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The Council Presidency and Legislative Leadership: The Case of Occupational Health and Safety

Many international institutions feature a leadership office to organize its decision-making process. In the case of the Council of the European Union, the rotating Council Presidency exercises the role of a process manager and enjoys proposal power. This function might allow the Presidency to steer the Council’s agenda according to its domestic priorities. Elsewhere, I have provided evidence for this effect in the field of environmental policy using a statistical large-n research design. In this paper, I scrutinize the causal mechanism in more detail with the use of a case study. I demonstrate that the German Council Presidency in 1999 employed issue subtraction to increase the chances of occupational health and safety legislation to pass through the needle’s eye of the Council. The paper links this finding to the general literature on international negotiation and negotiation analysis. I also discuss the normative ramifications of this effect and the prospective changes in the powers of the Presidency due to enlargement.