplomatic capital as “the resources that count as a valid currency for exchange in a field” (Adler-Niessen, 2008, p. 670). These resources refer to both the political and social capital (authority, competences, reputation, power, institutions) that are constantly renewed (ibidem). Therefore, an analysis of capabilities will examine the dedicated diplomatic capital in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, including the examination of a communication infrastructure, of institutional dynamics, competences and knowledge, hence both the political and social capital that it implies.

Effectiveness: goal-attainment in Eastern Europe

Based on the data collected in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, there is a positive dynamic in relation to EU performance according to the effectiveness benchmarks discussed above. It is fair to say, that after the inauguration of the EEAS, on the ground, the *function of representation* happened naturally and the EU Delegation did not replace national embassies. Opened initially as Commission representations: in Kiev in 1993, in Chisinau in 2005 and in Minsk in 2008, post-Lisbon, the EU delegations acquired legal recognition that upgraded the former Commission representations to full-blown Union delegations. The main division of tasks regarding representation as shown earlier (see Baltag, 2018) is hence straightforward: the EU delegations represent the EU in areas of exclusive and shared competences, while every member state represents its own interests bilaterally with the host country.

Post-Lisbon, abolishing the chairmanship of the EU Presidency in host countries increased the EU’s visibility, as the EU delegation represented the EU in all policy areas where the EU has competence. Whereas it was initially expected that this would be a highly difficult logistical effort for the newly established EU delegations, in practice the level of engagement with the member states’ embassies on this matter was relatively high, also because of the Commission representations’ previous activity. Besides, the EU delegations were constantly growing their expertise in representing the EU. Member states’ embassies therefore entrusted the Delegations with the (EU) representation role, while still preserving their watchdog role. This came with the EU delegation acquiring diplomats at the level of Head of Delegation and in the Political and Economic sections; as well as policy officers who had previous diplomatic experience. On the ground, there was a lot of synergy and cohesion in relation to the traditional function of diplomacy among the EU delegations and national embassies, including those embassies that had been in host countries since the early 90s. There was a general openness towards the assumed leading role of the EU delegations, while national embassies were still trying to preserve their own visibility or their autonomous position.

Therefore, contrary to doubts generated by research regarding the new EU diplomatic machine (Balfour et al., 2012; Emerson et al., 2011; Lehne, 2011), it seems that the Lisbon Treaty changes made the EU's system of diplomacy more *robust*, as claimed by Smith (2014). This robustness was reflected through the EU's ability to significantly extend its presence in third countries and acquire more explicit institutional foundations (*ibidem*). This, in turn, comes with MS embracing '*symbolic representation*'. Scholars explained that the latter referred historically to the practice of diplomatic envoys representing rulers without necessarily coming from the same polity, which was not uncommon (Jönsson & Hall, 2005). Such a diplomatic practice departs from the traditional understanding of representation as '*acting for others*' (acting on explicit instructions and as mere agents) towards '*standing for others*' (diplomats can be perceived as symbols of other things than their own polity) (Jönsson, 2008). Hence, after the inauguration of the EEAS, we can account for a change in diplomatic practice in Eastern Europe through the deterritorialization of diplomatic representation. As Sending, Pouliot and Neumann (2011; 2015) argued, the latter is attributable to value-systems where constituents differ in that they are not territorially defined – as is the case of the EU and its member-states.

Furthermore, this openness of MS embassies towards the EUD embracing the function of representing the Union is related to the fact that the national objectives of the MS are also a product of the negotiations in Brussels and, as Spence (2008) emphasized, through EU coordination in Brussels, national diplomats come to share objectives among themselves, even when this is 'the expression of the lowest common denominator' (p. 65). Moreover, while some have pointed out the principal-agent relations between representatives and represented and that diplomats find themselves '*stranded between constituents*' (Hill, 1991, p. 97), others have highlighted that foreign ministries and embassies have become '*co-participants*' (Hocking, 2002, p. 285). Similarly, according to empirical evidence on the ground, *MS embassies and the EU delegations became co-participants* in representing the Union (according to the Lisbon Treaty) as well as in pursuing the ENP/EaP agenda on the ground.

The activity of both the EU delegations and the MS embassies, in Eastern Europe, showed their increasing role in facilitating the achievement of ENP and EaP goals. The activity of the diplomatic community in Ukraine during 2010-2015 revolved around Ukraine's agenda for integration to the EU. Diplomats' major tasks were related to political developments in relation to the progress and the reform agenda of Ukraine and they developed instruments to support democratization, good governance and the rule of law, and the human rights reforms (interv. 18). The Delegations also played a great role in reporting on the progress achieved by these countries within the ENP and EaP in relation to carrying out of specific reforms which can be seen within

the ENP Progress Reports for individual countries. Member-state embassies focused their activities on specific goals such as “*to have stable neighbours, less migration pressure, less human trafficking, stable political environment, stronger institutions and a better security environment*” (interv. 39); all of which are objectives within the ENP and EaP.

