



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: David Masselter

Title: Bargaining Power of the Benelux Region within the EU Council

Programme/year: MAIN 2024

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Viera Martinková

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	27
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	38
<i>Total</i>		80	75
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	3
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	18
TOTAL		100	93



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis aims to analyse the voting power of the Benelux region in the Council of the European Union by computing the voting power of the three Benelux countries (using the Shapley-Shubik Index and the Banzhaf Power Index) and analysing the votes cast by Benelux countries, using the VoteWatch database.

The thesis draws mainly from rational choice institutionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism. However, it does not concisely present both approaches; instead, it presents their claims on coalition building, bargaining, and voting. It follows with three hypotheses, and while some references and argumentation support them, expanding the reasoning behind the hypotheses would have benefited the thesis.

The two empirical chapters, one on voting power based on voting indexes and the other on the actual voting behaviour based on an analysis of voting data, present a complex and well-rounded picture of the voting power of the Benelux region in comparison to other similar regional coalitions, V4, the Baltic states and the Nordic states. The author generally explains the data and his reasoning clearly while acknowledging the limitations of his approach or the data.

However, there are a few cases where his attempt at simplicity of the text created a confusing picture. First, in Figure 1, it would make more sense to show the percentage of population for each period individually, especially considering the Eastern Enlargement, and the % of total votes should also have been explained better. Second, when describing the blocking minority (p.46), an uninformed reader might get confused and think that any four countries create a blocking minority.

Minor criteria:

There are no significant formal issues; some of the parts of the thesis could have been structured better, especially the literature review that follows more of a work-by-work pattern than a more straightforward summary of the current knowledge, even though all key works are included.



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Assessment of plagiarism:

The thesis shows no signs of plagiarism.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis presents a clear research goal and research design and applies them to the Benelux countries' voting potential and voting behaviour. Apart from some minor issues with the presentation or the clarity of the text, it is an outstanding work with original results.

I happily recommend it for defence with a suggested grade A.

Suggested grade:

A

Signature: