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Success Factors in EU Agricultural Negotiations

Ole Elgström
Malena Rosén Sundström

MEMBER STATES AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Ole Elgström and Malena Rosén Sundström

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Preface

Are Denmark and Finland more successful than Sweden in EU agricultural negotiations? According to earlier/previous studies, Sweden is, in general, perceived as an attractive negotiating partner within the EU. Is agriculture a different story?

The authors of this report compare how well the Nordic states performed in the latest round of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) negotiations (2011–13), focusing on a number of "success factors" such as, for example, coalitions and networking, the use of institutional opportunities, and the effects of varying organisational structures.

Several lessons on how to be a successful negotiator are drawn in the study, e.g. the importance of good contacts with key officials; the prioritisation of key issues; and pragmatism. While Finland is seen as being "realistic", "flexible" and "pragmatic", and Denmark "follows the bacon", Sweden tends to wait longer before letting go of principles deemed important and is considered less pragmatic and often too ideological a player. At the same time, it should be remembered that the Swedish reform agenda is more ambitious, implying that it is more difficult for it to achieve its goals. It should not be forgotten that the CAP has moved in a more market-oriented direction – i.e. closer to the Swedish position – since the Swedish accession to the EU in 1995.

Eva Sjögren
Director

About the authors

Ole Elgström is Professor of Political Science at Lund University. He has published on internal and international negotiations involving the EU, and notably on external perceptions of the EU, in a number of journals such as *Foreign Policy Analysis*, the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, the *Journal of European Public Policy* and *European Foreign Affairs Review*. He is the co-editor (with Christer Jönsson) of *European Union Negotiations* (Routledge 2005) and (with Michael Smith) of *The European Union's Roles in International Politics* (Routledge 2006).

Malena Rosén Sundström is Senior Lecturer of Political Science at Lund University. She has published on Swedish party politics, as well as EU politics. Her dissertation brought together these two strands, analysing the Social Democratic Party's handling of, respectively, EU- and EMU-membership issues. She analysed the CAP reform negotiations of Agenda 2000, published in Elgström and Jönsson (2005) (see above). She is currently leading a research project on young peoples' political participation.

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Executive summary

In Swedish agricultural circles, it is often claimed that Sweden is doing poorly in EU agricultural negotiations. The dividends we get do not, it is argued, measure up to what we "should receive". The Swedish "failure" is often compared to the alleged higher degree of success of its Nordic neighbours, Denmark and Finland. At the same time, we know from research that Sweden is ordinarily perceived as an attractive partner for dialogue and consultation. Sweden is ranked number four among all EU Member States in having a potential influence on other states' positions, while Denmark is in position seven and Finland nine. We are thus confronted with a puzzle: Why does Sweden seem to be relatively unsuccessful in the field of agricultural negotiations when it is deemed influential in other sectors, and why do the other Nordics seem to fare better?

We tackle this puzzle by investigating factors that may lead to success or create obstacles to success in EU agricultural negotiations and by comparing how the Nordic states fare in these respects. Empirically, we focus on the latest round of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) negotiations (2011-13). A number of potential "success factors" were generated from the existing literature on EU decision-making and from research on international negotiations more generally. These include coalitions and networking, the use of institutional opportunities and persuasive strategies and the effects of varying organisational structures, of knowledge and of expertise. We also pay attention to Member State negotiation positions and their national interests in relation to the Commission proposal, as a potential facilitating or obstructive factor in negotiations.

In order to figure out what factors are most important for success, we have chosen a perceptual approach. We believe that probing the experiences and analyses of those who actually participated in the negotiations is the most reliable and effective way to evaluate the relative importance of various potential success factors. It was considered extremely important to include among the interviewees negotiators not only from the Nordics, but also from "external" actors: other Member State representatives, as well as officials from the EU institutions involved. All in all, 18 interviews were carried out.

The following are the main lessons learnt from our study – based on the perceptions of our interviewees – of success factors in agricultural negotiations:

- Good contacts with key officials, particularly within the Commission, are essential. Compatriots serve as excellent entry-points, but not necessarily as vehicles of influence. Enabling key officials to understand your concerns and your specific problems with a policy proposal is of major importance.
- Nurturing contacts with the European Parliament and the members of its

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (ComAgri) seems to be of growing importance.
- Being well-prepared when entering negotiations is imperative. This demands that you have an extensive network in Brussels, but also sufficient administrative resources "at home".
- Consideration of how to frame problems and messages is important. The use of frames that are considered legitimate, that fit the existing discursive climate, and that are well-received by crucial actors (in the Commission and in key Member States) facilitates success.
- Prioritisation is necessary. You cannot expect to reach all of your goals: Pick your battles, and concentrate your resources on the most important issues.
- Realism and pragmatism are key words. Consider what is realistic to achieve and focus on this. An ideological approach is often counterproductive, especially in day-to-day negotiations on concrete issues.

A comparison between the three Nordic EU members demonstrates both similarities and differences, which basically mirror an underlying Nordic variation in agricultural preconditions and structures. Denmark is dependent on its large agricultural export, and therefore, is liberal and against market interventions. For Sweden, the sector is relatively less important. Sweden, a free trade, market-oriented country, has, for many years, had a reduction of the CAP budget as a priority, and at the same time, it has defended a liberalisation of the sector and fought all kinds of interventions. Their basically liberal approach often makes Denmark and Sweden natural allies. Finland has a rather small, but nationally important agricultural sector, and support from the EU is considered a key national interest. It has therefore defended the CAP wholeheartedly.

Our respondents see Finland as a "realistic", "flexible" and "pragmatic" actor, guided by its national interest and ordinarily giving its full support to the Commission. Finland is pragmatic in the sense that its economic interests are always prioritised, while principles are placed in the back seat. Sweden is, on the other hand, ordinarily guided by principles. Sweden wants to change the CAP in a more market-oriented direction. Denmark is also claimed to follow liberal principles. At the same time, "the Danish flag follows the bacon", as one of our respondents put it; that is, Denmark also prioritises its economic interests when it comes to concrete negotiations. Several interviewees thus pointed out that Danish negotiators let go of their principles well before their Swedish counterparts do so in the final phase of negotiations. In this sense, the Danes are also pragmatic, but also at times more "prone to insist" (as they have clear national economic interests on many issues) than their Swedish counterparts.

Sweden is considered by many interviewees to be "too" restricted by its principles, with repercussions for its degree of influence. It has even been claimed that Sweden was "absent from the negotiation table", that is, marginalised in many negotiation sessions, due to its ideological approach. Some respondents,

however, pointed out that they had noticed an "improvement" in Sweden's willingness to compromise in recent years. Finland stands out because it is perceived to *prioritise* among the numerous issues on the agenda, much more than the other Nordics. Finland is also claimed by some interviewees to be the most versatile Nordic actor when it comes to adapting its coalition behaviour across different issues. On the other hand, Sweden and Denmark are perceived to be more active than Finland in negotiations. The Finns "are there, but quiet". The Danes are said to be skilful negotiators, partly because of Denmark's long experience as an interested actor in CAP negotiations. Finland is claimed to have invested in networking activities, especially in building high-level contacts with the Commission, and they often succeed in conveying the message they want to deliver to Commission officials. All three Nordics are considered to have capable officials who are well-prepared and to deliver high-quality inputs to the negotiation process.

The puzzle of our study was why Sweden seems to be relatively unsuccessful in the field of agricultural negotiations when it is deemed influential in other sectors, and why the other Nordics seem to fare better. A general observation is that ambitious goals are more difficult to reach, and Sweden's overall goal concerning the CAP can certainly be described as being ambitious: to scrap it altogether, or at least, to make it a market-friendly, liberal policy. The political and economic context surrounding the latest CAP process was not conducive to reform. A weak Commissioner, not committed to liberalisation, a conservative ComAgri in an EP with decision-making power for the first time, strong interest groups arguing for reintroduced interventions and a constellation of Member State interests that were not in favour of further market-oriented reform combined to make the situation extremely difficult for reform-minded actors. Bargaining success in terms of further liberalisation and fewer market interventions was not to be expected. This should be borne in mind when assessing the overall performance of Sweden, as well as Denmark, the two Nordic states pursuing such reform ideas.

1 Introduction

It is often claimed in Swedish debate that Sweden is doing poorly in EU agricultural negotiations (e.g. Färm et al. 2011; Pettersson 2011; Socialdemokraterna 2011; Ohlsson 2012; Hedström 2005). The dividends we get do not, it is argued, measure up to what we "should receive". This goes both in terms of economic support and in terms of policy changes that Sweden would like to see affected. The Swedish "failure" is often compared to the alleged higher degree of success of its Nordic neighbours, Denmark and Finland.

At the same time, we know from political science EU research that Sweden is ordinarily perceived as an attractive partner for dialogue and consultation, and as a desirable partner in difficult negotiation processes. According to Daniel Naurin and Rutger Lindahl (2014), Sweden is ranked number four among all EU Member States in having potential influence on other states' positions, while Denmark is in position seven and Finland nine. These figures are based on interviews with 249 Member State representatives in EU Council Working Groups in 2012 and confirm earlier studies by the same authors. We are thus confronted with a puzzle: Why does Sweden seem to be relatively unsuccessful in the field of agricultural negotiations when it is deemed influential in other sectors, and why do the other Nordics seem to fare better? Answers to this question could help Sweden to improve its achievements in this policy area.

We tackle this puzzle by investigating factors that may lead to success, or create obstacles to success, in EU agricultural negotiations. A number of potential "success factors" were generated from the existing literature on EU negotiation and decision-making and from research on international negotiations more generally. These include coalition-building and networking, the use of institutional opportunities and persuasive strategies and the effects of varying organisational structures, of knowledge and of expertise. We also pay attention to Member State negotiation positions and their national interests in relation to the Commission proposal, as a potential facilitating or obstructive factor in negotiations. To evaluate the importance of these factors and to probe into other possible drivers of success, we rely on a perceptual approach: The study is based on semi-structured interviews with participants in the latest round of EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform negotiations, which ended in 2013[1]. We interviewed representatives from the Nordic states, but also delegates from other Member States and from EU institutions. Though the research problem highlights success factors in general, the empirical focus is a comparison between the three Nordic Member States, actors that are, in many respects, similar, but are claimed to have experienced different rates of success in CAP negotiations.