Based on the background of EU’s relations with the three countries and the commitment of Moldova and Ukraine specifically to engage in EU-driven reforms according to the AA/DCFTA agenda, findings pointed to the fact that the practice of EU diplomacy has to do with shaping or influencing these countries internal dynamics. Through their diplomatic activity, both member-state embassies and the EU delegations engaged in what Keukeleire et al. (2009) identify as ‘*structural diplomacy*’. The latter is defined by the intensity of the diplomatic activity, a long-term approach and embeddedness within a broader range of foreign policy activities. The active approach of the diplomatic community in all three countries showed high intensity: besides statements, their activity was supported by actions in the form of joint monitoring missions (e.g.: the Cox-Kwasniewski mission in Ukraine), joint collaborations on education (e.g.: MOST project in Belarus) or joint programming (e.g.: water-management projects in Moldova). The long-term approach of the MS embassies and the EU Delegation was seen through their engagement from the onset of the ENP and EaP policies and their statements on committing to continue providing assistance on European integration reforms beyond 2015. As the policies for Eastern Europe (ENP and EaP) developed and considered civil society a stakeholder for these countries to implement reforms, the diplomatic interaction in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus also became highly diverse (and by extension, embedded in further activities). Besides their traditional diplomatic role, even in Belarus, where the diplomatic relationship started to develop from 2008 onwards, national embassies and the EU delegations became very active in their roles as donors and developed a strong relationship with civil society organisations, not just the governments. Through their activity as donors, diplomatic actors invested in strengthening reforms and fostering democratic developments in these countries.

Relevance: corporate diplomatic practices in Eastern Europe

Representing the Union as a political entity through the EU delegations is an important step forward vis-à-vis EU performance. On the ground, however, the challenge for common diplomatic practices revolved around the new amendments of the Lisbon Treaty regarding formulating and implementing a common approach (art. 32). Findings in relation to relevance have uncovered patterns of *corporate diplomatic practices*, meaning ‘those practices that are

performed by collectives in unison’ (Adler & Pouliot, 2011, p. 8). In Eastern Europe, corporate diplomatic practices have transitioned from a hierarchical to a *networking form of diplomacy*. The varied forms of meetings and interactions on the ground (presented in Tables 1 here, and 2 and 3 in the Annex) anchored the EU diplomatic actors in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus in networks. And whereas the typology of meetings coordinated by the EUDs brought formalisation, centralisation and institutionalisation of diplomatic practices on the one hand; on the other hand, evidence showed that their development as a need to engage with an increasingly diverse range of actors is a manifestation of networking as a phenomenon.

Table 1: Communication infrastructure between MS embassies and EUD in Ukraine			
Typology	Heading	Frequency	Description
Level	<i>General EU–member states meetings</i>		
	(1) HoMs: Meetings of Heads of Delegation (HoDs)	Weekly: every week (or every 2 weeks) on political issues, occasionally on civil society issues (approx. two–three times per year)	reflects the diplomatic ranking of the attendees
	(2) Deputy HoDs meetings	Monthly: on average every 2 weeks and at least once a month	
	(3) Counsellor’s meetings	Monthly & quarterly	
Topic	(1) Thematic EU (donor) meetings	Monthly (some quarterly) → 6 to 12 per year on the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political (and Human Rights) issues - Development cooperation issues - Energy & transport issues - Press & information issues - Economic / Commercial counsellors issues 	have a specific agenda and are narrow in scope
	(2) Consultations with other EU donors	organised based on necessity	distinctive for the EU delegation called before launching its regular local calls for proposals for civil society project funding
	(3) Member states’ roundtables		a type of meet and greet event, where civil society actors are invited in order to get acquainted with the diplomatic donor community and vice-versa
Group affiliation	<i>EU (donor) meetings within regional frameworks of cooperation</i>		

	(1) Visegrad Group (or V4)	Twice a year formally to several times per year informally	Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia
	(2) Nordic group (or Nordic Plus)	Twice a year and on ad-hoc basis	Sweden, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK (also Norway and Canada are part of Nordic Plus)
	(3) Baltic group	on ad-hoc basis	Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia (occasionally joined by Finland and Sweden)
Formality	(1) Formal events	organized based on the yearly agendas of EU delegations and member states' embassies; at least one event per actor	events organised by relevant stakeholders in each country as well as lunch, dinner or an "occasional coffee"
	(2) Non-formal events	<i>Information not disclosed</i>	
<i>Source: Author's compilation based on fieldwork conducted in Ukraine between</i>			

What played a major role in reaching a common approach was the fact that the frequency of meetings could be adjusted on the go and was not bound by rigid hierarchical structures.

