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National parliaments, electorates and EU affairs

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Reihe Politikwissenschaft

Political Science Series

National Parliaments, Electorates and EU Affairs

Edited by Katrin Auel and Tapio Raunio

Institut für Höhere Studien
Institute for Advanced Studies
Vienna

129

Reihe Politikwissenschaft

Political Science Series

National Parliaments, Electorates and EU Affairs

Edited by Katrin Auel and Tapio Raunio

April 2012

Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien
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Founded in 1963 by two prominent Austrians living in exile – the sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the economist Oskar Morgenstern – with the financial support from the Ford Foundation, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, and the City of Vienna, the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) is the first institution for postgraduate education and research in economics and the social sciences in Austria. The **Political Science Series** presents research done at the Department of Political Science and aims to share "work in progress" before formal publication. It includes papers by the Department's teaching and research staff, visiting professors, graduate students, visiting fellows, and invited participants in seminars, workshops, and conferences. As usual, authors bear full responsibility for the content of their contributions.

Das Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS) wurde im Jahr 1963 von zwei prominenten Exilösterreichern – dem Soziologen Paul F. Lazarsfeld und dem Ökonomen Oskar Morgenstern – mit Hilfe der Ford-Stiftung, des Österreichischen Bundesministeriums für Unterricht und der Stadt Wien gegründet und ist somit die erste nachuniversitäre Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für die Sozial- und Wirtschafts-wissenschaften in Österreich. Die **Reihe Politikwissenschaft** bietet Einblick in die Forschungsarbeit der Abteilung für Politikwissenschaft und verfolgt das Ziel, abteilungsinterne Diskussionsbeiträge einer breiteren fachinternen Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Die inhaltliche Verantwortung für die veröffentlichten Beiträge liegt bei den Autoren und Autorinnen. Gastbeiträge werden als solche gekennzeichnet.

Abstract

This Collection of Working Papers is based on papers presented at the Workshop on ‘National Parliaments and Their Electorates in EU Affairs‘, held on 7-8 April 2011 at the Humboldt-Viadrina School of Governance in Berlin. We are grateful for the generous financial contributions by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, the Humboldt-Viadrina School of Governance and the European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder. We would also like to thank the authors for their participation in and commitment to this project. Finally, special thanks also go to Jacqueline Haake and Lisa Dörr for their support with the organization of the Workshop, and to Sarah Christian for her help with proof reading and the production of this Collection of Working Papers. Revised versions of these papers will appear in a Special Issue of the *Journal of Legislative Studies* (forthcoming in 2014)

April 2012
Katrin Auel
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Keywords

European Union; National Parliaments; Parliamentary Communication Function; Media; Politicisation

General note on content

The opinions expressed in these papers are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the IHS.

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Introduction: National Parliaments, Electorates and EU Affairs

Katrin Auel and Tapio Raunio

The role of national legislatures in the political system of the European Union (EU) first received serious political and academic attention in the mid-1990s in connection with debates on how to cure the EU's democratic deficit (Norton 1995; Raunio 1999; Raunio & Hix 2000). Academic interest in the topic drew further inspiration from the first comparative projects that showed domestic legislatures to be largely ineffective or uninterested in controlling their governments in EU matters (Laursen & Pappas eds. 1995; Norton ed. 1995; Smith ed. 1996). Since then the role of national parliaments has featured quite prominently on the research agenda of both parliamentary and EU scholars, with several comparative research projects on national parliamentary scrutiny of EU policies completed during the first decade of the new millennium (Maurer & Wessels eds. 2001; Auel & Benz eds. 2005; Szalay 2005; Gates 2006; Kiiver 2006; Kiiver ed. 2006; Holzhacker & Albæk eds. 2007; O´Brennan & Raunio eds. 2007; Tans et al. eds. 2007; Barrett ed. 2008).

Thanks to this lively academic debate, we are now in a much better position to evaluate the ways in which national legislatures are affected by and get involved in European integration. While national parliaments have certainly been late adapters to integration, there is no doubt that they exercise tighter scrutiny of their governments over EU matters than before. Domestic legislatures have reformed their scrutiny systems, mainly by upgrading the powers and resources of the European Affairs Committees (EAC) and involving specialized committees more regularly in EU affairs. Inter-parliamentary networking in COSAC[1] and other forums has facilitated the sharing of 'best practices', with the individual parliaments assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the scrutiny arrangements in the other legislatures. This learning of best practices applies particularly to those countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Indeed, early evidence from the new member states indicates that their parliaments have on average implemented more comprehensive scrutiny mechanisms than the parliaments of the older EU countries (see particularly Szalay 2005; O'Brennan & Raunio eds. 2007; Karlas 2011).

However, practically all existing research has focused on parliamentary scrutiny of EU affairs. Most of this literature, both case studies and comparative analyses, has emphasized institutional adaptation by domestic legislatures. Scholars have been particularly interested

[1] COSAC stands for Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (www.cosac.eu/en). The biannual COSAC meetings bring together delegations from the EACs of the national parliaments and the European Parliament. COSAC decides normally by consensus, but following a rule change adopted in May 2003, its non-binding decisions (called 'contributions') can be passed with 3/4 of votes cast (which must constitute at last half of all votes). COSAC also has a secretariat in Brussels. (Knudsen & Carl 2008).

in comparing the effectiveness of alternative scrutiny systems and in explaining the adoption of specific scrutiny models. There is also a small but growing body of research on inter-parliamentary cooperation among national legislatures (and the European Parliament). But the main point is that practically all previous research has focused on the relationship between the parliament and the government, with scholars neglecting the linkage between legislatures and citizens.[2]

