I Do It My Way: Analysis of the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union

JOHANA GALUŠKOVÁ, PETR KANIOK

Abstract: This article analyses development of the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union (PermRep) from 2004, when the Czech Republic joined the European Union, until 2013. Its main aim is to test four concepts related to the three neoinstitutionalist theories – firstly, the path dependency and critical junctures models related to the historical neo-institutionalism, secondly principal-agent relation typical for the rational neo-institutionalism and the concept of the logic of appropriateness related to the sociological institutionalism. The authors try to determine which of these four models have the best explanatory potential when it comes to the development of the Czech PermRep. After analysing three independent variables (changes in executive, EU Council Presidency, EU strategies), and their impact on the dependent variable (character of the Czech PermRep), the authors conclude that particularly historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism models have the greatest explanatory power while the contribution of rational institutionalism model of principal-agent is relatively weak.

Keywords: Permanent Representation to the EU, neoinstitutionalism, path dependency, critical junctures, principal-agent, logic of appropriateness

Introduction

Recent research on the Europeanization of EU member states political systems has included responses of institutions within these political systems to the EU. As typical examples of such can be used national parliaments and coordination processes related to the EU agenda (e.g., Wright 1996, Kassim 2000, Sepos 2005). What has not come under scrutiny to this point is the institution of the

1 This article has been written under the grant Europe in Changing International Environment (MUNI/A/1316/2014).
2 An overview is available in Goetz – Meyer-Sahling 2008.
permanent representations of the member states to the EU. Their significance is particularly that they serve in each country as a point of contact between the European and national levels (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2014). Their role is particularly crucial in coordination and communications among capitals and EU institutions: without PermReps, EU and national levels would remain in isolation and the administration of European issues would become ineffective. PermReps are strikingly ambivalent institutions — although being part of a country’s domestic political system, their permanent location in Brussels nevertheless weakens their national loyalty to a considerable extent.

For these reasons, it is surprising that adequate research into PermReps has not yet been carried out. This study aims to fill this gap by providing an analysis of how the PermRep of the Czech Republic functions as an institution. Our analysis is anchored in theories of neoinstitutionalism. It aims to determine how the Czech PermReps developed during the period from the country’s accession to the EU until late 2013, and whether and to what extent this development may be explained by assumptions defined under theories of neoinstitutionalism. In this context, our analysis targets Rational Choice Institutionalism, Historical Institutionalism and Sociological Institutionalism. We pose a major research question and three auxiliary questions to determine which of models related to these theories best explicates development of the PermRep. Our analysis takes the form of an instrumental case study that draws on documents issued by relevant institutions and on interview with former PermRep diplomat. To explain the development of the PermRep to the EU, we are looking for the best theoretical explanation. As a main result, we found that the Czech PermRep is a highly stable institution. Development of the PermRep was determined by preceding historical developments and corresponded to some elements of the logic of appropriateness and concept of critical junctures. Historical Institutionalism assumptions therefore have the greatest explanatory potential, followed by Sociological Institutionalism concept of logic of appropriateness. Scenarios predicted by Rational Choice Institutionalism and its principal-agent model were not confirmed.

Our article importantly expands our knowledge of how institutions involved in promoting national politics perform within the EU environment. Its theoretical contribution is limited – we are aware that we take into account only fragments of the neo-institutional theories and therefore we do not aspire to generalize our findings or evaluate neo-institutional theories as a whole.

The text is structured as follows: The first part comments on relevant research. After that we explain theoretical background and key concepts. The third section

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3 The fourth neo-institutional theory is represented by Discursive Institutionalism that explains the causes behind changes by means of ideas and discursive interaction (Schmidt 2010: 5). Because this article focuses on changes caused by external factors, we omit this theory from our theoretical framework.
sets out the research questions, briefly explains methodology used and specifying our data. The analysis itself is contained in sections four through seven. Last part of the article summarizes findings and puts them into research context.

**Literature Review**

Any attention PermReps have gotten so far in the literature has been almost entirely in the form of descriptions and overviews. Themes covered include PermReps’ size, staffing, and their function and position within the structure that coordinates the European agenda in the country concerned. Case studies represent clear majority of work; comparative and theoretical articles are scarce.

The most comprehensive view of PermReps’ role has been provided in an anthology by Kassim et al (2001) focusing on the national coordination of the European agenda. Kassim and Peters (2001: 311–324) see the most substantial similarities in the manner by which some functions of PermReps are fulfilled, particularly regarding delivery of documents, communication with EU institutions, and the creation of bases for national negotiators. On the contrary, most important differences are found in the influence held by PermReps, their position within coordination structures and in their performance of particular functions.

Majority of research on PermReps focus on their functions. A study by Hayes-Renshaw, Lequesne and Mayor Lopez (1989) using examples of Ireland, France and Spain to deem the educative role PermReps play for national governments. Blair (2001) makes a similar observation. He identifies the function of PermReps to be ‘a natural point of connection between the interests of member states and institutions’ of the European Union (Blair 2001: 22). He sees the negotiations between the national and European levels to be the most important function of the PermReps.

Some attention has also been devoted to the PermReps in studies of the coordination mechanisms for the European agenda (for the new member states, see, e.g., Dimitrova – Toshkov 2007, Panke 2010, Gärtner – Hörner – Obholzer 2011). PermReps are analysed particularly as actors involved in coordination mechanisms. Anecdotal mentions of PermReps can be also found in a bunch of works on the Council of the EU (e.g., Spence 1995, Hardacre 2011).