Furthermore, it became obvious that diplomatic practices on the ground anchored MS in a European setting of networking. Swidler (2001) explained that '*anchoring practices*' work to the extent to which a group identifies with a set of practices "in which asserting one's membership in the community means creating or joining a group which then claims [their] spot" (p. 92). Others further showed that some practices work as 'anchoring practices' when they provide 'tools' and 'resources' that actors need in order to engage with others (Sending & Neumann, 2011). This was possible on the ground through designing a network of meetings at different levels (from Heads of delegations and missions and deputy Heads to the level of counsellors) with different topics (thematic meetings on human rights, development cooperation, energy and transport, economic and commercial and press and information) and different degrees of ceremonialism (formal and informal).

It can also be argued that the high degree of cooperation put emphasis on the emergence of what Hocking and Smith (2016) identify as '*multistakeholder*' diplomatic processes. These processes, as the authors argued, are based on inclusiveness and partnership and aim at bringing together all major stakeholders in a new form of 'common decision finding' (ibidem). For example, for the EU Delegation in Kiev, the common approach implied a high degree of cooperation established through constant meetings with the EU member states' embassies, at different levels. This new function resembled the Council working procedures in Brussels, with

the major difference being that, on the ground, there was little room to take immediate actions as such directives come from Brussels. Therefore, instead of decision-making, on the ground, corporate diplomatic practices were rather a form of common decision-finding as the cooperation with MS function quite often became the task of acting as the broker of common approaches or common statements. Once a common agreement had been reached on the ground, it was easier to act as one consolidated team vis-à-vis the host country.

Evidence further showed that ‘multistakeholder diplomacy’ came with *burden-sharing* as a form of anchoring practices. Mérand and Rayroux (2016) discussed in their research burden-sharing of European security practitioners as an example of anchoring practices that “define the constitutive rules of interactive patterns in social groups. Even if some members of the social group disagree with the dominant rule, by criticising it, they actually reinforce the latter’s centrality, as a common point of reference for the group” (p. 444). In Moldova and Ukraine, national embassies regarded the cooperation performed by the EU delegations positively. On the one hand, they were free of the logistical burden that came with the rotating Presidency role; on the other hand, they had, in addition to the instrument of bilateral diplomacy, the European apparatus (to use in achieving their foreign policy goals). In Belarus, for example, there are certain expectations from national diplomats regarding this function. Some argued that the EU Delegation in Minsk needed to do more, while others considered the EU Delegation’s role to be neutral. For the EU delegations in Eastern Europe, the Lisbon Treaty changes meant more work. This new function of cooperation brought more pressure. In Belarus, for example, for the EU delegations, this function implied that they needed to follow the political discussions all the time and to understand the current state of affairs in the host country. In Kiev and Chisinau, this function implied for the Delegations an extensive secretarial task of organizing, composing agendas, note-taking, information-gathering and sharing.

Creating synergies in cooperation for achieving the common approach was a challenging task for the EU delegation. EU member states benefited differently from common meetings, yet they were not always open about it; which made it difficult for the EU delegation to synthesize the results. As Mérand and Rayroux (2016) conclude, “practices are not as clear-cut as motives and norms because they are enacted by real social actors who play different games at the same time” (p. 457). Moreover, the authors also explained that burden-sharing as an anchoring practice does not suggest that national interest or strategic considerations or even prestige do not matter; all of these are taken into consideration by actors when deciding to engage in collective action. In Moldova and Ukraine, for example, some member states were not cooperative at all and did not come to meetings. This was for different reasons: from more objective reasons, such as lack of

personnel, low or no knowledge of English (the working language of the meetings), to less objective reasons such as not being interested in the issue. Thus, acting as a broker for the common approach was not an easy task for the EUDs. It was often rather complicated, especially in those sensitive areas where EU member states had certain interests, whether migration, education, visas, energy or trade. Some (Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia) lobbied the EU Delegation strongly; being very active in pushing for their own interests, and as neighbours of the host countries, they felt more confident in their national diplomatic line than in the EU approach.

Capabilities: a screening of resources in Eastern Europe

EU capabilities go beyond establishing diplomatic offices overseas; they refer to the EU's ability to maintain these offices, to mobilise and use resources and to use them in a manner that adds value to its diplomatic actions on the ground. An examination of resources evaluated information and communication as a diplomatic asset, including observations of practices of information-gathering and especially information-sharing among diplomatic actors as well as their competencies and knowledge.

An initial screening of resources shows that the EU diplomatic actors in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus were anchored in a '*community of practice*'. There are three identifying elements of a community of practice: an *ongoing mutual engagement*, a *sense of joint enterprise* and a *shared repertoire* (Bicchi, 2016); all of which could be observed on the ground. Findings showed a wide and varied typology of the diplomats' communication infrastructure in Moldova and Ukraine (presented in Tables 1 and 2) and a developing one in Belarus (Table 3). These meetings constituted mechanisms of cooperation, provided a common communication infrastructure and accounted for regular institutionalized practices of diplomatic interaction. Empirical evidence emphasized that EU diplomatic actors engaged on a regular basis (depending on the format, meetings vary in frequency: weekly, monthly, quarterly) in a high degree of information-sharing via written and oral reports, formal and informal data, as well as exchange of personal contacts. These meetings and the engagement of the diplomatic community during these meetings represent elements of a community of practice: ongoing mutual engagement (the practice of doing something regularly) and a shared repertoire (creating a specific set of tools and resources). Finally, the sense of joint enterprise is defined by members' shared sense of a common identity; the latter refers to "a routine of socially meaningful doing [... that bring the group] the sense of joint enterprise involved in accomplishing a task" (Bicchi, 2016, p. 464). This could be seen, in the fact that the activities of national diplomats in bilateral diplomacy were happening within the broader EU

