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PROPER NAMES IN EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS: STRUCTURAL, SEMANTIC AND FUNCTIONAL PROPERTIES

Summary. This study examines the structural, semantic, and functional properties of proper names (PNs) in European Council Conclusions (EUCO), a pivotal genre in European Union (EU) institutional discourse. A corpus of 549 PNs extracted from EUCO texts published between 2022 and 2024 was analysed, employing mixed methods. Structurally, the analysis reveals that PNs are predominantly multi-word expressions (52.7%), often comprising four or more components, such as "*Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance*" and "*International Donors' Conference on Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine*". This structural complexity underscores the EU's need for precise and descriptive references to unique entities. From a semantic perspective, PNs in EUCO texts are categorised into nine distinct groups, including: policy tools (22.8 %); organisations and entities (17.9 %); policy and legal documents (17.1 %); countries and regions (12.9 %); treaties, agreements, declarations (9.5 %); summits, conferences, and events (9.3 %); individuals and titles (8.7 %); assets and material resources (1.1%); political concepts (0.7 %). Among these, policy tools (22.8%) and organisations (17.9%) are the most prevalent, reflecting the European Council's role as an agenda setter and constitutional architect. The diversity of semantic categories demonstrates the scope of EUCO texts in addressing geopolitical, institutional, and policy-related themes. Functionally, PNs in EUCO texts fulfill multiple communicative roles. While their primary function is referential – identifying unique entities – they also perform evaluative, directive, and representational functions. Evaluative uses express judgments or highlight progress, e.g.: "*The European Council welcomes the holding of the Ukraine-South East Europe Summit.*" Directive uses issue calls to action or instructions, e.g.: "*The European Council calls for rapid stepping up of military support <…>*". Representational uses provide detailed reporting on events and decisions, e.g.: "*The European Council held a discussion on <…>*". The findings highlight the integral role of PNs in structuring EUCO texts, reinforcing their institutional authority, and advancing their strategic objectives.

Key words: proper names, proper nouns, European Council Conclusions (EUCO), structural properties, semantic properties, functional features.

Problem statement. The European Council, one of the seven key EU institutions, is regarded as an 'agenda setter' [1, p. 567], a 'constitutional architect' [2], and a 'crisis manager' [3, p. 257–260] in EU policymaking. It plays a pivotal role in shaping general political directions and priorities, issuing specific instructions to other institutions for policy initiation or implementation, and facilitating political compromises. Proper names (PNs) in institutional texts identify unique entities while fulfilling diverse semantic and functional roles. The nuanced use of PNs within these texts reflects the institution's priorities, authority, and communication strategies. Despite their significance, structural complexity, semantic diversity, and functional versatility, PNs in the European Council Conclusions (EUCO) texts remain underexplored. Current research lacks a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between the structural, semantic, and functional features of PNs in EUCO texts. Addressing this gap is essential to understanding how PNs contribute to the clarity, precision, and strategic intent of EU institutional communication.

Literature review. Proper nouns are a distinct category of nouns used to name unique entities, such as people, places, organisations, and events, setting them apart from other entities of the same type [4, p. 1758]. In English, proper nouns are always capitalised, distinguishing them from common nouns, which serve as general terms for a class of people, places, things, or ideas.

In linguistic discourse, two terms are used: proper nouns and proper names (hereafter PNs). They are closely related but have some distinctions in their usage and scope. Huddleston and Pullum claim that proper nouns are word-level units, while "proper names are expressions which have been conventionally adopted as the name of a particular entity" [4, p. 515–516]. According to Héois, *Socrates* can be analyzed as a proper noun or a proper name, but *Annie Oakley* can only be analyzed as a proper name containing two proper nouns, i.e. proper name "has a wider scope than proper noun" [5, p. 3]. In sum, proper names encompass not only individual proper nouns but also combinations of words that function together to name a unique entity, therefore a "**proper name**" is a broader term that can refer to any proper noun or a multi-word unit that serves to identify a specific entity uniquely (individuals, titles/positions, organisations, etc.) [6, p. 33]. Multi-word expressions (hereafter MWEs) can be defined as "lexical items which consist of more than one 'word' and have some kind of unitary semantic or pragmatic function" [7, p. 120].

Common nouns that categorise the referents of proper names are termed differently in research sources: descriptors, designators, category words, triggers, trigger words [6, p. 33]. In our study the term *trigger* will be used. It is important to note that "triggers depend semantically on the referent of the personal name, <…> and, triggers determine the characteristics of the object to which the name refers" [op. cit., p. 33]. Relations between components in a MWE that are obvious to native speakers may not be at all clear to a foreign speaker [8, p. 51].

The meaning of PNs is considered to be "one of the most controversial issues of PNs theory" [9, p. 6]. Analysis of the relevant

PNs research sources shows two opposite positions: 1) the so-called "orthodox view" of PNs [10, p. 772] or the Meaninglessness Thesis [11] (also known as Referentialism, or The Direct Reference View), according to which the said linguistic units are purely referential expressions without meaning. In contrast, the Maximum Meaningfulness Thesis supported by cognitive linguists [12, p. 316; 13] claims that "proper names are the linguistic units with the most meaning and the most restricted reference" [11].

Following Langacker [12, p. 231], Frazer-Mckee defines PNs as "nominals that carry a presupposition of referential uniqueness amongst members of a speech community"– this feature distinguishes them from common nouns, which designate classes of entities [11, p. 112-119]. Recognizing referential uniqueness (reference to a single entity) as the most defining feature of the PNs meaning [9, p. 9], researchers claim that, compared to common nouns, PNs have specific features as well, being linguistic units "in which there is both a reference to the type and at the same time, a reference to the individual" [9, p. 18; see also: 12, p. 316–318].

Due to the fact that proper nouns refer to unique referents, there are a few co-occurrence restrictions that distinguish them from common nouns in the typical contexts of their usage: 1) PNs do not accept demonstrative pronouns as determiners; 2) PNs do not accept restrictive adjectives or restrictive relative clauses in speech situation where they have a unique reference; 3) having a single referent, a given PN either invariably takes zero article or the definite article [14].

With respect to the properties of its referent explicated by the trigger, "a proper name from a given class (personal, location or organisation) selects triggers from a particular set of semantic subclasses" [6, p. 37], e.g. "complex personal names are combined with triggers that define a legislative job title, executive job title, judicial position, academic position, academic title, military rank, and profession [op. cit.]. Syntactically, proper nouns are heads of MWEs but show restricted combinatorial properties compared to common nouns [6, p. 34].

From the semantic perspective, Koeva et al. claim that "the notion of triggers is central for the classification of the semantic patterns of proper names and, accordingly – for the description of the respective syntactic patterns" [12, p. 33].

PNs can be grouped into different classes and subclasses [12, p. 37], with the two basic classes, "personal names and place names, presumably being linguistic and anthropological universals" [9, p. 20]. One of the most detailed typologies of PNs was proposed by W. Zelinsky some thirty years ago [15]. His framework identifies eight broad categories: deities, biota, places, events, social entities, enterprises, artefacts, and unclassified PNs, each with numerous subdivisions (than 130 onymic classes) [see also: 15]. A multidisciplinary look at PNs is offered by Valentine et al. [17], who classify them into distinct groups: personal names; geographical names; names of unique objects (monuments, buildings, ships or any other unique object); names of unique animals; names of institutions and facilities; names of newspapers and magazines; titles of books, musical pieces, paintings or sculptures; names of single events. Subsequent classifications of PNs by other researchers in the field largely represent variations of the typologies cited above. Thus, semantically, PNs embody a broad and diverse category, leading to the development of their various taxonomies.

From the functional perspective, PNs fulfil their communicative identifying function, but the purpose of creating a PN can be much more than identification, therefore, name researchers talk about "the complex meaning of names, differentiating various meaning components, e.g. denotative, categorical, cultural, etymological, and associative meanings" [9, p. 7]. PNs occurrence in a text as part of sentences creates "the context to ground the name" [9, p. 9–10]. If the observation regarding literary texts that proper names (PNs) serve as "a reflection of the text that hosts them" and "acquire a pragmatic and (con)textual meaning intrinsically linked to the text's overall meaning" [18, p. 3] also applies to institutional texts, it raises the question of how the selection of proper names is influenced by the type of the text.

Most previous studies have effectively demonstrated that the European Council Conclusions – adopted by consensus among the Heads of State or Government of EU Member States during regular meetings – are pivotal in defining the EU's strategic direction and priorities [1; 2; 3]. Although EUCO texts are non-legislative and have no binding legal force for the EU member states, they hold substantial political significance due to the European Council's dual roles: as the EU's 'agenda setter,' shaping its general political directions and priorities [1, p. 567], and as its 'constitutional architect', issuing specific instructions to other institutions for policy initiation or implementation [2]. However, limited research has explored the role of proper names as an integral part of the EUCO text vocabulary, particularly their structure, taxonomy, and functions.

This paper aims to identify and depict structural, semantic, and functional features of proper names in the texts of European Council Conclusions.

Methodology. The current study randomly selected EUCO texts published between 2022 and 2024 [19]. Mixed methods were applied to identify and categorise proper names in the texts. A manual sorting process was used to extract all proper names, resulting in a corpus of 549 entries. The identification accuracy was ensured by relying on the capitalization of proper nouns within each proper name.

This research involved three main procedures: 1) structural analysis: the structure of PNs was examined, and the structural patterns of PNs in EUCO texts were identified; 2) semantic analysis: PNs were categorised into semantic groups, a typology of PNs used in EUCO texts was constructed, and their frequency and distribution were established; 3) functional analysis: the functions of PNs in EUCO texts were analyzed and documented.

Results and Discussion. This section presents the findings on the structure, typology, and functions of proper names in European Council Conclusions, followed by their implications. The study identified a total of 549 proper names in our observation corpus of EUCO texts. Structural analysis of these names revealed the following properties of their internal structure: multi-word proper names accounted for 289 occurrences (52.7%), e.g. *International Conference in Support of Lebanon's People and Sovereignty in Paris, Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum*; three-word PNs: 116 occurrences (21,1%), e.g. *World Social Summit* (*WSS*), *Safe Schools Declaration* (*2015*), *Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs)*; two-word PNs: 89 occurrences (16.2%), e.g. *Granada Declaration, Euro Summit, António Costa;* one-word PNs: 55 occurrences (10%), e.g. *Brussels, Taliban, Syria.* The data obtained clearly show the dominance of multi-word proper names in EUCO texts, as they constitute the majority (52.7%) of all proper name occurrences. The internal structure of multi-word PNs incorporates from four (e.g. *Treaty on*

Stability, Coordination and Governance) to six (e.g. *the International Donors' Conference on humanitarian demining in Ukraine*) or eleven components at maximum (*Joint Communication: an EU strategic approach in support of Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration of former combatants*). The prevalence of multi-word proper names suggests that EUCO texts frequently reference unique entities with complex and descriptive names, providing detailed and specific descriptions. On the other hand, one-word proper names, which account for only 10% of the occurrences, are less commonly used in EUCO texts, where single-word references are often limited to well-known entities such as geographical names (e.g., *Brussels, China, Gaza*).

Semantically, PNs used in EUCO texts can be categorised into nine distinct semantic groups:

1) policy tools: 125 occurrences (22.8%), e.g. *Global Green Bond Initiative; Security and Defence Action Plan; European Defence Industry Strategy (EDIS)*; 2) organisations and entities: 98 occurrences (17.9%), e.g. *International Court of Justice (ICJ); European Investment Bank (EIB); The Houthis;* 3) policy and legal documents: 94 occurrences (17.1%), e.g. *Annual Sustainable Growth Survey; the Renewable Energy Directive; Framework Decision 2002/584/JHA;* 4) countries and regions: 71 occurrences (12.9%), e.g. *Ukraine; Afghanistan; Gaza;* 5) treaties, agreements, declarations: 52 occurrences (9.5%), e.g. *Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance; Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with Ukraine; Granada Declaration;* 6) summits, conferences, and events: 51 occurrences (9.3%), e.g. *Summit on Peace in Ukraine; International Humanitarian Conference for Sudan; International Expert Conference in Berlin on 25 October 2022;* 7) individuals and titles: 48 occurrences (8.7%), e.g. *Ursula von der Leyen; High Representative; NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg*; 8) assets and material resources: 6 occurrences (1.1%), e.g. *Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant; Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW); Artificial Intelligence (AI)*; 9) political concepts: 4 occurrences (0.7%), e.g. *European solidarity; Euro-Atlantic security; Concept on EU Peace Mediation (2020)*.

The core of the proper noun (PN) vocabulary in EUCO texts is comprised of entries from four semantic groups: Policy Tools (22.8%), Organisations and Entities (17.9%), Policy and Legal Documents (17.1%), and Countries and Regions (12.9%), together accounting for 70.7% of all PNs. Among these, "Policy Tools" PNs are the most frequent, representing approximately one-fifth (22.8%) of the total. This highlights the European Council's role as an EU 'agenda setter' the term coined by Bosquillon [1]), as its Conclusions outline instruments, actors, and political and legal frameworks essential for addressing key issues and achieving strategic objectives. This is illustrated by the following sentence from our observation corpus of EUCO texts: "<…> *In order to strengthen the defence capabilities of the European Union and of Member States, the full potential of the European Union's funding instruments and initiatives, in particular the European Defence Fund and the Permanent Structured Cooperation, the Capability Development Plan and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, should be harnessed <…>*" [20].