Within the Czech Republic, the PermRep has almost been neglected as a topic. The exception is a study by Karlas et al. (2013) focused on the role of the PermReps in coordinating the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy. Certain attention to the PermRep is also paid in yearbooks published by the Institute of International Relations (e.g., Beneš – Karlas 2009; Beneš – Braun 2010; Beneš – Braun 2011). In these cases, however, the PermRep is not analysed as an institution but as an actor in Czech foreign and European policy.
Theoretical Background

Various neoinstitutional theories differ in four basic aspects. First, they differently conceptualize key term ‘institution’. Second, they vary in their answers to the question whether states or institutions came first. And third, diversity can be identified in their conceptualizations of the influence held by institutions over states and vice versa. Last but not least, neoinstitutional theories disagree on structure-actor issue. Thus, the neo-institutionalist approach as a whole offers several options for explaining development and behaviour of institutions (Kratochvíl 2008: 134–136).

Rational Institutionalism assumes that the actors act rationally having fixed preferences and pursuing strategic goal to maximize them. Institutions are structures through them actors minimize problems connected with collective negotiations. Thus, institutions are beneficial because they reduce negotiation costs and increase predictability of actors involved (Schmidt 2010: 5–6; Kratochvíl 2008: 137).

The most widespread model connected with Rational Institutionalism is principal-agent. According Braun and Guston it is ‘a special type of social relationship in which two actors exchange resources’ (Braun – Guston 2003: 303). Under this relationship, principal owns resources but is incapable of using them to attain results required. Therefore an agent as entity to which the principal transfers resources is needed. Thus, countries delegate authority for institutions they have created with the aim of maximizing benefits. However, delegating authority to the agents gives rise to a degree of insecurity. The principal cannot confidently say whether the agent will carry out its entrusted duty.

Historical Institutionalism approach defines institutions as ‘formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy’ (Hall – Taylor 1996: 6). Institutions are seen as a stable part of history pushing development forward. The first important term used in Historical Institutionalism is critical junctures. Capoccia and Kelemen define them as ‘relatively short periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents’ choices will affect the outcome of interest’ (2007: 348). This probability must be substantially higher in this time period then under normal development. The second key concept employed in HI is path dependency. It stresses that ‘history matters’, since it forms future development (Ebbinghaus 2005: 5–6). The model is based upon actors’ decision-making being influenced by the past or current form of institutions. Key point is the extent to which prior decisions influence institutions’ future developmental alternatives (Ebbinghaus 2005: 16).

Sociological Institutionalism, considers institutions as ‘symbols, scripts and routines which act as filters through which actors interpret their situation, their particular place in it, and the most appropriate course of action for whatever deci-
sion faces them (Harty 2005: 54). Institutions are not set up by rational actors but reflect the cultural background and habits of their communities. The institutional structures form the norms and values that subsequently govern and influence actors (Kratochvíl 2008: 141). Authority is also perceived differently as Sociological Institutionalism emphasises legitimacy and trust (Niemann – Mak 2009: 10).

The first key Sociological Institutionalism term is ‘institutional isomorphism’ describing a process in which institutions within the same environment draw closer⁴. Institutions thus accept behavioural patterns to ensure their legitimacy. This approximation gives rise to institutional change (DiMaggio – Powell 1983: 150). Another important concept represents ‘logic of appropriateness’ assuming that actors’ behaviour is not motivated by maximal benefits but instead by what is right or expected (Niemann – Mak 2009: 10). The concept is based upon the presumption that actors are willing to maintain rules and observe them in their everyday activity because they consider them ‘natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate’ (March – Olsen 2009: 3). Although behaviour governed by the logic of appropriateness bears evidence of moral action, it may also be inspired by historical models and the lessons learnt from them. If rules have been used in the past and proved to be effective, actors opt for them again (March – Olsen 2009: 4, 12).

In line with the theories outlined, this study presents three explanations. Firstly, an explanation made through the Rational Institutionalism logic of principal-agent model: the PermRep, as an institution established by a national state, adjusts its form to the domestic political situation. Under the principal-agent model, the PermRep is the agent and the government is the principal. Secondly, from the standpoint of Historical Institutionalism and its path-dependency and critical junctures models, it may be presumed that the setup, functioning and role of the PermRep depend upon its prior development, and upon key moments that have shaped its existing form. Thirdly, Sociological Institutionalism refers to inspiration the institution might have gotten from other EU member states and their coordination systems, and to the process of learning and adapting to themes discussed and strategies adopted by the EU. Therefore, we expect that the PermRep would develop according norms and patterns important for the EU.

In keeping with theoretical expectations, we pose the following research question:

Which of the concepts related to the three approaches of neo-institutionalism best explains the development of the Czech PermRep to the EU?

⁴ However, significant divergence in the individual mechanisms of EU member states is a general trend in the national coordination of the European agenda despite the effort to harmonize these mechanisms (Kassim, Peters, Wright 2000: 12).
To be able to identify which concepts best describes the development and form of the PermRep, the following sub-questions are asked:

**Sub-question 1: Have changes in the executive influenced the personnel, structural and coordination components of the PermRep?**

In view of its size and importance, it hardly seems suitable to treat the PermRep as standard embassy. The impact of European immigration makes the PermRep a unique actor. Its tasks are not limited to the interests’ representation but the PermRep is responsible for their promoting as well. Therefore we assume that a change in the executive may lead to change in the composition of the PermRep. Nevertheless, we do not expect a complete staff replacement after every change of government. There are likely to be politically motivated appointments to the three highest-level posts, those at the ambassadorial level: the head of the PermRep, the deputy head of the PermRep, and the representative in the Political and Security Committee.5 We do not take into account changes at the level of ordinary diplomats (attachés, heads of units) for whom politically motivated change is not a factor, because their work is not primarily political in nature. Changes to the structural component involve issues as the reorganization of individual units traceable to changes in the government. When it comes to the coordination changes, we take into consideration the position of the PermRep within the EU affairs national coordination structure.

**Sub-question 2: Was the PermRep reinforced within the coordination structure during the Czech EU Council Presidency?**

As EU Council Presidency increases demands on national EU affairs coordination systems, we assume that such consequences of the Presidency should be reflected in the functioning of the PermRep. Concerning management of the Presidency, Czech Republic selected the so-called mixed model consisting of a combination of capital-based and Brussels-based models. Mix model thus assumes significant involvement of the PermRep as well as its increased autonomy (Kaniok 2010: 73, Tomalová 2008: 121–122). The Presidency thus logically opens the door to reinforcing the PermRep even after its end. We therefore focus on whether the PermRep’s role was reinforced during the preparatory phase for the Presidency, that is, whether the institution’s capacity was increased.

**Sub-question 3: Has the PermRep reacted structurally to any preference shown for particular EU themes?**

5 In the Czech case, the political nature of these posts is notable if the careers of former ambassadors are examined. Milena Vicenová (ambassador in 2008–2012) served as Minister of Agriculture in the first government of Mirek Topolánek, Jan Kohout (ambassador in 2004–2008) was Minister of Foreign Affairs in the governments of Jan Fischer and Jiří Rusnok. The first permanent representative, Pavel Telička, became directly involved in politics in 2014, as an MEP representing ANO.
This sub-question will help us identify whether the development of the PermRep may be explained using Sociological Institutionalism. If so, the institution’s structure will have been adapted to reflect the themes preferred, as well as to strategic plans and concepts adopted in the EU, particularly in the Council of the EU. More specifically, we focus on the amended Lisbon Strategy and the Europe 2020 strategy. Both strategies incorporate a midterm outlook for the EU that takes in a broad range of policies, and both discuss key issues. Europe 2020, in particular, requires that member states undertake a number of economic reforms, and these changes are frequently structural in nature. Thus we may assume that if the EU emphasises particular themes, this preference will be reflected in the structure of the PermRep, either as a reinforcing or moderating influence on some of its units.

**Methodology and Data**

Our analysis represents a case study (George – Bennett 2005), specifically an instrumental case study that tests existing theories (Kořan 2008: 33–35). It focuses on the role the Czech PermRep plays and analyses its form and role in coordinating European issues.

Our dependent variable ‘Character of the PermRep’ has two values — ‘stability’ and ‘change’. Dependent variable is analysed at two different levels — the personnel level and organizational level. The value ‘stability’ is assigned if no changes have occurred in structural or organizational factors that are attributable to the independent variables. The value ‘change’ is given if personnel or structural-organizational changes have in fact occurred.

Three independent variables are studied. The ‘Executive’ independent variable may be followed on three levels. First is the personnel level: here, we examine whether a change in the executive has led to changes in the three ambassadorial posts. To take the natural diplomatic cycle into account, we consider the impact of the executive independent variable during the six months after formation of a new government. Second, structural changes the new executive may implement at the PermRep are also relevant. This prompts us to follow whether, over a six-month period, any units of the PermRep have undergone reorganization. And, finally, we examine whether any change in the executive has changed the position of the PermRep within the national EU affairs coordination system.

The ‘Presidency’ independent variable is relevant for all above mentioned concepts. If the Presidency country is to meet or exceed expectations generally awaited from the Presidency, it must ensure that Council negotiations at all

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6 We believe that six-month period is an adequate time to follow changes in the personnel level and in the PermRep's structure. Within four-year electoral cycle, a period of several weeks would be too short to objectively assess any changes. In contrast, a longer time period, e.g., a year, would be subject to influences we do not follow, such as the natural rotation of the PermRep’s staff.
levels are efficient and of high quality (Kaniok 2010: 26–27). For a successful Presidency, the PermRep must be reinforced, particularly by having its capacity increased. The changes that occur under the Presidency may therefore be interpreted as constituting a critical juncture (Historical Institutionalism), stemming from the logic of appropriateness (Sociological Institutionalism). Conversely, from perspective of Rational Institutionalism, the Presidency may be perceived as an ideal opportunity to promote interests of the national actors controlling the PermRep (Kaniok 2010: 46).

The third independent variable is ‘EU strategies’. Their impact can be expected at the organizational–structural level. After Czech EU accession, two significant strategies were adopted: the Lisbon Strategy adopted in 2000 (and its amended version from 2005) and the Europe 2020 strategy adopted in 2010. As Member states are expected to increase the attention they devote to themes emphasized by the EU, the PermRep’s structure should change in line with themes preferred in the strategies, both nominally and operationally.