The same narrow or one-sided focus applies to the political debates and legal regulations. National constitutions typically give domestic legislatures certain rights (such as to receive information from the government on EU affairs) and set them specific responsibilities (such as transposing directives or approving Treaty amendments), with the constitutions often also containing rules about how EU matters are processed by parliaments. Beyond such rules parliaments are free to decide how and whether to become involved in EU politics. Also the EU Treaties give national parliaments certain rights (such as to receive EU documents) and allocate them certain specific duties that mainly deal with the division of competencies between the EU and its member states. When the role of national parliaments was debated in the Convention, the discussion was restricted almost exclusively to government scrutiny and compliance with subsidiarity principle. Even COSAC, which has a basically unconstrained agenda and can discuss any issue it wants, has focused its meetings on parliamentary scrutiny and recently on the subsidiarity control mechanism. (Raunio 2011)

Hence there is a clear need for studies on how national parliaments perform other than government-related functions in EU affairs. In fact, we know hardly anything about whether and how individual MPs, political parties, or legislatures as institutions 'link' with their electorates in EU affairs. Do parliaments inform the public about European matters? Are EU issues debated in plenary and are these debates covered by the media? Do MPs and political parties use publicly accessible control mechanisms like parliamentary questions or confidence votes in EU matters? Are citizens approaching MPs with requests or concerns about the EU? Do MPs defend constituency interests in EU affairs – if yes, how is this done? Do political parties and their parliamentary groups have specific mechanisms for interacting with their supporters in EU affairs?

The objective of this Collection of Working Papers is to provide first and (necessarily) preliminary answers to these important and until now unanswered questions. The next section of this introductory article discusses why engaging with the public in EU affairs is – or at least should be – an important aspect of parliamentary work. The third section introduces our research questions and hypotheses and examines the openness of parliamentary EU scrutiny across the 27 member states. The final section outlines the structure of this Collection of Working Papers.

[2] For reviews of the literature, see Goetz and Meyer-Sahling (2008) and Raunio (2009).

1. Bringing the public in – parliaments and the legitimacy of EU governance

The argument that transparency and access to information are a fundamental precondition for the exercise of democratic popular control over government activities is so widely shared, mentioning it seems almost trivial. But given the focus in the literature outlined above, it is nonetheless worth repeating that democracy depends on a viable public debate on policy choices and political alternatives to allow citizens to make informed political (electoral) choices and to exercise democratic control.

Within our democratic systems, parliaments are usually seen as not the only, but certainly one of the most important 'means by which the measures and actions of government are debated and scrutinised on behalf of citizens, and through which the concerns of citizens … may be voiced. The extent to which they carry out such actions, and are seen by citizens to carry out such actions, may be argued to constitute the essential underpinning of legitimacy of the political system in the eyes of electors' (Norton 1998:1, emphasis added).[3] Among the most important means for parliaments to fulfil this information and communication function are public debates in the plenary or – to a lesser extent – in committees as well as parliamentary questions or confidence votes. Debates are vital elements of electoral competition as they provide for a public articulation of societal interests and the discussion of policies thus informing citizens about complex political issues. Without debates allowing the electorate to identify competing leaders and policy agendas it is difficult for them to assess the performance of the government and to hold it accountable.

While parliamentary information and communication functions are important in every political system that aspires to be democratic, they have been considered of particular relevance in the EU system of multilevel governance. As Benz (2003: 103) has argued, deficits in the EU's democratic legitimacy are not primarily caused by deficits in the mediation of citizens' interests, at least if compared to the political practice of nation states and using realistic standards to assess the quality of interest mediation. Regarding the transmission of citizens' interests, the European multi-level polity proves 'to be open to a plurality of interests …, to those of different territories as much as to those of sectoral interests'. At the same time, it is exactly this interplay of different interests and institutions which results in the opacity of policy-making processes and the lack of accountability that have been defined as core

[3] The argument is, of course, by no means new, but already present in the classic writings of Walter Bagehot or John Stuart Mill (1998 [1861]). In Chapter IV of his classic The English Constitution Bagehot (2009 [1867]) outlines five core functions of parliament: the elective function, the articulation function, the educative function, the information function and the legislative function. For Mill (1998 [1861]: 282), "Parliament's part is to indicate wants, to be an organ for popular demands, and a place of adverse discussion for all opinions relation to public matters, both great and small." Thus, for both Bagehot and Mill, parliaments served mainly as arenas of public debate, to inform the public, to take up their needs and opinions, and to serve as a forum of complaint and petitions.

problems in both academic and political debates on the democratic deficit of the EU (e.g., Weiler 1991; Harlow 2002; Héritier 2003; Mair 2007; Puntscher Riekmann 2007).

For a long time, the European project drew its legitimacy from its capacity to solve problems effectively, and the process of integration was accompanied by what has been called the permissive consensus (Lindberg & Scheingold 1970). It was based on a consensus across the political mainstream that integration was desirable, and citizens permitted their political elites to pursue this course without much interference. But today there seems to be neither firm consensus nor much permissiveness. Until the early 1990s, the public could simply be ignored. Since then, however, 'supranational and national executive elites are confronted with a reluctant public who increasingly shows signs of disaffection if not utter disapproval of European politics' (Pollack & Slominski 2002: 3). Importantly, this growing public dissatisfaction with integration has also filtered through to party politics (Hooghe ed. 2007; Hooghe & Marks eds. 2007). The permissive consensus has thus given way to a 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe & Marks 2009), which can be seen as at least partly the result of a growing sense of alienation based on difficulties in understanding, let alone participating in, remote decision-making at the EU level and a fear of helplessness vis-à-vis political decisions that cannot be influenced or controlled.

Within the debate on the democratic deficit, this has led to demands for more openness and transparency of European institutions. And the EU has indeed reacted, especially by using the Internet, to increase its transparency by providing more and formerly inaccessible information to citizens.[4] Yet it remains rather questionable whether this provision of information – as welcome as it is – actually increases the legitimacy of the EU, given the highly technical nature of many of the documents available, as well as the sheer quantity of information leading to information overload (Curtin & Meijer 2006; see also the crucial distinction between transparency and publicity explained in the next section).[5]

A different counter-argument has been famously provided by Moravcsik (2002: 615), who argued that 'any effort to expand participation is unlikely to overcome apathy [since] the issues handled by the EU … lack salience in the mind of European voters.' One has to wonder, however, if this is not more of a hen-and-egg question. Instead it can be argued that the low salience of European policy issues (as opposed to the more general integration issue) is a result of a lack of arenas for public contestation and thus at least partly the result of the failure of political actors to demonstrate the impact of EU decisions on high-salience issues such as health care, education, taxation, law and order, or pensions and social security policy, to their electorate (see especially Føllesdal & Hix 2006: 551).

[4] The EU's website already contained six million pages and received 50 million consultations per month at the time of the launch of the European Transparency Initiative in 2005 (European Commission 2005: 4).

[5] Curtin and Meijer (2006: 117) calculated that 'if the access request numbers are used in relation to the population of the EU then one in thirty-three thousand citizens has exercised that right to date [2006]'.

Importantly, much of this debate focuses purely on the European level and the European institutions. The demand for transparency and information in EU issues, however, is at least as fundamental at the national level. That EU policy problems, solutions, alternatives, and conflicts are debated in public and that decision-makers be publicly held accountable for their decisions to allow citizens to exercise their control are fundamental pre-conditions for the legitimacy of domestic EU policy-making and thus the EU as a whole. Here, it has been argued that national parliaments are in a unique position to ensure that people are more connected with 'Europe' and its activities by serving as channels between citizens and the EU (Norton 2001). And by holding their governments accountable, that is by inducing them to explain European issues and decisions, to clarify European negotiation situations and to justify their negotiation behaviour, national parliaments are believed to contribute to raising public awareness for EU policies, and thus making the EU more visibly present in national politics and more accessible to and for their national public (Auel 2007). We have to be careful, of course, about assuming that greater information and public awareness will necessarily result in greater public support for the EU,[6] but the expectation is that it will increase the democratic quality of EU governance, because it will give citizens greater awareness of and ownership over European decisions. In the short run, this may lead to a brake on further integration, but in the long run a more open debate could create a basis for a more democratic Union (Auel 2010, for a similar argument see de Wilde 2009).

In this regard, the German Federal Constitutional Court argued in its Decision on the Lisbon Treaty (Bundesverfassungsgericht 2009) that the democratic legitimacy of the EU was indeed guaranteed within the member states (at least as long as the EU did not become a state), because democratically elected national governments retain responsibility for European decisions, and are in this capacity accountable to their national parliaments. Crucially for the Court, governmental action is legitimised inter alia through continuous public discourse, fuelled by the opposition, in which such action as well as alternatives are openly debated. However, given the lack of (comparative) empirical studies on how parliaments connect with their citizens and fulfil their information and communication functions in EU affairs, we are hardly in a position to assess to what degree parliaments actually do serve as channels between the EU and the citizens. It may be true that 'parliaments provide a major space for public debate and are thus the ideal arenas for the deliberation of important European issues and their national implications' (Auel 2007: 498), but whether they actually do so remains unknown. Claims that all is well at the national level in terms of the democratic legitimacy of EU politics seem therefore rather premature (Auel 2010).

Having thus outlined how national parliaments could contribute to the legitimacy and democracy of EU governance, the next section examines what channels domestic

[6] For example, Vliegenthart et al. (2008) found that news coverage of EU issues does have an impact on public support for European integration, but that this impact correlates with the framing of EU news in terms of benefit (increases public support) or conflict (decreases public support).

legislatures, political parties and individual MPs have for linking with the electorate in EU politics.

2. The research question: Do national parliaments engage with the public in EU affairs?

The research question of this Collection of Working Papers is how and whether national parliaments link with or represent their electorates in EU affairs. Considering that it consists for the main part of case studies of individual EU countries or of comparisons between selected member states, our modest but yet important goal is to provide the first empirical examination of this so far neglected question. It is also our hope that subsequent comparative research will provide more in-depth answers to the questions and hypotheses put forward in this collection of articles.

By analysing the linkage between parliaments and their electorates in EU affairs, this Collection of Working Papers contributes to at least three areas of research. First, this collection of articles contributes to literature on Europeanization, a concept used primarily to examine the impact of European integration on national politics (Featherstone & Radaelli eds. 2003; Bulmer & Lequesne eds. 2005; Graziano & Vink eds. 2007; Ladrech 2010). This Collection of Working Papers not only analyses how parliaments deal with European matters, but also measures in a variety of ways the salience of EU affairs in national legislatures (Raunio & Wiberg 2010). Hence it will develop a better understanding of the extent to which domestic polities are Europeanised. Secondly this Collection of Working Papers will contribute to debates on the democratic deficit (e.g., Moravcsik 2002; Føllesdal & Hix 2006). The lack of domestic debates on EU is often seen as part of that deficit, and this project will provide empirical data about whether key institutions of European democracy, national parliaments, play their part in alleviating that deficit. Indeed, if national parliaments neglect the function of linking with their electorates in European affairs, then MPs themselves contribute to the elitist or technocratic image of EU governance. And finally, this Collection of Working Papers will increase our knowledge of the work of national parliaments. Specifically, there has been worryingly little research on how parliaments connect with or reach out to the public. While there is empirical data on the constituency work of MPs, the 'public' functions of legislatures have remained under-researched (Norton ed. 1997, 2002).