[1] The negotiations were based on four proposals by the European Commission (2011a, b, c and d).

2 Methodology

In order to figure out what factors are most important for success, we have thus chosen a perceptual approach. We believe that probing the experiences and analyses of those who actually participated in the negotiations is the most reliable and effective way to evaluate the relative importance of various potential success factors (cf. Elgström and Chaban 2015). What actually happens in multi-actor negotiation processes is rarely revealed in written texts, and we have found no structured assessment of actor performance in the CAP negotiations in official documents. The interviews provide us with first-hand information that, treated carefully, gives us invaluable clues to actor behaviour that are very difficult to obtain in any other way. We have used the interviews to uncover what the negotiators themselves consider key issues and key obstacles to good performance in the reform negotiations.

The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that they were based on a number of broad questions (see Appendix). These questions were inspired by factors that have been found important in existing research on EU negotiation processes, but they also left ample room for the interviewees to come up with additional factors. We started our interviews by asking the respondents to describe the reform negotiation process with an emphasis on elements that were considered key to success and followed up with more detailed questions that probed the importance of various factors and mechanisms. Throughout the interviews, we also asked the respondents to compare the behaviour and approaches of the Nordic Member States.

It was considered extremely important to include among the interviewees negotiators not only from the Nordics, but also from "external" actors: other Member State representatives, as well as officials from the EU institutions involved, that is, the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament (EP). All in all, we carried out 18 interviews (see the List of interviewees): four in Stockholm with officials at the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation (which houses agriculture), nine in Brussels, three in Copenhagen at the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food and two with Finnish officials at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. We talked to officials from seven Member States (Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, Spain and Sweden), one Commission official, one person at the Council secretariat and one from the EP secretariat. All of the interviewees were actively involved in the 2011-2013 reform process. The interviews were granted with a promise of anonymity, meaning that we promised not to quote or refer directly to any respondent. When opinions differed or when a certain claim was only voiced by one or a few respondents, this is indicated in the text. Eleven of the interviews were conducted by the two authors together, and the rest by one of them. The interviews lasted,

on average, about one hour. The limited number of interviewees is obviously a weakness – especially when drawing conclusions about different actors' degree of success. Although we deliberately included several interviewees from non-Nordic countries, five out of 18 are Swedish officials, three are Danish and three are Finnish. Our search for respondents who represent non-Nordic countries and who were active in the 2011-13 negotiations was made difficult by the fact that many of the negotiators have moved on to other positions and are no longer placed in Brussels. As the picture of the success factors and of the role of the Nordics in CAP negotiations painted by our respondents was relatively uniform, often consensual, we still believe that our findings give a fair view of perceptions of the process.

It should be noted that we do not try to objectively measure any Member State's "degree of success". "Success", like "performance", is an "essentially contested concept", and there is "no Archimedean point from which success and failure can be objectively measured" (Jørgensen 2013: 88, 90; cf. Panke 2010a: 107-11). Performance can be discussed in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and financial viability (Jørgensen 2013: 90). When measuring effectiveness as goal attainment, it has to be borne in mind that goals are often not well-defined or clear, that goals may be set more or less ambitiously (which makes them more or less easy to reach) and are supposed to be fulfilled more or less quickly (Jørgensen 2013: 91; Tuominen 2016: 103). In the negotiation literature, "bargaining success" is often described in terms of the "congruence between actors' stated policy preferences and decision outcomes" (Costello and Thomson 2013: 1027; cf. Tallberg 2008). While abstaining from making any statements of success ourselves, we still briefly report how the actors that we interviewed perceive the success of the Nordic states.

3 Setting the stage: Previous CAP reforms and the context of the 2013 reform

The objectives of the CAP, as laid out in the Rome Treaty (Art. 39), were affected by post-war food shortages in Europe. Two of the aims were to "to increase agricultural productivity" and "to ensure a fair standard of living for farmers". In order to promote production, prices were set at artificially high levels, with the Community committing itself to buy surplus production, thereby securing farmers' incomes. By the time the CAP became a fully common policy in 1968, the situation had changed: Agricultural technological advancements, in addition to the stimulation to produce caused by the high prices, led to overproduction. The policy area was in need of reform, but it took until the early 1990s for any "real" reforms to be made (Rosén and Jerneck 2005).

When discussing reforms, it is important to define the concept. The verb "reform" means to "make changes in (something, especially an institution or practice) in order to improve it" (Swinnen 2015: 4). There are different degrees of reform: Smaller changes, where "instrument settings, or levels, are changed" (Daugbjerg 1999: 412), are usually the result of bureaucratic or technocratic decisions. Changes in policy objectives, or even policy paradigms, are of a politicised – and hence more contested – nature, and are the result of political decision-making (ibid.).

The drivers for a politicised reform in the early 1990s were both exogenous and endogenous. The agricultural overproduction in the Community was exported and sold cheaply outside the common market, against GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) trade liberalisation norms, causing conflict with other actors in the world market. There were also internal concerns about the increasingly costly policy, at most making up over 73 per cent of the Community budget (1985). Acting strategically to address these pressures, Agricultural Commissioner Ray MacSharry was able to achieve the first politicised reform of the CAP in 1992. By phased reductions in support prices, supplemented by direct aid payments, the policy area became more transparent. It also introduced some decoupling, meaning that support was not linked to production. The reform oriented the CAP in a more liberal, market-oriented direction (Anania and D'Andrea 2015: 33; Rosén and Jerneck 2005).

The Agenda 2000 negotiations (1997-1999), preparing the EU for the big eastern enlargement, as well as a new WTO (World Trade Organization) trade round, constituted a window of opportunity for greater reform of the policy area. The opportunity was somewhat lost because of the financial situations of the Member States, which, at the time, prioritised the fulfilling of the Euro criteria: A CAP reform would initially be costlier than a preservation of the status quo (Rosén and Jerneck 2005: 74-75). The negotiations did result in the introduction of a two-pillar structure of the CAP, with production support (direct payments, etc.) making up the first pillar and rural development the second. It continued on the path of the MacSharry reform, by further decreasing price support in some sectors (Anania and D'Andrea 2015: 33).

In 2003, Agricultural Commissioner Franz Fischler launched a "radical reform" (Swinnen 2015: 2). Two factors contributed to the 2003 reform: the imminent enlargement and the WTO Doha round. An important aspect of the reform was a considerable degree of decoupling of support from production (replacing price support to some extent). The reform allowed for the variation of implementation models, between, as well as within, the Member States (Nedergaard 2006: 218). However, the CAP was still subsidising farmers and protecting them from the market (Nedergaard 2006), although it continued to move in a somewhat more liberal direction. Based on a review clause in the 2003 agreement, the next Agricultural Commissioner, Mariann Fischer Boel, initiated a "Health Check" in 2007. The Health Check is described as completing the Fischler reform, by e.g. decoupling almost all of the direct payments still in place, further market liberalisation and increased emphasis on rural development (Anania and D'Andrea 2015: 35).

As described below, the 2013 reform turned out quite differently compared to the other reforms since 1992. It is even debated whether it actually constituted a reform at all, even though the term "reform" is used, in this text, as well as in many others, "mostly as a term of convenience rather than a value judgement", to quote Johan Swinnen (2015: 5). The 2013 reform took place in a new institutional setting, making CAP policy-making more complex: It was the first CAP reform decided since the Lisbon Treaty went into effect, making the European Parliament a co-decision maker. In addition, the CAP decision-making process ran more or less parallel to negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The two processes were subject to different procedures: In the area of CAP, the EP could propose amendments to the Commission's proposals, while it could only approve or reject the whole MFF proposal (Anania and D'Andrea 2015: 39).

The linkages between the MFF and the CAP negotiations affected the reform in several ways. First, they created a need to legitimise the CAP in order to defend

its share of the budget. This was done by e.g. the argument for "public funds for public goods", emphasising the environmental aspects of the CAP (Swinnen 2015: 9). Second, they led to a "compression of time", making the final phase of the CAP negotiations very short, since the EP and the Council did not approve their CAP mandates until the budget figures were set in the MFF negotiations. Alan Matthews argues that this "strengthened the hand of those arguing for minimal changes in the negotiations" (Matthews 2015: 172). Third, parts of the CAP decisions were included in the MFF negotiations, decided by the European Council, which meant that certain aspects of the policy were not in the hands of the Agricultural Council (Matthews 2015: 172-73).

The more complex institutional setting was reflected in the fact that the process turned out to be longer than for any of the previous reforms. The Commission launched a public debate on the new CAP in April 2010, with Dacian Ciolos as the new Agricultural Commissioner. It presented its proposal in 2011, but the four Regulations of the reform were not formally adopted by the Council until December 2013, after the approval of the EP the month before.

4 The 2013 CAP reform: Issues, cleavages and outcomes

The reform negotiations covered a number of themes and issues in which different priorities and divided opinions could be seen among both Member States and EU institutions. The main bones of contention in the 2011-2013 negotiations included (Swinnen 2015; Anania and D'Andrea 2015; Zahrnt 2011):

- The size of the CAP budget
- The distribution among Member States of direct payments (external convergence)
- The balance between market forces and intervention
- The degree and nature of "greening" and other public goods in the CAP
- The degree of flexibility that should be given to Member States in implementing the agreement

First, the size of the budget, decided by the MFF negotiations that run in parallel with the CAP negotiations, is a long-standing area of conflict that reflects concerns both about the political clout of farmers and their organisations and about the value of spending so much money on this specific sector, especially from the perspective of the economic crisis. The defenders of a sizeable CAP referred to the new environmental tasks that the CAP has had to shoulder, as well as to the advantages of a thriving countryside. In the previous CAP reform, an "unholy" coalition between farmer interests and environmentalists under the banner of "public funds for public goods" had secured a continued, substantial CAP budget.

