

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE

FAKULTA SOCIÁLNÍCH VĚD

Institut politologických studií

Václav Vlček

**Who Governs? The Participation of Ministers
in Council Meetings**

Diplomová práce

Praha 2017

Autor práce: **Václav Vlček**

Vedoucí práce: **Michal Parížek, Ph.D.**

Rok obhajoby: 2017

Bibliografický záznam

VLČEK, Václav. *Who Governs? The Participation of Ministers in Council Meetings*. Praha, 2017. 62 s. Diplomová práce (Mgr.) Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Institut politologických studií. Katedra mezinárodních vztahů. Vedoucí diplomové práce Michal Parížek, Ph.D.

Abstrakt

Tématem této diplomové práce je účast ministrů členských států Evropské unie na jednání Rady EU. Práce si zaprvé klade za cíl prozkoumat účast jako takovou, tj. jak často se ministři účastní a jaké jsou rozdíly mezi jednotlivými členskými státy a konfiguracemi Rady. Za druhé má tato práce ambici odhalit faktory na institucionální (evropské), národní a vládní úrovni, jež účast ministrů ovlivňují.

Z teoretického hlediska se práce opírá o teorii racionální volby. Po metodologické stránce byla zvolena kvantitativní analýza založená na rozsáhlém datasetu sestaveném pro období 2009 - 2014 a logistické regresi.

Práce dochází k závěrům, že ministři na jednání Rady jezdí poměrně často – průměr za dané období činil 64%. Z hlediska jednotlivých faktorů je konstatováno, že ministři reprezentující předsednický stát jezdí na setkání Rady častěji. Stejně tak je účast vyšší, pokud se na agendě konkrétního jednání nachází mnoho bodů či pokud daný ministr reprezentuje proevropsky orientovanou vládu. Naopak, pravděpodobnost účasti ministra klesá, pokud se v dané zemi blíží legislativní volby. Výsledkem analýzy také je, že postoj veřejnosti vůči Evropské unii nehraje v této otázce žádnou roli.

Výsledky jsou následně interpretovány z hlediska diskuze na téma demokratického deficitu Evropské unie. Autor se na základě svých poznatků přiklání spíše k zastáncům idey demokratického deficitu, zároveň však dodává, že otázka účasti ministrů nestačí k zhodnocení demokratické legitimacy Rady či dokonce Evropské unie jako celku.

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.

Klíčová slova

Evropská Unie, EU, Rada ministrů, Rada, ministr, účast, teorie racionální volby, racionalismus, logistická regrese

Keywords

European Union, EU, Council of ministers, Council, minister, participation, rational choice theory, rationalism, logistic regression

Rozsah práce: Text práce (úvod – závěr) čítá 129 710 znaků včetně mezer, což činí cca 72 normostran.

Prohlášení

1. Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracoval samostatně a použil jen uvedené prameny a literaturu.
2. Prohlašuji, že práce nebyla využita k získání jiného titulu.
3. Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zpřístupněna pro studijní a výzkumné účely.

V Praze dne

Václav Vlček

Poděkování

Na tomto místě bych rád poděkoval vedoucímu práce Michalovi Parížkovi, Ph.D. za jeho kurz kvantitativních metod, jenž ve mně vzbudil zájem o statistiku, za cenné rady, díky nimž jsem nad diplomovou prací „nestrávil mládí“, za přesné připomínky, které vždy odhalily slabá místa, jež jsem zbaběle přehlížel nebo je úmyslně zametal pod koberec, a v neposlední řadě za přátelský přístup a vynikající komunikaci. Nemenší poděkování pak patří mým rodičům, kteří mě po celou dobu studia podporovali. Děkuji!

Content

Introduction	2
1. Ministers in the Council of the European Union	5
2. Theoretical framework.....	11
2.1. Rational choice approach.....	11
2.2. Rational model of ministers' participation.....	12
3. Methodology	17
3.1. Logistic regression	17
3.1.1. Goodness of fit	18
3.1.2. Coefficients.....	20
3.1.3. Assumptions and casewise diagnostics.....	20
4. Data and dataset	22
4.1. Dependent variable (attendance)	23
4.2. Independent variables.....	27
4.2.1. Presidency	27
4.2.2. Agenda	28
4.2.3. Elections	28
4.2.4. EUdifference.....	29
4.2.5. Govaverage	31
5. Analysis.....	32
5.1. T-tests.....	32
5.2. Cross Tabulations	33
5.3. Logistic regression analysis	38
5.4. Assumptions and casewise diagnostics.....	45
6. Ministers' participation and the democratic deficit	49
6.1. Democratic deficit of the European Union	49
6.2. Ministers' participation – Moravcsik or Hix?	51
Conclusion	52
Shrnutí.....	55
Summary	56
Bibliography	57
Monographies	57
Periodical literature.....	58
Online sources.....	60
Webpages of the EU member states' governments	61

Introduction

This master thesis deals with the issue of the participation of national ministers in the Council of the European Union (EU). The Council is perceived as a body where the ministers meet, discuss European agenda and decide on it. However, the EU law does not require exactly the ministers to attend the meetings and the Council's Rules of Procedure allow the ministers to be substituted by someone else who can commit the particular national government. Therefore, it is very important to ask whether it is really the ministers who attend the Council meetings and under what conditions they do so.

This topic is interesting for three reasons – empirical, theoretical and normative. Firstly, as already indicated, it is important to ask whether the ministers attend the Council meetings. They are supposed to represent their governments and the citizens of their country but we do not know whether they really do that. Moreover, it is necessary to ask whether there is a variation in the participation and what can explain it if there is any.

Moreover, this issue is relatively untouched. The only exception is the recent article *Who's at the table? An analysis of ministers' participation in EU Council of Ministers meetings* (Gron, Salomonsen, 2015) published in the *Journal of European Public Policy*. This article indicates that the minister's participation becomes currently a center of scholarly attention. My thesis shares the method and two variables with the article. However, my theoretical framework allows me to involve more levels of analysis and thus study more potential explanations. Furthermore, the dataset of this thesis covers a different period which enables me to compare the results with the previous research.

Secondly, the issue is important from the theoretical point of view. Several studies, for instance Häge (2008) or Parížek, Plechanovová, Hosli (2015), indicate that the Council has experienced a shift of the decision-making process from the political to the bureaucratic level meaning that civil servants are more often involved in the Council's decisions. But is it really so? The findings on the ministers' participation in the Council meetings can add another piece of information to the puzzle.

Thirdly, the EU, which means also the Council, is often a subject of discussions on the democratic legitimacy of the Union. Since the ministers are those who represent democratically elected political parties and so the people in the member states, it is very important to ask whether they do the job. The thesis will, therefore, try to answer this normative question and frame its results by the debate on the so called "democratic deficit" of the EU.

The aim of this thesis is to answer the important question raised many times in the previous lines. How often do the national ministers attend the Council meetings? Moreover, the thesis asks whether there are some factors which influence the ministers' participation, what kind of factors they are and in what way they influence the attendance of the ministers in the Council meetings. More precisely, I study the impact of five variables at three levels of analysis. At the institutional (European) level, I am interested in whether the presidency office or the salience of the agenda of the particular meetings motivate the ministers to travel to Brussels more often. The national level is, on the other hand, represented by the public attitude towards the EU and national legislative elections. The key idea is that the ministers have to take the public opinion into account while making the decision whether to participate or not. Similarly, I assume that ministers are very busy before the national legislative elections and stay rather at home because they want to focus on the domestic politics and campaigning. Finally, I have identified one variable representing the national government and its attitude towards the EU. The ministers representing pro-European cabinets are assumed to attend the Council meetings more often than Euro-sceptics.

To answer these questions, an extensive dataset has been build and statistically analyzed. The data cover 364 Council meetings from 2009 to 2014. It is a unique data file including so far the most up-to-date information on the ministers' attendance. The only alternative is the dataset collected by Gron and Salomonsen (2015) which, however, involves the information on the period from 2004 to 2009.

The results of the analysis confirm my assumptions. The average participation rate in the Council meetings was 64% and four out of five factors report statistically significant results. Therefore, the thesis concludes that: 1) the ministers representing the presidency country attend the Council meetings more often, 2) the ministers are more likely to participate if the agenda of the meetings is more salient, 3) the upcoming national elections significantly decrease the probability of the ministers coming to Brussels and 4) the more pro-European national governments are, the more likely their members attend the Council meetings. The variable covering the public attitude, on the contrary, turned out to have a negligible and statistically insignificant effect.

A deeper analysis of the data, however, reveals also other interesting information. For example, the participation in the Council meetings has decreased since the previous period. Especially the Netherlands has remarkably plummeted. Furthermore, there are some interesting findings regarding the Council configurations. Firstly, the General Affairs Council, long viewed as

the most senior configuration, reports surprisingly low results compared to other configurations. Secondly, the Environment Council, on the contrary, reports surprisingly high level of ministers' participation. Thirdly, there are some meetings of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council which are completely overlooked by the ministers, including the minister representing the presidency country.

Finally, the ministers representing the countries with the highest levels of EU support among the citizens do not travel to Brussels the most. They report lower results than their colleagues who represent less EU-enthusiastic electorates which is one of the reasons why the hypothesis about the impact of the public attitude is not supported. This fact will be also evaluated by the final chapter on the democratic legitimacy of the Council.

Theoretically, the thesis is framed by the rational choice approach which assumes that individuals behave rationally, are able to identify their preferences, order them according to their utility and choose the best option in the particular strategic and institutional setting. This perspective is applied also on the national ministers who primarily want to stay in the office but also pursue favourable policies, seek prestige, media attention and influential political contacts in the Council. In terms of the methodology, the thesis applies quantitative methods to analyze the dataset. Firstly, the thesis provides some descriptive statistics on the individual variables and, secondly, it employs more sophisticated inferential tools to reveal the relationships between the dependent variable and the independent variables. The core analytical technique is logistic regression which is a well-established and advanced statistical method. All methodological obstacles were, moreover, successfully solved so I can argue that the results of the thesis are trustworthy and reliable. Compared to the project, one variable was slightly modified. This change is justified in the section 4.2. All files and data which were used for the purpose of the thesis are available online¹ and on the attached DVD. Every reader is welcome to use the data for further research or a replication of the thesis.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. The first chapter pays attention to the current state of scholarly knowledge on the Council in terms of the national ministers, their activities in the Council and other issues which are relevant for the topic of the thesis. The second chapter describes the theoretical background. Firstly, it defines the basic assumptions of the rational choice approach and, secondly, it develops the model which is finally tested by the quantitative methods (descriptive and inferential statistics) explained in the chapter three. The chapter four

¹ <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0Bzudt5gVqI4GUi9jbdTTnVDUDA>

deals with the dataset, the dependent and independent variables, their operationalization and descriptive analysis. The core of the thesis, i.e. the inferential statistics, especially the logistic regression, is presented in the chapter five. Finally, the interpretation of the results regarding the democratic legitimacy of the Council and the EU is provided by the chapter six.

1. Ministers in the Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union² is one of the key EU institutions which fulfills several functions. Most importantly, it is a legislative body which, together with the European Parliament (EP), adopts legislative proposals issued by the Commission. However, it exercises also some executive functions in the areas which do not fall under the Community competence, gives the direction to the future work of the Union and enables discussion among the member states on issues which are beyond the agreed areas of the EU competence and joint action (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, 322 – 327). This chapter will firstly elaborate on the existing scholarly literature which is relevant for the topic of the thesis. Unfortunately, there is only one article dealing exactly with the ministers' participation in the Council meetings. Secondly, the chapter will discuss some selected Council characteristics which will be referred to as the independent variables in the following chapters.

The Council consists of representatives “of each Member State at ministerial level, who may commit the government of the Member State in question and cast its vote” (The Treaty on European Union, Article 16). This definition may imply that the Council is one unitary body but it actually consists of three levels which are, moreover, divided horizontally. The top of the hierarchy is represented by the ministerial meetings which can take place in ten configurations focused on different issues. The middle layer consists of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) which is also divided into two bodies – COREPER I and COREPER II. Finally, there are many different committees and working groups which differ in their portfolios, frequencies of meetings, compositions, degrees of seniority of the national delegates etc. This chapter will focus primarily on the ministerial meetings and the national ministers' participation

² The Council of the European Union (sometimes also called the Council of ministers or simply the Council) should not be mistaken for the European Council (the supreme political authority in the EU consisting of the heads of the individual member states' governments) and the Council of Europe (the intergovernmental organization gathering forty-seven European states and focusing on human rights, social, environmental issues etc.).

in the Council sessions. The other levels and some other aspects of the Council will be discussed if it will be meaningful for the purpose of the analysis.

The highest level is the place where the individual national ministers representing the EU member states are supposed to meet. However, their participation in the Council meetings is not compulsory and they are allowed to be substituted if they are unable to attend a session (Council's Rules of Procedure, Article 4). Gron and Salomonsen (2015), therefore, raise a question how much the ministers really participate during the Council negotiations. Based on the dataset covering 362 meetings from 2005 to 2009, they conclude that 76% of the attendees were ministers, 9% were junior ministers, 4% were politically appointed civil servants and 11% were permanent civil servants (Gron, Salomonsen, 2015, p. 1079). Moreover, they study several institutional factors which may have influenced the participation (for instance, salience of the issues on the agenda, salience of the policy area, distance to Brussels, size of the political leadership in the member states, length of the EU membership or views on the EU in the member states) and come to the conclusion that the salience of the meeting, policy area and length of the membership have significant impact on the attendance (Gron, Salomonsen, 2015, p. 1084). More precisely, they argue that the participation was higher, the more b-points there were on the agenda, the larger competences in the particular issues the EU had and the longer the EU membership was. This thesis will study the same issue for the Council meetings which took place from 2009 to 2014. It will also evaluate the influence of the salience of the agenda and views on the EU but it will, moreover, focus on new variables at other levels, for example the national one.

Apart from the ministers, the Council meetings are often attended by other actors, for example Commission representatives, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European Central Bank President etc. (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 34; McCormick, 2011, p. 86).

As already mentioned, the Council is not divided only vertically but also horizontally. Since the Lisbon Treaty, the ministers have met in ten Council configurations covering different portfolios. The individual configurations, according to the Annex 1 of the Council's Rules of Procedure, are: Agriculture and fisheries (AGRIFISH); Competitiveness (COMPET); Economic and financial affairs (ECOFIN); Education, youth, culture and sport (EYCS); Employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs (EPSCO); Environment (ENV); Foreign affairs (FAC); General affairs (GAC); Justice and home affairs (JHA) and Transport, telecommunications and energy (TTE).

GAC is the busiest configuration dealing with policy coordination, horizontal dossiers, preparation of the European Council meetings and other institutional and administrative tasks. The high frequency of meetings (approximately once a month) is also characteristic for the configurations with politically sensitive portfolios, e.g. the FAC, ECOFIN, AGRIFISH and JHA. The FAC deals with the Common Foreign and Security Policy, European Security and Defence Policy, foreign trade or humanitarian and development aid, i.e. with the issues which are one of the symbols of national sovereignty. The ECOFIN administers finance and economic issues and usually consists of national political “heavyweights”. Its meetings are more secretive, informal and preceded by Eurogroup sessions gathering the ministers who belong to the Eurozone countries. The AGRIFISH was the first specialized configuration. It exercises large influence over the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy and is the target for very influential interest groups. This configuration is also the most active in using the qualified majority voting (QMV) procedure. Finally, the JHA deals with justice and home affairs, for instance migration, judicial and police cooperation, civil protection, fight against organized crime and terrorism etc. It has experienced a rapid increase in activity since the Amsterdam Treaty and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and its agendas are usually very long (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 36 - 45).

The other configurations are usually called at least twice per one presidency period, i.e. four times per year (Nugent, 2010, p. 144) and focus on different agendas from environment to energy to culture. Some of them (the EPSCO, EYCS and TTE) fuse several issues and the individual meetings are thus usually aimed only at one of them. For instance, one of the last meetings investigated by the thesis (3321) was a TTE session focused on energy items only. The other, on the contrary, deal rather with horizontal issues (the COMPET).

Although the individual configurations focus primarily on the policies under their competencies, they can adopt any proposal (even an unrelated one) which is on the particular agenda because there is officially only one Council. Therefore, the AGRIFISH configuration, which usually meets as the last one in December decides often on many issues which need to be adopted till the end of the year despite the fact that they fall under different portfolios (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 34).

A special role within the Council framework is played by the presidency country and the ministers and officials representing this office. The presidency rotates among the EU member states every six months. The Lisbon Treaty, moreover, formalized the cooperation of three consecutive presidencies which takes 18 months and is often called “troika” or “trio” (Nugent,

2010, p. 147). The countries responsible for the particular period present a common programme and play thus, to certain extent, the agenda-setting role in the Council although the right to initiate a piece of legislation is exclusively possessed by the Commission. The order of the presidency countries is defined by the *Council decision determining the order in which the office of President of the Council shall be held* (Council of the EU, 2007) which always puts together small and big states, old and new members, stronger and weaker economies and countries from different regions (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 138). However, this order has been affected by Brexit and shifted as a result of the recent Council's decision (Goulard, 2016).

The functions of the presidency used to be originally only administrative but their scope and the possibility to influence the final Council's decisions have developed over the years. Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006, p. 141) define the functions as business management, foreign policy management, initiatives promotion, package brokerage, liaison point and collective representation. The country holding the office chairs individual Council meetings across all Council levels (except for the FAC which is chaired by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy), coordinates policy with the previous presidency, organizes the meetings, moderates the debate in the meetings and distributes the timetables, agendas and final minutes (Nugent, 2010, p. 148).

Initiatives promotion and package brokerage are also very important functions with respect to the negotiations among the member states. The presidency usually negotiates with individual countries (these meetings are often called the "confessionals"), sends officials to individual capitals ("tour de capitales") and gathers thus information about the positions of the EU member states. Based on the information, the presidency country can facilitate negotiations between the member states, propose consensual solutions and unite several issues into widely acceptable package deals (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 147 – 151, Tallberg, 2004, 1003 - 1004). Most of the information are gathered by the Council Secretariat which assists the presidency and which has also become an influential actor because of its permanent nature, informational resources, networks of contacts and trust of the national governments (Beach, 2008). Finally, the presidency represents the member states and the Council and speaks for them internationally but also in the inter-institutional interactions within the EU, for example in the so called dialogues or in the conciliation committee (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 151 – 154).

As a consequence of this significant position in the legislative process (both in the Council and in the EU as a whole), the presidency has remarkable impact on the Council's

decision-making outcomes. The country holding the office controls the information, expertise and the decision-making procedure and can, therefore, promote its national interests (Elgström, 2003; Tallberg, 2004; Tallberg, 2008; Thomson, 2008). For this reason, the governments holding the presidency office “vote less often against the majority in the Council than they would otherwise” (Mattila, 2004, p. 46).

Regarding the decision-making process in the Council, the ministerial level is officially the only body allowed to vote on proposals and make the final decisions. The legislative way of every dossier starts usually at the lower levels of the Council – either in the COREPER, the committees or the working groups. These bureaucratic bodies are sometimes called the “real engine” (Hix, Hoyland, 2011, p.63) or the “heart of the everyday decision-making in the EU” (Lewis, 2005, p. 937) because they are responsible for the pre-negotiations of the agenda for the ministers. The decision-making process can be very quick but it may also take for years. Bal (2004, p. 129) states that some dossiers have been even known “to end up on a shelf because no political solution could be found”. However, the whole decision-making process is usually characterized by a common will to seek a consensual outcome acceptable for all national delegations. The ministers, for example, vote very rarely in the Council and if they do, the opposing states usually abstain from the vote. It happens even less often that the minister which is not satisfied with the result of negotiations votes against the proposal (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 260; Plechanovová, 2010; Mattila, Lane, 2001). Due to its permanent nature, the “culture of consensus” is even enhanced at the COREPER level where the permanent representatives socialize with their counterparts from other member countries and, as a result, seek both national interests and common solutions acceptable for all (Lewis, 2005).

The agenda in the COREPER is usually divided into two parts – part I which has already been agreed by working parties and part II which is more political or includes some sensitive aspects and needs to be discussed by the Permanent Representatives (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 79). Similarly, the agenda in the ministerial sessions is divided into the so called a-items (the items agreed at the lower levels) and b-items (the most political issues that have to be discussed by the highest national representatives). Any a-item, moreover, can be upon request opened as a b-item during the meeting (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 52). Sometimes, there are points that are formally decided by the lower levels but they are presented as the “false b-items” because one or more member states want to go through the formal procedure and express an opinion on the proposal (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 52) or the issue is not controversial but it would be politically incorrect not to debate it at the highest level, for example an international treaty with a third side (Sherrington, 2000, p. 61).

As already mentioned, the salience of the ministerial meetings is determined by the b-points which represent the most political and sensitive pieces of legislation or the issues on which the COREPER has not reached an agreement (Bostock, 2002). Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006, p. 52) claim, based on the insiders' impressions, that 85 – 90% of the agenda are adopted as the a-items (70% in the working groups and 15 – 20% by the COREPER) meaning that only 10 – 15% are formally discussed and decided at the ministerial level. Häge (2008) confirms the important role of the preparatory bodies but he provides more moderate numbers (just for the legislative decisions in the Community pillar) claiming that around 48% of dossiers are discussed at the ministerial level and around 35% are decided by the ministers. The senior committees are then responsible for the adoption of 22% and working parties for 43% of dossiers.

Häge (2007) also argues that the role of the committees varies across different policies and that the lower levels decide especially if the QMV is at stake at the ministerial level, if there is large uncertainty about the consequences of the decision or if the decision requires expertise. On the contrary, the ministers adopt the agenda more often if it is politically salient or if the EP is involved in the co-decision procedure.

These findings bring us back to the participation of ministers. As Häge (2008) and other authors (Lewis, 2005; Lewis 2010) imply the responsibility and the importance of the Council bureaucrats is growing. This argument is also supported by Parížek, Plechanovová, Hosli (2015) who demonstrate that the decision-making process in the Council has experienced a shift of a major part of the agenda from the political (ministerial) level to the civil servants in the COREPER. Beach (2008), moreover, argues that certain empowerment can also be observed at the Council's Secretariat although he admits that the power of this administrative body remains still dependent on the willingness of the member states.

The national ministers may be, therefore, motivated to ignore the Council meetings, send civil servants to Brussels and pay the attention to the national politics which is more important for their future political career. The reason, of course, may be that the negotiations in the Council are very demanding in terms of ministers' time, expertise, capabilities etc. and the ministers are, therefore, tempted to make use of their junior ministers, national civil servants or permanent representatives. On the other hand, the participation in the Council meetings may also bring some benefits for the ministers, for example influence on the European agenda, prestige, media attention or valuable political contacts. The next chapter will, therefore, elaborate on this very issue of benefits and costs resulting from the participation in the Council meetings.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter will serve as the theoretical background for the rest of the thesis. It will firstly elaborate on the rational choice approach which has been chosen as the core theory of the paper. Secondly, a theoretical model and my hypotheses will be defined based on the theory. The model will be then empirically tested in the chapter five.

2.1. Rational choice approach

The thesis is theoretically based on the rational choice approach which is increasingly influential in EU studies (Pollack, 2006, p. 31). This approach is rather a broad stream of different theories than one unified comprehensive theory explaining a particular social phenomenon. However, all these theories share some basic assumptions which lay the foundations also for this thesis. The assumptions are: 1) methodological individualism, 2) utility maximization and 3) existence of institutional and/or strategic constraints (Pollack, 2006, p. 32).

Firstly, methodological individualism is based on the idea that individual and collective behaviour is the result of individual choices and individuals are, therefore, the basic unit of analysis (Shepsle, 2010, p. 17; Pollack, 2006, p. 32). The choices are then motivated by individuals' preferences (relatively stable needs and wants) and beliefs, i.e. the ways in which the individuals may attain their needs and wants (Shepsle, 2010, p. 16 – 17).

Secondly, the individuals are assumed to be rational, i.e. goal-seeking or utility maximizing. As Shepsle (2010, p. 14) notes, rational does not mean all-knowing or worldly wise. Instead, rational choice is a choice based on the preferences, beliefs and the "ordering principle" (Shepsle, 2010, p. 29). Every time there are several ways (beliefs) to attain some goals, a rational individual evaluates these alternatives, orders them according to their utility and, finally, chooses the best option. Such maximizing behaviour is also called the "instrumental rationality" (Shepsle, 2010, p. 17), the "logic of consequentiality" (Pollack, 2006, p. 32) or the "calculus approach" (Hall, Taylor, 1996, p. 939).

Finally, the third assumption takes into account that a rational decision is not made in vacuum. The environment, where the decision is made, may have an impact on the individuals' choice, no matter how rational the individual is. The final decision is influenced by the existence of institutional and/or strategic constraints. People do not live in an ideal world where they can always choose the best option to attain the preferences. On the contrary, they are often constrained by formal and informal institutions, different strategic contexts, lack of information

(uncertainty) etc. and all these factors have to be taken into consideration while analyzing behaviour of the individual (Pollack, 2006, p. 32; Shepsle, 2010, p. 30).

Based on these three assumptions, it is possible to conclude that the key idea of the rational choice approach is an individual which has several preferences, is able to order them based on their utility (i.e. to maximize the utility) and, at the same time, take all the possible constraints into account while evaluating all alternatives. As a result, the individual chooses the best option which is available and possible in the particular situation. Based on this definition of a rational minister, the theoretical model is defined in the next chapter.

2.2. Rational model of ministers' participation

Based on the above mentioned assumptions, a theoretical model will be constructed. Models, as Shepsle (2010, p. 7) describes them, are "purposely stripped-down versions of the real thing" and this thesis accepts this definition. My ambition, therefore, is to build a model which would describe the ministers' behaviour regarding the Council meetings, test at least some of the variables (because it would be very demanding to gather data for all of them) and finally adjust the model as a consequence of the results.

The key actor of the model is a rational minister who primarily seeks own preferences but, at the same time, takes political and institutional factors into account. Taking inspiration from the rationalist literature on political parties' motivations (Strom, 1990), I assume that ministers are driven by the same incentives as parties, i.e. they seek offices, favorable policy outcomes and votes. The office seeking approach claims that political parties make an effort to control as many public offices as possible because it brings them substantial benefits and private goods. They also want to maximize their electorate support (the votes) in order to seize the position in the government. Finally, the political parties seek favorable policy outcomes and the influence on public policy (Strom, 1990). Similarly, the national ministers are primarily motivated to stay in the office and keep thus the influence on the public policy. However, it necessarily means that their political party has to keep the sufficient public support in order to stay in the government office after the next national elections. As Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006, p. 5) argue: "The members of the Council are, first and foremost, national politicians who think of themselves as, and indeed have been elected as, national politicians." The ministers are thus primarily focused on the national level but the European level, i.e. the participation in the Council meetings, may also provide them with several benefits. As participants, they can influence European policies and defend national interests. As Nugent (2010, p. 158) claims: "delegations that are headed by ministers with domestic political weight (...) are particularly

well-placed to exercise influence". Moreover, the ministers can also increase their political status, get media attention and gain valuable contacts on other national ministers and highly positioned EU officials.

The participation in the Council meetings thus seems rational because it provides the ministers with the above mentioned benefits. However, it may also be very costly to travel to Brussels. The ministers are usually very busy and their time is limited. Therefore, they may prefer sending a substitute to Brussels and staying at home due to domestic political and social conditions because they have a direct impact on their future re-election. The Council meetings are thus both politically beneficial and costly and the national ministers have to evaluate the particular situation and identify the best strategy (beliefs) to achieve their political goals (preferences). In the following lines, I will focus on individual factors at several levels that may change the strategic and institutional setting and influence the ministers' decision whether to attend the Council meetings or not. Some of the factors will be then empirically tested in the following chapters.

Starting with the European level, there are some institutional aspects that need to be considered. First of all, it is the presidency office. The minister coming from the member state holding the presidency office is in a special position which is associated with many duties but also many opportunities and benefits. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the presidency possesses information on member states' and other EU institutions' positions, it mediates negotiations among the states in the Council and between the Council and other EU institutions, it proposes consensual agreements and package deals, moderates the debate in the meetings, decides on voting in the Council etc. The office is also associated with media attention and the representative role in the diplomatic relations between the Council and third parties. Most importantly, the presidency country is in a good position to influence the final legislative outcomes and promote own interests. Favourable decisions can be subsequently presented to the domestic audience as a victory of the national delegation. It is, therefore, in the ministers' interest to participate in the meetings and make use of the power which the presidency office holds. As Tallberg (2008, p. 190) argues: "opportunistic chairs will seek to exploit this exclusive preference information and procedural control to promote agreements whose distributional implications they privately favour". Therefore, I make the first hypothesis:

H1: Ministers are more likely to participate in the Council meetings if they represent the country holding the office of the Council presidency.

The second institutional aspect, which ministers take into account before the Council meetings, is the salience of agenda. As already mentioned, the ministers deal with two types of agenda items – a-points and b-points. The former ones are usually technical, administrative and pre-negotiated by the lower levels of the Council. Moreover, there are so many of them that the ministers simply do not have time to deal with them. Therefore, they usually adopt the a-points en bloc with no further discussions and focus only on the most political and sensitive issues which are labeled as the b-points and which are worth of coming and keeping eye on the negotiations and final outcomes. However, even the b-points may be sometimes relatively technical and administrative or they can be simply unimportant from the national perspective. In such situations, it is rational to avoid the costs (travelling to Brussels) because they are not compensated by potential benefits. As Westlake and Galloway (2004, p. 29) claim: “the opportunity cost of traveling to and from Brussels has always seemed very high when a Council agenda is, from the point of view of a particular minister, relatively anodyne or consensual”. On the contrary, it is possible to assume that the more b-points there are on the agenda, the more likely it is that the agenda is of a high political importance or national interests are at stake. In such situation, the ministers do not hesitate to accept the costs and undergo the time-consuming journey to Brussels and demanding negotiations with other member states’ representatives. The next hypothesis is, therefore, as follows:

H2: Ministers are more likely to attend the meetings, the more salient the agenda of the particular Council meeting is.

Moving to the national level, I have identified two explanatory factors which influence the strategic context – national elections and public attitude towards the EU. As mentioned in the introduction on the ministers’ rational behaviour, the national level is crucial for the ministers’ future political career. The office depends, among other things, on the results of national elections and the performance of the party, which the ministers represents, in legislative elections. Although the national elections are not about European politics (Hix, Hoyland, 2011, p. 157), they may still affect the behaviour of the national ministers. The ministers are always very busy and it gets even worse before the national elections when they are expected to campaign, lobby for their political party, take part in TV debates etc. As Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006, p. 253) claim: “campaigning (...) may have significant implications for the country’s overall policy towards the EU and many issues may have to be put on hold until such time as the incoming government’s policy vis-à-vis the EU and particular policies is clarified”. The participation and negotiation in the Council meeting is simply very time-consuming and these costs are even higher if the ministers’ office is at stake. Under such conditions, the

European agenda is not the priority and the ministers pay attention exclusively to the national level and the national electorate. The third hypothesis, therefore, argues that:

H3: Ministers are less likely to participate in the Council meetings if they face upcoming general elections in their country.

As the second national factor, I have identified the public opinion. The ministerial office is dependent on the electoral success of the party which the particular minister represents. And this success is dependent on the attitude of the voters who may punish the governmental parties for bad public policies or, on the contrary, reward them for favourable behaviour and decisions, including the European affairs. Although I have mentioned that the European issues are not the most important ones in national elections, which are mostly about the domestic issues, the public attitude towards the EU should be, from the rational point of view, still taken into account by the ministers who want to keep their office.

The ministers coming from the countries where the public attitude is generally pro-European can, therefore, skilfully present Council's achievements, stress the benefits for people, point out their own role in the negotiations and get some political points. On the contrary, a public attitude which is rather reserved or even hostile towards the EU would discourage the particular minister to travel to Brussels. The politicians in such situations do not need to demonstrate the Council's achievements because it would not bring them any political benefits and it could, on the contrary, harm their political interests. As Nugent (2010, p. 271) argues "the existence of, for example, less than enthusiastic support for European integration amongst a sizeable proportion of national electorates may both restrain and encourage politicians depending on their viewpoint". Therefore, I formulate the fourth hypothesis:

H4: Ministers are more likely to attend the Council meetings if they represent pro-European public and, on the contrary, they are less likely to travel to Brussels if the public opinion in the particular country is rather euro-skeptical.

Fifthly, there is a level which is not strictly national but rather governmental because it consists of the governing parties and their attitude towards the EU. The individual ministers are dependent on the heads of the governments and their willingness to respect them and keep them in the cabinet. If the ministers deviate from the overall governmental policy, they risk being dismissed from the office. In such a situation, it is rational for the ministers to avoid the personal costs and follow the governmental line. Moreover, I assume that the cabinets which are mostly pro-European actively encourage the ministers to attend the meetings because they are aware of the potential to promote national interests or they just simply think that it is good

for the country and its reputation in the Union. On the contrary, I assume that euro-skeptical governments do not motivate their ministers to attend the Council meetings and they may even intentionally discourage them to do so. The ministers representing such governments thus do not have to travel to Brussels, they do not have to present the Council's achievements to the public and they use their limited time to focus on domestic politics which brings them more benefits in terms of potential future re-election. Therefore, the final hypothesis of this thesis is that:

H5: Ministers are more likely to attend the Council meetings if they represent national governments which are in favour of the European integration and, on the contrary, they rather stay at home if their government views the EU in the euro-sceptic way.

Finally, I believe that one more level is crucial for the ministers' participation in the Council meeting and it is the individual level. For instance, the ministers who do not speak foreign languages well (especially English) may be afraid of communicating with their counterparts and prefer staying at home to participating in the Council meetings. Moreover, they may also be aware that national civil servants (often professional diplomats) master several foreign languages and are, therefore, more capable to defend national interests. Similarly, as the former Czech State Secretary for European Affairs Belling pointed out, the ministers may prefer being substituted if they are not very knowledgeable in the agenda (Ministři Sobotkovy vlády..., 2015). In such a situation, it is also rational if the civil servant, which is more familiar with the issue, replaces the particular minister in the Council meeting.

Unfortunately, the individual factors are not involved in the analysis for two, mostly methodological, reasons. Firstly, it would be extremely demanding to operationalize the ministers as individuals and gather the data for all of them. Secondly, some individual variables cannot be easily quantified and used in the regression analysis. Therefore, the individual level will be left for future (maybe qualitative) research and the thesis will deal only with the above mentioned five factors.

To summarize the model, I argue that ministers behave rationally and follow their own interests (preferences) which are primarily to stay in the office but also to promote favourable agenda outcomes in the Council, gain influential political contacts and attract media attention. Therefore, I assume that ministers attend the Council meetings, especially if: 1) they are responsible for the chairmanship of the Council sessions, 2) salient agenda is about to be discussed and voted on, 3) the public opinion in the ministers' countries is mostly pro-European and 4) if the cabinet, which the ministers represent, is in favour of the European integration. On

the contrary, I assume that 5) the ministers are less likely to participate in the Council meetings if they face national legislative elections because their office is directly dependent on the result of the elections. All these factors are based on their benefits and costs for the particular ministers. The chapter 5 will tell whether the hypotheses are correct or not.

3. Methodology

From the methodological point of view, the thesis relies on quantitative methods. Standard statistical tools, for instance mean, standard deviation, t-tests or contingency tables, will be employed in order to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. However, the core of the analysis is logistic regression. This method is more advanced and goes beyond the curriculum at the Institute of Political Studies. Therefore, I will elaborate on it more in detail in the next chapter. Most of the calculations were run in the statistical software R. The R code is available online and on the attached DVD with the appendices.

3.1. Logistic regression

Binary logistic regression is the most sophisticated analytical tool employed by the thesis because it includes all independent variables and investigates their independent impact on the dependent variable. It is defined as “a multiple regression but with an outcome variable that is a (binary) categorical variable and predictor variables³ that are continuous or categorical” (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 347 – 348).

The dependent variable is thus binary, i.e. it takes either the value 0 for a phenomenon not occurring or 1 if the phenomenon occurs. Hence, the aim of the regression is not to calculate the value of the dependent variable from the independent variables. Instead, the logistic regression predicts the probability of the dependent variable occurring based on the independent variables (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 349). The formula of the regression is as follows:

$$P(Y) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(b_0 + b_1 X_{1i} + b_2 X_{2i} + \dots + b_n X_{ni})}}$$

³ Predictor variable is a synonym for an independent variable (Author’s comment).

The results of logistic regression, however, differ from ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and their interpretation is also different. The rest of this chapter will, therefore, describe step by step how the final analysis will be run, interpreted and assessed.

3.1.1. Goodness of fit

Firstly, the model as such has to be evaluated. The indicator of the overall fit of a regression model is the R^2 statistic reporting the amount of the variance which can be explained by the variance of the independent variables. However, this statistic is not suitable for logistic regression. Therefore, there are several analogous indicators which can be used in a similar way and which are based on the so called log-likelihood, i.e. the measure which indicates “how much unexplained information there is after the model has been fitted” (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 350) and the deviance statistic which, as the formula below shows, equals to minus two log-likelihoods (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 350).

$$deviance = -2LL = -2 \times \log\text{-likelihood}$$

Field, Miles and Field (2012, p. 352 – 353) claim that there are three measures that can serve as the R^2 statistic in OLS regression. Firstly, it is the Hosmer and Lemeshow’s measure which divides the difference between the baseline model’s deviance and the new models’ deviance by the baseline models’ deviance. The deviance of the new model including the independent variables is thus subtracted from the deviance of the model including only the intercept and the result is divided by the latter model. Mathematically, it can be expressed as follows:

$$\text{Hosmer and Lemeshow's } R^2: \quad R_L^2 = \frac{-2LL(\text{model})}{-2LL(\text{baseline})} = \frac{(-2LL(\text{baseline})) - (-2LL(\text{new}))}{-2LL(\text{baseline})}$$

Secondly and thirdly, it is possible to calculate the Cox and Snell’s R^2 and Nagelkerke’s R^2 which take into account the deviance of the new model, the deviance of the baseline model and the sample size n . Since the Cox and Snell’s R^2 cannot reach the theoretical maximum of 1, Nagelkerke suggested its improvement (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 352 – 353). These two measures are mathematically formulated as follows:

$$\text{Cox and Snell's } R^2: \quad R_{CS}^2 = 1 - \exp\left(\frac{(-2LL(\text{new})) - (-2LL(\text{baseline}))}{n}\right)$$

$$\text{Nagelkerke's } R^2: \quad R_N^2 = \frac{R_{CS}^2}{1 - \exp\left(\frac{-2LL(\text{baseline})}{n}\right)}$$

None of the measures is, however, widely accepted. On the other hand, they are conceptually somewhat similar and can be interpreted as the significance of the whole model (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 353).

Finally, it is possible to report the so called confusion matrix which tabulates actual and predicted values, helps to infer other information about the accuracy of the model and is depicted in the Table 1.

		Predicted	
		Good	Bad
Actual	Good	True Positive (d)	False Negative (c)
	Bad	False Positive (b)	True Negative (a)

Table 1: Confusion matrix. Source: Simple Guide to Logistic Regression in R (2015).

Based on the confusion matrix, it is possible to calculate the success ratio indicating how much actual values were predicted correctly, i.e. they were positive and the regression predicted them as positive and vice versa. Using the letters from the table, the formula would be $(d + a)/n$ where n is the total number of observations. Secondly, it is possible to derive the true positive rate (sensitivity) and the true negative rate (specificity) from the table. The former one is calculated as $d/(d + c)$ and the latter one as $a/(a + b)$. These indicators, finally, enable to plot a ROC⁴ curve which is based on the sensitivity and the false positive rate (1-specificity) and indicates how much the particular model is accurate in the prediction. The larger the area under the curve, the more accurate the model is. Ideally, the curve touches the top left corner of the graph as shown by the Figure 1 (Simple Guide to Logistic Regression in R, 2015).

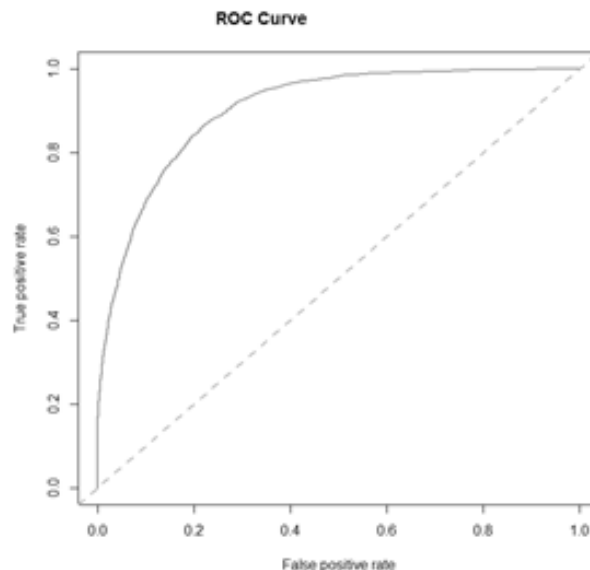


Figure 1: An example of the ROC curve. Author: Simple Guide to Logistic Regression in R (2015).

⁴ Receiver Operating Characteristic.

3.1.2. Coefficients

After evaluating the model as a whole, the individual coefficients need to be interpreted. Firstly, it is necessary to check the statistical significance of individual independent variables represented by the p-statistic which has to be smaller than the alpha value of 0.05. Only the predictors whose z fulfills this condition are worth further interpreting.

Secondly, the substantial size of the coefficients can be interpreted. However, the outcome of the logistic regression is difficult to interpret because the coefficients represent “the change in log(odds) in the response for a unit change in the predictor variable, holding all other predictor variables constant” (Kabacoff, 2011, p. 320). The simplest way to get the odds is, therefore, to exponentiate the coefficients. A result which is bigger than 1 implies that the odds of the outcome occurring increase while the value of the independent variable increases. On the contrary, a value smaller than 1 indicates a decrease in the odds of the outcome occurring for each unit rise of the independent variable (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 355). The odds ratios will be presented with 95% confidence intervals. The intervals cannot cross the value of 1. If they do, it is not clear in what direction the independent variable influences the dependent variable and the coefficient is not statistically significant.

However, the odds may still be relatively difficult to interpret and understand. Therefore, the probabilities will be predicted and presented (both in numbers and graphically) in order to show the effect of the independent variables on the chances of the outcome occurring.

3.1.3. Assumptions and casewise diagnostics

The logistic regression, as well as other types of regressions, is based on several assumptions that need to be fulfilled so that the regression can be regarded seriously. Furthermore, each model should be inspected regarding individual observations and their residuals. This part of the thesis will deal with this issue.

The first assumption that needs to be inspected is multicollinearity which controls that there is no perfect correlation among the independent variables (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 357). Such correlation can affect standard error parameters of the particular model. This assumption can be tested through the variance inflation factor (VIF) whose result should not be larger than four (Kabacoff, 2011, p. 200). Similarly, the tolerance indicator can be calculated but it reports the same information as VIF because it equals $1/VIF$. Therefore, the tolerance value should not be smaller than 0.25.

Secondly, linearity may be an issue. However, the logistic regression is interested only in the relationship of continuous independent variables and the logit of the dependent variable (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 356). A continuous variable is the variable which takes any value between its minimum and maximum value, i.e. it can take values that are not whole numbers, for example temperature (Meier, Brudney, Bohte, 2010, p. 63). This assumption can be tested through a new regression model which includes the continuous variables and their interactions with their logs. If the interaction variables are statistically significant, the assumption of linearity is violated (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 356).

Finally, the assumption of the independence of errors has to be checked. The main idea of the assumption is that the regression residuals should be independent on each other. It can be tested by employing the Durbin-Watson test which checks the correlation of the errors. The results of the test vary between 0 and 4 and the value of 2 indicates no correlation. A higher value indicates a negative correlation and lower a positive correlation (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 306 - 307). The closer the test statistic is to 2, the better the result is. Moreover, the p-value resulting from the test has to be higher than 0.05 because the null hypothesis of the *dwt* test is that there is no autocorrelation among the residuals. Lower p-values, therefore, mean that the null hypothesis has to be rejected and the alternative hypothesis claiming that the residuals are autocorrelated has to be accepted.

Moreover, the logistic regression has its own problems dealing especially with the ratio of cases for individual variables (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 357 - 360). The first one is the incomplete information from the predictors. Simply said, it is the situation when there are not enough observations for all combinations of variables. This problem applies to all kinds of data (both categorical and continuous) and can be inspected through simple contingency tables. Each cell of the table should contain at least one observation and more than 5 cases in more than 20% of the cells. The second issue is the complete separation, i.e. the situation when the data are actually too good. If there is no overlap of the data and the dependent variable is predicted perfectly, there is a need to worry about the results. This is often the case when there are too many variables and too few cases in the model.

The last thing to do is to inspect the model itself, especially the individual residuals and their characteristics. Firstly, Field, Miles and Field (2012, p. 375) recommend to inspect the cases "for which the model fits poorly". It means the standardized residuals (residuals divided by the estimate of their standard deviation) whose absolute value should not be greater than 3, 1% of them should not be greater than 2.5 and 5% greater than 2 (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 302).

The same applies for the studentized residuals (residuals divided by the particular standard errors) which evaluate the impact of a case on the ability of the model to predict the case (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 303, 376).

Finally, the authors recommend to inspect the residuals that have an undue effect on the model, more precisely the Cook's distance, DFBeta statistic and leverage statistics. The Cook's distance measures the influence of a case on the particular model and its value should not be higher than 1 (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 303). The DFBeta statistic takes into the account the difference between a parameter which was estimated using all cases and the parameter estimated when one case was excluded from the particular model. Its values should be again less than 1 (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 304, 376).

Last but not least, the casewise diagnostics should focus on the leverage points (i.e. the hat values) which represent the impact of the observed value of the dependent variable over the predicted values. The resulting values lie between 0 (no influence) and 1 (complete influence) and should not be twice (or alternatively three times) higher than the average value which is calculated as $(k + 1)/n$ where k is the number of independent variables and n is the number of observations. Otherwise, an undue effect of the cases with higher values cannot be excluded (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 303 – 304).

This chapter has exactly described the way in which the data will be analyzed. The next chapter will, therefore, start by describing and operationalizing the variables and providing some descriptive statistics. In the fifth chapter, the inferential statistical tools will be employed and the assumptions of the logistic regression analysis will be explored.

4. Data and dataset

The analysis is based on the extensive dataset which was manually collected during the past year. The data contain information on 364 (nearly all) regular Council meetings that took place during the seventh EP's office term, i.e. from July 2009 to June 2014. Each Council meeting is characterized by the number of the meeting, the year and the particular date when the session took place, the type of the configuration which held the meeting (occasionally including more details on the type of the meeting, for example TTE, Energy), the number of agenda points and the information on the ministers' participation. Furthermore, the data on the present ministers are involved, for instance their nationality, names, political parties and the party position towards the EU. Finally, some data on the individual member countries were also collected, e.g.

the public opinion towards the EU, presidency country and the date of national elections. As a result, the dataset contains more than ten thousand rows and thirty columns which serve as a unique source of information and new findings.

The data come from several sources: Press Releases for Council meetings number 2957 – 3326 and Provisional Agendas for Council meetings number 2957 – 3326 which were downloaded from the Council's document register. Unfortunately, there are some missing data for several Council meetings because the information was not found (3007, 3272), the meetings were cancelled (3185, 3255, 3269, 3289), the particular Press Release does not include a list of participants (3239) or the meetings were merged into one (3055 and 3056).

The data on the public attitude towards the EU come from the public opinion surveys Eurobarometer 72 – 81. The party positions on the EU are, on the other hand, based on the dataset *1999 - 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File* (Bakker, Edwards, Hooghe et. al, 2015) which includes a lot of information on ideology and policy stances of national political parties in Europe. The websites *Election Guide* (<http://www.electionguide.org>) and *Parties and Elections in Europe* (<http://www.parties-and-elections.eu>) served as the source of the data on the national legislative elections and, finally, the information on individual cabinets and their composition were derived from the national governmental websites.

The dataset, Council press releases, provisional agendas, Eurobarometers and other files used for the purpose of the thesis are available on the above mentioned link or the attached DVD.

4.1. Dependent variable (*attendance*)

The dependent variable deals with the ministers' participation in the Council meetings. It takes the value 1 if a national minister participated in a meeting and 0 if the minister did not. Only national ministers, members of national cabinets who possess voting rights in the national cabinets, were taken into account. The cases with regional ministers, junior ministers, deputy ministers or permanent representatives were assigned 0.

There were 71 cases of meetings where only regional ministers represented their country. Especially ministers from Belgium but also from the United Kingdom, Spain and Germany. An analysis including these national representatives was also performed but the overall results were nearly the same as the results of the main model. Similarly, an analysis excluding these cases was also performed and the results were again nearly identical.

Moreover, it is necessary to stress that the analysis includes also Croatian ministers. However, the country has been the EU member since July 2013 so the analysis itself includes the Croatian ministers only for the Council meetings which have taken place since the enlargement. The data were also investigated while excluding the Croatian cases but the results of this model were nearly identical as the outcome of the main model.

In the dataset, the average participation of the ministers in the Council meetings is 64% with the standard deviation of 48%. Out of the 9900 cases, the ministers attended the meetings 6330 times and were absent 3570 times. The most active ministers came from Denmark, Sweden, Luxembourg and Finland (their ministers were present in more than 80% of the cases). On the other hand, the Slovak and British ministers missed the meetings in more than half of the cases! For individual numbers see the Figure 2. The red line represents the above mentioned average, the blue one represents 50% participation.

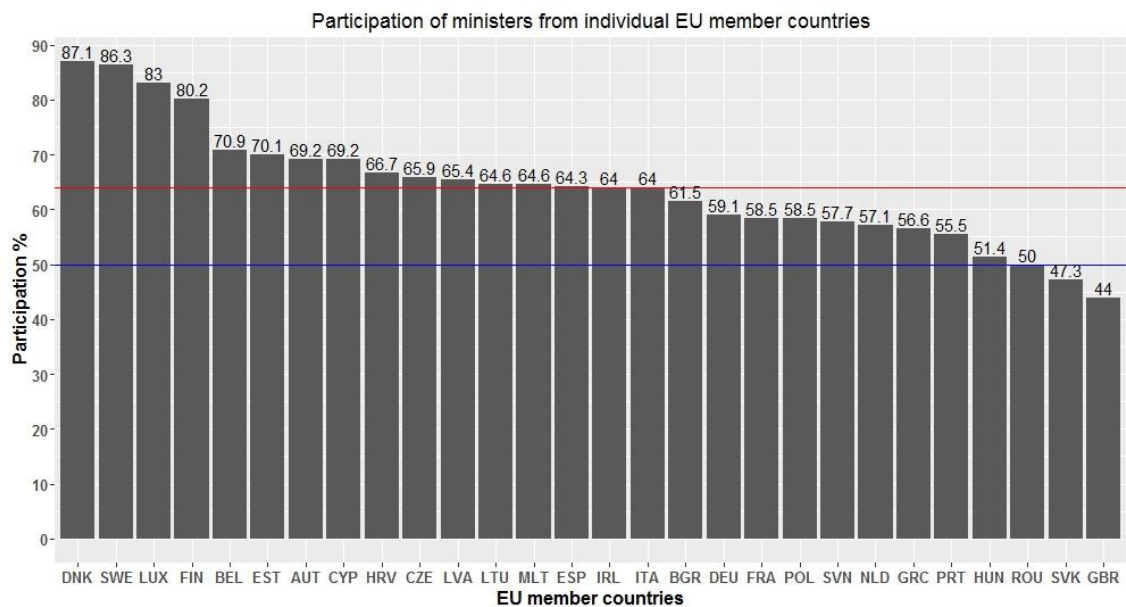


Figure 2: Participation of ministers per EU countries. Source: author.

In terms of regional patterns, the high participation of the Nordic ministers is obvious. Similarly, it seems that ministers from middle-sized and small countries attend the Council meetings more often while the ministers from the large countries (e.g. Germany, France or the United Kingdom) lag behind the average. This finding may indicate that the minister from bigger states are more engaged in other issues and traveling to Brussels is, therefore, more costly for them than for the ministers of the middle- and small-sized states.

On the other hand, it seems that there are no clear North-South-East cleavages because the regions are represented at both ends of the Figure. Nordic countries lead the ranking, the

United Kingdoms or the Netherlands belong, on the contrary, to the least represented countries. The largest southern countries (Spain, Italy) represent the average participation but there is also Cyprus with higher participation or, on the other side, Portugal with a lower value for the dependent variable. Finally, the eastern members are spread along the whole scale – from the most active Estonia, to average Latvia and Lithuania to the least represented Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

If I compare the results with Gron and Salomonsen (2015), who study the same issue for the meetings between the years 2005 and 2009, I see some interesting changes. Firstly, the mean has dropped from 76% to 64%. Twelve percentage points are a very large difference which raises the question what has caused this drop in the participation. This thesis offers two potential explanations, both based on the fact that the Lisbon Treaty came into force in December 2009. Firstly, the treaty formalized the European Council as the EU institution which means that the debates on the general guidelines and the negotiations about the future course of the Union can officially take place in the European Council instead of the Council of ministers. Secondly, the Lisbon Treaty clarified the competences of the EU and the member states which could cause an attendance decrease in the configurations which deal with the portfolios mainly falling under the national authority. Unfortunately, I cannot evaluate this assumption because Gron and Salomonsen (2015) do not provide the information on the individual Council configurations.

Moreover, there is a change in the ranking's highest positions which were occupied by Finland (93%), Luxembourg (91%), Netherlands (90%), Belgium (89%) and Sweden (88%) in the period from 2004 to 2009 (Gron, Salomonsen, 2015, p. 1080). Since then Denmark has made a progress from 77% to 87% (becoming thus the leader among the member states) and, on the contrary, the Netherlands has fallen from 90% to 57%. The lack of the data, however, makes it impossible to explain the reasons of these shifts. The middle positions and the bottom of the ranking remains more or less stable. Gron and Saloomonsen (2015, p. 1080) report Slovakia (63%), Romania (60%) and the United Kingdom (56%) as the biggest absentees which is the same according to my data.

In terms of the individual Council configurations, the Figure 3 shows that there is one configuration (JHA) which is attended apparently more often than the others. On the other hand, the EYCS, GAC, TTE and COMPET configurations were attended much less often – approximately in 50% of the cases. The lines in the Figure 3 represent again the average and the 50% participation.

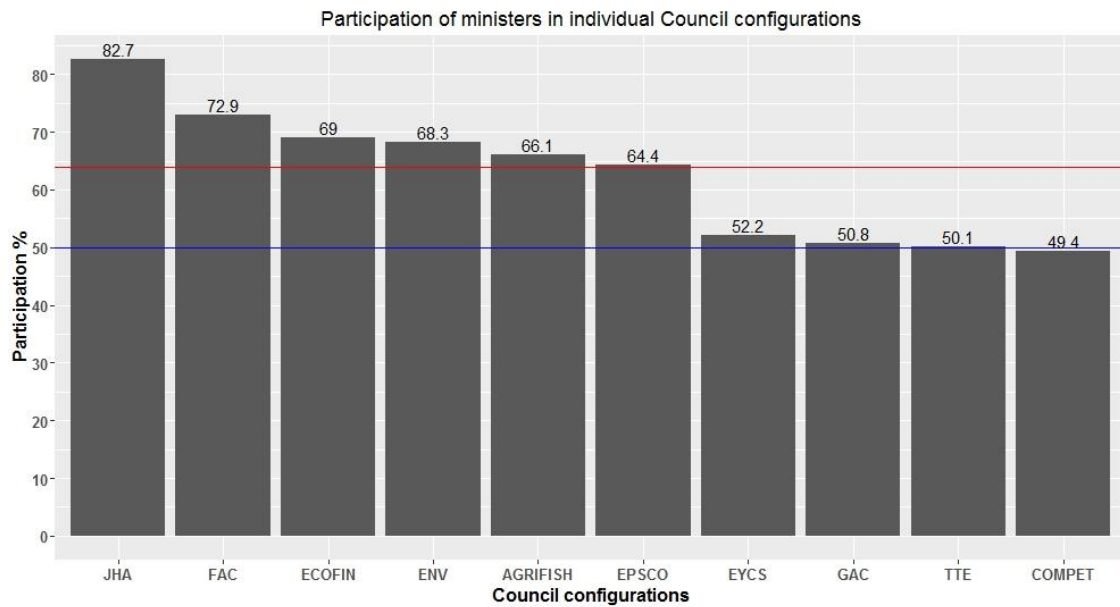


Figure 3: Participation of ministers per Council configurations. Source: author.

The highest percentage for the JHA, FAC or ECOFIN is no surprise because they represent high politics portfolios and it is understandable that the ministers want to keep the agenda under their supervision. As already mentioned in the chapter 1, the JHA has experienced a large increase of activity and its agendas are by far the longest among the Council configurations (as the next chapter and the Table 3 also show). The FAC deals with very sensitive policy which is a symbol of national sovereignty and states want to protect it. The ECOFIN is occupied by the most senior officials who have a big say in the member states and the whole EU as well. Finally, the AGRIFISH is a very strong configuration with the longest tradition among the current configurations, a lot of money are associated with the Common Agricultural Policy and the configuration is also the one which decides by the qualified majority most often. All of that motivates the ministers to come and keep eye on the final decisions. Quite surprisingly, there is also the ENV among the most attended configurations which may reflect high ambitions which the EU has in this area.

On the contrary, the EYCS, GAC, TTE and COMPET report much lower participation, approximately around 50%. The reason probably is that these configurations are not so prestigious, involve either several policy areas (EYCS, TTE), horizontal issues (COMPET) or cover policies which belong primarily to the member states (EYCS). Surprisingly, one of the least attended configurations is the GAC which was perceived as the “most ‘senior’ of the Council formations” (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 36) and composed of foreign ministers. However, the separation of the foreign policy agenda in June 2002 (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 36) probably detracted the political attention from the configuration. The ministers

attend FAC more often and keep the policy coordination, institutional issues and preparations of European Council sessions for their civil servants.

4.2. Independent variables

For the purpose of the analysis, five independent variables at three different levels were used. Firstly, the institutional aspects were taken into account as variables representing the Council presidency and the salience of the agenda of the individual meetings. Secondly, the national characteristics were employed. More precisely, it is analyzed whether the meetings took place prior to national legislative elections or not and what was the public opinion on the EU in the member countries. Finally, at the governmental level, the analysis takes into account what was the position towards the EU of the government which the particular minister represented.

4.2.1. Presidency

This is a binary variable assigning 1 to ministers holding the presidency office during the Council meetings and 0 for the rest. Given the fact that the FAC is formally chaired by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, a separate analysis excluding all FAC cases was performed and the results were very similar to the main analysis. Hence the configuration was kept in the analysis.

During the explored period, there were ten EU countries holding the presidency office. The order of the countries till 2020 was established by the Council decision in 2007 (Council, 2007) and is presented in the Table 2.

EU member country	Months	Year
Sweden	July - December	2009
Spain	January - June	2010
Belgium	July – December	2010
Hungary	January - June	2011
Poland	July – December	2011
Denmark	January - June	2012
Cyprus	July – December	2012
Ireland	January - June	2013
Lithuania	July - December	2013
Greece	January - June	2014

Table 2: Presidency countries (July 2009 - June 2014). Source: Council (2007).

4.2.2. Agenda

The second institutional independent variable covers the salience of the agenda. Since it is very difficult and data demanding to identify the salience of the agenda for the individual member countries, the variable is operationalized as the number of points on the agenda which is the same way that Gron and Salomonsen (2015) use. However, they calculate the points based on the minutes published after the Council sessions. I think, on the other hand, that it is more logical to take into account the information from the agenda which is distributed before the meetings and according to which the ministers decide whether to participate or not. This method is also used by Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006, p. 53).

The variable *agenda* was thus calculated as the number of substantive points, i.e. all points with the exception of procedural issues, for example adoptions of the agenda or approvals of the lists of a-items. The last point of the agendas, “any other business”, was counted as one although it sometimes includes more than one issue. A variable including all „any other business“ issues (*agendaAOB*) was also calculated. The correlation of both variables was 0.82 and the difference between the regression models employing *agenda* and *agendaAOB* was little. Therefore, only the variable *agenda* was finally used in the main model.

The average amount of the points per one Council meeting is 7.5 with the standard deviation of 4.6. Most of the points were on average discussed by the JHA (17.8). On the contrary, the smallest number of points was debated by the ministers of agriculture. However, the difference makes sense because there were only twenty-seven JHA meetings during the examined period compared to fifty-one AGRIFISH sessions. See the Table 3 for the average number of points and the number of meetings per individual Council configurations.

Configuration	Meetings	<i>agenda</i> mean	Configuration	Meetings	<i>agenda</i> mean
AGRIFISH	51	4.67	EYCS	14	9.58
COMPET	21	9.75	FAC	69	7.03
ECOFIN	54	7.24	GAC	52	5.23
ENV	21	5.37	JHA	27	17.82
EPSCO	22	8.64	TTE	33	6.63

Table 3: Number of meetings and the amount of agenda per Council configurations. Source: author.

4.2.3. Elections

The variable *elections* is a binary variable coded as 1 for ministers attending or not attending the Council meeting which took place within six months before the national legislative elections in

the ministers' countries. If there were no upcoming legislative elections, the variable was coded as 0. The summary of all national elections which are employed by the analysis is provided by the Table 4. The dataset includes forty-four legislative elections in all twenty-eight EU member countries.

EU country	Date	EU country	Date	EU country	Date
Austria	2013-09-29	Germany	2009-09-27	Netherlands	2012-09-12
Belgium	2014-05-25	Greece	2012-06-17		Poland
	2010-06-13		2012-05-06	Portugal	
Bulgaria	2014-10-05		Hungary		2009-10-04
	2013-05-12	2014-04-06		2009-09-27	
Croatia	2011-12-04	Ireland	2010-04-25	Slovakia	2012-12-09
Cyprus	2011-05-22		2010-04-11		2012-03-10
Czech Republic	2013-10-25	Italy	2011-02-25	Slovenia	2010-06-12
	2010-05-28	Latvia	2013-02-24		2014-07-13
Denmark	2011-09-15		Lithuania	2014-10-04	Spain
Estonia	2011-03-06	2011-09-17		2011-11-20	
Finland	2011-04-17	Luxembourg	2010-10-02	Sweden	2014-09-14
France	2012-06-17		2012-10-14		2010-09-19
	Germany	2012-06-10	2013-10-20	United Kingdom	2010-05-06
	2013-09-22	Malta	2013-03-09		

Table 4: Legislative elections in EU member states. Source: www.electionguide.org, www.parties-and-elections.eu.

4.2.4. EUdifference

The public opinion on the EU is biannually measured by the Eurobarometer. The “positive” and “negative” answers on the question “In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative and very negative image?” were taken into account for the purpose of the thesis.

However, neither the variable *EUpositive* (with the mean of 36.5 and the standard deviation of 10.3) nor the variable *EUnegative* (with the mean of 22.4 and the standard deviation 10.2) do not reflect the dominant mood in the member countries. Therefore, the latter variable was subtracted from the former one and the final variable *EUdifference* was thus created. All of them will be analyzed in the next chapters but only the variable *EUdifference* will be finally employed in the main model. The correlation of the variables *EUpositive* and *EUnegative* is

-0.80 and the correlation of the variables *EUpositive* and *EUnegative* with the variable *EUdifference* is 0.95 and - 0.95 respectively.

Country	II. 2009	I. 2010	II. 2010	I. 2011	II. 2011	I. 2012	II. 2012	I. 2013	II. 2013	I. 2014	Average
AUT	+7	+2	-7	0	-17	-13	-8	-7	-9	-3	-5.5
BEL	+36	+34	+32	+32	+8	+10	+2	+12	+11	+17	+19.4
BGR	+55	+46	+45	+45	+48	+39	+43	+41	+35	+41	+43.8
CYP	+35	+11	+8	+22	+8	-7	-19	-42	-37	-12	-3.3
CZE	+21	+10	+9	+2	-6	-12	-14	-11	-9	+1	-0.9
DEU	+34	+13	+10	+16	+5	+9	+6	+5	+11	+16	+12.5
DNK	+30	+25	+17	+18	+15	+15	+16	+16	+16	+9	+17.7
ESP	+46	+36	+16	+24	+4	-10	-12	-18	-3	-4	+7.9
EST	+39	+35	+30	+30	+14	+23	+14	+21	+24	+34	+26.4
FIN	+16	+12	+4	+6	-9	-11	-10	-12	-4	+13	+0.5
FRA	+30	+18	+17	+19	+6	+12	+8	+6	-2	+11	+12.5
GBR	-6	-13	-20	-14	-36	-29	-31	-22	-17	-13	-20.1
GRC	+42	+14	-3	-9	-9	-14	-31	-22	-38	-22	-9.2
HRV	-7	+1	+3	+3	+6	+10	+4	+18	+17	+21	+7.6
HUN	+19	+27	+23	+15	+4	-8	-1	+4	+15	+12	+11.0
IRL	+46	+42	+32	+38	+11	+10	+5	+5	+17	+24	+23.0
ITA	+47	+38	+41	+35	+21	+1	+8	+8	-8	+1	+19.2
LTU	+35	+33	+41	+33	+22	+24	+30	+27	+28	+40	+31.3
LUX	+59	+36	+33	+32	+23	+18	+10	+11	+20	+17	+25.9
LVA	+11	+8	+10	+10	+3	+11	+11	+14	+15	+22	+11.5
MLT	+28	+31	+27	+16	+17	+14	+14	+30	+27	+34	+23.8
NLD	+38	+26	+21	+17	+2	+3	+2	-7	-1	+10	+11.1
POL	+44	+44	+48	+38	+33	+28	+30	+32	+35	+42	+37.4
PRT	+42	+17	+21	+10	-9	-11	-21	-20	-17	-1	+1.1
ROU	+56	+43	+37	+47	+40	+34	+27	+24	+30	+46	+38.4
SVK	+44	+37	+41	+32	+8	+12	-1	+8	+3	+4	+18.8
SVN	+44	+28	+26	+22	+20	+15	+15	+3	+5	+20	+19.8
SWE	+21	+19	+11	+10	+6	-1	-4	-5	+4	+13	+7.4

Table 5: Overall attitude towards the EU in individual member countries. Source: author.

The mean of the variable *EUdifference* is 14 with the standard deviation of 19.4. The most negative attitudes towards the EU were in Cyprus in 2013 (-42 in spring and -37 in autumn), in Greece in the second half of 2013 (-38) and in the United Kingdom in autumn 2011 (-36). On the other hand, the citizens were most positive about the EU in Luxembourg (+59), Romania (+56) and Bulgaria (+55) in the second half of 2009. The values for individual countries are in the Table

5. The last column says whether the mood in the countries was in general in favour of or against the EU over the period under scrutiny.

Gron and Salomonsem (2015) employ a similar variable but they take into account only the amount of positive answers which I think is inappropriate because it omits the opinion of negatively oriented citizens. Therefore, I have combined both the positive and negative answers and created a new variable.

4.2.5. Govaverage

This variable differs from the initial project of the thesis and replaces the variable *partyfinalNM*. The reason is that it is not possible to identify the missing ministers and so their political party. It would be necessary to guess which minister would come to the particular meetings because some configurations involve more portfolios. This approach would, however, be quite artificial. At the same time, it is not possible to assign the present ministers with their party positions and the absentees and independent ministers with the average value of the particular cabinets because it would result in two different levels for one variable – the party level for present ministers and the government average for the absentees and independent ministers. Therefore, the attitude towards the EU is operationalized as the governmental average for all ministers regardless of whether they participated in the meetings or not. The level of analysis is thus same for all of them. The correlation of the original variable and the new one is 0.89 and the outcome of the final analysis does not differ a lot after the change. Moreover, the analysis is more reliable from the methodological point of view and the new variable is also theoretically justifiable – for more details see the chapter 2.2.

The variable *govaverage* deals with the ministers' government position on the European Union. The numbers in the dataset represent the weighted average for individual cabinets based on the number of representatives which the governing parties had in the cabinet and their attitude towards the European integration. The data for individual political parties were derived from the dataset *1999 - 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File* (Bakker, Edwards, Hooghe et. al, 2015) which quantifies the party position from 1 meaning "strongly opposed" to 7 meaning "strongly in favour"⁵. However, these data were not collected every year. Therefore, the analysis assigns the ministers who were in the office from 2009 to 2011 the value from 2010 and the ministers who were in the office from 2012 to 2014 the value from 2014. If a political party was

⁵ The whole scale is 1 – strongly opposed, 2 – opposed, 3 – somewhat opposed, 4 – neutral, 5 – somewhat in favour, 6 – in favour, 7 – strongly in favour (Bakker, Edwards, Hooghe et. al, 2015).

not assigned a value in the particular year, the value from the nearest possible year was used. The representatives of independent caretaker governments were assigned the mean of the previous and the following political government.

The individual ministers, their parties, the party positions and the averages of the governments are represented by the columns *minister*, *party1* – *party4*, *party1code* – *party4code* and *govaverage* in the dataset.

The average value of the variable *govaverage* is 5.9 (with the standard deviation of 0.90) indicating that the data are negatively skewed and the governments in the individual EU member countries were generally pro-European. The median is even 6.1. The most negatively oriented cabinets were two Hungarian governments dominated by Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union with the values of 3.0 (May 2010 – June 2014) and 3.2 (since June 2014)⁶ and one British government dominated by the British Conservative Party with the value of 3.9 (May 2010 – May 2015)⁷. On the contrary, there were three cabinets which were assigned the highest possible value of seven (the most pro-European one). Two of them were the Portuguese socialist cabinets led by the Socialist Party from March 2005 to October 2009 and from October 2009 to June 2011. The third cabinet with the highest value was the Maltese cabinet led by the Nationalist Party from March 2008 to March 2013.

5. Analysis

In this part, some basic statistical tools (t-test and cross tabulations) will be used to reveal the relationships among the data. Secondly, a logistic regression involving all variables at once will be employed, interpreted and diagnosed.

5.1. T-tests

The analysis assumes that there is a relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. For the binary independent variables, I can employ the so called t-test to verify this hypothesis. In both cases, the two-tailed unequal variance t-tests were employed.

The first binary independent variable is *presidency* having the value 1 if the particular minister came from the member country holding the Council presidency office and 0 for the rest of the ministers. The results of the t-test show that ministers holding the presidency office report

⁶ The party itself was assigned even lower values – 2.7 in both periods.

⁷ The British Conservative Party was assigned the value of 3.1 for that period.

the mean of the variable *attendance* 91%. On the contrary, the mean for the ministers from non-presidency states is only 63%. The results are, moreover, statistically significant, with the p-value smaller than $2.2e-16$. The t-test thus supports the expectations that ministers representing the presidency states attend the Council meetings more often than their colleagues from other member states.

The second binary variable is *elections* having the value 1 for the ministers attending a meeting which took place within six months before national legislative elections in the ministers' countries. Such ministers report the average attendance of 58%. On the contrary, the ministers with the value 0, i.e. from the countries where no legislative elections were about to take place, report the value 65%. These results support the assumption that the ministers facing national elections attend the Council sessions less often. The difference is relatively small but it is also statistically significant because the p-value equals to $7.45e-07$. Other independent variables are not binary. Therefore, they will be analyzed in a different way.

5.2. Cross Tabulations

Furthermore, cross tabulations (or alternatively contingency tables) will be used to reveal the relationship of the independent variables and the dependent variable. The advantage of the cross tabulations is that they enable the readers to see the changes of the dependent variable per individual categories of the independent variable and thus get a deeper insight into the data.

Although I have already tested the relationship of the binary variables with the dependent variable, I will use the cross tabulations for them as well because they can provide some new information. For instance, the measure of association gamma (Meier, Brudney, Bohte, 2010, p. 275 - 278) which evaluates the strength and the direction of the relationship. It can take values from -1 to +1. The size of the measure represents the strength of the relationship and the sign indicates the direction. Minus means a negative relationship, plus means a positive relationship and zero stands for no relationship (Meier, Brudney, Bohte, 2010, p. 275 – 278).

As the Table 6 shows, the percentage for ministers from presidency and non-presidency countries is the same as the percentage indicated by the previous t-test. The p-value of the chi-squared test is statistically significant and gamma equals 0.7 indicating a strong positive relationship between the variables. The values of the significance test and gamma are also presented under the table. The result thus supports the assumption that ministers coming from the presidency country attend the Council meetings more often than the ministers representing other member states.

	<i>attendance</i>		
<i>presidency</i>	0	1	Row total
0	3536 37.1%	6000 62.9%	9536 96.3%
1	34 9.3%	330 90.7%	364 3.7%
Column Total	3570	6330	9900

Table 6: Cross tabulation of attendance and presidency. The p-value of the chi-squared test is 2.849652e-27. Gamma equals 0.702. Source: author.

An interesting piece of information, furthermore, is that 34 (i.e. 9%) ministers representing the Council presidency did not utilize the possibility to make use of the opportunity and exercise the power which the office offers. The configurations which lacked the minister from the presidency country were mostly the GAC (9 cases), FAC (8) and ECOFIN (6). However, since these configurations are the most frequent ones (as the Table 3 shows), it is understandable that the numbers are higher compared to the other ones. However, there were no absences of the minister from the presidency country in the AGRIFISH which has a comparable number of meetings as the GAC, FAC and ECOFIN. It is, therefore, very likely that agriculture is always taken seriously by member states regardless of the situation.

Interestingly, there is a clear pattern of absences in the ECOFIN. All of them took place in November (there were two during the Cypriot chairmanship in 2012) and the EU budget was always the content of the negotiations. A closer insight into the issue shows that these meetings are always ignored by the ministers from all member states – there were no ministers in 2013, one in 2009, two in 2010 and 2012 and three in 2011. The agenda is always the same and deals with preparation for the conciliation committee on the budget, the negotiation with the EP and evaluation of the results. The ministers thus keep this technical job dealing with the budget details for their permanent representatives.

Regarding the presidency countries, three member states represented two thirds of the absences – Poland (9), Hungary (8) and Cyprus (6). These states were relatively new members but they also had more than six years long experience in the EU and it is, therefore, not appropriate to guess that they did not understand the importance and potential of the EU chairmanship. A potential solution may, however, lie at the national level. In Poland, the government faced elections and new cabinet formation during its presidency in autumn 2011. Hungary (spring 2011) and Cyprus (autumn 2012) did not experience any elections or government changes but they both reported relatively low values of the variable *govaverage* (3

for Hungary and 4.5 for Cyprus) and the public attitude (*EUdifference*) in Cyprus was, moreover, negative (-19) during its presidency period. Half of the absences (Poland plus Hungary) took place in 2011. However, this year was not so exceptional in the EU history in order to conclude that the absences were caused by some special occasions. The national characteristics thus seem as the most explanatory with exception of the November ECOFIN meetings where it is the nature of the agenda which motivates ministers to absent.

The non-binary variables are transformed into categories so that their relationship with the dependent variable can be more easily analyzed. Therefore, the variable *agenda* was transformed into five categories: 0 – 4, 5 – 9, 10 – 14, 15 – 19 and more than 20 points. The results are reported in the Table 7 which argues that the more agenda points there are, the more the ministers attend the Council meetings (the higher is the percentage in the column 1). Moreover, the p-value of the chi-squared test is statistically significant and gamma is 0.28 indicating a positive, however quite weak, relationship. Despite this fact, it is still possible to claim that the results are in accordance with the hypothesis claiming that the ministers are more motivated to travel to Brussels if more salient agenda is at stake.

	<i>attendance</i>		
<i>agenda category</i>	0	1	Row total
0 – 4	1211 46.8%	1376 53.2%	2587 26.1%
5 – 9	1763 35.8%	3159 64.2%	4922 49.7%
10 – 14	451 27.6%	1181 72.4%	1632 16.5%
15 – 19	98 21.3%	363 78.7%	461 4.7%
> 20	47 15.8%	251 84.2%	298 3.0%
Column Total	3570	6330	9900

Table 7: Cross tabulation of attendance and *agendacategory*. The p-value of the chi-squared test is 9.602682e-59. Gamma equals 0.281. Source: author.

Another binary variable, tested previously by the t-test, is *elections*. The results of the particular cross tabulation can be seen in the Table 8. The table confirms the previous t-test claiming that ministers facing the upcoming national elections are less likely to attend the Council meetings (58% attendance) than the ministers who do not have to campaign at home (65%). This negative,

although quite weak, relationship is confirmed by gamma which equals -0.15. The results are again statistically significant and support the hypothesis assuming that the ministers who face the upcoming national elections come less often to Brussels.

	<i>attendance</i>		
<i>elections</i>	0	1	Row total
0	3004 35.1%	5557 64.9%	8561 86.5%
1	566 42.3%	773 57.7%	1339 13.5%
Column Total	3570	6330	9900

Table 8: Cross tabulation of attendance and elections. The p-value of the chi-squared test is 3.602641e-07. Gamma equals -0.151. Source: author.

The variable *EUdifference* was divided into ten groups which can be seen in the Table 9. Apparently, the more EU optimistic the public is, the higher the participation in the Council meetings is which meets my theoretical expectations. However, the differences are not very large and the percentage of the participation falls in the highest categories. This may be caused by the fact that the most pro-European citizens were, based on the Table 5, Bulgaria, Romania and Poland. However, as the Figure 2 shows, the participation of their ministers was below average and Romanian ministers were even the third largest absentees. It, therefore, raises the question what discourage the ministers from these member states to travel to Brussels in spite of the high public support for the EU. It may, for example, be a long and time-consuming journey from Eastern Europe to Brussels.

On the contrary, the ministers from Nordic countries participated the most although the public attitude towards the EU is mostly reserved in Northern Europe. These contradictions cause that the relationship is not very strong for the variable *EUdifference* and it is also supported by the very low gamma (0.03). The results for the variables *EUpositive* and *EUnegative* indicate similar problems. The former one reports a similar pattern as *EUdifference*, i.e. an increase and a fall in the highest categories, and the outcome for the latter one is completely random, with no pattern. Both has also very low gammas: 0.03 and -0.05 respectively.

The weak results for the variable *EUdifference* thus imply that the public opinion does not have to be a decisive factor which the ministers take into account and the hypothesis 4 is, therefore, not right. The regression analysis in the next section can answer this question.

	<i>attendance</i>		
<i>EUdifference category</i>	0	1	Row total
< -30	88 42.5%	119 57.5%	207 2.1%
≥ -30 & < -20	76 41.1%	109 58.9%	185 1.9%
≥ -20 & < -10	323 43.4%	421 56.6%	744 7.5%
≥ -10 & < 0	394 36.5%	685 63.5%	1079 10.9%
≥ 0 & < 10	548 36.9%	938 63.1%	1486 15.0%
≥ 10 & < 20	783 32.4%	1632 67.6%	2415 24.4%
≥ 20 & < 30	416 33.6%	821 66.4%	1237 12.5%
≥ 30 & < 40	520 34.7%	978 65.3%	1498 15.1%
≥ 40 & < 50	385 40.4%	568 59.6%	953 9.6%
> 50	37 38.5%	59 61.5%	96 1.0%
Column Total	3570	6330	9900

Table 9: Cross tabulation of attendance and EUdifferencecategory. The p-value of the chi-squared test is 1.085101e-07. Gamma equals 0.031. Source: author.

Finally, the variable *govaverage*, which was transformed into the original seven categories⁸, needs to be analyzed. The results in the Table 10 confirm the expectations. An increase in the dependent variable *attendance* can be seen while the independent variable is growing. The results are also statistically significant and support thus the hypothesis claiming that the ministers representing more pro-European cabinets attend the Council meetings more often than the ministers who represent more Eurosceptic governments. The strength of the relationship *gamma* is, however, only 0.14 which is relatively low.

⁸ There were no cases for the categories 1 and 2.

	<i>attendance</i>		
<i>govaverage category</i>	0	1	Row total
3	158 51.8%	147 48.2%	305 3.1%
4	243 51.2%	232 48.8%	475 4.8%
5	624 40.9%	901 59.1%	1525 15.4%
6	1686 33.4%	3357 66.6%	5043 50.9%
7	859 33.7%	1693 66.3%	2552 25.8%
Column Total	3570	6330	9900

Table 10: Cross tabulation of attendance and govaveragecategory. The p-value of the chi-squared test is 2.536998e-24. Gamma equals 0.136. Source: author.

5.3. Logistic regression analysis

So far, I have proved that the independent variables individually more or less confirm the hypotheses. However, do they work together and explain the ministers' participation in the Council meetings as one complex model? This part will present a logistic regression model, interpret its results and evaluate them. Statistically, the model can be expressed as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 attendance = & \beta_0 + \beta_1presidency + \beta_2agenda + \beta_3elections + \beta_4EUdifference \\
 & + \beta_5govaverage + error
 \end{aligned}$$

In words, I assume the variables *presidency*, *agenda*, *elections*, *EUdifference* and *govaverage* to influence the probability that national ministers attend the Council meetings. More precisely, I expect *presidency*, *agenda*, *EUdifference* and *govaverage* to increase the probability and *elections* to decrease it. The R outcome of the model is presented in the Table 11.

Before the overall model will be evaluated, the bivariate relationships of the individual independent variables with the dependent variable (models 1 – 5 in the Table 11) can be inspected. Based on the information, it is possible to claim that all factors have a significant impact on the attendance of ministers in the expected way, i.e. *presidency*, *agenda*, *EUdifference* and *govaverage* lead to an increase in *attendance* and, on the contrary, the variable *elections* cause a decrease in *attendance*. However, the variable *EUdifference* reports a very weak result supporting the findings from the previous cross tabulation analysis. From the overall

perspective, the institutional factors seem to explain most of the variation because their log-likelihood values are the lowest among the models 1 – 5.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	<i>attendance</i>					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>presidency</i>	1.744*** (0.181)					1.805*** (0.183)
<i>agenda</i>		0.083*** (0.005)				0.085*** (0.005)
<i>elections</i>			-0.303*** (0.060)			-0.268*** (0.061)
<i>EUdifference</i>				0.003*** (0.001)		0.001 (0.001)
<i>govaverage</i>					0.208*** (0.023)	0.227*** (0.024)
Constant	0.529*** (0.021)	-0.024 (0.043)	0.615*** (0.023)	0.532*** (0.026)	-0.646*** (0.135)	-1.386*** (0.148)
Observations	9,900	9,900	9,900	9,900	9,900	9,900
Log Likelihood	-6,400.843	-6,335.676	-6,459.571	-6,468.555	-6,430.995	-6,204.711
Akaike Inf. Crit.	12,805.680	12,675.350	12,923.140	12,941.110	12,865.990	12,421.420
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01					

Table 11: The logistic regressions outcomes. Source: author.

Apart from the variables used in the final model, bivariate regression analyses for alternative variables (*agendaAOB*, *EUpositive* and *EUnegative*) were also performed. The first variable is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, reports the value of 0.036 and the standard error 0.003. The variable *EUpositive* is significant only at the 0.1 level and the values of the coefficient and standard error are 0.003 and 0.002 respectively. Finally, *EUnegative* reports the statistically significant (at the 0.01 level) result -0.007 and the standard error of 0.002. The results thus do not differ from the variables used in the final model and support our hypotheses that more agenda points and more EU optimist public motivate the minister to attend the Council meetings and, on the contrary, more negative public discourages the ministers to travel to Brussels. Moreover, the results for the variable dealing with the public attitude towards the EU is again quite problematic since the values of the coefficients are very small and the variable *EUpositive* is not sufficiently significant. The results from the previous section with the contingency tables are, therefore, confirmed.

Now, the final model (6) including all variables at the same time can be inspected. The results seem promising but it is necessary to evaluate the model as a whole first. The log-likelihood equals to -6204.7. The null deviance (the deviance for the model including only intercept) of the model is 12945 and the residual deviance (the deviance for the model including the variables) of the model is 12409 which implies that the new model is better than the one without the independent variables. Based on these measures, it is possible to calculate the alternative measures of R^2 suitable for the logistic regression (Hosmer and Lemeshow's R^2 , Cox and Snell's R^2 and Nagelkerke's R^2) which imply how much variance of the dependent variable can be explained by the variance of the independent variables. The results are depicted in the Table 12 and are relatively weak, indicating that the model is able to predict from 4% to 7% of the dependent variable. However, the study by Gron and Salomonsen (2015, p. 1082) reports nearly identical pseudo R^2 values: 5 – 6%. The low value thus seems to be symptomatic for this issue. The reason probably is that the participation can be influenced by several factors, especially at the individual level, which have not been included to the analysis because it would be very demanding to gather the data or impossible to operationalize and analyze them in the quantitative way.

Pseudo R^2	
Hosmer and Lemeshow's R^2	0.041
Cox and Snell's R^2	0.053
Nagelkerke's R^2	0.072

Table 12: Pseudo R^2 for the model. Source: author.

However, if I compare the values of R^2 with the confusion matrix (Table 13), which tabulates actual and predicted values and thus indicates the accuracy of the model, the results seem more promising. The table indicates that the predicted and actual values match in 6420 cases out of 9900 which means that the success rate of the model is 65%⁹. The sensitivity (the true positive rate) of the model is 94.8%¹⁰ and the specificity (the true negative rate) is 11.8%¹¹.

		Predicted	
		1	0
Actual	1	6000	330
	0	3150	420

Table 13: Confusion matrix. Source: author.

⁹ $(6000+420)/9900 = 0.648$.

¹⁰ $6000/(6000+330) = 0.948$.

¹¹ $420/(420+3150) = 0.118$.

Based on these two measures, I can depict the ROC curve which evaluates the relationship between the true positive rate (sensitivity) and the false positive rate (1-specificity). The bigger the area under the curve, the better a particular model is. Ideally, the curve touches the top left corner indicating 100% success rate (Simple Guide to Logistic Regression in R, 2015). However, the Figure 4 indicates that the predictive power of the model is not very strong in this case. The problem is apparently the low value of specificity indicating that the model does not estimate ministers' absences very well.

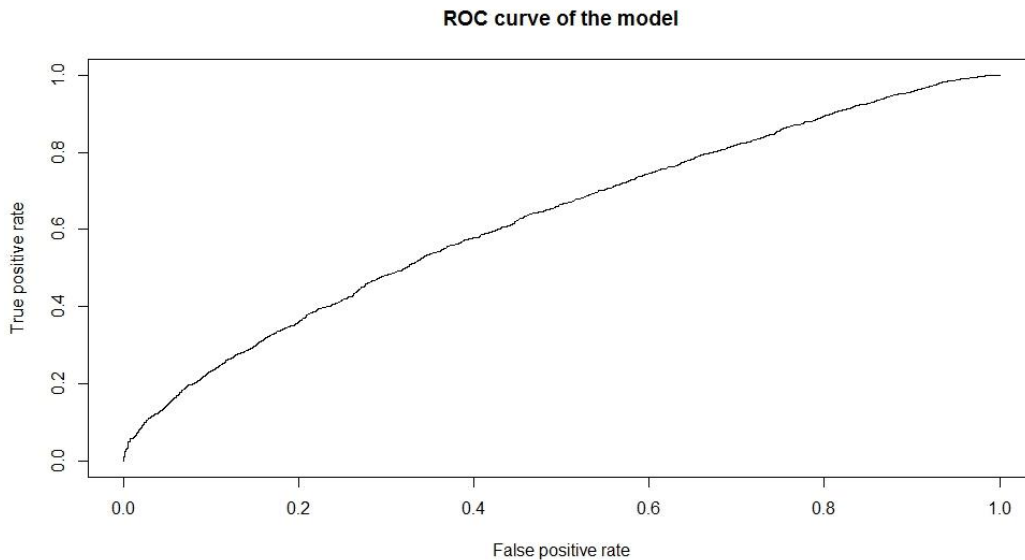


Figure 4: Roc curve of the model. Source: author.

After evaluating the model as a whole, the individual variables can be inspected. Four out of five independent variables are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The p-values for the individual variables are: *presidency* (2e-16), *agenda* (2e-16), *elections* (1.23e-05), *EUdifference* (0.529), *govaverage* (2e-16). The variable *EUdifference* is thus the only one which reports statistically insignificant results and indicates thus that the overall public opinion does not have an impact on ministers and their decision to go or not to go to Brussels. The insignificance can be explained by the fact that the Nordic countries, which rank among the best in terms of the attendance, have on average relatively low (although not negative) results regarding the variable *EUdifference* and the countries with highest values for the variable (Bulgaria, Romania and Poland) report, on the contrary, low participation rate of their ministers. Other variables, however, provide significant results. Therefore, their coefficients can be further interpreted.

Unfortunately, the outcome of logistic regression is difficult to interpret because the coefficients represent "the change in *logit* of the outcome variable associated with a one-unit change in the predictor variable" (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 368) while holding the other predictor variables constant. And "[t]he *logit* of the outcome is simply the natural logarithm of

the odds of Y occurring” (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 368). It means the natural logarithm of the odds of a minister attending a Council meeting. To find out the results, I have to exponentiate the coefficients to get the odds which are presented in the Table 14.

Variable	<i>presidency</i>	<i>agenda</i>	<i>elections</i>	<i>EUdifference</i>	<i>govaverage</i>
Odds ratio	6.0771233	1.0888915	0.7647358	1.0007186	1.2545206
Conf. int. 97.5%	8.8565552	1.1006631	0.8626322	1.0029576	1.3156150
Conf. int. 2.5%	4.3091895	1.0774526	0.6782470	0.9984828	1.1963263

Table 14: The odds ratios for the coefficients of the variables in the model. The confidence level is 0.95. Source: author.

Based on the results, I can say that the odds that the minister attend a Council meeting is 6.1 higher for the minister who represents a presidency country than for a minister from a country which does not hold the office (while holding the other variables constant). Similarly, I can argue that the odds of the minister coming to Brussels increases by a factor of 1.1 for a one-point increase in the variable agenda (while keeping the other variables constant). I can thus confirm the finding of Gron and Salomonsen (2015) who also report a significant and positive effect of the number of b-points. Conversely, the odds of the minister attending the Council meeting can be multiplied by 0.8 for a unit change in the variable elections (while holding the other variables constant). It means that the odds decrease¹² for the ministers who face upcoming national elections. Finally, the odds of the minister coming to Brussels increases by 1.3 as the variable *govaverage* increases by one unit (while other variables are held constant). As mentioned above, the variable *EUdifference* is not statistically significant. The reason is that the values of its confidence interval cross the value 1¹³.

Finally, I can calculate the probabilities in order to see the impact of independent variables on the probability of the outcome. The probability change for the variable *EUdifference* is not reported because its result is not statistically significant.

The following plots depict the predicted probability and the confidence intervals for the particular independent variables and represent the impact of the particular variables on the probability that a minister comes for the Council meeting while keeping the effect of the other independent variables constant.

¹² If the value of the predictor is higher than 1, it means an increase in the odds of the outcome occurring. The value smaller than 1, on the contrary, represents a decrease in the odds (Field, Miles, Field, p. 371).

¹³ Once it crosses the value of 1, it is not sure whether the odds increase or decrease as a result of a unit change in the predictor variable (Field, Miles, Field, 2012, p. 372).

- The probability of a minister attending a Council meeting increases from 64% to 91% if the minister comes from the presidency country.

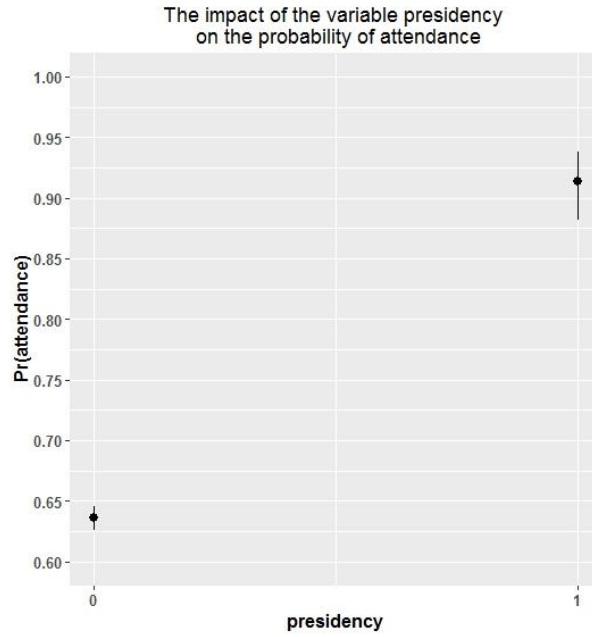


Figure 5: The impact of the variable presidency on the probability of attendance. Source: author.

- The probability of a minister attending a Council meeting increases from 52% when there is only one point in the agenda of the meeting to 70% for the agenda with ten points and to 94% for the agenda with thirty-three points.

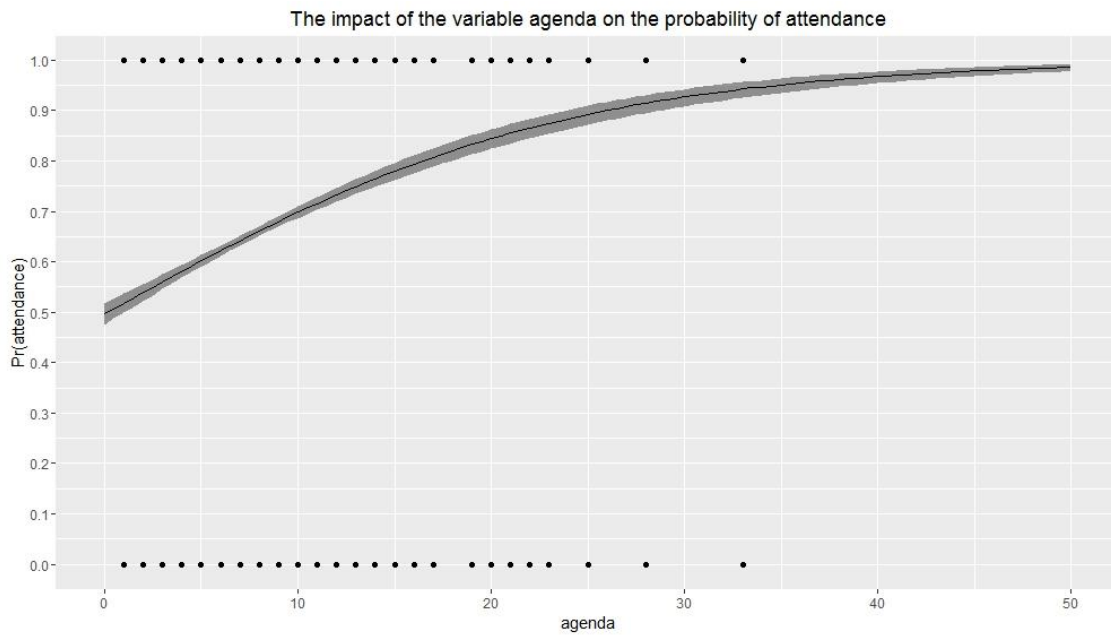


Figure 6: The impact of the variable agenda on the probability of attendance. Source: author.