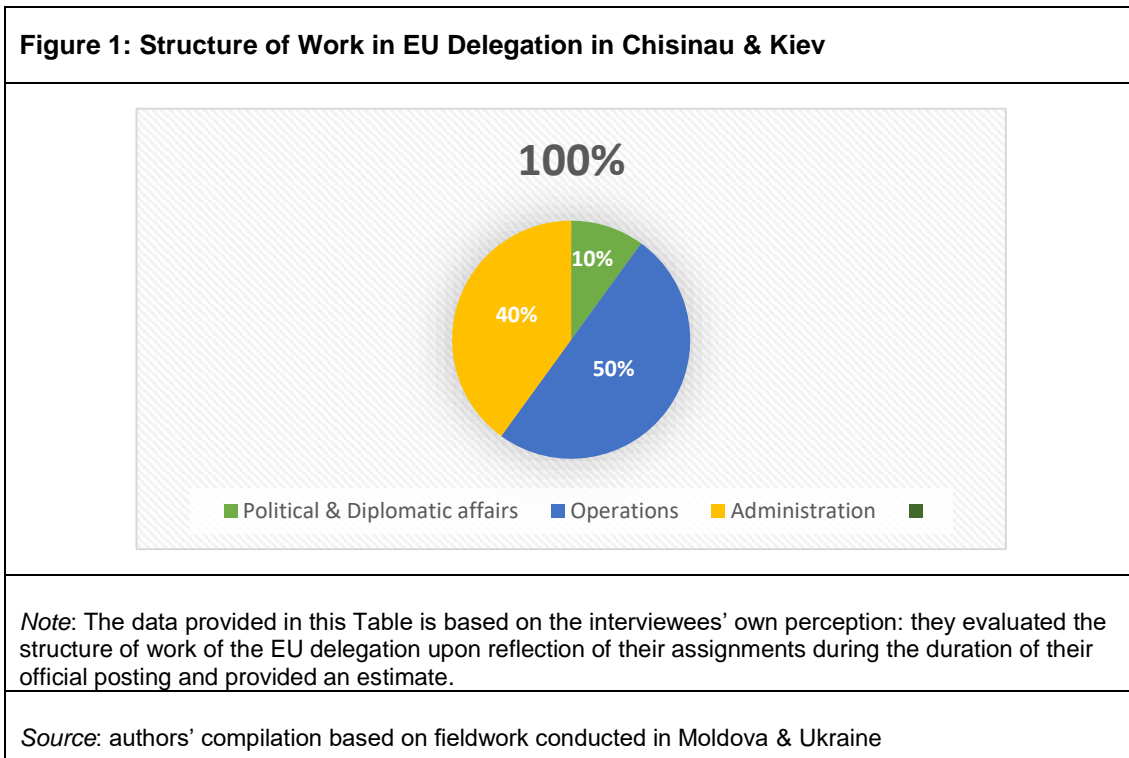
context of relations with Moldova, Ukraine or Belarus. Therefore, their national agendas were related to political developments in relation to the progress of the EU-driven reform agenda of these countries and subsequently they developed instruments to support democratization, good governance and the rule of law or the human rights reforms. It is important to note that the sense of joint enterprise does not imply that everyone has to be in agreement, “but there must be a local, contextualised, indigenous response to external challenges [to the community of practice]” (ibidem). As an EU diplomat stated, in such cases, on the ground there was, among MS, a sort of ‘gentleman’s silent agreement’, meaning that what they agreed on were the minimum possible things and their role was then to convince their headquarters about them and find solutions (interv. 33).

Research has pointed out the quintessential role of *communication* for diplomacy, and that a key diplomatic task that transforms into coordination is the clear communication of intent (Jönsson and Hall, 2005; Neumann, 2008); hence in achieving coordination, the crucial skill is communication, which allows one to ‘get the right signal across’ (Adler & Pouilot, 2011, p. 9). Communication was indeed at the core of the diplomatic interaction on the ground and the EU delegations started to play a more central role in becoming an informational network hub. The positive development post-Lisbon in this sense was the extensive communication infrastructure discussed above, coordinated by the EU delegations and open to all EU member states. Analysts note that sharing of information within these meetings is a considered a crucial resource for diplomacy (Berridge, 2015). As evidence showed, the reports from the ground in Eastern Europe were shared through the common system – AGORA and COREU network - which carries communications related to CFSP, and involved exchanges of reports within the diplomatic network; most were political reports coming from the HoD. COREU allowed for a flow of information between the EUDs and MS as well as between EUDs and EEAS.

