

Abstract

The thesis deals with the participation of ministers in the Council of the European Union. The first goal is to explore the participation as such, i.e. how often the ministers attend the Council meetings and what differences there are among the member states and the Council configurations. Secondly, the thesis seeks to reveal factors at the institutional (European), national and governmental level which have an impact on the participation.

From the theoretical point of view, the thesis is framed by the rational choice approach. In terms of methodology, a quantitative analysis based on extensive dataset for the period 2009 – 2015 and logistic regression have been employed.

The thesis concludes that the ministers attend the Council meetings quite often – the average for the period was 64%. Regarding the individual factors, it is argued that the ministers representing the presidency country attend the sessions more often. Similarly, the participation is higher if there are many points on the agenda or if the minister represents a pro-European government. On the contrary, the probability of the participation is lower if the ministers face upcoming legislative elections at home. The analysis also shows that the public attitude towards the EU is irrelevant in this case.

The results are, finally, interpreted in terms of the debate on the democratic deficit of the European Union. Based on the results, the author leans towards the proponents of the idea. However, he adds that the issue of ministers' participation is not sufficient to make a final conclusion on the democratic legitimacy of the Council or even the European Union as a whole.