- The probability of a minister attending a Council meeting decreases from 66% to 60% if the minister faces upcoming national legislative elections.

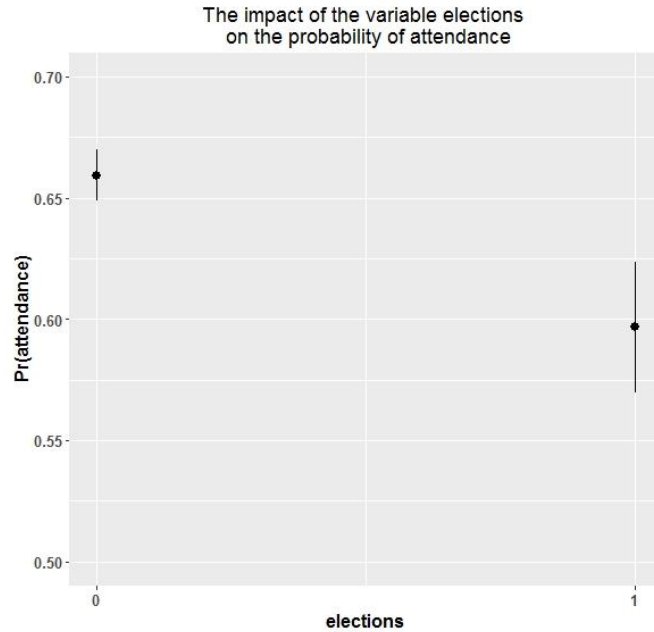


Figure 7: The impact of the variable elections on the probability of attendance. Source: author.

- The probability of a minister attending a Council meeting increases from 49% for the ministers representing the governments with the lowest position towards the EU (3.0) to 55% for the governments with the position around 4 and to 71% for those representing the most pro-European cabinets (the value of 7).

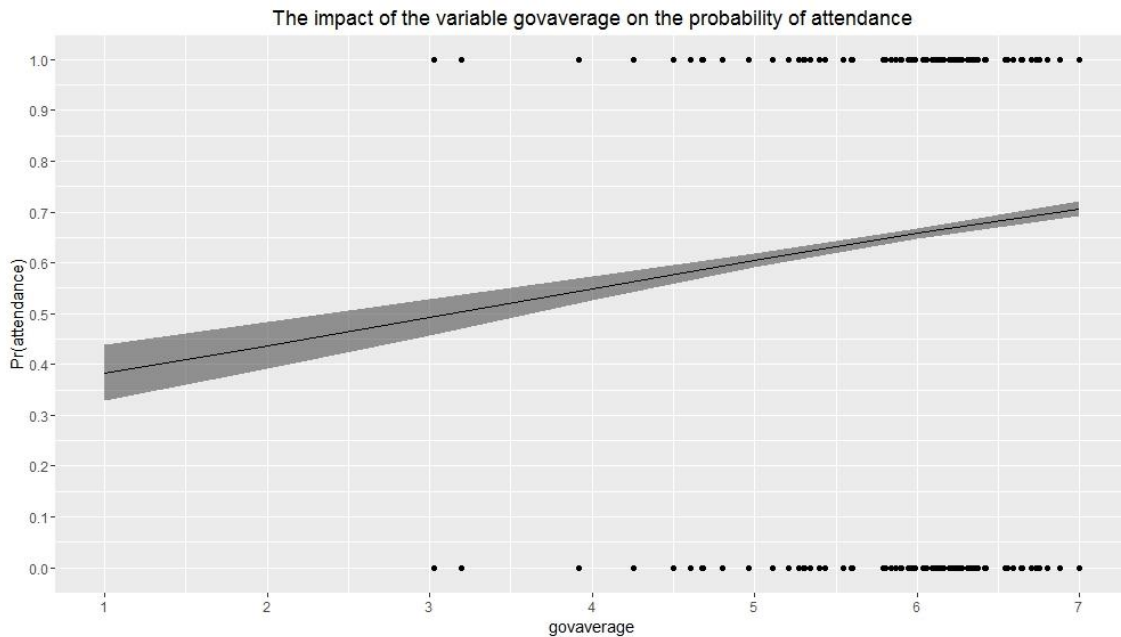


Figure 8: The impact of the variable govaverage on the probability of attendance. Source: author.

To summarize this part, I can argue that three variables (*presidency*, *agenda* and *govaverage*) have a significant and positive effect on the dependent variable *attendance*. It means that the presidency office, more points on the agenda and more pro-European government motivate ministers to attend the Council meetings more often. On the other hand, one variable (*elections*) has a significant negative effect which indicates that the ministers who face upcoming national legislative elections hesitate to travel to Brussels and prefer staying at home. Out of these four variables, *presidency* reports the largest amount of impact on ministers' will to attend Council meetings. Unfortunately, the variable *EUdifference* does not provide significant results so I cannot make any conclusions about the impact of public opinion on ministers' behaviour.

However, despite the positive results for individual variables, the overall "power" of the model is still quite weak as indicated by the R²s. The future research should, therefore, come up with new variables, operationalize better the existing ones or employ qualitative methods to analyze the variables which cannot be transformed into numbers.

5.4. Assumptions and casewise diagnostics

The last thing that needs to be done in order to evaluate the model is to check whether it fulfills the basic assumptions of logistic regression and whether there are some specific cases with very poor fit or, on the contrary, with an undue influence on the model. Firstly, three assumptions – multicollinearity, linearity and independence of errors – will be controlled. Secondly, the residuals and their characteristics will be checked.

Field, Miles and Field (2012, p. 356 – 357) state that there are three assumptions associated with logistic regression – multicollinearity, linearity and independence of errors. Starting with multicollinearity, I can calculate the VIF statistic and the tolerance statistic¹⁴. The results can be seen in the Table 15. Both statistics are close to 1 which is positive and it is possible to argue that the independent variables are not correlated and multicollinearity is not a problem.

	<i>presidency</i>	<i>agenda</i>	<i>elections</i>	<i>EUdifference</i>	<i>govaverage</i>
VIF	1.004166	1.002292	1.005695	1.057846	1.059158
Tolerance	0.9958512	0.9977132	0.9943375	0.9453171	0.9441464

Table 15: VIF test and tolerance for the model 6. Source: author.

Another assumption is the linearity of the logit which has to be checked for each continuous variable. However, none of the variables is truly continuous. The variables *presidency* and

¹⁴ Both statistics, however, contain the same information because tolerance = 1/VIF.

elections are only binary and *govaverage* is the ordinal variable. *EUdifference* and *agenda* may look like continuous variables but they cannot take any value between the individual points and their range is also quite limited. Therefore, this assumption was not inspected.

Furthermore, the assumption of independence of errors should be controlled. The independence means that the individual cases of the data are not related to each other which is a problem in the model because the cases are the ministers who attend the Council meetings more or less regularly and have the same or similar characteristics over time. This assumption can be tested by the Durbin-Watson test whose result (1.654947) is relatively good (close to 2 indicating no correlation) but the p-value is below 0.05 and it is, therefore, not possible to exclude the problem of independence of errors. Gron and Salomonsen (2015, p. 1079) report the same methodological problem claiming that the assumption of independence “is somewhat violated” in their dataset.

This problem may be, however, at least partly solved by clustering the standard errors. The dependence of the data can be firstly expected at the country level because the ministers from the same states share the same national and governmental characteristics (*election*, *EUdifference*, *govaverage*) and secondly at the level of individual Council meetings because they may share the same institutional characteristics (*presidency*, *agenda*). The analyses employing the clustered standard errors based on both the national and meeting characteristics really increase the p-values of the individual coefficients. However, there are no substantive changes compared to the main model. The coefficients which were statistically significant (*presidency*, *agenda*, *elections*, *govaverage*) remain still significant at the level 0.01 and the variable *EUdifference* still does not report any significance. The p-values in the model correcting the dependence at the country level are: *presidency* <0.0001, *agenda* <0.0001, *elections* 0.0038, *EUdifference* 0.8396 and *govaverage* 0.0008. The model correcting the dependence at the meeting level reports these values: *presidency* <0.0001, *agenda* <0.0001, *elections* <0.0001, *EUdifference* 0.6590, *govaverage* <0.0001. The problem of dependent errors thus seems to be not so serious.

Regarding the two specific issues associated with the logistic regression, there is no problem with the complete separation. As the previous figures show, the data overlap in all four cases and they do so even in the case of the variable *EUdifference* whose plot was not published because its results are not statistically significant. The problem of incomplete information, however, seems to be problem in terms of the variable *govaverage* which reports one cross tabulation cell with zero observations. Since it is the only problematic cell out 150 combinations,

I can expect that the results cannot be influenced too much and, therefore, I will not deal with this issue any further.

Finally, it is necessary to run diagnostics of individual cases and their residuals. More precisely, the cases for which the model fits poorly will be explored through their standardized and studentized residuals. Secondly, cases with an undue effect will be evaluated through several indicators, for instance DFBeta, leverage points and Cook's distance.

In terms of standardized and studentized residuals, Field, Miles and Field (2012, p. 376) recommend that only 5% of the residuals can have an absolute value larger than 1.96, 1% of the values can be higher than 2.58 and none of them can be larger than 3. The model meets this criterion. In both cases, fifty-one observations (i.e. 0.5%) are higher than 1.96, one observation (0.01%) is larger than 2.58 and none is higher than 3. There is, therefore, no problem with the model from this perspective.

Regarding the latter group of indicators, those checking the undue effect, DFBeta, leverage points and Cook's distance tests have to be employed. DFBeta represents "the difference between a parameter estimated using all cases and estimated when one case is excluded" (Field, Miles, Field, 2010, p. 304) and its absolute value should be ideally lower than one. The model fulfills this condition. All residuals for the intercept and the variables are smaller than 0.01. In terms of the influential points (measured by the Cook's distance) which can affect the whole model, there is also no problem. According to Field, Miles and Field (2010, p. 303), the border line is again the value of one. The Cook's distance of the residuals is, however, always smaller than 0.01.

Last but not least, it is necessary to inspect leverage points which evaluate "the influence of the observed values of the outcome variable over the predicted values" (Field, Miles, Field, 2010, p. 303). The authors recommend to be concerned with cases which are twice or, alternatively, three times higher than the average leverage value¹⁵. In the model, this value is 0.00061. Unfortunately, there are quite many observations which are twice higher (824) and still a large number of those which are three times higher (383) out of the 9900 cases.

To inspect the impact of the influential points, the analysis without the influential points can be run and the results can be compared with the original model. If the regression without the 824 cases is performed, the results are nearly the same, except the variable *presidency*

¹⁵ Which is calculated as $(k+1)/n$ where k is the number of variables in the model and n the number of cases (Field, Miles, Field, 2010, p. 304).

whose value becomes smaller and statistically insignificant. However, the regression omitting only the 383 cases provides similar results as the original model including the statistically significant variable *presidency*. This test is, therefore, quite ambiguous. However, it indicates that I should be careful about making some strong conclusions about the variable *presidency* until it is inspected more in detail.

To conclude this part of the thesis, it is necessary to summarize the findings. Based on the initial data inspection, I argue that a substantial part of ministers attends the Council meetings, more precisely 64% of them. However, there are some variations over member countries and individual Council configurations.

Regarding the states, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Finland) and Luxembourg have the highest participation rate. On the contrary, ministers from the United Kingdom, Slovakia or Romania travel to Brussels least. The most attended Council configuration is with no doubts the JHA configuration. The COMPET, TTE, GAC and EYCS are, on the other hand, much less attractive for national ministers.

Furthermore, I confirm most of the hypotheses about the factors that influence the participation. The quantitative analysis has proved that there are some factors which influence ministers' attendance. Based on several tests (t-test, cross tabulations and logistic regression), I have confirmed four out of five hypotheses. More precisely, the results indicate that the presidency office, many points on the agenda and pro-European national cabinets motivate ministers from the member countries to come more often to Brussels and participate in the Council meetings. On the contrary, ministers hesitate to come if they face national legislative elections and prefer spending the time on campaigning in their countries. The only variable which does not match the assumptions is the variable *EUdifference* indicating that national ministers do not take account of the public attitude towards the EU while deciding whether they will attend the Council meetings or not. The study by Gron and Salomonsen (2015), which also covers the issue of public attitude towards the EU, has also problems with this variable. The authors operationalize it only as the percentage of people who consider the EU a good thing (they do not take into account the number of people who consider the EU a bad thing), their findings are statistically significant but the results indicate that ministers who represent more pro-European public attend the Council meetings less often. I should be, therefore, careful while making conclusions about the impact of public opinion because the variable provides no or even counterintuitive results.

Unfortunately, the pseudo R²s or the ROC curve indicate that the overall explanatory power of the whole regression model is quite weak which can be seen even in the similar study by Gron and Salomonsen (2015). The weakness is primarily caused by the fact that the issue of ministers' participation may involve more factors than I have analyzed, especially at the individual level. If the dependent variable was operationalized as a percentage for individual ministers, OLS regression could be employed, more individually oriented independent variables involved and the reliability of the model thus improved. However, it would be possible only for the Council configurations where it is clear which minister is supposed to come, for instance AGRIFISH or ENV. Another option would also be a qualitative insight into the question.

6. Ministers' participation and the democratic deficit

Many analyses of the Council (for example, Håge, 2008; Gron, Salomonsen, 2015 or Parížek, Plechanovová, Hosli, 2015) often frame their final results by the debate about the democratic character of the particular phenomenon or the EU governance in general. Sometimes, the literature refers explicitly to the debate on the "democratic deficit" which has been developed especially by Majone (1998, 2000), Moravcsik (2002, 2008), Follesdal and Hix (2006). This thesis will use the same approach to interpret its findings.

6.1. Democratic deficit of the European Union

Both Majone (1998, 2000) and Moravcsik (2002, 2008) oppose the idea of the democratic deficit but they use slightly different arguments for their stands. Majone (1998, 2000) argues that the EU is not a political system comparable to the national one. The EU, according to him, is only a "regulatory state" whose outcomes are not the core of a political contest even at the national level where these issues are handled by isolated agencies, for example courts, central banks, technical regulatory agencies etc. The EU decisions, as well as the decisions of the isolated national agencies in the national states, are thus "Pareto-efficient" (i.e. everyone benefits from them) and there is no need to politicize them in the same way as redistributive decisions (i.e. those with clear winners and losers).

Regarding the topic of the thesis, Majone (1998) argues that the Council is a democratic body because the ministers are accountable to national parliaments and thus, although indirectly, to voters. This interpretation is used also by Moravcsik (2002, 2008) whose critique of the democratic deficit thesis is theoretically rooted in his liberal intergovernmental theory. This approach argues that the EU (especially its supranational bodies) is only an agent of the

member states and, therefore, the EU is accountable through the particular national governments.

Moravcsik (2002, 2008) tries to disprove the individual arguments of the democratic deficit proponents. He claims that the EU is not a superstate because most of the issues (especially the salient ones) are handled by the member states. Moreover, he argues that the system of checks and balances is even stricter compared to the national level, the democratic control and the accountability of individual EU actors is sufficient, the European citizens mostly trust the EU and have the opportunity to participate in the EU politics but they do not have the motivation to do so because they do not find the EU policies the most salient for them

With regards to the Council of ministers, Moravcsik (2002, 2008) argues that the body is democratic and legitimate because its powers are limited and its competences are constrained by other institutions involved in the EU decision-making process – the Commission and the EP. Moreover, he claims that the legitimacy is secured by the accountability of individual actors. The Council is dominated by national governments so the national ministers and other national officials (permanent representatives etc.) are under constant instructions of the national executives which are, at the same time, under control of the national parliaments and indirectly thus under the public control. As he notes (Moravcsik, 2008, p. 335), some parliamentary committees of the EU affairs (for example in Sweden or Denmark) are very strong and require parliamentary assent before the particular minister votes in the Council. Finally, Moravcsik (2002, 2008) supports the legitimacy of the Council by refusing the complaints about transparency of the Council. He states that the degree of secretion (especially at the lower levels) is comparable to the national administrations.

Follesdal and Hix (2006) are, on the contrary, defenders of the EU democratic deficit concept. They argue that all functions of the EU are not only of the regulatory nature as Majone (1998, 2000) indicates. They say that there are in fact redistributive consequences, i.e. clear winners and losers, in the EU. The key idea of their approach is, however, based on the criticism of Moravcsik (2002). They argue that there is no political contestation for the political leadership or a rival political agenda, i.e. there is no true opposition which would seek power at the European level. The only opposition is the one which questions the EU and its policies as a whole. As a result of the missing political opposition, the EU institutions do not have to reflect the public opinion and changing preferences of the EU citizens.

Regarding the Council, Follesdal and Hix (2006) appreciate the increase in roll-call voting and some indications of coalition building among the member states. However, they also claim

that the Council has to become more as a “classic ‘legislature’, with standard rules of procedure determining the division of labour, agenda control and amendment rights” (Follesdal, Hix, 2006, p. 553 – 554). Moreover, they argue that the Council also needs to be more transparent, publish voting records (for all votes, not only the final and successful ones) and allow larger media scrutiny of its internal processes.

To summarize the current debate on the legitimacy of the EU, Follesdal and Hix (2006) consider the EU illegitimate because there is a lack of political contestation which would reflect changing preferences of the EU citizens. On the other hand, Majone (1998, 2000) argues that the EU is legitimate as long as its primary function is of regulatory nature with no redistributive consequences. Finally, Moravcsik (2002, 2008) focuses on the accountability of national governments and argues that the EU is democratic as long as the member states are so.

6.2. Ministers’ participation – Moravcsik or Hix?

In this part, I will evaluate whether the Council is democratic with regard to the topic and the results of this thesis, i.e. the participation of ministers.

As I have presented in the analytical chapter, the overall participation of ministers in the Council of the EU is 64%. Is it enough to argue that the Council contributes to the democratic legitimacy of the EU? And if it is, do the ministers reflect the changing preferences of the citizens? And can the legitimacy of the Council be evaluated based only on the participation of ministers? The answers are not easy but I can provide some while drawing inspiration from the above mentioned debate on the democratic deficit of the EU.