But this was not necessarily an emerging practice on the ground; rather, it was one that already existed on the ground and was highly visible in Kiev and Chisinau. The legacy of Commission representations and a certain *path-dependency* was noticeable in all three countries. On the one hand, the Commission offices were established as information offices and the EU delegations embraced fully the traditional communication function. On the other, the EU delegations embraced more technical tasks, such as project management, as the Commission offices were established as operational offices. A delegation’s activities were therefore divided among operational, administrative, and political and diplomatic issues. As Figures 1⁸ shows, in Moldova

⁸ No data has been disclosed about the structure of work of the EU Delegation in Minsk given that the circumstances for conducting interviews in Belarus were more difficult

and Ukraine, only approximately 10 and respectively 15 per cent of the work related to the main functions of traditional diplomacy such as gathering, synthesizing and producing information, intelligence and counter-intelligence, producing reports and policy advice for headquarters, representing EU interests through engaging in public diplomacy, or developing economic and commercial cooperation through engaging in trade diplomacy.

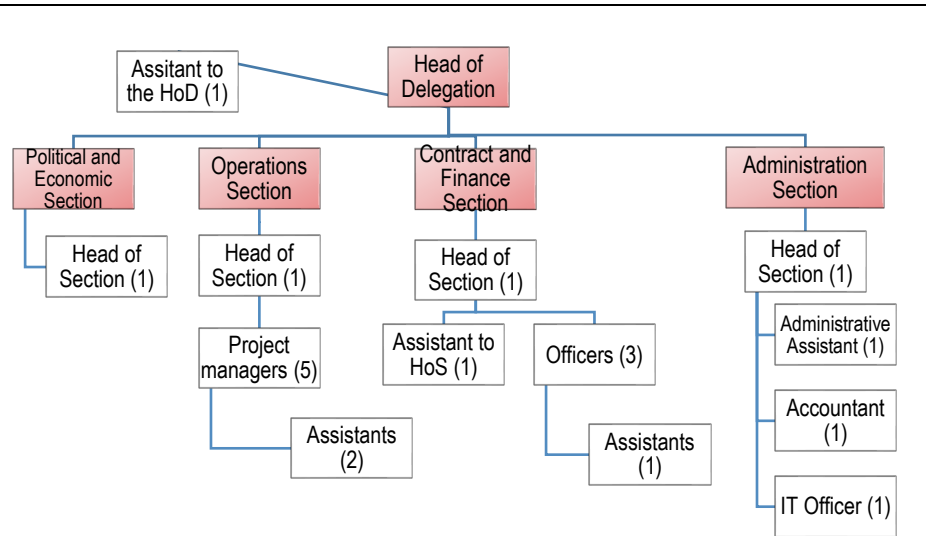


In contrast, approximately 50 per cent of the activity (the Commission legacy) was related to operational activities or what we earlier discussed as *aid-driven diplomacy* with tasks such as project management in the areas of good governance and democratization, economic cooperation and social and regional development, and infrastructure and environment-related developments. Diplomatic practice in Eastern Europe, hence, diversified and expanded to the extent of embracing new functions, such as acting as a donor. This, relatively new practice of diplomacy, the aid-driven one, was reflected in Eastern Europe in the internal structures of the Delegations, both pre and post-Lisbon (see Figures 2 & 3 for Moldova). In all three countries, the operational sections in the EU delegations were bigger than the political ones (see Figures 4, 5 and 6 for data on Ukraine and Belarus in the Annex).

A further evaluation of resources reflected on human resources issues, establishing a European esprit de corps and institutional turf wars as dimensions of capabilities on the ground. As a

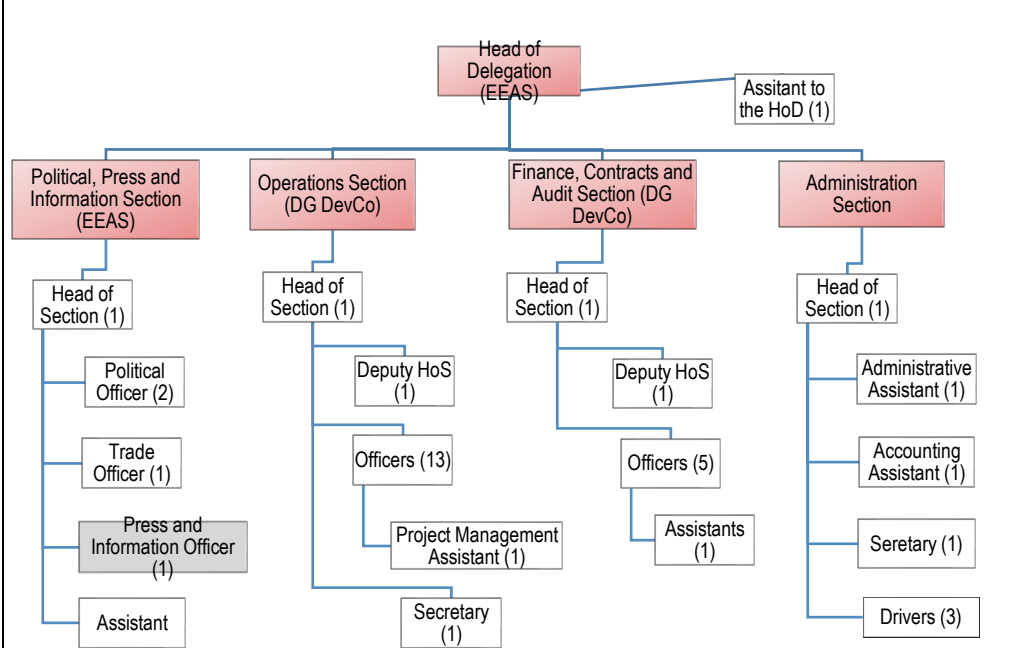
general observation, *human resource* issues were recurrent for both the national and Union diplomatic representations: for example, being understaffed; not sufficiently trained in EU policy-making; understanding, or the language of the host country.