Table 1 captures anticipated scenarios for the behaviour of the independent variables should they follow various theoretical expectations. As analysed models are not in every case exclusive, we minimize risk of misinterpretation by providing the most detailed explanation when it comes to the impact of independent variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal-agent</th>
<th>Critical junctures/Path-dependency</th>
<th>Logic of appropriateness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>PermRep staff changes in dependence on changes in the executive. The PermRep is subject to the interests of the government in office, which may change. A change in the executive also leads to structural changes in the organization of the PermRep.</td>
<td>Dependent Variable – change in the executive does not mean change in its staff or in the coordination system. Changes result from long-term development and are not simply a reaction to the wishes of domestic actors. To a large degree, the institution is autonomous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The PermRep has developed stably; change in the executive does not mean change in its staff or in the coordination system. Changes result from long-term development and are not simply a reaction to the wishes of domestic actors. To a large degree, the institution is autonomous.</td>
<td>Dependent Variable – stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The PermRep does not react to the needs of domestic actors and a change in the executive does not mean any staffing, structural or coordination changes. If changes occur, they are in the form of input following from the culture of the environment in which the institution is operating. The PermRep acts in line with the logic of appropriateness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Impact of Independent Variables on the PermRep Based upon Theoretical Expectations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal-agent</th>
<th>Critical junctures/Path-dependency</th>
<th>Logic of appropriateness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidency</td>
<td>Dependent Variable – change</td>
<td>Dependent variable – change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are changes in staff, in the coordination system and the PermRep is reorganized. The PermRep is one of the players and does not enjoy an exclusive position. After the Presidency has finished, the PermRep original structure is restored.</td>
<td>The Presidency is a key moment with the potential to modify the development of the institution and influence its future path. As a result of the Presidency, the PermRep reinforced its position within the coordination system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU strategy</td>
<td>Dependent Variable – change/stability</td>
<td>Dependent Variable – change/stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes at the PermRep occur only if it is in the interest of domestic actors. If topics preferred by the national government are concerned, changes at the PermRep occur.</td>
<td>The impact of strategies is negligible. It may be identified only if the strategies are considered as path breaking events. Otherwise, the path dependency concept prevails.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors

### Change of Government/Government Coalition

When analysing the ‘Executive’ independent variable, we focus on personnel, structural and coordination changes at the PermRep. The personnel changes at the PermRep were followed for the posts of ambassadors, specifically the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the EU, Deputy Permanent Representative, and the Permanent Representative to COPS. Table 2 provides an overview of individual governments and ambassadors.
Table 2: Overview of Government Coalitions and Terms of Office of PermRep Ambassadors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Permanent Representative</th>
<th>Deputy Permanent Representative</th>
<th>COPS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2013 – David Konecký</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors

From a political standpoint, the most interesting post is that of the Permanent Representative. Although there has been no change of appointment to this post within six months after the forming of a new government coalition, some changes have nevertheless been accompanied by significant discussion. An example is the early termination of Jan Kohout’s term of office. Kohout was replaced with Milena Vicenová in January 2008 instead of ending in May of that year. However, the government decided to make the replacement early, justifying this choice by reference to the approaching Czech EU Council Presidency. According to Alexander Vondra, then Deputy Minister for European Affairs, the change would have occurred sooner or later anyway (Lidovky 2007). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs took a similar view of the matter. It confirmed that the change of appointment would improve collaboration between the Prime Minister’s office and the PermRep (iDnes 2007). Thus, although change happened after six months period following existence of new cabinet, the step was clearly politically motivated. This conclusion confirms also stormy political discussion
following this replacement. The loudest criticism came from opposition ČSSD, whose cabinet had appointed Kohout to the position in 2004 (Ihned 2007).

While in the case of Deputy Perment Representative no changes related to the shifts in executive can be found, Table 2 shows that two cases involving COPS took place within the six-month timeframe. These two cases concern Václav Bálek, appointed in 2009 after the caretaker government took office, and David Konecký, who was appointed in 2013, once again after a caretaker government had taken office. Nevertheless, in both cases, the change was natural, since the predecessors to both Bálek and Konecký had served for five and four years respectively.

The second level of the analysis deals with structural changes in the PermRep. The PermRep was established by Government Resolution No. 208, dated 27 February 2002, under which the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the European Communities was transformed to the PermRep. Prior to the Czech Republic EU accession, the Permanent Mission served as a standard embassy. The Permanent Mission consisted of 6–7 departments. It was headed by the ambassador and deputy ambassador (Interview with former PR employee, 2014).

Immediately after Czech accession to the EU did the structure of the PermRep begin to assume the fixed form which characterized it, with minor modifications, until 2014 (Interview with former PermRep employee, 2014). The oldest available record of the organizational structure dates from 2005. At that time, four departments and twelve units were created, as depicted in Table 3.

### Table 3: Organizational structure of the PR in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department/section</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COREPER II</td>
<td>Legal Affairs Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trade Policy Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Justice and Home Affairs Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COREPER I</td>
<td>Sectorial Policies Unit A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sectorial Policies Unit B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture and Environment Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political and Security Committee (COPS)</td>
<td>Unit of Internal EU Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit of Common Foreign and Security Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee for Internal Operations and Personnel Agenda (VCHOD)</td>
<td>Central Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial-Economic Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information Technology Unit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors
The Permanent Representative and Deputy Permanent Representative stood at the helm of the PermRep. The former was responsible for COREPER II agenda whilst the latter dealt with COREPER I units. Two other units (COPS and VCHOD) were managed by the Deputy Head of the PermRep charged with Common Foreign and Security Policy (Permanent Representative to COPS) and the Deputy Head of the PermRep charged with Internal Operations and Personnel Agenda, respectively (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2005). In late 2004 and early 2005, the Cabinet of the Permanent Representative was established. It consisted of the Permanent Representative, member of the Antici group and COREPER II secretary. Next, a Cabinet of the Deputy Deputy Permanent Representative was created, consisting of the COREPER I ambassador, a member of the Merten group and COREPER I secretary (Interview with former PermRep employee, 2014; Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2005).