A proponent of the intergovernmental theory would suggest that the participation of the ministers is not relevant for the evaluation of the Council’s legitimacy because both ministers and their substitutes (junior ministers, permanent representatives etc.) are just agents of the particular national governments which are, at the same time, directly accountable to the national parliaments and indirectly to the voters.

The supporters of the democratic deficit idea who share the arguments with Follesdal and Hix (2006) would, however, answer that this accountability is not sufficient because it does not mean that the changing public preferences are reflected and transmitted through the national government to the Council, especially when national issues dominate the political discourse in the member states, people are not informed about the EU policies and do not care about them. Hence, the ministers (or their substitutes) can do whatever they want in the Council.

This skeptical view is supported even by the results of the thesis. Firstly, the variable *EUdifference* is not relevant which implies that the public attitude towards the EU is not taken into account when the ministers decide about going to the Council meetings. Secondly, the results of the variables *elections* and *govaverage* implies that the ministers focus more on the national issues. Firstly, the ministers prefer staying at home before domestic elections to attending the meetings in Brussels. Secondly, the governmental attitude towards the EU plays a larger role for ministers than the public opinion. Therefore, I claim that the ministers behave rationally, search the ways to keep their office but they do not reflect the changing EU preferences of their citizens while planning their business trips to Brussels.

Therefore, the results tend to support the proponents of the democratic deficit idea. However, it is not possible to evaluate the democratic legitimacy of the Council (or even the legitimacy of the whole Union) only according to the participation of the ministers. This conclusion should be only a piece to the whole puzzle.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to contribute to the current knowledge on the EU, explore the participation of the national ministers in the Council meetings and identify some factors which can influence the attendance. In conclusion, I argue that the effort was mostly successful.

Firstly, the thesis described the data, defined the theoretical and the methodological framework of the thesis. The dataset included information on 364 Council meetings from 2009 to 2014. Methodologically, the thesis used established statistical tools to describe the data and to infer the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. The most sophisticated method used in the analysis was the logistic regression analysis. Moreover, several methodological shortcomings were solved and it is, therefore, possible to consider the results trustworthy and reliable.

Theoretically, the analysis was based on the rational choice approach which assumed that the key unit of analysis is an individual which has some preferences, behaves rationally (i.e. orders different alternatives based on their utility and chooses the best option) and, at the same time, takes all strategic and institutional constraints into account while making the decision. Secondly, the thesis presented a model based on the theory which assumed that the ministers of the EU member states behave rationally, they want to keep their office but also to promote their policies and, therefore, they attend the Council meetings because it provides them with

political influence, prestige, media attention and influential political contacts. However, the model argued that the participation is also influenced by some institutional, national or governmental factors which may encourage the minister to attend more or, on the other hand, to attend less the meetings in Brussels.

The hypotheses defined in the chapter 2 argued that ministers are mainly motivated to attend the Council meetings if they 1) represent the presidency member state, 2) if the meetings' agenda is more salient, 3) if the ministers represent pro-European public and 4) if they represent pro-European government. On the contrary, one hypothesis at the national level claimed that 5) the ministers are less willing to participate if they face upcoming legislative elections in their country.

The analysis of the data resulted in the information that 64% of the ministers had participated in the Council meetings which was less compared to the study for the period 2004 - 2009 published by Gron and Salomonson (2015). The explanation of this evolution is a challenge for future research. Secondly, I argued that there was a considerable variation in the participation among the member states and among the Council configurations. For example, the Netherlands fell from the top positions in the participation rankings to the bottom. In terms of the configurations, the analysis revealed that the GAC, generally perceived as the most senior configuration, reported surprisingly low participation compared to other configurations. On the contrary, the ENV was surprisingly one of the most attended configurations. The analysis also described an interesting phenomenon in terms of the ECOFIN indicating that November meetings of this configuration dealing with the EU budget are always overlooked by the ministers and nearly none attend the session.

In terms of the individual factors, the inferential statistics proved that the hypotheses were mostly right. However, the results for the variable *EUdifference* in the contingency table were quite weak and the logistic regression analysis did not support this particular hypothesis at all. As a result, I claim that four out of five independent variables really have an impact on the ministers' attendance. The ministers representing the presidency country come to the Council meetings more often, the participation is more likely if there are many points on the agenda and the pro-European orientation of the national governments motivates the particular ministers to travel to Brussels more often. On the contrary, the ministers who face upcoming legislative elections in their countries prefer staying at home to participating in the Council meetings.

The overall goodness of the whole model was, however, not so good. The logistic equivalents of R^2 reported values about 4 – 7%. The success rate of the model was 65%.

However, Gron and Salomonsen (2015) achieved similar values in their research. Therefore, I propose to analyze this issue also qualitatively so that it is possible to involve even the factors which are difficult or impossible to analyze in the quantitative way, for instance the language knowledge or the expertise of the ministers.

Finally, I interpreted the results with regard to the “democratic deficit” of the EU. The conclusion supports the proponents of the idea but also stresses that the democratic legitimacy of the Council should not be evaluated based only on the ministers’ participation. It is rather a new piece of information that can be used in the scholarly debate on the topic. Moreover, the results confirm the current trend of bureaucratization of the decision-making process in the Council which is pointed out by some scholars (Häge, 2008; Parížek, Plechanovová, Hosli, 2015).

The results of the thesis thus seem promising. However, there is still room for improvement and many questions should be answered by future research. Methodologically, the analysis could be more focused on individual ministers and their characteristics. Moreover, OLS regression could be employed if the dependent variable was operationalized as a percentage for individual ministers. However, it would be possible only for the ministers which participate in the Council configurations where it is very clear which minister is supposed to come, for instance the AGRIFISH or ENV. In configurations like the EYCS, it would be quite artificial to guess which minister was supposed to come and did not do so since the configuration involves several portfolios covered by several national ministers. Moreover, the analysis would also deserve a qualitative insight because some potential explanations are difficult to quantify, for example language knowledge of individual ministers.

From the theoretical point of view, the attention could also be put to some culturally conditioned explanations (for instance different administrative systems in the member states), sociological explanations (norms, expected behaviour) or psychological factors (fear of the ministers to attend the meetings).

Finally, from the “normative” perspective focused on the democratic legitimacy of ministers’ behaviour, we have to ask whether the participation of ministers is really important and whether professional diplomats with experience, expertise and knowledge of many languages are not better in defending national interests.

Hopefully, the future research will answer at least some of these questions.

Shrnutí

Tato magisterská práce se zabývá otázkou účasti národních ministrů na jednáních Rady Evropské Unie. Toto téma je jednak velmi aktuální a zároveň velmi zajímavé z empirického, teoretického a normativního hlediska. Práce je rovněž významným příspěvkem k současnému politologickému poznání, jelikož je založená na nově vytvořeném a velmi rozsáhlém datasetu, který zahrnuje 364 jednání Rady během let 2009 až 2014.

Teoreticky práce vychází z teorie racionální volby, jež předpokládá, že se ministři chovají racionálně, tj. mají určité preference, jsou schopni je seřadit na základě jejich prospěšnosti a na závěr si vybrat ty, které jsou za daných strategických a institucionálních podmínek nejlepší. Práce tak předpokládá, že jsou ministři členských států výrazně motivováni účastnit se jednání Rady, jelikož jim to přináší významné politické benefity. Zároveň je však chování ministrů omezeno vnějším faktory, a to na třech úrovních – institucionální, národní a vládní. Práce konkrétně předpokládá, že předsednictví EU, význam agendy jednotlivých setkání, proevropsky orientovaná veřejnost v jednotlivých členských státech a proevropský postoj národních vlád motivují ministry účastnit se jednání Rady častěji. Naopak blížící se legislativní volby na národní úrovni ministry od účasti na jednání Rady odrazují.

Výsledky pokročilé kvantitativní analýzy potvrzují většinu těchto předpokladů. Průměrná účast na jednání činila 64%. Mezi jednotlivými členskými státy a také mezi jednotlivými konfiguracemi Rady je však patrná jasná variace. Z hlediska výše zmíněných faktorů potvrzuje statistická analýza, že úřad předsedy EU, významná agenda jednání a proevropská orientace národního kabinetu skutečně zvyšují šance, že se daný ministr jednání Rady zúčastní. Naopak blížící se legislativní volby na národní úrovni tyto šance snižují. Postoj veřejnost vůči EU nemá dle výsledků žádný vliv na chování ministrů. Práce zároveň odhaluje hned několik zajímavých poznatků s ohledem na účast ministrů. Například je z výsledků patrný jasný pokles vůči předchozímu pětiletému období či dominance severských států, co se míry účasti týče. Zároveň práce odhaluje překvapivě nízkou míru účasti u konfigurace GAC, a naopak vysokou míru účasti u konfigurace ENV. V neposlední řadě pak práce zjišťuje, že některé meetingy ECOFIN jsou národními ministry zcela ignorovány.

Na závěr jsou poznatky orámovány debatou o demokratickém deficitu EU. Práce dochází k závěru, že výsledky předchozí statistické analýzy dávají spíše za pravdu zastáncům tohoto fenoménu. Práce však zároveň potvrzuje současný trend byrokratizace rozhodovacích procesů v Radě, který byl některým politology zpozorován.

Summary

This master thesis focuses on national ministers and their participation in the Council of the European Union. This issue is very topical and interesting for empirical, theoretical and normative reasons. Moreover, the thesis serves as a substantial contribution to the scholarly knowledge because it is based on a newly created and very extensive dataset for 364 Council meetings that took place from 2009 to 2014.

Theoretically, the thesis draws on the rational choice approach which assumes that the ministers behave rationally, i.e. they have own preferences, order them according to their utility and, finally, choose the best one in the particular strategic and institutional context. The thesis, therefore, assumes that the national ministers are highly motivated to attend the Council meetings because it brings them political gains. However, their behaviour is constrained by external factors at three levels – institutional, national and governmental. More precisely, the thesis hypothesizes that the presidency office, a salient agenda of the particular meeting, pro-European public in the member states and pro-European attitude of the national governments motivate the ministers to attend the Council meetings more often. On the contrary, the thesis assumes that the ministers coming from the countries where national legislative elections are about to take place soon are less likely to devote their time to the Council sessions.

The results of an advanced quantitative analysis confirm most of the assumptions. The average participation was 64%. However, there were large differences across individual member states and across the Council configurations. Regarding the above mentioned factors, the statistical analysis concludes that the presidency office, the salient agenda and the pro-European cabinet really increase the odds of the ministers attending the Council meeting. Conversely, the national elections discourage the ministers to travel to Brussels. The public attitude, however, seems to have no effect on the ministers' behaviour. Moreover, the thesis reveals some interesting findings regarding the participation in the Council meetings. For instance, there has been a clear drop in the participation compared to the previous period, the Nordic countries dominate the rankings, the GAC configuration reports surprisingly low attendance, the ENV configuration, on the contrary, reports surprisingly high attendance and some ECOFIN meetings are completely ignored by the national ministers.

Finally, the thesis elaborates on the EU democratic deficit debate and concludes that the results of the previous analysis tend to support the proponents of this phenomenon. Moreover, the results confirm the current trend of bureaucratization of the Council decision-making which has been observed by some political scientists.

Bibliography

Monographies

BAAL, Leendert Jan. (2004). Member States Operating in the EU Council of Ministers: Inside Impressions. In: MEERTS, Paul; CEDE, Franz. *Negotiating European Union*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 127 – 142.

BEACH, Derek. (2008). The Facilitator of Efficient Negotiations in the Council: The Impact of the Council Secretariat. In: NAURIN, Daniel; WALLACE, Helen. *Unveiling The Council of the European Union: Games Governments Play in Brussels*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 219 – 237.

ELGSTRÖM, Ole. (2003). *European Union Council Presidencies: A Comparative Perspective*. London: Routledge. 210 p.

FIELD, Andy; MILES, Jeremy; FIELD, Zoë. (2012). *Discovering Statistics Using R*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 992 p.

HAYES-RENSHAW, Fiona; WALLACE, Helen. (2006). *The Council of Ministers*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 392 p.

HIX, Simon; HOYLAND, Bjorn. (2011). *The Political System of the European Union*. 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 448 p.

JORGENSEN, Knud Erik; POLLACK, Mark A.; ROSAMOND, Ben. (2006). *Handbook of European Union Politics*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 616 p.

KABACOFF, Robert I. (2011). *R in Action: Data analysis and graphics with R*. Shelter Island: Manning Publications Co. 447 p.

MCCORMICK, John. (2011). *Understanding the European Union: A Concise Introduction*. 5th ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 276 p.

MEERTS, Paul; CEDE, Franz. (2004). *Negotiating European Union*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. 261 p.

MEIER, Kenneth J.; BRUDNEY, Jeffrey L.; BOHTE, John. (2010). *Applied Statistics for Public and Nonprofit Administration*. 8th ed. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning. 608 p.

NAURIN, Daniel; WALLACE, Helen. (2008). *Unveiling The Council of the European Union: Games Governments Play in Brussels*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 320 p.

NUGENT, Neill. (2010). *The Government and Politics of the European Union*. 7th ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 432 p.

POLLACK, Mark A. (2006). Rational Choice and EU Politics. In: JORGENSEN, Knud Erik; POLLACK, Mark A., ROSAMOND, Ben. *Handbook of European Union Politics*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. p. 31 – 55.

SHEPSLE, Kenneth A. (2010). *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Ltd. 548 p.

SHERRINGTON, Philippa. (2000). *The Council of Ministers: Political Authority in the European Union*. London and New York: Pinter. 213 p.

TALLBERG, Jonas. (2008). The Power of the Chair: Formal Leadership by the Council Presidency. In: NAURIN, Daniel; WALLACE, Helen. *Unveiling The Council of the European Union: Games Governments Play in Brussels*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 187 – 202.

WESTLAKE, Martin; GALLOWAY, David. (2004). *The Council of the European Union*. 3rd ed. London: John Harper Publishing. 456 p.

Periodical literature

BOSTOCK, David. (2002). Coreper Revisited. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 40, n. 2, p. 215 – 234.

FOLLESDAL, Andreas; HIX, Simon. (2006). Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 44, n. 3, p. 533 – 562.

GRON, Caroline Howard; SALOMONSEN, Heidi Houlberg. (2015). Who's at the table? An analysis of ministers' participation in EU Council of Ministers meetings. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 22, n. 8, p. 1071 – 1088.

HÄGE, Frank M. (2007). Committee Decision-making in the Council of the European Union. *European Union Politics*. Vol. 8, n. 3, p. 299 – 328.

HÄGE, Frank M. (2008). Who Decides in the Council of the European Union. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 46, n. 3, p. 533 – 558.

HALL, Peter A.; TAYLOR, Rosemary C. R. (1996). Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms. *Political Studies*. Vol. 44, n. 5, p. 936 – 957.

- LEWIS, Jeffrey. (2005). The Janus Face of Brussels: Socialization and Everyday Decision Making in the European Union. *International Organization*. Vol. 59, n. 4, p. 937 – 971.
- LEWIS, Jeffrey. (2010). How institutional environments facilitate cooperative negotiation styles in EU decision-making. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 17, n. 5, p. 648 – 664.
- MAJONE, Giandomenico. (1998). Europe's "Democratic Deficit": The Question of Standards. *European Law Journal*. Vol. 4, n. 1, p. 5 – 28.
- MAJONE, Giandomenico. (2000). The Credibility Crisis of Community Regulation. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 38, n. 2, p. 273 – 302.
- MATTILA, Mikko; LANE, Jan-Erik. (2001). Why Unanimity in the Council? A Roll Call Analysis of Council Voting. *European Union Politics*. Vol. 2, n. 1, p. 31 – 52.
- MATTILA, Mikko. (2004). Contested decisions: Empirical analysis of voting in the European Union Council of Ministers. *European Journal of Political Research*. Vol. 43, n. 1, p. 29 – 50.
- MORAVCSIK, Andrew. (2002). In Defence of the "Democratic Deficit": Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 40, n. 4, p. 603 – 624.
- MORAVCSIK, Andrew. (2008). The Myth of Europe's "Democratic Deficit". *Intereconomics: Journal of European Economic Policy*. Vol. 2008, n. November/December, p. 331 – 340.
- PARÍZEK, Michal; PLECHANOVÁ, Běla; HOSLI, Madeleine O. (2015). Byrokrtaizace rozhodování v Evropské unii po východním rozšíření. *Sociologický časopis*. Vol. 51, n. 1, p. 41 – 64.
- PLECHANOVÁ, Běla. (2010). The EU Council enlarged: North-South-East or core-periphery? *European Union Politics*. Vol. 12, n. 1, p. 87 – 106.
- STROM, Kaare. (1990). A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties. *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 34, n. 2, p. 565 – 598.
- TALLBERG, Jonas. (2004). The Power of the Presidency: Brokerage, Efficiency and Distribution in EU Negotiations. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 42, n. 5, p. 999 – 1022.
- THOMSON, Robert. (2008). The Council Presidency in the European Union: Responsibility with Power. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 46, n. 3, p. 593 – 617.

Online sources

BAKKER, Ryan; EDWARDS, Erica; HOOGHE, Liesbeth et al. (2015). *1999-2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File*. Version 1.1. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina. [online]. <www.chesdata.eu>

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. (2007). *Council decision determining the order in which the office of President of the Council shall be held*. [online]. <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32007D0005&from=EN>>

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. (2009). *Council's Rules of Procedure*. [online]. [cit. 2016-09-24]. <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:l14576>>

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. *Press releases for the Council meetings 3215 – 3287*. [online]. <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/register/en/content/int/?lang=EN&typ=ADV>>

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. *Provisional agendas for the Council meetings 3215 – 3287*. [online]. <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/register/en/content/int/?lang=EN&typ=ADV>>

ELECTION GUIDE. *Elections*. [online]. [cit. 2016-05-01]. <<http://www.electionguide.org/elections/>>

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Standard Eurobarometer 72 - 81*. [online]. [cit. 2016-04-01]. <<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/#p=1&instruments=STANDARD&surveyKy=2041>>

EUROPEAN UNION. *Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union*. [online]. [cit. 2016-09-23]. <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012M/TXT>>

GOULARD, Hortense. Council confirms shift in EU presidencies to replace UK term. *Politico*. [online]. (2016). [cit. 2016-09-25]. <<http://www.politico.eu/article/council-confirms-shift-in-eu-presidencies-to-replace-uk-term-european-estonia/>>

Ministři Sobotkovy vlády jezdí na Rady EU častěji, na Topolánka ale nemají. *EurActiv.cz*. [online]. (2015). [cit. 2016-10-30]. <<http://euractiv.cz/clanky/cr-v-evropske-unii/ministri-sobotkovy-vlady-jezdi-na-rady-eu-casteji-na-topolanka-ale-nemaji-012550/>>

PARTIES AND ELECTIONS IN EUROPE. *Countries*. [online]. [cit. 2016-05-01]. <<http://www.parties-and-elections.eu>>

Simple Guide to Logistic Regression in R. *Analytics Vidhya*. [online]. (2015). [cit. 2016-08-19]. <<https://www.analyticsvidhya.com/blog/2015/11/beginners-guide-on-logistic-regression-in-r>>

Webpages of the EU member states' governments

Austria: www.bka.gv.at

Belgium: www.federal-government.be

Bulgaria: www.government.bg

Croatia: www.vlada.gov.hr

Cyprus: www.cyprus.gov.cy

Czech Republic: www.vlada.cz

Denmark: www.stm.dk

Estonia: www.riigikantselei.ee

Finland: www.valtioneuvosto.fi

France: www.gouvernement.fr

Germany: www.bundesregierung.de

Greece: www.primeminister.gov.gr

Hungary: www.kormany.hu

Ireland: www.gov.ie

Italy: www.governo.it

Latvia: www.mk.gov.lv

Lithuania: www.lrv.lt

Luxembourg: www.gouvernement.lu

Malta: www.gov.mt

Netherlands: www.government.nl

Poland: www.premier.gov.pl

Portugal: www.portugal.gov.pt

Romania: www.gov.ro

Slovakia: www.vlada.gov.sk

Slovenia: www.vlada.si

Spain: www.lamoncloa.gob.es

Sweden: www.government.se

United Kingdom: www.gov.uk

MASTER'S THESIS PROJECT

Who Governs? The Participation of Ministers in Council Meetings

Author: Bc. Václav Vlček

Signature of the author:

Supervisor: Michal Parížek, Ph.D.