Mapping proper names (PNs) from semantic categories such as Tools/Initiatives, Political/Legal Frameworks, Actors/Institutions, and Geographical/Regional References to their textual functions helps identify their primary roles in EUCO texts. The **identifying** or referential function (naming specific or unique entities) emerges as their generic function, consistent with usage in other texts. In contrast, the **evaluative, directive**, and **representational functions** are distinctive to PNs within the context of EUCO texts.

The **evaluative function** of proper names in EUCO texts is reflected in their frequent use with verbs or modifiers that indicate progress or express judgment on actions, events, or goals relevant to the EU. These verbs and verbal collocations convey positive or negative evaluative semantics, such as *welcome*; *hail; underline the importance of*; *be unwavering in its commitment to help; acknowledge the important role played by*; *be a remarkable achievement*; *note the importance of*; *stress the importance of*; [strongly] *condemn [in the strongest terms; resolutely]; reiterate its [resolute;* unequivocal*] condemnation*; *constitute a serious threat to*; *be [extremely] concerned about; be [deeply] alarmed; be a gross violation of* [international law], *etc*. For example: *The European Council* <u>welcomes</u> *the holding of the Ukraine-South East Europe Summit <…>*; *The European Council* <u>underlines the importance of living up to the commitment made at the G7 Apulia Summit</u> *<…>*; *The European Council* <u>reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine <…>*; *The European Council* <u>is deeply alarmed</u> *by the dramatic military escalation in the Middle East <…>*.

The **directive function** involves issuing calls to action, instructions, demands, or appeals. When proper names function as the subjects or objects of statements, they anchor actions or expectations to specific entities, thereby realizing the directive function in EUCO texts. The most frequently used verb predicates in such contexts include *call for*, *call on [someone]*; *demand* [a particular action]; *urge* [entity to undertake an action]; *task* [particular entities, as a matter of urgency]; *will continue to [do something]*; and modal verbs like *must* or *should*, which explicitly or implicitly urge actions involving the proper names as subjects or objects. For example, the sentence "*The European Council* <u>calls for</u> *rapid stepping up of military support <…>*" is a clear directive, urging action to increase military support. "*Rocket attacks by Hezbollah* <u>must stop</u>" is an example of a direct imperative, demanding an end to *Hezbollah's* specific actions. In the sentence " *Subject to EU law, Russia's assets* <u>should remain</u> *immobilised until Russia ceases its war of aggression against <…>*", the proper name *Russia* serves as the focus of the directive, linking the expected action to a specific entity; the modal verb *should* conveys an authoritative recommendation, which is a hallmark of the directive function.

The **representational function** involves describing, reporting, or providing information about actions, events, or entities. The sentences with PNs where the said function is actualised contain the following verb predicates used predominantly either in the Past Simple or the Present Perfect tenses: *hold* [a particular action]; *review* [specific work]; *adopt* [actions]; *endorse*; *discuss*; *decide*; *follow* [closely]; *prepare* [an event]; *take stock of preparations* for [an event]; *provide*; [further] *reinforce,* etc. For example, the sentence "*The European Council* <u>held an exchange of views</u> *with the President of Ukraine* <…>" reports a specific action involving the proper names *The European Council* and *the President of Ukraine*. The following sentence "*The European Council* <u>held a discussion</u> *on the integrated country-specific recommendations as discussed by the Council, thus allowing the conclusion of the 2024 European Semester <…>*" represents a procedural activity by *The European Council*, linked to the *2024 European Semester*. The sentence given below: "*The European Council* <u>took stock</u>

of preparations for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan (COP29), for the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Cali, Colombia (COP16), and for the Conference of the Parties of the Convention to Combat Desertification in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (COP16)" provides detailed informational content about preparations for multiple events, with proper names representing the specific events and locations.

In essence, the PNs perform multiple functions in EUCO texts identifying specific entities, reinforcing the institutional and geopolitical scope of the text, and providing clarity and precision in reporting actions and events.

Conclusion. The present study provides a deeper understanding of the strategic use of proper names in the texts of European Council Conclusions, revealing insights into their structural and semantic features and highlighting their diverse roles within EUCO texts. The findings, derived from a corpus of 549 PNs extracted from EUCO texts published between 2022 and 2024, offer insights into how proper names contribute to the clarity, specificity, and strategic intent of these texts.