Another organizational structure was introduced within the PermRep in 2008. Its basic parts were units defined as a ‘comprehensive units responsible for the PermRep’s operation within their individual competency’. The units were grouped into departments/sections. This organizational structure also allowed setting up working groups (permanent or temporary) that focused on specific issues (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR, not dated). With the exception of cosmetic changes consisting to the section’s names, only a single substantial change occurred: the Military Section was established under the COPS department.

The final organizational scheme comes from 2013. At that time, minor terminology modifications were made and sections were re-named as working groups. Their definitions, however, did not change. Terminology modification also took place at the level of the offices that made up COREPER I, COREPER II and COPS. They were labelled the ‘Secretariat’ (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR, 2013). Both COREPER I and COPS have remained unchanged; they consist of secretariats and working groups identical to the offices and sections under the previous organizational structure. The structure within units/working groups did change in COREPER II and VCHOD. Previously unified Financial and Trade Policy Unit split into two independent working groups. Under the VCHOD section, the IT working group has remained. However, new working groups were established: Administration and Human Resources; Finance and Property; and Operation and Technology. In 2013, the PermRep had four departments/sections and 14 units/working groups.

The third level of analysis focuses on changes in the EU affairs national coordination system. Typically, the European agenda is in the Czech case shifted between two key coordination centres: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Government. Because key changes in the coordination system for European affairs took place in line with changes in the executive (Galušková 2012: 39), we may assume the PermRep was also affected, particularly in terms of changes to its position versus the superior entity.
Gärtner, Hörner and Obholzer (2011: 90) call the Czech coordination system as decentralised and highly complex whereas Karlas describes it as semi-centralized and pluralist (2009: 4). In more practical terms, quite many actors are involved in the coordination system. The most significant represent the Office of the Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the PermRep, the Prime Minister, the President, and previously the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs (Karlas 2009: 6).

Table 4 depicts where the main Coordination Centre for European Affairs was located and what significant changes in EU affairs coordination took place, as well as which institution managed control over the PermRep.

### Table 4: Influence of Change of Government in the Position of the PermRep within the Coordination System for EU affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Coordination Centre</th>
<th>Position of the PermRep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/2006 – 1/2007: ODS</td>
<td>11/2006 – post of the Secretary to the Government for Coordination of Czech Presidency was established; the Secretary was not a member of the government</td>
<td>Controlled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2007 – 3/2009: ODS, KDU-ČSL, SZ</td>
<td>2007 – the post of Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs was established – weakening of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Controlled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/2010 – 7/2013: ODS, TOP-09, VV</td>
<td>7/2010 – post of the Minister for European Affairs cancelled – the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was reinforced. 9/2011 – the post of the State Secretary for European Affairs under the Office of the Government was established along with the State Secretary for European Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Controlled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, close collaboration with the Office of the Government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors
As a body, the PermRep is placed among Czech permanent missions and delegations that subordinate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, several units supervising the PermRep can be found – EU General Affairs Department, the EU Policies Department, the European Community Law Department and the Common Foreign and Security Policy Department (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2010).

Another coordination change that took place was related to the Czech Council Presidency. As the responsibility concerning Presidency organization was shared between Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs (Government Resolution dated 12 March 2007, No. 210), the PermRep reinforced its relations with the later body. From an institutional point of view, the PermRep remained part of the foreign mission network in 2007 but was now explicitly ‘governed jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs’ (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2007). Although the PermRep was subordinated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it has earned certain autonomy. First, PermRep directly participated in the Committee for EU and could independently communicate with the Ministerial Coordination Group. Moreover, Beneš and Karlas (2008: 71) point out that a new ‘communications triangle involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the PermRep, and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs’ was created. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs, as the new coordination actor, thus brought uncertainty into the relationship between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the PermRep (Beneš – Karlas 2008: 71–72).

After the Presidency, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs was cancelled. This had also impact on PermRep’s position in the national coordination system. Subsequent lack of clarity regarding simultaneous existence of two Secretaries for European Affairs moderately strengthened the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly the Minister, since there was no ‘member’ of the Government to look after the European agenda (Galušková 2012). The PermRep remains an associate member of the Committee for EU at the working level (Statute of the Committee for EU 2014) and collaborates with the Ministerial Coordination Groups at individual ministries (Beneš – Braun 2011: 72).

How can we evaluate the influence the ‘Executive’ variable has over the dependent variable? While the Historical Institutionalism and Sociological Institutionalism scenarios were built around the stable form of the dependent variable, principal-agent model anticipated changes in all areas examined.

As the analysis shows, the assumptions of Rational Institutionalism do not work well. The PermRep has undergone stable development and does not react to national turbulence caused by change to the executive. To a certain extent, the PermRep tends to develop autonomously, independently of the wishes and interests of domestic actors. This trend is notable when it comes to personnel...
choice, and at the structural-organizational level. On this level, the assumption of stable, uninterrupted development in Historical Institutionalism, offering an explanation for path dependency, seems to be confirmed. Four main departments/sections remained active throughout the existence of the PermRep. The only unit that was not part of the PermRep’s 2005 organizational structure was the military unit. However, according to a former PermRep employee, military topics were among agendas covered by COPS already from 2003 (Interview with former PR employee, 2014). This means the unit was established only formally. Moreover, stability may also be demonstrated in the PermRep’s position within national EU affairs coordination system. The PermRep developed in parallel with shifts in competency along an axis running from the Office of the Government to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, specifically from the Prime Minister/Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs to the Foreign Minister and back. Although many changes and events affecting PermRep’s position occurred, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs may be regarded as the entity to which the PermRep is responsible. For the PermRep, paradoxically, any changes that weaken the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mean more independence and the establishment of more intensive contacts with the other components in the coordination system. When the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs as a new actor in the coordination structure was introduced, the PermRep got an opportunity for greater independence and reinforcement of its position among the entities coordinating the EU agenda. What is important, the PermRep maintained this position also after the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs had been abolished. This development provides evidence that the PermRep’s position within the coordination system may be considered a path dependency process. In this respect, the PermRep acts autonomously and in spite of the fact that the EU affairs coordination system in the Czech Republic is not considered stable, this instability had no significant impact on the PermRep’s position.

Elements of Sociological Institutionalism can be regarded as complementary explanations of the path dependency model. The fact that only minor changes occurred within the organizational structure throughout the development of the institution implies that the initial design proved its worth. The PermRep became accustomed to it, and it regards it as effective. Aside from minor changes, the structure of the PermRep established in 2003 proved to be permanent. Minor changes taking place concerned particularly names of individual units and their mergers or splits. No significant change thus took place (Interview with

7 The exact year in which the military unit was established is questionable. Although the statements by the former PermRep employee (Interview with a former PR employee, 2014) and Málek (2009) confirm that the PermRep’s structure was reorganized to include military themes immediately after Czech Republic joined the EU, organizational structure from 2005 does not include it (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2005).
The PermRep drew inspiration for its basic setup from the PermReps of other EU member states. Its structure engineered to suit the European environment. This particularly means that the individual departments and units/working groups reflect configurations of the Council of the EU (Interview with Former PR employee, 2014).

### Czech EU Council Presidency

The performance of the Czech EU Council Presidency can be divided into several phases. First one is the preparatory phase launched already by early 2005. During this phase, the Presidencies of other EU member states were evaluated. Systematic preparations for the upcoming Presidency started in October 2006, when the post of the Secretary to the Government for Coordination of the Czech Presidency in the Council of the EU was established (Government resolution dated 25 October 2006 No. 1238). As already mentioned, major changes to the EU affairs coordination system took place in this period. Although originally the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was charged with coordinating the Presidency, this duty was later shifted to the Secretary to the Government. Finally, it was the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs that served as the key coordination body (Galušková 2012: 31).

The PermRep played in this preparatory phase an important role. More importantly, because of the nature of the model selected for the organisation and coordination of the Presidency, it acted autonomously. With its extensive experience in the European environment, the institution took part in all preparatory work. Its knowledge of the Council working and its access to positions held by EU member states enabled the PermRep to submit unique analyses and documents relevant for the preparatory work. These were later used by individual ministries (Kaniok 2010, 96–97). For instance, the PermRep prepared a list of legislation having high importance for the Presidency (Kaniok 2010: 142). It also took part in creating the media communication strategy or in scheduling meetings between the central coordination body and individual ministries (Kaniok 2010: 97).

In terms of the PermRep’s structure and organization, there was an increase in the number of employees during the preparatory phase: their number doubled from the regular approximately 100 employees to 200–220. To maintain continuity, the mandate of many employees who had worked at the PermRep from 2004 was extended until 2009 (Interview with former PermRep employee, 2014).

During the Presidency, the PermRep reinforced its position as the ‘key link between the Czech administration and Union bodies’ (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2009). The PermRep chaired over all meetings of the Council of the EU in Brussels at the COREPER and COPS levels (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2009). In terms of organization and logistics, the PermRep also bore responsibility for political meetings among ministers. A total of 146 PermRep diplomats
were authorized to chair meetings of 150 working groups. The PermRep also worked closely with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prepare 34 meetings on the level of ministers and two European Councils (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2009). PermRep diplomats also played an important role in negotiating between the European Commission and the European Parliament (EP) (Kaniok 2010: 159). In the area of negotiations, the coordination system was decentralised: PermRep diplomats worked independently; they were not forced to consult every step they took (Kaniok 2010: 153, 159). The PermRep also helped administer the Presidency agenda database and, with individual ministries, ensured information entered in the system was up-to-date (Kaniok 2010: 161).

Throughout the Presidency, the PermRep maintained close contact with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs, particularly via video conference (Beneš – Braun 2010: 72). The intensive communication between PermRep diplomats and the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs took place because the PermRep was capable of acting autonomously. In the same way, the PermRep coordinated its activities with the Committee for EU on the working level (Kaniok 2010: 162).

Even after the end of the Presidency, when the PermRep and the coordination mechanism for EU affairs returned to their ‘original’ form, the PermRep maintained intensive contacts with the Section for European Affairs that operated under the Office of the Government, particularly via the Committee for EU on the working level (Beneš – Braun 2011: 70). The PermRep remains an associate of the Committee (Statute of the Committee for EU 2014) and its representatives have an opportunity to work with individual Ministry Coordination Groups. The PermRep’s role in formulating the Czech Republic’s positions in the EU legislative process was thus reinforced (Beneš; Braun 2011: 71). The PermRep also showed greater initiative in communicating and establishing contacts with Czechs working in the European Commission and the EP (Beneš – Braun 2011: 72).

In other words, the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU presented the PermRep with a unique opportunity to prove itself as a capable component in the coordination system. Testimony to this is that, although the Presidency was evaluated fairly negatively from a political point of view, the diplomats and persons responsible for preparing and chairing the individual meetings were praised. For the PermRep, the Presidency was beneficial not only for its reputation but also because it built a network of contacts. Reinforcement is also noticeable in informal meetings among ambassadors, e.g., of the Visegrad Group (Beneš – Braun 2011: 72).