Figure 2: Internal organisation of the EU Delegation in Chisinau pre-Lisbon



Source: authors' compilation during the fieldwork conducted in Moldova (interv. 1 and 25) and based on the old website of the Commission representation in Moldova

Figure 3: Internal organisation of the EU Delegation in Chisinau post-Lisbon



Note: the Press and Information Officer position is highlighted in grey in the Table as to emphasize that such a post was missing in 2013 and was acquired in late 2015
Source: authors' compilation during the fieldwork conducted in Moldova and based on the new website of the Union Delegation in Moldova

For national embassies, the issue of esprit de corps was mainly linked to most embassies being understaffed. Most embassies were small, with only two or three diplomats present. Another factor identifying human resources was the age range, experience accumulated of all participants and their language skills: being a skilful diplomat and knowing at least Russian was extremely important in all three countries. For the EUDs in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, having one-third of their personnel from the EEAS brought the ‘diplomatic’ into their activity. Yet these were national diplomats, who were former employees of their ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) and who, after spending four years in the host country, would return not to the EEAS in Brussels but to their national MFA. Furthermore, given the number of EEAS staff and Commission staff in the Delegations (see Table 4), the latter represented a much larger proportion.

Table 4. Distribution of EEAS and Commission staff in the Delegations in Eastern Europe				
Eastern Europe		Staff		
		Commission	EEAS	Total
Countries	Belarus	17	10	27
	Moldova	26	11	37
	Ukraine	74	28	102
<i>Source:</i> Data drawn from Bicchi & Maurer (2018), Table 2, page 16 (staff numbers have been provided to the authors by EEAS staff in March, 2016)				

Research on EU diplomatic practice has discussed the symbolic power of national diplomats, achieved due to their states’ symbolic position versus the potential of the symbolic power of the EEAS (Adler-Niessen, 2014). But research also shows that the struggle between national diplomacy and the EU’s new diplomatic service concerning its symbolic power is unsubstantiated (ibidem). On the background of this research, observations from the fieldwork conducted in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus pointed to the fact that the *struggle over symbolic power* is not so much located in the intersection of the national and EU levels but rather in the inter-institutional dimension. In all three countries, the inter-institutional ‘turf wars’ echoed Brussels’ inter-institutional dynamics: internally, the EU delegations reflected three specific institutional tensions. One tension was an echo of the intra-EEAS tensions – between people inside the EEAS and people from the national diplomatic service. The latter spent, on average, 4 years in the Delegation, were employees of their respective MFAs and would return back to their home capitals, bypassing Brussels. In Kiev, for example, this created a degree of mistrust between the staff coming from Brussels and the staff coming from the national capitals to the Political section. A second tension was related to the relationship between the EEAS and the Delegation. Although political officers believed that information should be exchanged equally and frequently

between them and the EEAS, in practice, information flows were more frequently directed to Brussels than to Delegations. And a third power struggle, echoed the inter-institutional dynamic between EEAS and certain DGs in the Commission. Structurally, there are two parts within an EU delegation: the Commission part, represented by DG DevCo and the DG Trade personnel; and the EEAS part, represented by national diplomats or EEAS personnel. The European Commission's staff work on sensitive issues in the area of good governance, rule of law, education, corruption and energy, etc., which are all very political in nature. The EEAS personnel are in charge of the political agenda, yet in the period studied they were most often not consulted on the reports on sectoral issues that went directly to Brussels, bypassing the political officers. This, in turn, created dividing lines within the EUDs.