Let us now discuss how national parliaments can engage with the public in EU matters and formulate some hypotheses about whether they can be expected do so. But first we must define what we mean by linking with or representing electorates in European matters. After all, MPs are always, at least in theory, representing citizens when performing various parliamentary activities. For example, MPs can be considered to be representing their constituents when scrutinizing EU legislation behind closed doors in EACs. Alternatively one can argue that plenary debates should be seen primarily as form of government scrutiny as

opposed to serving the function of articulating and representing societal interests. Various control instruments, such as confidence votes or parliamentary questions, can also be simultaneously construed as ways to hold the government accountable and as mechanisms for defending the interests of the electorate. It can indeed be impossible to measure from the outside whether parliamentarians perform various functions primarily in order to control the executive or to represent their voters.

Considering these methodological difficulties, we have decided to choose an empirical criterion that emphasizes the ability of the electorate to follow parliamentary work. Hence we are interested in parliamentary activities that are accessible to the public – either in the form of live or media coverage (like plenary debates) or of the public having access to the documents (like parliamentary questions or the minutes of committee meetings or plenary sessions), or through direct contacts with the voters (MPs' constituency work or parliaments or parties informing the electorate of EU affairs).

Second, while citizen-related parliamentary activities are easily demanded and theoretically justified, the question remains: what are the incentives for parliamentarians and political parties to establish links with their electorates in EU affairs? The literature indicates a number of reasons why MPs may generally prefer to conduct their EU business away from the prying eye of the public. It is essential to emphasize that national parliaments are party-political institutions, bringing together legislators representing different political parties. Government formation is based on bargaining between political parties, with the opposition parties trying to unseat the cabinet or increase their support in the run-up to the next elections. Parties are also responsible for setting the parliamentary rules of procedure: the agenda and powers of committees and the plenary as well as the rights of individual members and party groups are all decided by political parties. Most MPs in turn are primarily concerned about the goals of re-election, policy influence, or career advancement. Hence any realistic model of parliamentary activities must start with the incentives of parties and individual MPs. (Bergman et al. eds. 2000; Strøm et al. eds. 2003)

In fact, one can reasonably argue that the incentive structure works against political parties or MPs emphasizing citizen-related activities in EU affairs. For most parties the costs of engaging in such public activities on Europe probably outweigh any potential benefits. Regardless of the data used, there is a consistent body of work showing that national parties across the EU are ideologically less cohesive on integration than in traditional socio-economic issues that dominate domestic political discourse (e.g., Hix 1999; Marks & Steenbergen eds. 2004). Parties are also considerably more supportive of integration than their voters (Mattila & Raunio 2006), and this can impact negatively on their vote shares in elections (Hobolt et al. 2009). Avoiding public activities related to EU affairs can thus be seen as a logical response from parties aiming at electoral success.

Turning from political parties to individual MPs, when choosing what issues to focus on in the parliament, they probably make a rational calculus, weighing the costs and benefits of various parliamentary activities (Saalfeld 2003). Considering that re-election and policy influence are probably the primary goals of most MPs, focusing on EU matters may not be a very attractive option for most parliamentarians. In terms of re-election, EU policy can be important for the constituencies (e.g., in terms of attracting regional policy funds), but not necessarily for the voters who still base their voting choices primarily on domestic issues.[7] As for policy influence, the ability of an individual legislator to influence politics at the European level is probably close to zero, even when the MP is an influential figure in the main governing party and when the Council or the European Council decides by unanimity.

Factors related to EU level bargaining may also impact on domestic parliamentary choices. Negotiations between the government and the parliament (and especially between the cabinet and its party groups) are clearly facilitated by closed doors. Publicity threatens to make divisions and conflict, within the (governing) party or parties, public and thus vulnerable to exploitation by the opposition or the media. Greater publicity could also make information on the government's negotiation strategy available to other member states and thus weaken its bargaining position. Finally, the government's bargaining position in Brussels could be weakened by public conflicts between the government and the parliament as other negotiation partners at the European level could easily point out that the government's position is not even supported at home.

There are thus various reasons why national parliaments, political parties or individual MPs may favour to keep a low profile on EU affairs and to have European matters processed behind the safety of closed doors. But under which conditions do parliaments decide to 'go public' rather than focussing on government scrutiny and oversight behind closed doors? When can we expect individual MPs and political parties to engage in publicly accessible parliamentary activities in EU affairs? Next we shall discuss these questions in relation to those forms of parliamentary work that are or can be accessible to the public: plenary debates, committee meetings, control instruments (particularly confidence votes and parliamentary questions), informing the electorate (by political parties or parliaments or by legislators through constituency work), and media coverage.

2.1 Plenary debates

Perhaps the most important way in which parliaments connect with citizens between elections is through plenary debates. As argued in the previous section, plenary debates may provide an effective forum for both articulating and representing societal interests and informing the electorate about issues on the political agenda. Indeed, much of the previous

[7] For example, in her case study on the Danish scrutiny system, Møller Sousa (2008: 441) shows how the incentive structure works against more active involvement in European affairs, with the MPs feeling that neither the media nor the voters are interested in EU matters.

literature has argued that plenary debates on Europe might generate more interest in European integration and hence bring EU closer to the citizens. However, such arguments can be challenged on three accounts. First, it is questionable whether citizens would follow coverage of debates on issues such as European integration if they are not salient to them. Related to this is the more general observation that it is uncertain how many European citizens follow parliamentary debates directly even in domestically salient issues. This again demonstrates the importance of the media. And thirdly, in countries characterised by broad consensus among the main parties over integration, such debates would hardly be very exciting. But at the very least plenary debates provide the electorate with the opportunity to learn about what is on the agenda of European politics and what are the positions of parties in these matters – particularly if the debates are covered by the media.

Existing evidence, though very scarce, suggests that the role of the plenary tends to be rather limited in European affairs. Relying on the opinions of country experts, Bergman et al. (2003: 175) concluded that in no member state legislature of the EU-15 did the plenary get actively involved in EU matters, with plenary involvement categorized as 'weak' in thirteen countries and as 'moderate' in Finland and Italy. Case studies of individual parliaments also point in this direction (e.g., Raunio & Wiberg 2010). Indeed, the main difference between domestic and EU politics seems to concern the role of the plenary.[8] Domestic laws and other nationally salient issues are normally debated in the full chamber while it seems that EU matters are only seldom on the agenda of the plenary. Most parliaments probably have debates about 'high politics' EU issues like Treaty reforms, financial frameworks, European Council meetings, or the current euro crisis and the associated bail-out measures. Regarding specific EU laws or policies, political parties may be more prepared to debate them in the plenary if such policies – such as the Services Directive (see the articles by Miklin and Auel and Raunio in this Collection of Working Papers) – can be incorporated into the cleavages structuring domestic party contestation (mainly the left-right dimension).

This limited role of the plenary can probably be explained by a combination of institutional choices and the interests of political parties (which are obviously related). The establishment of EACs reduces the use of plenary, as the former coordinate parliamentary work in EU matters and are normally authorized to speak on behalf of the whole parliament in these issues. While MPs may defend committee deliberations behind closed doors with the need to further national interests and to allow confidential exchange of views between the government and the parliament, this mechanism clearly also serves the interests of the mainstream parties. Governing parties in particular may want to monitor the government behind closed doors without public criticism that might damage the reputation of the cabinet (Auel 2007). Indeed, main parties in several EU countries, especially in the Nordic region, have deliberately 'depoliticized' European integration through cross-party cooperation in the

[8] See Hegeland (2007) for an interesting analysis of how European matters fall somewhere between domestic and foreign policy in terms of the openness and transparency of the parliamentary decision-making procedures.

EAC with the aim of manufacturing consensus in national integration policy (Bergman & Damgaard eds. 2000).

Considering that most of the main opposition parties are on average no more coherent over EU than governing parties or have similar preferences on integration, they are also unlikely to demand more plenary debates about Europe. Hence the only parties that probably would like to have debates about Europe are those that are more in tune with their electorate over Europe and internally cohesive about integration. These parties are normally either populist parties or parties located at the extremes of the left-right dimension that can for example use such debates to criticize the government for not defending the national interests well enough in EU negotiations (see the article by de Wilde in this Collection of Working Papers, also de Vries & Edwards 2009). Given that they are often relatively small parties in their respective political systems, they may not even have enough influence over the parliamentary agenda to force such debates to be held. Hence a plausible hypothesis is that plenary debates on Europe are more likely in countries with more Eurosceptical party systems or with more polarized or differentiated party preferences about integration. In such member states parties should have more to win by having public debates about Europe, either because they can thus challenge the governing parties or they can use the debates to send signals to their electorates.

2.2 Transparency in EACs and specialized committees

Whether or not committees meet in public can have a major impact on the ability of the electorate to follow parliamentary work. If the committees meet in public and/or provide verbatim accounts of their sessions, then the public can learn what was said and by whom. If, in contrast, the committees meet behind closed doors and do not provide minutes of their meetings, then the possibilities for voters to learn about committee proceedings are very limited. Hence, whether the EAC and specialized committees meet in public, when deliberating on EU affairs, is a very important choice that has significant effects on the ability of the electorate to observe the domestic handling of EU matters.

As explained above, the centralization of EU matters to the EAC – as is effectively the case in the majority of national parliaments – is quite advantageous for most political parties. But interestingly, and partly against the reasoning above, despite significant cross-national variation the handling of EU affairs has gradually become more transparent and public in national parliaments. According to COSAC (2009), in around half of the lower houses of national parliaments (14/27) the EACs meet in public (Table 1). However, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between public and private EAC meetings. The main problem is that some do sit in camera, but publish the minutes on the web afterwards or allow the press to be present (e.g. Cyprus, Estonia, France and Spain). This means that information on the proceedings is basically public, even if the actual meetings are not. One could even argue

that providing minutes or streams on the web may be more important as it provides regular information to a larger audience than attendance at meetings, which is necessarily limited.

Table 1: Transparency of EU matters in national parliaments (2009).

Member State (lower house)	Are EU committee meetings publicly accessible?	Are EU documents received by parliament from EU / government publicly accessible?	Are EU documents produced by parliament publicly accessible?	Are the meetings of other specialized committees publicly accessible?
Austria	Yes	Yes (EU) / No (government)	Yes	No
Belgium	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Bulgaria	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cyprus	No	No	Yes	No
Czech Republic	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Estonia	No	Yes	Yes	No
Finland	No	Yes	Yes	No
France	No	Yes	Yes	No
Germany	Yes (since 2009)	No	Yes	No
Greece	Yes[a]	No	No	Yes[a]
Hungary	No	No	No	No[b]
Ireland	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Italy	No	Yes	Yes	No
Latvia	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Lithuania	No	Yes (EU) / No (government)	Yes	No
Luxembourg	No	Yes	No	No
Malta	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	Yes	No (EU) / Yes (government)	Yes	Yes
Poland	Yes	Yes (EU) / No (government)	Yes	Yes
Portugal	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Romania	Yes	Yes	No	Yes/No[c]
Slovakia	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Slovenia	No	No	Yes	No
Spain	No	No	Yes	No
Sweden	No	Yes	Yes	No
United Kingdom	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes:
a) Possibly not open to public visits as such, but committee meetings are as a rule broadcast on Parliament TV.
b) Open to the press.
c) Contradictory information on Parliament website. Sources: COSAC (2009b), parliamentary rules of procedure and national constitutions.

In addition, it should be kept in mind that most EACs have the option to either close parts of their otherwise public meetings (such restrictive practices being normally used in connection with more sensitive EU matters, e.g. security policy, or when the minister appears in the committee before a Council meeting) or to hold occasional open meetings although they usually sit in camera. In Hungary, Lithuania, and Malta, for example, EAC meetings are generally public, but the meetings are always closed when the government position is discussed. In turn, the German EAC, for example, formally sits in private, but has recently made increasing use of its option to hold public meetings. Finally, most parliaments do not make EU documents, produced either by the Union or the national government, available to the public, but in most member states the public has access to EU material produced by the parliaments themselves – such as the opinions or reports of the EACs.[9] Yet most parliaments have not established any specific offices or units for informing the public about the EU.

With regard to cross-national variation, it has been suggested in the literature that EAC that are considered stronger scrutinisers prefer to hold their meetings in private, while weaker EAC may try to compensate for their lack of power with more public strategies (Auel & Benz 2005; Auel & Rittberger 2006). However, it may not be so much the power of the EAC as such, but rather the question of what they focus their scrutiny on that is decisive. Following the eighth bi-annual COSAC report on EU procedures and practises (COSAC 2007), we can distinguish between document based and government position based scrutiny systems. Although in both cases the addressee of the scrutiny procedure is, in the end, the government, the two systems differ with regard to whether EAC scrutinise and draft an opinion on EU documents or the government position. The former gives parliaments the opportunity to address concerns with EU proposals without directly criticising or opposing their government and thus inviting party competition or intra-party conflicts. We could therefore expect that EAC emphasising document based scrutiny will find it easier to provide broader information to the public.

The incentives of political parties may also explain decisions about transparency. Based on our reasoning above, we expect that mainstream parties will be more willing to provide broad access to EAC meetings and information if they operate in a system without either open party political contestation over Europe or a more Eurosceptic public. Finally however, we also need to consider that the degree of openness and transparency may be less a strategic decision than one that reflects broader parliamentary tradition or convention and is thus path

[9] The entries in Table 1 need to be treated with some additional caution. Often the replies from national parliaments to COSAC were quite unspecific and vague, and in such cases additional information was acquired from national parliaments. More importantly, in most instances there are exceptions to the general rule of providing or not providing access to EU committee meetings and documents. Furthermore, some parliaments make EU documents available to the public before they are processed by the legislature while others make them available ex post. For country-specific rules, please see COSAC (2009) and particularly the rules of procedure of the national parliaments.

dependent (Dimitrakopoulos 2001). In that case, EAC will simply provide similar access to their meetings and documents as the other parliamentary committees.

2.3 Control instruments

Parliaments have various tools for holding the government accountable. And in many ways parliaments have become better at controlling governments – they have reformed their rules of procedure and committee systems to facilitate oversight of the government, and MPs are also making more active use of various control mechanisms such as parliamentary questions and reporting requirements. The reforms and developments have primarily aimed at reducing the informational advantage of the government through investing more resources in committee work and demanding more regular information from the cabinet about its activities (Longley & Davidson eds. 1998; Strøm et al. eds. 2003; Baldwin ed. 2006). As outlined above, the literature has shown that similar developments have occurred in the field of EU affairs, with parliaments strengthening the role and powers of EACs and demanding more information from the executive in European matters.

These oversight mechanisms can naturally also be employed to defend or represent constituency interests. While there is variation with respect to the openness of committees, confidence votes and parliamentary questions are accessible to public throughout the EU. Parliamentary questions are particularly interesting as they are multi-functional and MPs ask questions for several reasons. Among the most important are asking for information, committing the government to making a public formal statement and pressing it for action, defending constituency interests, and informing the policy-makers of problems they might be unfamiliar with. The attractiveness of parliamentary questions is enhanced by the fact that in their questions MPs can practically raise any issue they want. Parliamentary questions are used in every EU national legislature, but there is variation between the parliaments regarding both the types of questions used and the procedural details concerning the submission and answering of questions (Wiberg 1995; Strøm et al. eds. 2003; Russo & Wiberg 2010).

Parliaments and specifically the opposition can also put forward motions of no confidence, the procedural rules of which vary between national legislatures (Strøm et al. eds. 2003). Confidence votes must normally be put forward by entire party group(s) or by a specified number of MPs. It is probable that confidence votes are seldom used in connection with European matters. This hypothesis is based on three factors. First, EU affairs may not be a very salient issue in the minds of voters in most member states, and hence the opposition might not benefit that much by resorting to that instrument. Second, the opposition would then be also forced to publicly defend its own policies, something that may not be in its interest for reasons explained above. And third, were the opposition to attack the

government's European policy in such a public way, the prime minister might blame the opposition for 'unpatriotic' behaviour that undermines the success of the government (and the 'national interest') in subsequent EU negotiations (Benz 2004: 881; Auel & Benz 2005: 379). It is also likely that the share of parliamentary questions on EU matters is low. This expectation is based on two factors: information on European matters is often available faster from other sources (direct contacts with ministries or with the European level), and as EU issues can be of low salience to most citizens, MPs may not consider asking questions on EU matters important in terms of credit-claiming or re-election.

2.4 Informing the electorate

One of the classic functions of parliaments is that of informing the public about societal affairs. For example, according to Bagehot (2009 [1867]) parliaments should perform the functions of 'teaching the nation' and 'informing the people'. The citizenry can obviously learn about policy issues from coverage of plenary or committee debates, but a more explicit way of teaching or informing the people is achieved through direct contact. Parliaments as institutions can provide information about EU to the electorate, for example online or through their information offices. Political parties can cultivate support or understanding for their European policies through interaction with their voters, for example by debating EU matters in party bodies (especially the party congress where the local party branches are represented) or by emphasizing European policies in their programmes.

But of special interest here is the work undertaken by individual MPs. When meeting voters in the constituencies, do legislators talk about EU affairs and do the citizens make specific requests or have questions regarding Europe? As explained above, available evidence indicates that voters across the EU are still primarily concerned about domestic issues – such as employment, taxation, health care or education policy. The opinion gap that prevails over the EU between parties and their supporters can also work against MPs focusing on European issues in their meetings with constituents. Hence we hypothesize that matters related to European integration feature rarely in MPs' constituency work.

2.5 Media coverage

Finally, the distinction between two kinds of openness of a political system has to be considered: transparency and publicity (Hüller 2007). While transparency requires that information is publicly available, publicity is only achieved if citizens are actually aware of the information. While parliamentary information can, of course, be directly accessed (through print publication, the internet or parliamentary TV channels), most citizens experience politics primarily through the media. This raises the question to what extent the national media covers parliamentary activities in EU affairs or draws on parliamentary publications as sources of information.

In a famous quote, Herbert Gans (1980: 116) wrote that that the relationship between journalists and their sources 'resembles a dance, for sources seek access to journalists, and journalists seek access to sources'. Thus, journalists and politicians are engaged in a 'negotiation of newsworthiness' (Cook 1998: 90): politicians are in control of information and have the potential to grant legitimacy to news stories, but media representatives have control over the visibility, the attention as well as the tone or 'framing' of news stories. This raises the question of 'news value' from two perspectives: On the one hand, we need to ask whether and under what conditions MPs consider EU issues as valuable enough to seek the attention of the media actively. Generally, it can be assumed that 'political actors have a vital interest to win (favorable) media attention for their issues and policy aims. In fact, having a voice in the media is a key political strategy to gain legitimacy and power in the political process' (Tresch 2009: 67). However, as argued above, this may not be the case for EU issues, especially if MPs or parties have to weigh the benefits of seeking attention for EU matters against attention for other topics. On the other hand, the question is whether the media consider EU issues or events to be of any news value, and if yes, whether parliamentary activities dealing with then are newsworthy as well. Since the seminal study of Galtung and Ruege (1965), news value research focuses on the characteristics or factors that make events newsworthy.

And while the literature has identified a large variety of factors that may influence news selection (for an overview see Eilders 1996; O'Neill & Harcup 2009), many scholars seem to agree that events that concern powerful or famous individuals (or organisations/institutions), have an entertaining, dramatic (negative and/or conflictual, involving winners and losers), or surprising element, are perceived as relevant to a significantly large audience, or fit the news organisation's own agenda, are more likely to be selected than those not featuring one of these factors. While the selection of a specific European event or issue will thus depend – inter alia – on such factors, a plausible hypothesis is that media coverage in general depends both on the salience of "Europe" in the country (though not necessarily the degree of Euroscepticism, Brüggemann & Kleinen-von Königslöw 2009) and on the level of party competition over Europe – the more fiercely parties, and their prominent (famous) members in parliament in particular, fight (entertainingly) over the EU, the more the media should cover parliamentary involvement in EU affairs.

The indicators introduced above were all chosen with future comparative research in mind: each of them can be applied to all or nearly all national parliaments in a functionally equivalent manner. The subsequent articles in this Collection of Working Papers will provide first evidence for or against the hypotheses put forward in this section. Before that the final section of this introductory article explains the structure of this Collection of Working Papers.

3. The Structure of this Collection of Working Papers

This Collection of Working Papers starts by outlining the normative and theoretical arguments in favour of national parliaments 'going public' in European matters. In his article, Jürgen Neyer argues that national parliaments could and should become key mediating institutions between European citizens and EU decision-making. The multi-level nature of EU governance raises fundamental questions about democracy and the appropriate role of national parliaments, with individual domestic legislatures facing serious problems in holding their governments accountable in European affairs. Drawing on a concept of legitimacy that centres on the idea of justification, Neyer suggests that national parliaments should become more actively involved in the European constitutional process. Such a role could be achieved through transforming COSAC into an Inter-parliamentary Constitutional Assembly responsible for Treaty revisions.

The remainder of this Collection is divided into three sections. The first section provides comparative data about EU plenary debates and the usage of the EU in domestic parliamentary discourse in select EU member states.

Comparing parliamentary EU debates in Finland, France, Germany and the UK, the article by Auel by Raunio shows how institutional and party related factors impact the level and nature of the debates. The results confirm significant variation between both the four countries and different types of EU matters. Examining the parliamentary processing of three major EU issues, the European Arrest Warrant, the Services Directive, and providing financial aid to Greece in the spring of 2010, especially the latter produced colourful debates. Regarding the overall level of plenary debates on European matters, the Bundestag had by far the highest share of EU debates. The Bundestag was also the only legislature where standard EU legislation and policy are often debated on the floor. In contrast, the Finnish Eduskunta with its famous EU scrutiny model performed clearly worst, both regarding the overall share of EU debates and the three concrete EU issues.