Second, demands were raised by the new Member States (NMS) for a more equal distribution of direct payments. In particular, the Baltic states, where payment was lowest, felt disadvantaged by the existing system based on past payments (Swinnen 2015: 25; Anania and D'Andrea 2015: 44). It was generally felt that the different treatment of old and new members was hard to justify, and some kind of redistribution was seen as necessary (Zahrnt 2011: 7). Third, the increased price volatility induced demands for more regulation, including the maintenance of supply controls in dairy and sugar (Swinnen 2015: 25). As food prices had surged in 2008, food security had become a pervasive argument for those calling for more protection, but price volatility could also result in negative social consequences (Zahrnt 2011: 7). Against these protectionist forces stood the proponents behind "the decades-long strategy towards liberalisation, consistent with WTO constraints" (Swinnen 2015: 25).

Fourth, environmental concerns have led to a demand for a "greening" of the CAP, consistent with EU policies in, for example, the area of climate change. The question was how to promote environmental public goods in a way that did not unduly impose constraints and costs on agricultural production (Zahrnt 2011: 9). Fifth, several actors wanted considerably more flexibility for Member States in the implementation of regulations related to the coupling of direct payments, but also including greening conditions and the allocation of funds between Pillar 1 (direct payment) and Pillar 2 (rural development) (Swinnen 2015: 25).

In the end, the 2013 CAP decision included a small budget cut, some redistribution of direct payments from old to new members, increased flexibility in policy implementation and in the allocation of funds, and modest changes in environmental and market regulations. The general assessment of the reform negotiations seems to be that its end result "was closer to a status-quo evaluation than a significant reform" (Swinnen 2015: 25). The reform is claimed to have brought positive innovations into the CAP, but also to have brought the "robust, consistent path outlined by the previous reforms since 1992 to a grinding halt" (Anania and D'Andrea 2015: 83). Those who had hoped for a significant step towards more liberalisation and more greening were probably disappointed, while those who wished to retain the substantial financial support to the sector were probably satisfied (ibid., p. 84).

5 The Three Nordics: National interests and positions

As previously stated, it certainly matters what interests and aims an actor has in a negotiation, when assessing its performance and how well the outcome corresponds to its aims – a more ambitious goal is more difficult to reach (Jørgensen 2013). In addition, an actor's position and desired outcome in relation to the prevalent status quo is also of importance: "the location of the *status quo* (which following the conventional use of this term in the literature is the outcome that would occur in the event of no agreement) is generally assumed to be an important factor in shaping bargaining success" (Costello and Thomson 2013: 1027). If two actors are on the same side of the status quo, the actor further from the status quo is in the weaker bargaining position. If two actors are on different sides of the status quo, the one closer to the status quo is in the better position (ibid. pp. 1027-28). An actor's position in relation to the status quo can thus in itself be a "success factor".

The three Nordic Member States differ with regard to their national interests and their positions in relation to the status quo in the CAP. Sweden and Denmark belong to the reform-minded camp: They argue for less intervention and more market, while Finland belongs to the conservative camp, arguing for the continuation of a strong and interventionist CAP. Sweden has a very liberal – some interviewees have even stated it as being "too liberal" – view on the CAP as a whole and is a strong principled advocate for thorough reform. Up until 1990, Sweden's agricultural policy was, in many ways, very similar to the CAP (e.g. with market price support), and it also faced many of the same problems at the time (e.g. over-production and increasing costs). In 1990, a decision for drastic reform was made, de-regulating the policy area, making agriculture "subject to the same, market-determined, conditions as other economic sectors" (Schwaag Serger 2001: 86). This domestic reform process coloured the Swedish perception of the CAP and made it argue for a similar process within the EU.

Denmark has a more pragmatic approach. Agriculture is a big export sector in Denmark, and hence, it has great economic interests in the sector, making it less prone to take a "radical" stand. Denmark thus balances between its principles (market-oriented reform) and its business interests. Due to Finland's geographic location, the whole country is classified as a Least Favoured Area (LFA). Its climatic disadvantages make Finland's agricultural sector vulnerable to competition from countries with better preconditions, and it has therefore been an ardent defender of an interventionist CAP. Finland, as well as Sweden,

were granted a special aid agreement, the so-called Nordic Aid, for agriculture to be maintained in their northern parts when they became EU members in 1995. This scheme covers more than half of the utilised agricultural area in Finland and is very important to Finnish farmers (Institute for European Environmental Policy 2009). The agricultural sector in Sweden is described as relatively less important than in the other two Nordics, while the forestry sector is important in Sweden, as well as in Finland. All three Nordics give high priority to a greener and more sustainable CAP.

All in all, their interests and overall views on the CAP place the three Nordics on opposing sides of the status quo, with Finland close to the status quo and Denmark and Sweden further away, with Sweden's position being the one furthest away[2]. The Council is often argued to be closer to the status quo than the EP (Napel and Widgrén 2006), but this was not the case with regard to the latest CAP reform. The Committee of Agriculture (ComAgri), where "the real decisions [on the CAP] are made" in the EP (Knops and Garrone 2015: 418), was dominated by farm interests and was overall in favour of the status quo (ibid. pp. 425-26). The position of the EP was thus detrimental to the possibilities of a less conservative CAP and to Sweden's and Denmark's positions and preferred outcomes.

Here, the preferences of the three Nordics with regard to some aspects of the 2013 reform are briefly presented, followed by even briefer comments on the outcome of the negotiations for each of them. It is a starkly simplified picture of a very complex process. The aspects chosen here are those that were central to the negotiations according to the literature (e.g. Swinnen 2015; Anania and D'Andrea 2015; Zahrnt 2011) and the interviewees, and those specifically mentioned by the interviewees as being of importance to their Member State(s).

Starting with the views of the size of the CAP *budget* in the last reform, settled in the MFF negotiations, Sweden was the only Member State besides the United Kingdom in favour of reducing it (Zahrnt 2011: 16). Denmark was in favour of maintaining the budget level for the CAP, and Finland did not express a clear position in the negotiations (European Parliament 2015: 34-35). The outcome of the MFF negotiations was a somewhat lower budget than proposed by the Commission. When comparing the budget with the previous one (2007-2013), the result in terms of "more or less" is very complex and depends on how such a comparison is made.

On the issue of the *distribution of direct payments among the Member States* (external convergence), also settled in the MFF negotiations, Sweden and Finland were in favour of more equality between the EU member states (e.g. European

[2] This regards the overall positions of the three Nordics in relation to the status quo. Their relative positions on specific issues might, of course, vary somewhat.

Parliament 2015: 34-35). This was also the result of the negotiations, even though especially some NMS were not entirely content with the outcome. Both Finland and Sweden turned out to be beneficiaries. Denmark was against the proposal on external convergence and argued that the financial support in Pillar 2 should also be taken into account when discussing the issue of distribution between the Member States. Denmark, whose CAP support consists of a very high proportion of direct payment and a very low proportion of Pillar 2 support, compared to Sweden and Finland, was one of those Member States suffering the biggest cuts in direct payments and ended up as a net contributor (European Parliament 2015: 39).

Direct payments were described as the file where the most happened, and hence, an important priority to all three Nordic Member States – although as a necessary evil for Sweden, according to a Swedish interviewee. Within the file, Sweden and Finland shared the priorities of internal convergence and greening. On internal convergence, Finland wanted more flexibility in coupled support. On greening, Finland and Sweden criticised the proposal, which was designed with Central Europe in mind and did not fit Finnish and Swedish preconditions. The Commission proposed three EU-wide measures for the "greening" elements of direct payments, but all three Nordics, as well as other Member States, demanded greater flexibility in implementing the measures. The outcome was much more flexibility than had been proposed by the Commission: Its vision of common measures in order to simplify the policy was considered detrimental by many of the Member States, and many exemptions were given.

On the degree of *flexibility* that should be given to Member States in implementing the agreement, all three Nordic member states were in favour of flexibility, albeit in somewhat different ways. The outcome was significantly increased flexibility, leading to rather different agricultural policies at the national level. This can be an advantage, in that general rules can be applied to local conditions. It might, however, also undermine these general principles – and ultimately, the single market (Swinnen 2015: 17)

With regard to the *balance between market forces and intervention*, Sweden's position in the negotiation is described as being "defensive" in that it was trying to counteract strong pressure towards re-regulation. The most radical Swedish proposals were never put on the table. Instead, Sweden, as well as Denmark, had to work hard to counter the demands for increasing interventions, with a positive result. Alan Matthews (2013) stated: "The efforts of some member states and COMAGRI to strengthen the role of public intervention in the most recent CAP reform were not successful".

The *degree and nature of "greening" and other public goods in the CAP* are of importance to the Nordics, but none of them were, as stated above, in favour of the proposal of the greening of direct payments on the terms originally proposed

by the Commission. The *Rural Development Programme* is of high value to Sweden. However, the proposals for the 2013 reform were less negative in this area, seen from a Swedish standpoint, and therefore, were less prioritised by Sweden this time. Sweden and Denmark did not want greening within Pillar 1, instead advocating the possibility of moving money from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2, but this was seen as impossible to get through. Due to the fact that some NMS did not fare very well with regard to their CAP budgets in the MFF negotiations, it was decided that it would be possible to move money in both directions between the two pillars of the CAP. In rural development, the Finns prioritised the Least Favoured Areas (LFA), working with both definitions and payment, and arguing for more flexibility, which was achieved.

To *summarise* the main interests of the three Member States, Finland prioritised two files in the negotiations: direct payments and rural development. With regard to direct payments, it wanted coupled support to be flexible, and it worked to change the proposal on greening together with Sweden (the forest exemption). Sweden also prioritised the issue of internal convergence in direct payments, acted against pressures for more regulations and in favour of simplification. Denmark prioritised the issue of greening, asking for more flexibility, as well as the issues of internal and external convergence, respectively. With regard to the first, Denmark wanted more flexibility, and with regard to the latter, it wanted all CAP support to be taken into account when deciding on a new distribution between Member States.

6 Success factors in CAP reform negotiations

In this section, we analyse our empirical findings regarding potential success factors in agricultural reform negotiations. Our starting points were a number of factors derived from the literature on EU negotiations and from negotiation theory that have been claimed to serve as facilitators or impediments for actors in EU negotiation processes. We were, however, open to adding other factors, if new ideas turned up during our interviews. We discuss the factors one by one, starting each sub-section with a brief summary of what existing literature has to tell us, followed by our presentation and interpretation of the empirical results.

6.1 Coalitions

Goal attainment in negotiations has often been associated with successful coalition building. As you cannot reach your goals alone in multilateral negotiations, there is a need to form alliances with other actors, both to exert influence during negotiation processes and in actual voting situations (Zartman 1994; Hopmann 1996). Coalition patterns in the EU have mainly been studied in three different ways (cf. Naurin and Lindahl 2008: 65-66). First, some scholars have looked at voting patterns in the Council (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006; Aspinwall 2006; Mattila 2008; Hosli et al. 2011). Secondly, coalition patterns may be captured by studying the expressed positions (revealed preferences) of the actors (Thomson et al. 2006; Kaeding and Selck 2005). Analysing "how far and how close the member states position themselves in relation to each other" makes it possible to detect potential conflict dimensions and coalitions (Naurin and Lindahl 2008: 66). Thirdly, Council working party participants have been asked, either in survey format or in interviews, to describe actual co-operation, contacts and coalitions with other actors during negotiation processes (Elgström et al. 2001; Naurin and Lindahl 2008; Naurin and Lindahl 2014). This is the method we have used in this study.

Coalitions may be based on interests, cultural affinities, power (to gain a majority or a blocking minority) or ideology (for example, on the left-right dimension). In the EU, coalitions are often believed to be issue-based and linked to national interests, but cultural factors, like language and shared history and identities, have also been mentioned as contributing to contact and coalition patterns (Elgström et al. 2001).

Existing research, regardless of approach, demonstrates the prevalence of a North-South dimension within the Council and its Working Groups (Mattila 2008; Naurin and Lindahl 2008). The importance of this striking fault-line does not seem to have diminished after enlargement (Mattila 2008), although a North-

South-East pattern is now visible in certain issue areas (Mattila 2009; Naurin and Lindahl 2014). Research has also highlighted the paramount importance of the "big three" – France, Germany and the UK – in EU negotiation processes. For example, Naurin and Lindahl's 2014 study reveals that the large countries have by far the highest "network capital" (measured as frequently mentioned cooperation partners). Interestingly for this study, in their ranking of "the most influential actors", Sweden is number four, while Denmark is number seven and Finland number nine among the EU Member States (the same ranking appeared in 2003 and 2006, see Naurin and Lindahl 2008: 71). According to the same authors, there are no tight Benelux or Nordic coalitions, as Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands are closer to each other and to the UK than to Finland, Belgium and Luxembourg, respectively (Naurin and Lindahl 2008: 74).

EU CAP reform negotiations are, according to our findings (and to common wisdom in the field), predominantly interest-based – though countries like Sweden and the UK also enter the negotiations with an ideologically based free-market approach. Member State positions are, it is argued by our respondents, mainly determined by geographical preconditions and existing agricultural structures. The resulting coalition patterns reveal a clear North-South division that informs much of the reform negotiations. At the same time, however, this overall pattern is often modified by issue-based coalitions that follow interests in specific issue areas.

More concretely, our respondents uniformly refer to the existence of two opposing camps when it comes to reform initiatives. One coalition – the so-called Stockholm group – is pro-reform and pro-market and against "excessive" market intervention. It ordinarily consists of the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Estonia, Latvia and the Czech Republic, with the first four countries often mentioned as forming the core of the alliance (and as "natural allies" due to similar agricultural conditions) and with Germany seen as having a foot in both camps. The conservative, reform-reluctant coalition (at times referred to as "Club Med") is seen to be led by France and basically consists of the Mediterranean countries, but also including Austria and Finland, and today, often supported by many new Member States – although the issue of external convergence has led to frictions between old and new members.

The Stockholm group has its roots in the Agenda 2000 discussions (cf. Rosén and Jerneck 2005) and was considered an important constellation in the following reform negotiations. Today, its weight seems to have diminished – possibly as a result of a less reform-inclined environment – and meetings are today rather infrequent. It is an arena for the exchange of information and for testing ideas and arguments in a friendly environment.

Another interest-based key coalition, especially on budgetary issues, is the one between net payers; primarily Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.

It is, unsurprisingly, ordinarily confronted by the net receivers. Some of our respondents also mentioned what they labelled the G-5, a group consisting of Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany and France (traditional export countries): a "very good" group, according to one interviewee, devoted to informal discussions and the testing of ideas on the level of agricultural officials, with meetings about once every half-year. There are also geographically and culturally based groupings, held together by similar conditions and common interests. The Visegrad coalition, sometimes backed by other Eastern Member States, was mentioned in this respect, but also the so-called 3+3 Group, consisting of the Nordic countries and the three Baltic states. Co-operation among the Nordic states is considered "tight" and "easy", especially among officials in Brussels, but as interests are often diverging, the Nordics ordinarily do not seem to represent a coalition as such.

Although participation in these overarching coalitions is important – as avenues for information and informal discussion – their *role as success factors* seems limited. In this regard, issue-based coalitions, often bilateral, based on similar interests in specific issues must be considered more important. Again, the co-incidence of national interests is key. Co-operation between Denmark and Sweden, notably during the Danish Presidency, is claimed to have been "very close" and productive in delimited issue areas, primarily within the second pillar. Another example is the co-operation between Finland and Sweden that resulted in the so-called "forestry exemption". As the Commission's proposal regarding agriculture and the environment was clearly adapted to the situation of large-scale farms in continental Europe, Finland and Sweden could present a convincing argument for special treatment to the Commission, with limited implications for other Member States, and were also, in the end, quite successful. Finland is, at least by some interviewees, claimed to be the most versatile Nordic actor when it comes to "variable geometry", that is, adapting its coalition behaviour across different issues. This mirrors its position as a pragmatic country with a focus on a small number of key issues, based on national interests.

Some respondents generally called for a more flexible approach in looking for coalition partners, notably in the Swedish context. It was noted that Sweden had co-operated in specific areas with both Spain (e.g. on Genetically Modified Organisms) and France (e.g. on environment and administrative simplification), often with great success. The importance of making alliances with France was underlined by these respondents, as France is listened to and exerts influence in many other countries.

To *summarise*, coalition-building, as a success factor, is indeed emphasised by our respondents. It is considered important to be part of broad coalitions, not least to be able to prevent negative developments (by forming a blocking minority). Still, it was the usefulness of issue-specific, often bilateral co-operation that was highlighted the most. Such behaviour can, it was argued, create preconditions

for influence in specific dossiers. Also, it seems crucial not to be blinded by traditional partnerships and to be continuously vigilant to use opportunities for bilateral co-operation with "unusual" partners.

6.2 Institutional contacts

There is consensus in the literature about the need for Member States to utilise what Matilda Broman (2008) called "institutional possibilities and network opportunities" (cf. Buonanno and Nugent 2013). The importance of good contacts with officials in EU institutions is constantly repeated. Such contacts need to be taken throughout the entire policy process, but special emphasis is put on contacts in the early phases of the process, before the agenda is set and before proposals have been written (Broman 2008: 71; Panke 2010a: 27).

Good relations with Commission officials are deemed to be crucial (Panke 2010a: 21). The Commission constitutes a knowledge centre, as it has privileged access to information regarding technical details about existing and projected EU policies and political matters about "what other policy actors want and will accept" (Buonanno and Nugent 2013: 44). Most scholars seem to agree that Commission officials cannot be seen as representatives of "their" governments (Egeberg 2006), although some claim that the policy positions of a DG are influenced by the nationality of the Commissioner in charge (Thomson 2011). No links have been detected between the officials' nationality and their decision-making behaviour (Egeberg 2010). Officials are guided primarily by their bureaucratic role and attachment to their DGs (ibid.; Egeberg 2006), and national officials in Brussels also perceive them "to act mainly independently from particular national interests" (Egeberg et al. 2006: 36). Permanently employed officials are subject to socialisation processes that tend to make them increasingly identify themselves with supranational interests (Suvarierol et al. 2012; Trondal et al. 2015). Nevertheless, Commission officials "make interesting interlocutors to their compatriots" (Egeberg 2010: 136) and often serve as points of access for national representatives (Egeberg 2006: 36).

Special attention has been paid to "seconded national experts", officials that have temporary contracts in the Commission and are paid by their governments. These experts have an "ambiguous organizational embeddedness" (Trondal 2006: 156), not least as they are supposed to return to their national administration after their stint at the Commission. Therefore, they have sometimes been claimed to have "double allegiances" (Trondal et al. 2015) and have even been expected to act as "domestic Trojan horses" in the Commission, advancing national interests (Trondal 2006; Trondal et al. 2015). Empirical evidence, however, demonstrates that contracted personnel, in practice, are largely integrated and committed to their present organisation, and that the national experts are *de facto* autonomous *vis-à-vis* their national governments (Trondal et al. 2015).

Cooperation and informal contacts with European Parliament officials and with Members of the EP are also highlighted, and increasingly so, as the EP is more and more becoming a co-legislator, with the spread of the ordinary decision-making process. It has been considered especially important to create contacts with the *rapporteurs* and shadow *rapporteurs* of the political groups in the EP (Broman 2008: 76). Likewise, close contacts with the rotating Council Presidency are recommended in the literature, as the Presidency country partly determines the agenda during its stint in power, and as it has a chance to speed up or put a brake on the handling of policy dossiers. The Presidency is also presumed to be a source of privileged information, being at the centre of policy processes and having a reputation as a neutral mediator (Elgström 2006; Panke 2010a: 21; Tallberg 2004).

All of our interviewees agree on the key importance of having close contacts with both other Member States and with the EU institutions, to get information on what is going on and on other actors' positions, but also – and not least – to inform and explain your own standpoints to others. It is considered extremely useful and even "decisive" to have good access to the Commission. Such contacts should be maintained at all levels, from contacts with desk officers and upwards. It is vitally important to have a chance to explain your policy positions to the Commission officials in charge, especially if special national circumstances make a potential policy proposal, and its implementation, problematic for your country. The Finnish-Swedish "forestry exemption" was cited as one example of fruitful dialogue with Commission officials. Ideally, these contacts should take place in the early phases of a decision-making process, before a proposal has been written and before actual negotiations start, as was the case in the forestry example. One tactic is to prepare text proposals in advance and try to get Commission officials to include them in the text. Such efforts were reported from both Finnish and Swedish sources.

Though one non-Nordic respondent reports that there are no major differences in the nature of Nordic states' relations with the Commission, other interviewees convey a differing opinion. Several non-Finnish sources argue that Finland has been the most effective Nordic country in influencing the Commission away from the negotiation table. Finland has, it is claimed, worked hard to create beneficial high-level contacts with DG Agri, but has also worked with officials at lower levels. This strategy is also confirmed by Finnish respondents. Another respondent suggested that Denmark and Finland are prone to introduce more concrete proposals to the Commission than Sweden, which was claimed to offer more general policy-oriented proposals.

It is considered a major advantage to have work experience from both DG Agri and a national delegation. If you have been a Commission official and then get

a job at a country's Permanent Representation, you are likely to carry with you an excellent informal network and to have easy access to former colleagues. The current Swedish SCA (Special Committee on Agriculture) representative was pointed out as a prominent example by several interviewees. Having worked in the DG, you are more likely to be perceived as a credible partner, because you have developed an understanding of how the DG functions and about the issues at hand.

By tradition, Denmark has had many more employees in DG Agri than the other two Nordics. Presently, Denmark has one Director, three unit Heads and half a dozen desk officers working in this DG, while the other two countries have two to three officials each placed there. Having compatriots as Commission officials is seen as an advantage, because they tend to understand your country's problems. However, the effects, in terms of influence, should not be exaggerated, as no "special treatment" is normally given to the country of origin. The role of national experts was also discussed in the interviews. One respondent did mention their potential role as sources of influence, because of their double allegiance, while adding that this should not be overrated, as national experts normally do not occupy decisive positions in the bureaucracy. In general, it was perceived to be an advantage to have such officials in the service, not least for countries that do not have that many permanent employees in DG Agri – while long-standing, big Member States such as France, Italy and Spain, which are heavily represented there, do not have to rely on seconded national officials. The total number of national experts has decreased in recent years, diminishing their role as access points.

Relations to the EP were given less attention by our interviewees. Our impression is that the value of parliamentary contacts was deemed to be uncertain. Still, the need to invest in these relations in the future was emphasised by some of our respondents, and it was pointed out that all Nordic countries had actually tried to influence the reform process through contacts with individual Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). It was claimed to be relatively easy to get individual MEPs to accept texts, written by state officials, as a basis for amendment proposals, due to the MEPs lack of expertise and resources. In such cases, it was, however, also considered necessary to anchor these proposals among other Member States and Commission officials, as you may otherwise receive negative reactions later on in the process.

Good contacts with the Presidency were deemed to be crucial by most of our Member State respondents. At the same time, it was noted that the extent and nature of such contacts vary considerably from one Presidency to another. Shared norms and previous good relations facilitate co-operation. As the Presidency "cannot know everything", it is often ready to accept support – for example, in terms of text formulations – from trusted fellow country officials. Both Swedish and Danish officials thus underlined the excellent working relationship between

the two countries during the Danish Presidency. Holding the Presidency creates a possibility for influence, but is also risky if you try to use the office to your own advantage. Therefore, Presidencies try to be objective and to base their proposals on convincing arguments when writing compromise texts. The Danish respondents emphasised the importance of acting as an "honest broker" when holding the Presidency, stating that "we had to work on proposals which were against our national interests".

To *summarise*, having good contacts – an effective network – is considered an essential success factor by our respondents. Networks should be broad to ensure ample information from all relevant partners. Still, close contacts with Commission officials are claimed to be the most important asset. This is where policy proposals are produced, and this is where you need to explain the circumstances that make your country require special treatment. Compatriots serve as first access points and process-facilitators, but it is far more important to have a wide network with many contact points. Investments in contacts with the EP seem to be a wise decision for future success.

6.3 Organisational set-up

Denmark follows the continental tradition with large Ministries including officials, administrators and technical experts. Finland and Sweden, on the other hand, have chosen a "dualistic" structure, separating the political level from the bureaucratic. They have relatively small Ministries and independent agencies ("verk") that handle technical issues and implementation. This arrangement is designed to give autonomy to the agencies, and less "extensive and detailed steering" from the executive (Jacobsson et al. 2015: 4). However, despite similarities in the overall structure, there are differences between Sweden and Finland in the level of autonomy for their negotiation mandates. In general EU terms, Finland seems to be the Nordic Member State with least guidance or instructions from politicians when negotiating in Brussels (Jacobsson et al. 2004: 41-42). There are also differences between the three Nordics in practical arrangements with regard to the CAP, where the SCA spokespersons of Denmark and Finland are placed in their respective capitals, while the Swedish SCA spokesperson is placed in Brussels.

In Sweden, relationships between Ministry (where the merger of the former Ministry of Agriculture with other policy areas has resulted in a rather large institution, the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation) and agency work well, with regular coordination and consultations, according to our interviewees at the Ministry. Recent cuts in budgets and the number of personnel – both at the Ministry and the agency level – have, however, created problems, according to some Swedish interviewees: The agency ("Jordbruksverket") has not always been able to meet the demands of the Ministry, due to the reduced number of officials. Officials in Stockholm and Brussels did not always receive the information they needed to be well-prepared in technical negotiations. Though similar budget

cuts have also occurred in Denmark and Finland, their effects do not seem to be as noticeable. In Finland, this is arguably due to a tough prioritisation where personnel have been allocated to the areas where Finland has the most important national interests.

In terms of the practical arrangements of the CAP, all of the interviewees that commented upon the potential choice between a capital-based and a Brussels-based SCA representative saw pros and cons with both alternatives. "It is more important to have the right person than where he or she is located", as one respondent put it. There was a small but noticeable tendency that officials who are Brussels-based (Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, but also our respondents from EU institutions) saw more advantages in this option, while those who are capital-based (Austria, Denmark, Finland) had a slight preference for that alternative.

The advantage of being in Brussels is primarily that it facilitates informal contacts and networking. As having good contacts is considered absolutely essential, a presence creates a clear advantage. It is easy to "go for a coffee" with an official from the EU institutions or from another country. So much happens outside of the negotiation room – and if you are there, you can more readily use these opportunities. Being in Brussels gives you a larger degree of flexibility. It also seems that representatives of EU institutions prefer Member States to have their SCA representative in Brussels, as this facilitates easy contact. On the other hand, being located in the capital gives you a chance to be closer to political life in your home country – which is also considered important. You can have easier and closer contacts with your Minister and with members of Parliament, but also with domestic experts, within or outside the Ministry. In EU negotiations, it is seen as vital to know what is going on at home and how the domestic debate is running, and this is easier to accomplish if you have your base in the capital.

Sweden's institutional structures were also described, both by Swedish and non-Swedish respondents, as having certain characteristics that influence its negotiation behaviour. The Swedish spirit of consensus, where all institutions involved have to agree before a decision (according to these respondents), is claimed to result in a certain rigidity and inflexibility. The hands of negotiators are sometimes tied by strict mandates, resulting from internal coordination, and it takes time to receive new instructions from the capital when negotiations so require. It should be noted, however, that one of our interviewees from the EU institutions firmly denied having noticed any problems of this kind. Despite the fact that Finland's negotiation mandates are discussed in its EU section, made up of people from the different Ministries, the mandates are usually flexible. However, two respondents argued that Finnish negotiators, in fact, seem to be quite restricted by their mandates.

To summarise, the way in which organisational structures are set up does not seem to be a major obstacle or promoter of success. Thus, the location of SCA

representatives is not portrayed as a decisive success factor. Both capital-based or Brussels-based representations have their advantages and disadvantages. The key thing is to have close contacts with relevant people in relevant EU institutions, while, at the same time, keeping abreast of what is going on in the domestic scene. Neither is the organisational set-up in terms of continental or Nordic traditions regarding Ministries and agencies deemed to be a major success factor. What is considered important, however, are the administrative resources being devoted to the negotiations. At least in the Swedish case, budget cuts, especially affecting the agricultural agency, are claimed to have had a negative impact upon negotiation effectiveness.

6.4 Knowledge, expertise and personalities

"The role of expertise is pivotal" in EU negotiations, according to a team of academic experts (Egeberg et al. 2006: 67; cf. Panke 2010a: 207). The use of expertise is essential in two ways: First, it provides a state with information and may thereby create a knowledge advantage; second, experts help to define and frame issues together with other national and EU representatives (Broman 2008: 85; cf. Payne 2001). Survey research demonstrates that officials assign more weight to arguments advocated by members who have shown expertise in the subject matter at hand than to, for example, big Member State representatives (Egeberg et al. 2006: 67). Information advantages and expertise are thus claimed to provide possibilities for influence and leadership (Buonanno and Nugent 2013: 89; Broman 2008: 222). In EU negotiations, the Commission is often said to have an advantage here: both because of its in-house knowledge and its ability to marshal the knowledge it does not have itself (Buonanno and Nugent 2013: 89). The Commission may also have privileged information about actors' wishes and bottom lines (what they can actually accept), due to its reputation as a neutral mediator (ibid.).

The importance of being well-prepared when you come to the negotiation table is emphasised, not least by former practitioners. Former Dutch Permanent Representative Bernard Bot thus included among his "ten commandments for the successful negotiator" the need to "know your dossier well" (2004: ix) and continued, "a negotiator who really knows what he/she is talking about will always be more persuasive than one who clearly does not". The personal capacity of a negotiator can thus be of "crucial importance" (Bal 2004: 133). This capacity involves experience and knowledge, but also personal qualities, i.e. the "character" of individual negotiators (cf. Tallberg 2008). In the same vein, Leendert Jan Bal (2004: 133) gave the following advice: "Don't underestimate the influence of individuals and social processes" on negotiation outcomes.

Consistent with the message from the literature overview, our interviewees agree on the importance of high competence among officials. It is a "big asset" and may even be decisive in technical negotiations. However, some respondents add that neither experience nor expertise in matters of substance are absolutely

necessary, as individual officials can rely on the often considerable knowledge of their organisations. Still, it is seen as an advantage to have substantial experience in the field of agriculture, not least because networking is so important: Building a good network takes time. Most respondents claim that there is a high level of expertise in all of the Nordic states – but one interviewee remarked that Finland is "very, very capable" in terms of expertise, while Denmark is "OK" and Sweden's expertise is "varying depending on issues and individuals".

The most important thing, according to many respondents, is to be well-prepared. This is true not least for small countries. According to our sources, all three Nordic countries usually come to the table well-prepared. They are "professional" and "serious countries", which is not always the case with, for example, Eastern European Member States, at least in the eyes of one respondent. For example, all three regularly put forward text proposals to the Commission, the EP and the Presidency. This is seen as a sign of earnestness, as written texts are taken more seriously than oral messages.

What kind of information and knowledge are considered most useful? According to two interviewees, good knowledge about the Commission is key: both about whom to talk to and when to do so (timing). It is also seen as essential to have a good overview of others' positions and to understand why different actors take these stands. Issue-specific subject knowledge is, of course, also an advantage, but as noted above, this can be provided by your organisation.

To *summarise*, expertise and experience are valued assets for negotiators. These characteristics are obviously closely connected to actors' networking capabilities (see above). Most important, however, is coming well-prepared to the negotiation table. In this respect, the Nordics seem to be exemplary members when compared to some other Member States.

6.5 Persuasive strategies

Over the last decade, EU negotiation literature has paid considerable attention to the role of arguments in negotiations, inspired by the idea of "the better argument" in deliberative democratic theory (e.g. Naurin 2010; Risse and Kleine 2010; Mansbridge et al. 2010). Here, the focus is on discussion on the merits, how actors try to influence each other by making legitimate and justifiable claims for their positions. In a true deliberation, actors are also themselves ready to be influenced by other participants' arguments. Diana Panke argued that "argumentative power", i.e. to "seek to convince others to change preferences in the wake of compelling claims" (Panke 2010b: 802), is a strategy that can be used by small states trying to overcome their structural disadvantages (such as fewer votes and more limited resources) in EU negotiations. There are different views in the literature about whether argumentative power or persuasive strategies are most likely to be (successfully) used by big or small Member States (see e.g. Dür and Matteo 2010 and Naurin 2010 for different opinions on this matter). We

do not have to settle that argument here in order to analyse to what extent, if at all, the three Nordic EU members made use of this possibility in the CAP negotiations.

Two interrelated aspects of persuasive strategies are prioritisation and framing. Prioritisation is about concentrating limited resources on what is most important: What specific issues in a negotiation are of most importance to an actor? Especially to small states, with fewer resources, prioritisation is essential. As one interviewee puts it: "For a big member state, all questions are big questions" – they do not have to prioritise as hard. Once specific priorities are clear, the actor can try to find e.g. good scientific backing and arguments for its preferred stance (Panke 2010a, b). Prioritising is also important because actors tend to be more active and more successful in regard to issues that they consider to be of high salience (Panke 2010a: 209; cf. Segal and Jeffrey 2000).

Framing is about "selecting and emphasising particular aspects of an issue" (Eising et al. 2015: 516). The parties in a negotiation are likely to have "different problem views and a rivalry over policy solutions which need to be accommodated" (ibid. p. 520), thereby framing the issue under negotiation in different ways. This can be done in both general terms (generic frames) and in issue-specific terms (specific frames), relating to the policy area at hand. The Commission's proposals often use generic frames, trying to bring together different actors and decrease the level of conflict between them (ibid p. 519). Differences in national contexts will make Member States more prone to invoke different frames in response to policy proposals, which can be done by utilising both generic and specific frames. According to Panke (2010a: 208), framing matters in EU negotiations, but mainly when the argument resonates with the prior beliefs of the addressees. Examples of framing are to argue that something is efficient or democratic: A policy option that one Member State argues is more democratic, another can argue is less efficient.

Several interviewees emphasise the importance of making compelling claims and of trying to get others to see the merits of one's arguments in the negotiations. With regard to framing, some respondents argue that by using a "European dimension" frame, you are more likely to involve other actors, as well as by framing a certain policy or solution as being in the common interest. Other potentially successful ways of framing mentioned by different interviewees are to argue in terms of efficiency, simplification or less administration. It is important to pay attention to the context: One interviewee stated that with regard to a specific issue under negotiation, it was obvious that arguments in terms of environmental concerns would not be "selling", but by arguing for the same solution in terms of simplification, the other actors were convinced of the merits of the solution. Furthermore, "being extremely ideological is detrimental", as one interviewee puts it. To argue in very ideological terms is thus not regarded as a successful persuasive strategy, nor are radical and unrealistic arguments like

"remove all interventions". Sweden is the Nordic Member State that is the most prone to ideological argumentation, and several interviewees were of the opinion that a more pragmatic approach – and arguments – could benefit Sweden.

At the same time, Sweden is, as the other two Nordics, regarded as very competent, with much knowledge about the issues under negotiation, even if it does not always frame them in "academic" terms. One interviewee states that the Commission has a very academic way of working, with an interest in e.g. methodological issues. Hence, in order to make the Commission interested in your claims, it is an advantage to share its academic approach – even when more "practical" aspects are under discussion. Finland has been more successful in "talking the Commission language" and usually backs up its claims by using the Commission's own statistics. This can be seen as both an efficient and a smart persuasive strategy: efficient in that it can use the resources provided by the Commission, and smart in the sense that the Commission is not likely to question its own data.

Several interviewees also describe Finland as working hard – and successfully – with prioritisation: "The Finns select a few issues, which they put all their energy on". According to Panke (2010b: 803), the prioritisation of issues, as well as contacts with the Commission, can compensate for "[d]isadvantages in argumentative power". In the case of Finland, however, these strategies seem to be used *in addition to* other forms of argumentative power, rather than as compensation.

To summarise, framing – selecting the most convincing arguments in the situation at hand – is considered important by our respondents. In order to be successful, you should know what arguments are most likely to be listened to, not least by centrally placed Commission officials and by key Member State representatives. Ideologically framed arguments were in general perceived to be less convincing. "Picking your battles" is frequently mentioned as another success factor. Actors that focus their resources on a few issues of obvious national interest, with Finland constituting the prime Nordic example, are claimed to have better odds of succeeding than those who spread their attention over a large number of more or less important issues.

7 A Nordic comparison

A comparison between the three Nordic EU members demonstrates both similarities and differences, which basically mirror an underlying Nordic variation in agricultural preconditions and structures. Denmark is dependent on its large agricultural export and is therefore liberal and against market interventions. For Sweden, the sector is much less important, and Sweden, a free trade, market-oriented country, has for many years had a reduction of the CAP budget as a priority, and at the same time, has defended a liberalisation of the sector and fought all kinds of interventions. Their basically liberal approach often makes Denmark and Sweden natural allies. Finland has a rather small, but nationally important, agricultural sector, and support from the EU is considered a key national interest. It has therefore defended the CAP wholeheartedly. At times, and as pointed out before, national interests create other types of coalitions: Finland and Sweden have, for example, a shared interest in the special characteristics of their agriculture, with adverse conditions in northern parts of their countries.

Against this background, Finland is seen by our respondents as a "realistic", "flexible" and "pragmatic" actor in agricultural negotiations, guided by its national interest and ordinarily giving its full support to the Commission. Its CAP policy is backed by all major political parties. Finland is pragmatic in the sense that its economic interests are always prioritised, while principles are placed in the back seat. According to one interviewee, Finland *has* to be pragmatic if it wants its agriculture to survive. Sweden is, on the other hand, ordinarily guided by principles, according to our interviewees. Sweden wants, first of all, to change the CAP in a more market-oriented direction. Denmark is also claimed to follow liberal principles. At the same time, "the Danish flag follows the bacon", as one of our respondents put it; that is, Denmark also prioritises its economic interests when it comes to concrete negotiations, partly due to the influence of strong domestic pressure groups. Several interviewees thus pointed out that Danish negotiators let go of their principles well before their Swedish counterparts do so in the final phase of negotiations. In this sense, the Danes are also pragmatic, but also at times more "prone to insist" (as they have clear national economic interests in many issues) than their Swedish counterparts.

Sweden is considered by many to be "too" restricted by its principles, as pointed out in a previous section, with repercussions for its degree of influence. Some observers – outside the circle of our interviewees – even claim that Sweden has been "absent from the negotiation table" (Pettersson 2011), that is, marginalised in many negotiation sessions, due to its ideological approach. Swedish negotiators are also claimed by some interviewees to often have a more restricted and less flexible mandate than the other two Nordics, due to its domestic political

situation and the influence of the Ministry of Finance. Despite Sweden's allegedly "principled" approach, one non-Swedish respondent maintained that while Denmark sometimes drops environmental concerns because of its economic interests in agriculture, Sweden may do the same when it comes to forestry, a sector of considerable economic weight in that country. Some respondents also pointed out that they had noticed an "improvement" in Sweden's willingness to compromise in recent years.

Finland stands out because it is perceived to *prioritise* among the numerous issues on the agenda, much more than the other Nordics. The Finns, many respondents claimed, focus on just a few issues, and they do so to their advantage, as they are often successful in the areas they prioritise. On the other hand, Sweden and Denmark are perceived to be more active than Finland in negotiations. The Finns "are there, but quiet" and, according to two respondents, they tend to rely much more on their instructions than their Danish and Swedish counterparts. The Danes are said to be skilful negotiators, partly because of Denmark's long experience as an interested actor in CAP negotiations. Finnish negotiators are supposed to be the best networkers, especially in building contacts with the Commission. "They are in touch all the time", in the words of one respondent, and they often succeed in conveying the message they want to deliver to Commission officials. All three Nordics are considered, not only by Nordic respondents, to have capable officials who are well-prepared and to deliver high-quality inputs to the negotiation process.

To *summarise*, Sweden is seen as restricted by its principles and by its domestic political situation. Denmark shares Sweden's liberal principles, but tends to be more pragmatic in actual negotiations. This is explained by our interviewees by the importance of the farming sector in Denmark and by the concomitant influence of economic interest groups. Finland is considered to have an advantage due to its strict priorities and its consistent efforts to protect a few, vital interests. It also has the advantage of being closer, in general, to the status quo, compared to the other two Nordics.

8 Conclusions

The puzzle stated in the introduction was why Sweden seems to be relatively unsuccessful in the field of agricultural negotiations when it is deemed influential in other sectors, and why the other Nordics seem to fare better. As argued above, ambitious goals are more difficult to reach, and Sweden's overall goal concerning the CAP can certainly be described as being ambitious: to scrap it altogether, or at least, to turn it into a market-friendly, liberal policy.

The political and economic context surrounding the latest CAP process was not conducive to reform. A weak Commissioner, not committed to liberalisation, a conservative ComAgri in an EP with decision-making power for the first time, strong interest groups arguing for reintroduced interventions and a constellation of Member State interests that was not in favour of further market-oriented reform combined to make the situation extremely difficult for reform-minded actors. Bargaining success in terms of further liberalisation and fewer market interventions was not to be expected. This should be borne in mind when assessing the overall performance of Sweden, as well as Denmark, the two Nordic states pursuing such reform ideas. From a long-term perspective, the CAP has moved towards increased market liberalisation since 1992, and hence in the direction preferred by Sweden and Denmark – but their main aspiration in the negotiations leading up to the 2013 decisions was, in hindsight, rather to defend the achievements that had been already made in previous rounds of CAP negotiations.

Sweden is definitely not "absent from the table", but rather the opposite, according to interviewees from other Member States and EU institutions: It is a knowledgeable and professional actor, active in the negotiations. There is, however, as pointed out by many interviewees, a "Swedish dilemma", made up of its ideological stand against the CAP, on the one hand, and its efforts to pursue material national interests, on the other hand, which could be described as trying to get the most out of a cake at the same time that you profess not to like it. This dilemma sometimes, according to several respondents, makes it difficult for Sweden to act in concrete policy areas, especially within Pillar 1, which is the part of the CAP most disliked by Sweden.

Perhaps, but not necessarily, related to this dilemma is the fact that Sweden has not fully followed its own ideological viewpoint on the CAP when implementing the 2013 reform. One prominent example of this is that Sweden did not use the opportunity to transfer resources from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2 – which Denmark and ten other Member States did, among them, other reform-minded members, such as the Netherlands and the UK. In an evaluation of the national implementation of the 2013 reform, based on the relative degree of "conservatism", Sweden is

actually placed in what is termed the "moderately conservative camp", together with e.g. Finland and Austria (Anania and D'Andrea 2015: 76-80). The category is the second, out of four, in the ranking, with other reform-minded Member States in the first category ("less conservative").

Overall, Sweden is, despite the dilemma described above, not necessarily deemed "less successful" in concrete negotiation episodes than its Nordic neighbours by our non-Swedish respondents. This result is consistent with the finding of Panke (2010a: 203, 206) that all three Nordics are among the most successful (as well as the most active) of the small EU members in shaping outcomes on the concrete issues about which they have positions. It is primarily in such day-to-day negotiations that the success factors that we have analysed come to the fore and determine a country's degree of success. What should Sweden, as well as other Member States, consider when trying to promote their national interests in Brussels negotiations?

To recapitulate, the following are the main lessons learnt from our study – based on the perceptions of our interviewees – of success factors in EU agricultural negotiation:

- Good contacts with key officials, particularly within the Commission, are essential. Compatriots serve as excellent entry-points, but not necessarily as vehicles of influence. Enabling key officials to understand your concerns and your specific problems with a policy proposal is of major importance.
- Nurturing contacts with the European Parliament and the members of ComAgri seems to be of growing importance.
- Issue-specific coalitions are necessary to build and maintain. Alliance partners may shift from one issue area to another, and you should carefully consider, from case to case, the other actors with whom to align. When you have defensive interests, the goal is often to create a blocking minority.
- Being well-prepared when entering negotiations is imperative. This demands that you have an extensive network in Brussels, but also sufficient administrative resources "at home".
- Consideration of how to frame problems and messages is important. The use of frames that are considered legitimate, that fit the existing discursive climate, and that are well-received by crucial actors (in the Commission and in key Member States) facilitate success.
- Prioritisation is necessary. You cannot expect to reach all of your goals: Pick your battles, and concentrate your resources on the most important issues.
- Realism and pragmatism are key words. Consider what is realistic to achieve and focus on this. An ideological approach is often counterproductive, especially in day-to-day negotiations on concrete issues.

What, then, are the implications of these lessons for Sweden specifically? First, to continue to have a Brussels-based SCA representative, which seems to be serving

Sweden well, and to keep existing staff resources (i.e. to avoid further downsizing at the Ministry, as well as at Jordbruksverket). Second, to (continue to) work strategically with potential coalition partners and institutional contacts, and to consider increased attention to contacts within the EP. Third, to introduce a stricter prioritisation, with a focus on issues for which Sweden has a realistic chance to influence the outcome. Finally, to be more pragmatic and to avoid ideologically based framing. According to many respondents, Sweden has moved in a more "realistic" direction over the last few years, and this is claimed to have been beneficial for Sweden in CAP negotiations.

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List of interviewees

Lars E Olsson, Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, 19 November 2015

Carl-Fredrik Lööf, Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, 19 November 2015

Tomas Dahlman, Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, 19 November 2015

Ulrika Rinman, Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, 19 November 2015

Carina Folkeson Lillo, Swedish Permanent Representation to the EU, 12 January 2016

Carl-Johan Lindén, European Commission, 12 January 2016

Peeter Seestrand, Estonian Permanent Representation to the EU, 12 January 2016

Jaime Lillo Lopez, Spanish Permanent Representation to the EU, 13 January 2016

Maria Daniela Lenzu, Secretariat of the European Council, 13 January 2016

Helène Cuisinier, Secretariat of the European Parliament, 13 January 2016

Frank Schmit, Luxembourg Permanent Representation to the EU, 14 January 2016

Jesper Wulff Pedersen, Danish Ministry of Environment and Food, 26 January 2016

Kari Valonen, Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 16 February 2016

Johann Doppelbauer, Austrian Permanent Representation to the EU, 16 February 2016

Lotte Linnet, Danish Ministry of Environment and Food, 23 May 2016

Mia Stecher, Danish Ministry of Environment and Food, 23 May 2016

Pia Lehmusvuori, Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 3 June 2016

Risto Artjoki, Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 6 June 2016

Appendix: Interview guide

We will ask you rather broad questions, with a possibility to follow up. We are not interested in details regarding the Nordic countries' positions on different issues, nor in details regarding the negotiation process, but more broadly in what strategies and activities these states engaged in. Our main task is to investigate "factors promoting success" in agricultural negotiations. The following questions will form the basis for our interview:

- In general, what factors are the most important for a Member-State in order to have influence in agricultural negotiations? What aspects are the most important for Member State representatives to consider and to keep in mind if they want "success"?
- What coalitions and/or informal networks existed (in various issue-areas) and to what coalitions/networks did each of the Nordic states belong? Did any of them remain outside essential coalitions/networks? Could they have chosen better coalition strategies?
- How would you evaluate the contacts the Nordic states had with the EU institutions (Commission, EP, Council secretariat)? Did they use these institutional opportunities to the best extent possible? At what points in time were contacts taken (too late?)?
- Do you have any comment on the organisational structure of these countries? Were they (mainly) Capital-based or Brussels-based? Did this play any role? Were they internally coherent or were different signals sent by different national actors?
- How did the different Nordic states frame their arguments, that is, how did they define problems and solutions? Were their arguments well taken and persuasive? Could they have argued more effectively?
- Were the individuals representing each country experienced and knowledgeable and did they have good individual networks? Was there continuity in the country delegations?

Svensk sammanfattning

Föreliggande rapport utgår från det ofta förekommande påståendet att Sverige inte får ut vad man ”borde” i förhandlingar om EU:s gemensamma jordbrukspolitik (CAP), vare sig ekonomiskt eller sett till politikområdets utformning. De övriga nordiska EU-medlemmarna Finland och Danmark framställs inte sällan som mer framgångsrika i dessa avseenden.

Samtidigt anses Sverige generellt sett vara en attraktiv partner i EU-förhandlingar, och har i upprepade analyser uppgetts vara den mest efterfrågade samarbetspartnern, efter de ”tre stora” (Frankrike, Tyskland och Storbritannien). Det leder till följande fråga: Hur kommer det sig att Sverige verkar vara mindre framgångsrikt i jordbruksförhandlingarna, och varför uppfattas de två nordiska grannländerna som mer framgångsrika?

