

Abstract

This master thesis compares the presidencies of a big state (France) and a small state (the Czech Republic) in the Council of the European Union in 2022, using the negotiation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive as an example. It describes the differences and similarities in the negotiations of the two presidencies at the level of the Energy Working Group. The thesis verifies whether the influence of the size of the state on the following five parameters of the presidency was visible during the presidency: overall objectives, expertise and personnel, strategic, communication, cooperation and legislative. It is a case study of two presidencies of the Council of the European Union and their comparison. A qualitative method was used, namely semi-structured interviews with actors from both presidencies. These were analysed and then the individual parameters were compared. The research found that to a large extent the presidencies were similar in their functioning and work, but differences were also found. France, as a big state, had a greater expert capacity and a more time-consuming administrative burden in terms of the need to consult headquarters. Therefore, it was not as flexible and reactive in its communication; the presidency could be classified as a capital-based model. The Czech Republic, as a small state, had slightly less expert capacity, but thanks to this it was able to react and communicate more actively and be flexible; its openness was highlighted. On the contrary, the Brussels-based presidency model was chosen due to its flexibility. However, the findings of the research also brought out other factors than the size of the country that have an impact on the presidency. It is clearly the political situation that can have a significant impact on the pace of legislative negotiations, the personality of individual diplomats, but also the sensitivity of the subject under discussion. It has also been noted that the strict division between capital and Brussels-based presidencies has virtually disappeared over the last few years, with modern technology enabling real-time communication.