

Abstract

European Union faced several external challenges in the beginning of the 21st century. Its enlargement to 24 member states led to a state of dissimilar and not well interconnected economies in need of a new model of external competitiveness. Finding the model and, more importantly, delivering it on community level, was a new task of the European Commission, especially after re-launch of the Lisbon strategy in 2005. Yet, there was another challenge for EU that was not so easy to address by the Commission: the relative weakening of EU's external economic action comparing to new increasingly assertive policies of other international players, especially BRICs. Was it possible for the Commission focus only on supporting EU competitiveness without any external action, as was expected by articles of the Treaty of Nice?

As the thesis argues, indeed there was an external action of the Commission before the Lisbon treaty, through its public support of SME internationalization within the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). A neoinstitutional analysis of the issues on two levels is carried out: Firstly on the level of European institutions (motives, relevant contexts and institutional rules), secondly, on the level of secondary actors (SMEs, NGOs, CIP executive agency EACI), where the Commission could use its authority and adjust the more concrete rules of calls for grant proposals. The analysis of secondary level concludes with a detailed description of results and processes that led to strengthening of Commission's external action, especially through the initiative of Enterprise Europe Network. The broader conclusions of the primary analysis may be used for deduction of hypotheses and further testing of the neoinstitutional theory.