

EIF Lunchtime Seminar

Turning “They” into “We”? The Impact of the Rotating EU Council Presidency on the Member States

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Abstract

The rotating European Union (EU) Council presidency is held by each Member State (MS) in turn for six months. While the functions and the achievements of the rotating presidencies have been studied widely on the EU level, my PhD dissertation takes a reverse, and relatively under-researched perspective of looking at what holding the presidency means for the respective country and whether it fulfills its alleged function of bringing Europe closer to the MS. Combining new institutionalist theoretical approaches under the concept of Europeanization and employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, I examine the domestic impact of the EU Council presidency on three levels: administrations, ministers and citizens of the MS. Firstly, based on almost 100 interviews with civil servants from six small MS, I find that the Council presidency contributes to the Europeanization of national administrations, especially of the countries holding the position for the first time, even if rather through skill development than a change of institutional structures. Secondly, analyzing a dataset of ministerial attendance to the meetings of the Council of the EU, I find an increased engagement of high-level politicians before and during the presidency, but no notable long-term impact. Finally, based on Eurobarometer data, I find that the rotating Council presidency could be accountable for a minor improvement of knowledge of the EU among citizens of small and “new” MS.

We offer drinks and snacks for registered participants – please send us a message to eif@univie.ac.at.