

derable emphasis on the need for the states that entered the Union in 2004 to have appropriate administrative capacity. The national administrations of the new member states were examined in detail by the Commission and recommendations made on how to increase their capacity to engage in EU decision-making and implement EU decisions. Efficient administration capable of working within the EU was made preconditional to membership. For instance, Malta had to make considerable changes in its administrative structure in order to qualify for membership.¹⁶ Historically, new small member states such as Ireland, Greece and Portugal faced difficulties in working within the EU framework. Whereas Ireland and Portugal have overcome these difficulties, Greece has not yet because of its traditionally weak administrative structure.

The ability of a state to influence the decision-making processes of the EU may have as much to do with skilful and efficient domestic EU policy-making, negotiation tactic and contacts in the EU institutions and other member states as it has to do with the exact number of votes in the Council of Ministers, the right of veto in particular policy sectors and in the European Council. Small states are caught between the increased complexity of the EU decision-making structure and their limited administrative resources. Small administrations must find a way to participate efficiently within the Union in order to defend their national interests. They must be able to be as successful in EU decision-making as the larger administrations. This major challenge has led small member states to adapt strategies that differ from those of the larger members. There is a fundamental difference between the working methods of small and large states in the EU's decision-making processes, as discussed below. The research on which these findings are based covers the period 1986 to 1994 and the seven small member states at the time: Luxembourg, Ireland, Denmark, Portugal, Greece, Belgium and the Netherlands. It compares their behaviour with that of the large states in two policy areas, i.e., the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Regional Policy.¹⁷

16 *Commission of the European Communities*, Enlargement Strategy Paper: Report on progress towards accession by each of the candidate countries, 2000, Available online: http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report_11_00/pdf/strat_en.pdf (Accessed 16 May 2003); *Thorballsson*, Iceland and European integration: On the Edge, 2004.

17 See *Thorballsson*, 2000, *ibid.*