Conclusion

The flaws of the pre-Lisbon institutional system that were often linked to the lack of continuity and leadership were addressed through MS embracing '*symbolic representation*'. After the inauguration of EEAS, one can account for a change in diplomatic practice in Eastern Europe through the deterritorialization of diplomatic representation; this implies that MS, as members of the EU have internalised EU values, rules and norms and have welcomed the EUDs to represent the EU while their preserved their traditional national representation function. This was most obvious through the abolition, on the ground, of the system of rotating Presidencies, a task performed and coordinated post-Lisbon by the EU Delegations in Chisinau, Kiev and Minsk. Therefore, in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, a strong non-fragmented leadership of EUD, in this sense, was successfully acknowledged and embraced by the diplomatic community; which, in turn, strengthened continuity of EU diplomatic practice. Moreover, following the attribution of legal personality to the EU via the Lisbon Treaty, the EU Delegations were designed to communicate "values, policies and results of its projects toward third country stakeholders" (Duke 2013, p. 25) in cooperation with MS embassies. According to the empirical evidence, *MS embassies and the EU delegations became co-participants* in pursuing, in Eastern Europe, the ENP/EaP agenda.

This research also shows that in Eastern Europe, there are forces that drive or divide the practice of EU diplomacy. The drivers for EU diplomatic performance, such as engaging in multistakeholder diplomacy or burden-sharing seem to be conducive to cooperation practices on the ground. Empirical evidence showed how the openness to cooperate of EU diplomats led to

avoiding overlap and complementarity through participating in *multistakeholder diplomacy*. Also, corporate diplomatic practices transitioned from a hierarchical to a *networking form of diplomacy* that anchored MS embassies on the ground in a European setting of networking. This was possible through the EUD coordinating and maintaining a network of meetings at different levels, with different topics and different degrees of ceremonialism. Evidence further spoke in favour of *burden-sharing* as a driver in EU diplomatic performance as MS embassies and the EU delegations have recognised the value of the division of labour between them. Without the burden of coordinating the common meetings, which became a central task in the EUDs activity, the EU and the national diplomats could focus on formulating the common approach, which often meant delivering a common message or a common position vis-à-vis the local authorities in Eastern Europe. The fact that post-Lisbon there was a higher level of involvement of the EU Delegation, played a positive role in reaching the common approach. Against this background, the upgraded structural development by the Lisbon Treaty spurred convergence on the ground in a manner that led to collective action.

Although on the one hand, the EU developed a communication infrastructure that was a valuable resource for the diplomatic community and the EUD became an informational network hub. On the other hand, evidence revealed the *struggle over symbolic power* reflected through intra- and inter-institutional tensions which can constitute a hamper for in EU diplomatic practice. Three specific tensions have been identified: the first is intra-EEAS tension which on the ground was present via the degree of mistrust between the staff coming from Brussels and the staff coming from the national capitals to the Political section. A second tension was related to the relationship between the EEAS and the Delegation, with information mainly being uploaded to the EEAS and the other way around. And a third one - echoed the inter-institutional dynamic between EEAS and the Commission (especially DG DevCo), where the level of cooperation was constricted by the limited degree of report-sharing or consultation on behalf of the DG DevCo personnel positioned in the Operations sections of the delegations. In addition, the diplomatic staff in the Delegation found it difficult to have two lines of reporting in Brussels – to the EEAS and to the Commission – and saw this as creating dividing lines and separation within the Delegation.

An inherent next step in promoting research on EU diplomatic practice and performance, which results from this research, would be to further investigate the drivers and dividers of EU diplomatic practice and performance. The shift of the diplomatic interaction from a hierarchical to a network form of diplomacy opens another avenue for research.

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Annex

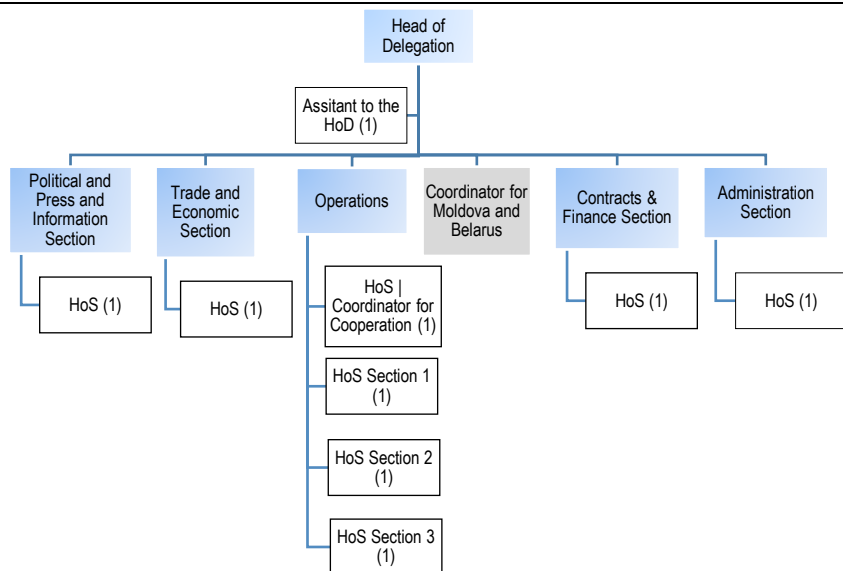
Typology	Heading	Frequency	Description
Level	<i>EU–member states general meetings</i>		
	(1) HoMs: Meetings of Heads of Delegation (HoDs)	Weekly: every week on political issues, occasionally on civil society issues (approx. two–three times per year)	reflects the diplomatic ranking of the attendees
	(2) Deputy HoDs meetings	Monthly	
	(3) Counsellor's meetings	Monthly: at least once every two months → six per year	
Topic	(1) Thematic EU (donor) meetings / Sectoral cooperation	Monthly, also can be quarterly, called on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Justice sector reform - Development and aid - Human rights - Trade/Economic development - Transnistria 	have a specific agenda and are narrow in scope
	(2) Consultations with other EU donors	Called based on necessity	distinctive for the EU delegation called before launching its

