

likely to succeed in bilateral negotiations with the Commission than in the Council where they face all the other member states.²⁶

5. Negotiation tactics in the Council

The negotiation tactics of small states in EU decision-making processes are influenced by the smallness of their administrations and their special characteristics, as discussed above. Small states cannot expect to become active participants in all EU policy sectors. Their limited resources, compared to those of their larger partners, restrict their scope of action in the policy-making process. The negotiation tactics of a small state can be flexible or inflexible²⁷ depending on whether it regards an issue to be of great or little importance.

This is contrary to the negotiation strategy of the large member states, which tends to be inflexible on all occasions. They have a wider range of interests within the EU, among them, controlling the EU's expenditure and securing their international position. They also have the administrative capacity to focus on all sectors of EU policy and tend to be proactive.

The small states only become proactive in the policy-making process when issues of direct national interest are on the agenda. This is, for example, the case of Greece, Portugal and Ireland in relation to particular aspects of Regional Policy and Luxembourg in negotiations on its tax privileges and banking sector. All the administrative capacity of small states is devoted to guaranteeing a positive outcome in sectors of direct national interest. As a result, small states are reactive within the EU policy-making process in areas of little national interest.²⁸

Although the bargaining behaviour of the Union's members is influenced by national preferences, the personalities and negotiation skills

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The flexibility of states in EU decision-making processes is defined according to whether they change their original policy position presented at the EU level. A state is regarded to have a flexible negotiation tactic if it alters its original policy stand during the negotiation process. A state is regarded as inflexible if it adheres to its original policy stand to the very end of the process.

²⁸ *Thorhallsson*, 2000. *ibid.*