The impact of the ‘Presidency‘ independent variable may be found for expectations derived from Historical Institutionalism and Sociological institutionalism. Their theoretical explanations are, complementary. By contrast, the assumptions of the principal-agent model were not confirmed. In terms of the PermRep’s or-
ganization, no significant reform related to the preparatory phase took place. In terms of changes in coordination, there is an observable connection to the preparations for the Presidency. The changes prompted benefits especially for the PermRep and its independent development, which is not in line with the principal-agent concept.

Historical Institutionalism and its concept of critical junctures offer the greatest explanatory capacity. The Presidency, as a new experience demanding enormous commitment, represented a critical juncture with potential to change the PermRep’s role. During the Presidency and as a consequence of it, the PermRep reinforced its position within the national EU affairs coordination structure and initiated close collaboration with other national coordination actors, as well as with European institutions and partners.

Match between assumed and real values of the dependent variable can be also found when it comes to Sociological Institutionalism. This approach however anticipated that change would be due to different reasons. The starting point is the logic of appropriateness expecting that the Presidency will follow norms and patterns set up before. In the Czech case, such behaviour can be traced down already in the preparatory phase. Number of employees was increased in order to ensure smooth conduct of Council business, relations within the ‘European environment’ reinforced and the PermRep as an expert on Brussels was substantially involved in the preparation and performance of the Presidency. Specifically from the point of view of Sociological Institutionalism, another fact was relevant: during the Presidency and its preparatory stage, mandates of some diplomats were extended so that the ‘institutional memory’ was maintained.

**EU Strategies**

Documents we examine under the ‘EU strategies’ independent variable include the Lisbon Strategy (more precisely, its amended version adopted in 2005), and Europe 2020 adopted in 2010. The institution’s organizational structure in 2005 will be compared to that in 2008 and 2013, identifying potential changes. These changes concern not only the creation/elimination of individual units, but also modifications of units’ scope. Because both strategies focus on socio-economic agendas, our analysis does not deal with units administering agendas related to foreign policy or the security agenda as well as internal operations of the PermRep. Comparing the organizational structure will allow us to determine whether the Sociological Institutionalism approach, which assumes the PermRep adapts to strategic themes, is applicable.

Tables 5 and 6 depict three PermRep organizational structures as overviews of their units and agendas. Sections that could be most influenced by the themes of both strategies are those focused on trade and financial policies and sectorial policies A and B.
Table 5: Agenda of Individual Units in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal Affairs</td>
<td>Legal expertise, Court of Justice, human rights and minorities, contact with NGOs, IGC, future of Europe and enlargement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>EU tax policy, EU budget, multi-annual financial framework and monitoring, OLAF, insurance, capital movement, money laundering, regional development, structural funds, Cohesion fund, EU funds, EU grants and loans, EMU, contact with EIB and statistics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice and Home Affairs Unit</td>
<td>Schengen – civilian component, judicial cooperation in criminal matters, police collaboration and terrorism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Expert level of Art. 133 Committee, development and humanitarian aid, EFTA, trade issues, trade and development, anti-dumping, commodities and customs issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Environment</td>
<td>Horizontal and sector agenda on environment, air, hazardous substances, rural development, commodity agenda, CAP, veterinary issues, fisheries and CAP control mechanisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectorial Policies A</td>
<td>Technical harmonization, consumer protection, participation in EU foreign aid, energy, nuclear energy issues, EU transportation policy, competition, public procurement, public support, telecommunication and post services, Galileo, enterprise policy, industry and competitiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectorial Policies B</td>
<td>Company law, industrial and intellectual property, social policy, employment, labour market, culture, audio-visual field, education and youth, public health, pharmaceutics and medical devices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors

Table 6 presents a similar schema, but for the years 2008 and 2013, the time period in which goals promoted by the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020 should have been fulfilled.

Table 6: Agenda of Individual Units in 2008 and 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Agendas in 2008</th>
<th>Agendas in 2013 (changes compared to 2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal Affairs and Communication</td>
<td>Institutional relations among the PR and EP, European Court of Justice, consultancy in EU legal affairs, issues of protocol, PR spokesperson, public relations, communication strategy and contact with media.</td>
<td>No change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When comparing the organizational schemata and the scope of individual units in 2005 and 2008, it is clear that the adoption of the (revised) Lisbon Strategy had no impact concerning the agenda covered by the PermRep. But it clearly influenced scope of individual units tasked with monitoring the development of strategies adopted by the EU. However, there is no specific note of the Lisbon Strategy (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR, not dated).

Similarly, tasks carried out by working groups in 2013 do not differ from those carried out by units under the preceding organizational structure. Nor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Agendas in 2008</th>
<th>Agendas in 2013 (changes compared to 2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Trade Policies</td>
<td>Financial and tax policy, EMU, statistics, regional policy, free movement of capital and services, funds from the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund, contact with EIB, European Court of Justice and ECB. Tax statistics, external trade relations, common commercial policy, anti-dumping and sensitive commodities, trade agenda and ACP, monitoring of strategy development, development in policies, legislation and management of EU funds connected to these areas.</td>
<td>Only a formal separation occurred resulting in two independent units: Financial Policy and Trade Policy. Agendas remained unchanged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice and Home Affairs</td>
<td>Judicial collaboration in criminal matters, police collaboration, fighting terrorism, organized crime, corruption, financial and economic crime, civil security, anti-drug, migration and asylum policies.</td>
<td>No change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Environment</td>
<td>Agriculture, biotechnics, phytosanitary and veterinary issues, fisheries, rural development, sectorial operational programs, agenda under the Alimentarius codes, trade negotiations, monitoring of strategy development, development in policies, EU legislation and drawing monies from the corresponding funds.</td>
<td>No change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectorial Policies A</td>
<td>Competitiveness and entrepreneurship connected to horizontal issues of the internal market, transportation, telecommunications and information society, competition, energy and nuclear safety, monitoring EU conceptual documents and legislation and drawing monies from relevant funds, where necessary.</td>
<td>No change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectorial Policies B</td>
<td>Education, culture, audio-visual field, work and social affairs, science and research, youth, professional qualification, company law, consumer protection, protection of intellectual and industrial property, monitoring of strategy development, development in policies, EU legislation and policies, providing from drawing monies for CR projects under the European Social Fund and the corresponding EU programs.</td>
<td>No change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors
can it be said that Europe 2020 changed the scope of the PermRep. Similarly as with the 2008 structure, the working groups continued to be charged with monitoring the development of EU strategies, policies and legislation adopted. However, there is no specific note of Europe 2020’s objectives in the description activities of the working groups in 2013.