Typology	Heading	Frequency	Description
Level	<i>General EU–member states meetings</i>		
	(1) HoMs: Meetings of Heads of Delegation (HoDs)		reflects the diplomatic ranking of the attendees
	(2) Counsellor's meetings		
Topic	(1) Thematic EU meetings	<i>Information not disclosed</i>	have a specific agenda and are narrow in scope; are taking place on the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assistance and cooperation - Sanctions - Schengen issues - Economic counsellors issues - Political (and Human Rights) issues

	(3) Member states' roundtables		regular local calls for proposals for civil society project funding
Group affiliation	<i>EU (donor) meetings within regional frameworks of cooperation</i>		
	(1) Visegrad Group (or V4)	once per year	Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia
	(2) Nordic group (or Nordic Plus)	occasionally	Sweden, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK (also Norway and Canada are part of Nordic Plus)
Formality	(1) Formal events	Organized based on the yearly agendas of EU delegations and member states' embassies; at least one event per actor	events organised by relevant stakeholders in each country as well as lunch, dinner or an "occasional coffee"
	(2) Non-formal events	<i>Information not disclosed</i>	
<i>Source: Author's compilation based on fieldwork conducted in Moldova</i>			

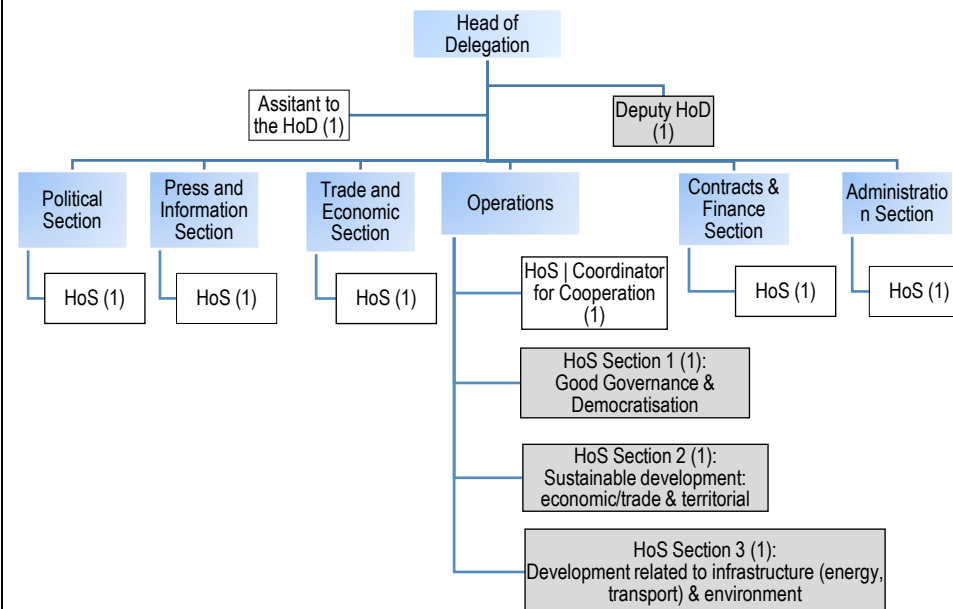
Group affiliation	<i>EU meetings within regional frameworks of cooperation</i>		
	(1) Visegrad Group (or V4)	<i>Information not disclosed</i>	Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia
	(2) Nordic Group (or Nordic Plus)		Sweden, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK
<i>Source: Author's compilation based on fieldwork conducted in Belarus</i>			

Figure 4: Internal organisation of the EU Delegation in Kiev pre-Lisbon



Source: authors' compilation during the fieldwork conducted in Ukraine in 2011 (interv. 15) and based on the website of the Commission representation in Kiev (currently archived)

Figure 5: Internal organisation of the EU Delegation in Kiev post-Lisbon



Source: authors' compilation during the fieldwork conducted in Ukraine in 2013 and 2016 (interv. 16, 20, 23, 48) and based on the website of the EU Delegation in Kiev in 2013 and in 2015 (currently archived)

Figure 6: Internal organisation of the EU Delegation in Minsk (opened post-Lisbon)