Structurally, the dominance of multi-word expressions among PNs, comprising 52.7% of the analyzed corpus, highlights the need for descriptive and precise references within EUCO texts. Such structural complexity reflects the institutional emphasis on accurately identifying and referencing unique entities, ensuring that the texts convey the intended meaning without ambiguity. The use of simpler structures is less frequent and serves primarily to denote widely recognised locations or prominent individuals.

Semantically, the categorization of PNs into nine distinct groups, including policy tools; organisations and entities; policy and legal documents; countries and regions; treaties, agreements, declarations; summits, conferences, and events; individuals and titles; assets and material resources; political concepts, emphasises the diversity and scope of EUCO texts. The most frequently encountered categories – policy tools, organisations, and legal documents – account for over half of the occurrences, underscore the European Council's role as an agenda setter, a constitutional architect, and a crisis manager.

Functionally, the primary role of proper names in EUCO texts is referential. While identifying unique entities, they also perform evaluative, directive, and representational functions. The evaluative function allows PNs to convey judgments, progress, or significance, often through collocations with verbs expressing approval, condemnation, or urgency. The directive function situates PNs within calls to action, linking specific entities to responsibilities or expectations. Representationally, PNs serve to anchor reports of events, decisions, or actions, providing clarity and reinforcing the institutional authority of the European Council.

Proper names in EUCO texts reinforce their institutional authority, enhance their communicative precision, and project the European Council's leadership in addressing diverse policy issues. The results of the present study are yielded from a relatively small corpus, therefore, future research should expand on these findings by analysing a larger corpus of EUCO texts to explore additional patterns and trends in the use of PNs. An equally important area for further exploration is the translation of PNs into Ukrainian, given the growing prominence of EU-Ukraine relations.

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Олійник О. Власні імена в текстах висновків Європейської Ради: структурні, семантичні та функційні особливості

Анотація. Це дослідження присвячено опису структурних, семантичних і функційних особливостей власних назв (ВН) у текстах Висновків Європейської Ради (EUCO) як

одного з ключових жанрів інституційного дискурсу Європейського Союзу (ЄС). Корпус із 549 ВН відібрано з текстів EUCO, опублікованих у період з 2022 по 2024 рік, із застосуванням змішаних методів для аналізу їхньої структури, типології та функцій. <u>Структурний</u> аналіз засвідчив, що ВН переважно є багатослівними виразами (52,7%), які складаються з чотирьох або більше компонентів (до 11), наприклад: "*Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance*" або "*International Donors' Conference on Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine*". Така структурна складність підкреслює потребу Європейської Ради (ЄР) в точних і описових покликаннях на унікальні об'єкти. В аспекті <u>семантики,</u> ВН у текстах EUCO класифікуються на дев'ять груп: політичні інструменти (22.8 %); організації та угрупування об'єктів / суб'єктів (17.9 %); документи (17.1 %); країни та регіони (12.9 %); договори, угоди, декларації (9.5 %); саміти, конференції та події (9.3 %); відомі діячі та посади (8.7 %); активи та матеріальні ресурси (1.1%); та політичні концепти (0.7 %). Серед них найбільш поширеними є ВН, які вербалізують політичні інструменти (22,8%) й організації та угрупування об'єктів / суб'єктів (17,9%), що відображає роль ЄР як ініціатора порядку денного та конституційного архітектора ЄС. Різноманітність семантики ВН демонструє широкий спектр геополітичних, інституційних і політичних унікальних об'єктів і суб'єктів у текстах рішень ЄР. ВН у текстах EUCO виконують декілька комунікативних функцій, серед яких основною є референційна – ідентифікація унікальних об'єктів. Крім цього, вони виконують оцінну, директивну та репрезентативну функції. Оцінне використання виражає судження або підкреслює прогрес, наприклад: "*The European Council welcomes the holding of the Ukraine-South East Europe Summit.*" Директивне використання включає заклики до дії чи інструкції, наприклад: "*The European Council <u>calls for</u> rapid stepping up of military support <…>*". Репрезентативне використання надає детальну інформацію про події чи рішення, наприклад: "*The European Council <u>held a discussion</u> on <…>*". Дослідження взаємодії форми, значення та функції ВН у текстах EUCO сприяє глибшому розумінню лінгвістичних механізмів, які лежать в основі інституційної комунікації ЄС. Отримані результати підкреслюють інтегральну роль ВН у створенні інституційної специфіки текстів EUCO, посиленні їхнього авторитету в просуванні стратегічних завдань ЄС.

Ключові слова: власні імена, власні іменники, Висновки Європейської Ради (EUCO), структурні властивості, семантичні властивості, функціональні ознаки власних імен.