The themes promoted by the Lisbon strategy and Europe 2020 were part of the PermRep’s agenda from the very beginning. It may thus not be said that the institution ignored or refused to pay attention to themes accentuated by the EU. The contrary is true: as noted above, the original structure of the PermRep was quite durable and this was also reflected in the agenda of individual units. The strategies adopted in the Council of the EU thus had no significant influence over the structure that had been established.

The independent variable in question did not influence the form taken by the PermRep, and should thus be assigned the value ‘stability’. Thus the greatest explanatory ability may be ascribed to Historical Institutionalism and its concept of path-dependency: EU strategies clearly do not represent watershed moments that could change the form of the PermRep in the sense of a radical re-configuration of its structure and scope. It becomes clear that the institution has conformed to the structure established at its establishment, a feature typical for the path dependency concept (Pollack 2008: 4). In other words, once institutions choose a path, they tend to follow it, because the cost of any potential change is too high. Only watershed events have the potential to change the institutions’ course; this, however, was not confirmed in the case of the EU strategies.

Complementary to Historical Institutionalism are elements of Sociological Institutionalism, specifically the logic of appropriateness. Although neither strategy led to clear changes in the organization, shifts may be noted in the scope of units/working groups and emphases placed on key themes closely related to the strategies.

Principal-agent model was hardly to evaluate as both strategies had very small saliency for Czech politics. Although Czech governments incorporated both documents into their policies, no specific interest or problem was identified.

**Conclusion**

The PermReps of EU member states are among the least studied actors involved in promoting national interests in the EU. While the PermReps of the old member states received at least some coverage, it is hard to find any information about the PermReps of the new member states. This article has attempted to close the gap and examine the extent to which the roughly 10 year development of the Czech PermRep may be explained on the basis of the key assumptions contained in three neoinstitutionalist theories. The analysis took in the account
impact of the three independent variables — Executive, Presidency and EU strategies — on the development of the PermReps.

To answer our key research question — which of models related to neo-institutionalist theories best explains PermRep development — we constructed further three sub-questions. After finding answers to them, we have found that historical models seem to be best suited to explain the logic behind the development of the independent variables. The potential for sociological logic of appropriateness was adequate but nevertheless not impressive. The lowest explanatory ability came with the rational model of principal-agent. What does this imply?

First, limited capacity of principal-agent model does not mean that Rational Institutionalism as a theory is incapable of explaining the situation with European integration. The success of historical and sociological models may be caused by the fact that any PermRep is a specific institution which differs from regular embassies or parts of EU political system. Moreover, Czech PermRep’s unique and strong position is also result of unsteady and turbulent approach towards the EU which characterized Czech political elites. The Czech ‘EU policy’ is typically marked by changes appearing after each executive’s alternation in the EU affairs coordination system. On the other hand, it is evident that institutions depart from their principals, they act independently, and they are subject to influences that the principals fail to control. On this level, our study confirms conclusions of studies focusing on the socialisation of actors in the committees of the Council of the EU and particularly on shifts in their loyalty (e.g., Lewis 1998, Lewis 2005, Aus 2008). Our findings also show that changes in the PermRep are gradual and internal. In this regard, it would be interesting to test the assumptions of Discursive Institutionalism and try to analyse PermRep discourse. However, as PermReps work behind closed doors, this direction of further research represents rather wishful thinking than real option. Such research would require either a long-term stay by a researcher at the PermRep, or access to a large body of internal documents.

From a purely empirical viewpoint, Czech PermRep seems to be an institution resilient to influences with the potential for long-term change. The path established for the PermRep at its beginning continues to be functional. There is therefore no reason for change. On the other hand, events providing new opportunities and potential to change the PermReps’s future course do exist. An example was the Council Presidency and its preparation. Apart from such

8 There are good reasons to believe that importance of the Council Presidency for the PermReps prevails even after changes in the Presidency system which was done by the Lisbon Treaty. Firstly, the Lisbon Treaty excluded from the Presidency’s power only the European Council and the Foreign Affairs Council. In other policy areas and formations of the EU Council, rotating Presidency kept its influence and responsibilities. For evaluation of the post-Lisbon Council Presidency see for example Warntjen 2013, Batory – Puettner 2013 or Puetter 2014.
potential critical junctures, the PermRep is permanently under the influence of the EU and other PermRep, which make it to be sensitive to its partners’ requirements and can accommodate them. Influence of this environment, PermRep self-perception and its history thus seem to be much more influential than potential wishes of domestic principals. Czech PermRep is thus likely one of the few elements to ensure the continuity and stability of Czech European politics, perhaps the only such component.

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