Signature of the supervisor:

Academic year of assignment proposal: 2014/2015

Department: Department of International Relations

1. Subject

The thesis will deal with the issue of ministers' participation in the meetings of the Council of the European Union (sometimes also called the Council of Ministers).

Together with the European Parliament, the Council is involved in the legislative process of the EU. As previously mentioned, it is usually perceived as the body where national ministers meet, discuss Commission's proposals and finally pass the acts. This is not, however, entirely true.

Firstly, it is necessary to mention that the Council is not one unitary body.¹⁶ Instead it consists of several institutions – different configurations of ministerial meetings, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), several working groups or the Secretariat of the Council.

Secondly, the ministerial meetings are not the only place where agenda is discussed and passed. The lower levels of the Council decision-making process are also responsible for authorizing a substantial part of the dossiers. Häge (2008) argues that about 48% of the agenda are discussed and 35% decided at the ministerial level. Haynes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006, p. 79) go even further and claim that it is only 15% of the proposals which are adopted during the ministerial meetings. In both cases the results mean that more than one half of the dossiers are agreed by the working groups or the COREPER committees and then postponed to the ministerial level where they are passed “en bloc” as so called a-points without any further negotiations. (Häge, 2008, p. 535; Haynes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 79) The post-enlargement shift of the agenda from the political level to the administrative body (COREPER) is also supported by findings of Parizek, Plechanovova and Hosli (2015) or Best and Settembri (2008).

Finally, the “ministerial level” is not exactly what it seems to be. The paragraph 2 of the Article 9c of the Lisbon Treaty says that “The Council shall consist of a representative of each Member State at ministerial level, who may commit the government of the Member State in question and cast its vote.“. (Lisabon Treaty) These representatives are not, however, defined any further and the member states interpret this paragraph very loosely. It may be a minister (either senior, junior or regional) or an official who is politically appointed to represent the corresponding government. (Haynes-Renshaw, Wallace, 2006, p. 79) This particular issue (Is it really the ministers who

¹⁶ Although it is thus defined by the EU law (Article 9c of the Lisbon Treaty).

influence the lives of five hundred million EU citizens through their decisions in the Council?) still remains nearly untouched. Although it is quite important question, there is so far only one article (Gron, Salmonsens, 2015) dealing with it. The first aim of this thesis is thus to contribute to recent scholarly literature on this topical but quite overlooked issue.

The second reason why it is important to examine ministers' participation in the Council meetings is the democratic legitimacy of the EU. The "democratic deficit" of the EU has been discussed since mid 1980s. (Hix, Hoyland, 2011, p. 132) As previously mentioned, the Council is part of the EU legislative process. The participation of ministers (with their democratic legitimacy and accountability) in the decision-making process is therefore a key question of these debates. Hence, the result of the thesis will be interpreted from main two perspectives. The first one which advocates presence of the democratic deficit in the EU (Follesdal, Hix, 2006) and the second one which opposes many ideas of democratic deficit proponents. (Majone 1998, 2000; Moravcsik, 2002, 2008)

1.1. Theory

The thesis will focus particularly on individual ministers and their attendance in the Council. However, it is necessary to take into the account that representation of the member states in the Council is not ministers' only activity. They also have duties back at home where they, moreover, have to account for their actions to their political parties and electorates. Finally, they also have some own believes and preferences which influence their behaviour. Therefore, the thesis will analyse ministers' behaviour at three levels - the institutional, the national and the individual. Each of these levels will be based on different theoretical approach.

The basic idea behind the whole paper will, nevertheless, be the same: ministers are rational actors who want to maximise their political utility but their behaviour is influenced by several factors, for instance the institutional setting of the decision-making process in the Council, national characteristics of the country which ministers represent in the Council and their personal believes and preferences.

For the purpose of the first level of analysis, the institutional one, the rational choice institutionalism will be applied. This approach is based on three basic assumptions. Firstly, it relies on "individuals as the basic units unit of social analysis". Secondly, the

rational choice institutionalism assumes individuals to behave rationally, strategically, seek their goals and “maximize their expected utility”. Finally, the approach puts emphasis on institutions which constrain individuals’ behaviour and choices. (Pollack, 2006) Political behaviour is thus formed by institutional rules and processes. (Shepsle, 2006) By applying this concept the thesis will try to find and explain potential institutional explanations of ministers’ presence or absence in the Council meetings.

To explain the national effect on ministers’ attendance we have to think about their role in the national politics. Ministers represent the government, which consists of ruling parties which are accountable to voters and have to defend their moves in elections. Therefore, the public opinion may influence ministers’ behaviour. In terms of the European integration this issue is theoretically covered by the “elite-mass linkage” model which can take two forms. (Steenbergen, Edwards, de Vries, 2007) Some scholars advocate the “bottom-up”, “mass driven” or “the electoral connection” perspective which means that “political elites can adopt whatever position the mass public takes on European integration”. (Steenbergen, Edwards, de Vries, 2007, p. 14, Hellström, 2008, p. 1129 - 1130) The proponents of this position are for instance Carruba (2001) or Tillman (2004). On the contrary, there are also some scholars arguing for the “top-down” or “elite-driven” perspective which put emphasis on political elites and their ability to shape the public opinion. (Hellström, 2008, 1130) The top-down model is advocated for example by Steenbergen (2007) or Hoghe and Marks (2005).

The last level will deal with ministers’ political preferences and party affiliation. It is possible to think about European political parties in two ways. On the national level, there are national parties which compete primarily for the power in the particular state and which also select (if they are in the government) the ministers who afterwards represent the state in the Council. On the European level, there are firstly some party federations (e.g. Party of European Socialists) which represent individual ideological families and bring together individual national parties of the same nature. Secondly, there are political groups in the European Parliament which consist of national parties of similar ideology which have succeeded in the European elections. (Hix, Hoyland, 2011, p. 138 – 141) These groups, however, represent more parliamentary factions rather than political parties. (Hix, Holyand, 2013, p. 185) Since the ministers primarily represent the national parties we can evaluate the impact of the parties (and their ideologies) on ministers’ behaviour in terms of European integration. It is not enough to take only the public opinion into account because the scholarly literature proves that national political elites

in general tend to be more prone to the European integration than public. (Hooghe, 2003) However, it is necessary to differentiate between different political parties and their representatives. As Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) show moderate political parties (center-left, center-right) support the European integration whereas radical parties (both far-left and far-right) oppose it. McElroy and Benoit (2010) go even further and define positions for European Parliament groups on left/right and pro-/anti-Europe dimensions. Their findings indicate that moderate political groups (especially EPP, PES and ALDE) are more pro-European than nationalists and communists.

Finally, it is necessary to summarize this theoretical framework. The thesis will apply several approaches in order to be able to cover all three levels. However, the basic idea behind the whole research will be the same – ministers are rational actors which tend to maximize their political utility (to gain power, to gain public support, to keep the office and help their party to succeed in the elections and stay in power) but their behaviour may be influenced by other factors like institutional setting of the Council, public support for the EU in their country or their personal party affiliation. The hypotheses about the causal logic are described in the following part of this project.

1.2. Research questions and hypotheses

Based on the theoretical foundations two research questions and several hypotheses will be defined:

1. How often do national ministers attend the Council meetings?

- The basic assumption is that ministers attend a substantial part of the meetings. It is rational for them to travel to Brussels and participate in the EU decision making process. In this way they gain power to influence the EU legislation in the area they are usually familiar with. Moreover, the Council meetings offer to their participants an opportunity to meet colleagues from other member countries, build mutual contacts and earn prestige.
- Furthermore, the thesis expects that there are some factors which may influence minister's perception of whether it is beneficial to travel to Brussels or not. These factors are deduced from the theoretical foundations of the thesis.

2. What are the causal factors which influence ministers' participation in the Council meetings?

- **Presidency** – The post of the president of the Council of Ministers is a great opportunity for the member states to pursue their goals and priorities. Tallberg (2004, 2010) argues that the Presidency is not only administrative service of the Council. On the contrary, it is a political actor which possesses informal and procedural resources that can facilitate negotiations and secure agreement. Furthermore, Thomson (2008) points out that the legislative outcomes of the Council are often in line with the position of the country holding this office. Therefore, the thesis will argue that the Presidency motivates ministers to attend the Council meetings and seize the power.
- **Salience of the agenda** – As mentioned above, ministers deal only with smaller part of all dossiers. (Häge, 2008; Haynes-Renshaw and Wallace, 2006, p. 79) On the other hand, it is usually politically the most sensitive part of the agenda. (Häge, 2007; Naurin, 2015, p. 141) Hence, the thesis assumes that the more salient the agenda is (i.e. the more b-points are about to be negotiated), the more motivated ministers are to attend the Council meeting.
- **National support of the European integration** – The theoretical part has already mentioned that ministers are primarily accountable to their national parties and electorates. Therefore, the thesis expects that public opinion on European integration can influence ministers' behaviour, i.e. the bottom-up perspective. (Carruba, 2001; Tillman, 2004) Politicians from more pro-European countries will be more willing to go to Brussels whereas ministers representing more eurosceptic public will avoid the meetings and focus on the national issues (more visible for voters).
- **National elections** – This factor relates to the previous one. Travelling to Brussels and negotiations in the Council are time-consuming activities. Therefore, the thesis assumes that ministers concerned with upcoming national elections will prefer to invest their time in campaigning in the country to negotiations in the Council.
- **Party affiliation** – Finally, the thesis will deal with ministers' party affiliation. Scholarly literature on this topic proves that politicians representing moderate ideologies and parties are more pro-European than politicians representing extremes of the political spectrum. (Hoghe, Marks, Wilson, 2002; McElroy,

Benoit, 2010) Hence, the thesis expects ministers from moderate national parties to be more pro-European and attend more the Council meetings and, on the contrary, ministers from more radical national parties to be anti-European and avoid the negotiations in Brussels.

1.3. Methodology and data

For the purpose of the thesis, quantitative methods will be applied. The main variables will be presented by using descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics (t-tests, regression analysis) will be run to reveal causal effects between the dependent variable and independent variables. The dataset will be gathered by the author and based on press releases from individual Council meetings from the period of 7th European Parliament¹⁷.

2. Structure

Introduction

1. Theoretical framework
 - 1.1. Theory
 - 1.2. Data and variables
2. The Council of the European Union
 - 2.1. Evolution and legal basis
 - 2.2. Composition and different configurations
 - 2.3. The Council in the EU legislative process
3. The analysis of ministers' participation
 - 3.1. Descriptive statistics
 - 3.2. Inferential statistics – causal relations of the variables
4. Discussion
 - 4.1. Evaluation of results
 - 4.2. Potential implications
 - 4.3. The limitations of the thesis

Conclusion

¹⁷ I.e. from July 2009 to April 2014 (European Parliament) This period was chosen because one parliamentary term is considered to represent one political cycle in the EU.

3. Literature

3.1. Non-periodical literature

BAL, Leendert Jan. (2004). EU States Operating in the EU Council of Ministers: Inside Impressions. In: MEERTS, Paul W.; CEDE, Franz. *Negotiating European Union*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 127 – 142.

BEST, Edward; SETTEMBRI, Pierpaolo. (2008). Surviving enlargement: how has the Council managed? In: BEST, Edward; CHRISTIANSEN, Thomas; SETTEMBRI, Pierpaolo. *The Institutions of the Enlarged European Union: Continuity and Change*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. 262 p.

HAYES-RENSHAW, Fiona; WALLACE, Helen. (2006). 2nd ed. *The Council of Ministers*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 392 p.

HIX, Simon; HOYLAND, Bjorn. (2011). *The Political System of the European Union*. 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 400 p.

JÖNSSON, Christer; TALLBERG, Jonas. (2013). Institutional Theory in International Relations. In: PIERRE, Jon; PETERS, Guy; STOKER, Gerry. *Debating institutionalism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. p. 86 – 114.

KARLAS, Jan. (2008). Předsednictví Rady EU - funkce, cíle, forma a vliv. In: KARLAS, Jan et al. *Jak předsedat Evropské unii?: návrh priorit předsednictví ČR v Radě EU v roce 2009*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů. p. 17 – 32.

NAURIN, Daniel; WALLACE, Helen. (2010). *Unveiling the Council of the European Union: games governments play in Brussels*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan. 320 str.

NAURIN, Daniel. (2015). The Councils of the EU: intergovernmental bargaining in supranational polity. In: RICHARDSON, Jeremy; MAZEY, Sonia. *European Union: Power and Policy-making*. 4th ed. Oxon: Routledge. p. 135 – 157.

POLLACK, Mark A. (2006). Rational Choice and EU Politics. In: JORGENSEN, Knud Erik; POLLACK, Mark A., ROSAMOND, Ben. *Handbook of European Union Politics*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. p. 31 – 55.

SHEPSLE, Kenneth A. (2006). Rational Choice Institutionalism. In: RHODES, R. A. W., BINDER, Sarah A; ROCKMAN, Bert A. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. New York: Oxford University Press. 816 p.

SHERRINGTON, Philippa. (2000). *The council of ministers, political authority in the European Union*. London: Pinter. 213 str.

3.2. Periodical literature

CARRUBA, Clifford. (2001). The Electorate Connection in European Union Politics. *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 63, n. 1, p. 141 – 158.

FOLLESDAL, Andreas; HIX, Simon. (2006). Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 44, n. 3, p. 533 – 562.

GRON, Caroline Howard; SALOMONSEN, Heidi Houlberg. (2015). Who's at the table? An analysis of ministers' participation in EU Council of Ministers meetings. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 22, n. 8, p. 1071 – 1088.

HÄGE, Frank M. (2007). Committee Decision-making in the Council of the European Union. *European Union Politics*. Vol. 8, n. 3, p. 299 – 328.

HÄGE, Frank M. (2008). Who Decides in the Council of the European Union. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 46, n. 3, p. 533 – 558.

HALL, Peter A.; TAYLOR, Rosemary C. R. (1996). Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms. *Political Studies*. Vol. 44, n. 5, p. 936 – 957.

HELLSTRÖM, Johan. (2008). Who leads, who follows? Re-examining the party–electorate linkages on European integration. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 15, n. 8, p. 1127 – 1144.

HIX, Simon; HOYLAND, Bjorn. (2013). Empowerment of the European Parliament. *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 16, p. 171 – 189.

HOOGHE, Lisebeth. (2003). Europe Divided? Elite vs. Public Opinion on European Integration. *European Union Politics*. Vol. 4, n. 3, p. 281 – 304.

HOOGHE, Lisebeth; MARKS, Gary; WILSON, Carole J. (2002). Does Left/Right Structure Party Positions on European Integration? *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 35, n. 8, p. 965 – 989.

HOOGHE, Lisebeth; MARKS, Gary. (2005). Calculation, community and cues: Public opinion on European integration. *European Union Politics*. Vol. 6, n. 4, p. 419 – 443.

MAJONE, Giandomenico. (1998). Europe's 'Democratic Deficit': The Question of Standards. *European Law Journal*. Vol. 4, n. 1, p. 5 – 28.

MAJONE, Giandomenico. (2000). The Credibility Crisis of Community Regulation. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 38, n. 2, p. 273 – 302.

MORAVCSIK, Andrew. (2002). In Defense of the "Democratic Deficit": Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 40, n. 4, p. 603 – 624.

MORAVCSIK, Andrew. (2008). The Myth of Europe's "Democratic Deficit". *Intereconomics: Journal of European Economic Policy*. Vol. 43, n. 6, p. 331 – 340.

PARÍZEK, Michal; PLECHANOVÁ, Běla; HOSLI, Madeleine O. (2015). Byrokrtaizace rozhodování v Evropské unii po východním rozšíření. *Sociologický časopis*. Vol. 51, n. 1, p. 41 – 64.

POLLACK, Mark A. (1996). The New Institutionalism and EC Governance: The Promise and Limits of Institutional Analysis. *Governance*. Vol. 9, n. 4, p. 429 – 458.

STEENBERGEN, Marco R.; EDWARDS, Erica E., DE VRIES, Catherine. (2007). Who's Cueing Whom? Mass–Elite Linkages and the Future of European Integration. *European Union Politics*. Vol. 8, n. 1, p. 13 – 35.

TALLBERG, Jonas. (2004). The Power of the Presidency: Brokerage, Efficiency and Distribution in EU Negotiations. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 42, n. 5, p. 999 – 1022.

TALLBERG, Jonas. (2010). Explaining the institutional foundations of European Union negotiations. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Vol. 17, n. 5, p. 633 – 647.

THOMSON, Robert. (2008). The Council Presidency in the European Union: Responsibility with Power. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 46, n. 3, p. 593 – 617.

TILLMAN, Erik. (2004). The European Union at the Ballot Box? European Integration and Voting Behaviour in the New Member States. *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 37, n. 5, p. 590 – 610.

3.3. Electronic sources

European Parliament. *Plenary*. [online]. [cit. 2015-09-11].
<<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/bilan-statistic.html>>

EU Treaties.

<http://europa.eu/eu-law/decision-making/treaties/index_en.htm>

EVROPSKÉ HODNOTY. (2015). *Účast ministrů zemí Visegrádské skupiny na Radě Evropské unie v letech 2004 – 2015*. [online].

< <http://www.evropskehodnoty.cz/ministri/>>

Press releases from the individual Council meetings.

< <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/register/en/content/int/?lang=en&typ=ADV>>

Rules of procedure of the Council of the European Union.

<<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=URISERV:o10003&from=EN>>

<<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=URISERV:114576&from=EN>>

Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community. (2007). [online]. [cit. 2015-09-10]. <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/CS/ALL/?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:TOC>>