

Do Institutional Changes Make a Difference?

A veto player analysis of how institutional changes in the Council of the EU influence legislative efficiency and outputs

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Abstract

Enlargement and the use of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in the EU are two highly controversial subjects around the issue of institutional design. The fear that enlargement would lead to legislative paralysis has periodically stimulated calls for QMV to be extended into new policy areas. This paper will seek to contribute to the questions of: what effects enlargement and voting procedure changes have had on the Council; and what has caused these effects? It will do this by presenting a single theoretical framework using a veto player analysis to explain how these changes alter the levels of cohesion in Council. The paper will present evidence that suggests that variation in the levels of cohesion from alterations to the institutional structures will lead to changes in efficiency of the legislative process and changes to legislative outputs. Institutional structures that encourage more cohesion in Council are likely to improve the efficiency of the process and broaden the depth and possibly the scope of EU legislation.