Författarna till föreliggande rapport tar sig an frågan genom att undersöka ett antal olika faktorer som kan anses skapa förutsättningar, alternativt hinder, för framgång i EU:s jordbruksförhandlingar. Dessa ”framgångsfaktorer” hämtas från förhandlingsteorier och består av: koalitioner och nätverk, institutionella kontakter, organisatoriska aspekter, kunskap och expertis samt övertalningsstrategier.

För att undersöka betydelsen av dessa faktorer, och även utröna om det finns ytterligare faktorer av vikt, har deltagare i den senaste CAP-förhandlingsrundan (2011-2013) intervjuats. Deltagarnas erfarenheter ger en god bild av vad som kan anses leda till framgång i dessa förhandlingar. För att få en så nyanserad bild som möjligt har författarna intervjuat representanter för sju olika medlemsländer (Danmark, Estland, Finland, Luxemburg, Spanien, Sverige och Österrike), samt företrädare för EU-kommissionen, ministerrådet och Europaparlamentet. Fyra svenska departementstjänstemän har också intervjuats.

Framgång är ett svårdefinierat begrepp, och en enkel definition existerar knappast, även om förhandlingslitteraturen ofta beskriver ”förhandlingsframgång” som en överensstämmelse mellan en aktörs preferenser och förhandlingsresultatet. Det är inte författarnas avsikt att på ett objektivt sätt försöka mäta framgång, utan istället att rapportera om hur olika aktörer ser på vad som kan bidra till framgång i CAP-förhandlingar, och hur ”framgångsfaktorerna” kan relateras till de tre nordiska länderna i den senaste reformförhandlingen.

De tre nordiska länderna skiljer sig åt vad gäller förutsättningar för jordbruk och betydelsen av sektorn för landet. Det återspeglas också i deras syn på CAP. Sverige hade nyss genomgått en omfattande reform av den egna jordbrukspolitiken, som tidigare haft många likheter med CAP, när landet 1995 blev medlem i

EU. Denna inhemska omläggning av jordbrukspolitiken färgade Sveriges syn på CAP, som man ansåg borde genomgå samma marknadsanpassning. Sverige blev en stark förespråkare för radikal reform av CAP. Danmark hör också till reformförespråkarna: landet har en stor jordbrukssektor och en omfattande export. Finland vill däremot se en fortsatt interventionistisk CAP. Landets geografiska läge, med de begränsade förutsättningar för jordbruk som detta innebär, skulle göra det svårt för det att utan stöd konkurrera med stora jordbruksländer. Även om jordbrukssektorn är liten, är den av stor vikt för Finland. För Sverige är jordbruket relativt sett av mindre betydelse, medan det liksom Finland har en betydelsefull skogsindustri.

Den senaste reformförhandlingen handlade bland annat om storleken på budgeten för den gemensamma jordbrukspolitiken; fördelningen av direktstöd mellan medlemsländerna; balansen mellan marknadskrafter och intervention; omfattningen och utformningen av ”förgröning”; samt hur mycket flexibilitet som skulle ges till medlemsländerna vid implementering av besluten. Förutom de olika ståndpunkter mellan medlemsländerna som ska beaktas vid beslut i rådet, deltog Europaparlamentet för första gången som en jämbördig beslutsfattare inom jordbrukspolitiken.

Nedan följer en sammanställning av de undersökta framgångsfaktorerna:

Koalitionsbyggande och nätverk är centralt i förhandlingar. Många respondenter betonade vikten av sakspecifika, bilaterala samarbeten och öppenhet för samarbete med ”ovanliga” koalitionspartners. Ett exempel på detta var Finlands och Sveriges framgångsrika samarbete, som resulterade i ett undantag från gemensamma förgröningsregler av direktstödet vad gäller ländernas skogsnäring. Finland sågs av många respondenter som det nordiska land som mest anpassar sitt koalitionsarbete efter sakfråga. Det speglar landets position som en pragmatisk aktör, som fokuserar på ett litet antal frågor baserat på dess nationella intresse.

Institutionella kontakter – och att veta till vem man ska vända sig och när i processen – är av stor betydelse i EU-förhandlingar. Goda kontakter med framför allt EU-kommissionen lyfts fram av respondenterna. Inte minst viktiga är de tidiga kontakterna med representanter för denna institution, gärna redan innan förslagen till nya beslut har skrivits. Finland anses jobba hårt på kontakterna med kommissionen, på olika nivåer. Det ses också som en fördel om landets representant i Särskilda jordbrukskommittén (SJK) har erfarenhet av arbete i kommissionen, vilket den nuvarande svenska representanten har. Det ger både kännedom om kommissionens arbetssätt och ett nätverk av tidigare kolleger. Anställda landsmän behöver inte innebära att det egna landet gynnas, men det kan ge värdefulla ingångar till institutionen. Danmark är det nordiska land som har flest anställda inom området jordbruk i kommissionen. Kontakter med Europaparlamentet anses vara av ökande betydelse, i och med dess ställning

som medbeslutande i jordbruksfrågor. Alla de tre nordiska länderna arbetade med kontakter i parlamentet under de senaste förhandlingarna, där framför allt Finland och Danmark försåg parlamentariker med textunderlag.

Organisatoriska aspekter: Att Sverige och Finland har en dualistisk struktur, som separerar den politiska nivån från den byråkratiska, medan Danmark har stora ministerier som inkluderar administration och teknisk expertis, verkar sakna betydelse för deras respektive agerande i jordbruksförhandlingarna. Alla tre länderna har erfarit nedskärningar i personal – i Sverige främst på Jordbruksverket – vilket inte anses ha påverkat Danmark och Finland nämnvärt, medan Sverige i viss utsträckning märkt av brister när det gäller underlag, framför allt av teknisk natur. I Finland har nedskärningarna inneburit en starkare prioritering av personal på de områden där landet har störst nationella intressen.

Sveriges SJK-representant är placerad i Bryssel, medan Finlands och Danmarks företrädare är placerade i sina huvudstäder. Det finns för- och nackdelar med båda arrangemangen: att vara på plats i Bryssel ger enklare tillgång till informella kontakter och nätverksmöjligheter, medan placering i huvudstaden innebär bättre kontakt med den nationella politiken. Båda aspekter är av betydelse, och inget av arrangemangen kan per automatik sägas ge bättre möjligheter att nå framgång i förhandlingarna. Däremot har en del intervjupersoner, både svenska och icke-svenska, beskrivit den svenska konsensusandan som i vissa sammanhang försvårande: ibland drar den interna koordinationen ut på tiden och det kan ta tid att få nya instruktioner.

När det gäller *kunskap och expertis* beskrivs samtliga tre nordiska länder som mycket kunniga och professionella, och väl förberedda inför förhandlingar. Övertalningsstrategier handlar om att söka övertyga andra om fördelarna med de egna ståndpunkterna. Det omfattar såväl hur de egna argumenten framställs (”framing”) som prioritering av vad som anses vara mest centralt. Finland anses lägga stor vikt vid prioritering – landet väljer ut ett litet antal frågor som de lägger all energi på. Man är också bra på att ”prata kommissionens språk”, det vill säga att framställa sina argument på ett sätt som passar väl med kommissionens sätt att arbeta. Sverige anses ofta relatera till ideologiska argument, vilket anses mindre framgångsrikt. Danmark är också principiellt en CAP-motståndare, men anses vara mer pragmatiskt i sina argument.

Undersökningen visar att Sverige i CAP-förhandlingarna inte generellt kan sägas vara mindre framgångsrikt än de övriga två nordiska länderna. Det bör påpekas att mer ambitiösa mål är svårare att uppnå. Sveriges övergripande syn på CAP är att den borde skrotas – eller åtminstone omvandlas till en marknadsorienterad policy. Det är ett synnerligen ambitiöst mål, men CAP har sedan 1990-talet förflyttats i den riktning som Sverige och Danmark önskar. Omständigheterna kring den senaste förhandlingsrundan var dock sådana att ytterligare steg i den

riktningen inte kom att tas, och det handlade för Sverige och Danmark, och övriga reformförespråkare, snarare om att försvara de framsteg som man tidigare uppnått och att undvika ytterligare interventioner.

Sverige är en aktiv och kunnig aktör i jordbruksförhandlingarna, men kan sägas lida av ett dilemma som består av att landet å ena sidan intar en ideologisk hållning för ett avskaffande – eller åtminstone en radikal omläggning – av CAP, och å andra sidan försöker uppnå materiella, nationella intressen. Det kan beskrivas som att försöka få så mycket som möjligt av en kaka som man har förklarat att man egentligen inte gillar. Detta dilemma försvårar ibland svenskt agerande, särskilt vad gäller direktstöd, vilket är den del av CAP som Sverige tycker sämst om.

Vad innebär då undersökningens resultat – i mer konkreta termer – för Sveriges agerande i EU:s jordbruksförhandlingar? Den första slutsatsen är att man bör fortsätta att ha en Bryssel-baserad SJK-representant, vilket har tjänat Sverige väl, samt undvika ytterligare nedskärningar i personella resurser. För det andra är det viktigt att fortsätta att arbeta strategiskt med potentiella koalitionspartners och institutionella kontakter, och att fästa ökad vikt vid Europaparlamentet. För det tredje verkar en striktare prioritering – framför allt i frågor där Sverige har en realistisk chans att påverka – ge resultat. Slutligen bör Sverige vara mer pragmatiskt och undvika att framställa sakfrågor i ideologiska termer. Enligt flera respondenter har man dock på senare år förflyttat sig i en mer ”realistisk” riktning, något som verkar ha varit till Sveriges fördel.

"The puzzle of our study was why Sweden seems to be relatively unsuccessful in the field of agricultural negotiations when it is deemed influential in other sectors, and why the other Nordics seem to fare better."

Ole Elgström and Malena Rosén Sundström

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www.sieps.se • info@sieps.se • +46-8-586 447 00