Comparing debates on investiture and national budgets in Italy and Spain from 1986 to 2006, the article by García Lupato focuses on the overall salience of Europe and its usage by national parties. Europe was particularly salient in Spanish investiture debates, with the EU referred to to the same extent in budgetary debates in the two countries. García Lupato shows how both ideology and government-opposition dynamics affect the discourse of parties, with governing parties defending the EU and using it to legitimate their programmes and budgetary decisions. While opposition to Europe comes mainly from smaller and ideologically radical parties, especially in budgetary debates the EU is often seen as an external constraint and thus arguably contributes to the depoliticization of national politics.

The second section of the Collection of Working Papers focuses on the impact of plenary debates and the interplay between parliamentary and media arenas of communication. In particular, the three articles indicate considerable variation in the politicization and media coverage of different types of European issues.

The article by de Wilde assesses the explanatory power of main European integration theories for the communication of EU issues in mass media and national parliaments. By comparing parliamentary debates and media coverage on the EU's multiannual budgetary frameworks in The Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland, de Wilde shows how the communication of Europe differs mostly between mass media and parliaments rather than across countries or over time. Visibility of the debates reflects more the national interests at stake and the contentiousness of EU when it comes to mass media coverage, while visibility of parliamentary debates is highly influenced by the organization of scrutiny procedures. The media focuses on the government in its coverage of the budgetary debates and frames EU budget negotiations as a zero-sum conflict between member states. These findings have clear lessons about the ability of national parliamentary EU debates to reach the public. Increasing the share of EU debates may not work unless the national media also changes its traditional logics of communication.

Examining the parliamentary processing of the Services Directive in Austria and Germany, Miklin argues that domestic politicization of Europe may require policy proposals that polarise between centre-left and centre-right parties, with such matters facilitating parliamentary debates where parties provide citizens with choices in EU politics. Miklin also shows how this higher salience makes national parliaments pay more attention to the proposal, hence resulting in tighter scrutiny of the government. This reduces the risk of agency losses in Council decision-making, with ministers better aligned to the preferences of their parliamentary principals.

Finally, the EU and its member states have in recent years made more active use of various 'soft law' coordination instruments such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). This has raised concerns about the potential exclusion of national parliaments from these primarily intergovernmental processes. The article by de Ruiter investigates whether British and Dutch opposition MPs 'go public' with information about the performance of their governments in six OMCs. The results indicate that Dutch MPs use more information from OMC reports to shame the incumbent government for its policies than British MPs. In both parliaments these shaming activities take primarily place in committees and have no link with newspaper coverage on OMCs. Hence activities of MPs aimed at going public with information from OMC reports established only a weak link between OMCs and the citizens.

The third section broadens our approach by examining public parliamentary activities beyond plenary debates. Both articles also provide data about individual MPs, in addition to political parties and parliaments as institutions, that have received the bulk of attention in the other contributions.

The article by Pollak and Slominski analyses the supply side of political communication – the extent to which the Austrian parliament and its political parties and MPs inform citizens about EU matters. Focusing on three consecutive Treaty revisions (Nice Treaty, Constitutional

Treaty, Lisbon Treaty), Pollak and Slominski show how the parliament and party groups engaged in relatively modest efforts to inform Austrian citizens about these major European level processes. Perhaps more intriguingly, the authors suggest that individual MPs are reluctant to communicate with their constituents over Europe since it is an activity not rewarded either by their party organization or by voters. Taken together, all communication efforts are top-down in character and do not aim at any deliberative engagement with the citizens.

In the final article of this Collection of Working Papers, Navarro and Brouard explore the Europeanisation of parliamentary questions in the French National Assembly (1988-2007). While the overall share of EU-related questions is very low and shows only very modest increase over time, there is interesting variation between the types of questions, political parties, and individual MPs. Questions to the government were much more Europeanised than written or oral questions, with these questions to the government utilized by MPs from the governing parties to control the cabinet, especially when the minister in charge comes from a different party. Europeanised oral questions, the most visible to the voters, deal with local district concerns. In terms of parties and MPs, Eurosceptical and opposition deputies were no more likely to ask EU-related questions than pro-European and governing party MPs.

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What Role for National Parliaments? European Integration and the Prospects of Parliamentary Democracy[1]

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Abstract

The debate on the role and function of national parliaments in the European multi-level system has produced a number of important insights. The dominance of the member state governments and the limited effectiveness of parliamentary control mechanisms are relevant insights that foster a clearer conceptualization of the European multi-level polity and highlight the deficiency of its democratic credentials. They also emphasize the need to put national parliaments back into power by giving them a new competence to set the agenda of the European constitutional discourse.

1. The Challenge

National parliaments have for long-time been neglected in European studies. Most research, driven by an interest in the policy output of the EU, either analysed specific policies or focused on the workings of the European institutions, i.e. the Commission, the Member States or the European Parliament. Similarly, those who were interested in the legislative procedures, took a close view on the competences of the European Parliament, asked for the emergence of a European demos or the adequate application of the principle of subsidiarity. National parliaments, however, were again largely non-existent. It is only since the early 1990s that national parliaments have slowly started to move out of the corner.[2] The Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam and now Lisbon have given formal rights to national parliaments and explicitly stated that they have a legitimate role in European governance. The Treaty of Lisbon provides for expanded information and contestation rights to national parliaments and makes them guardians of the subsidiarity principle by introducing what is usually called the Early Warning System. The growing awareness that national parliaments deserve a more prominent role in European politics, has also been reflected in the German constitutional Court's decisions on the Treaties of Maastricht and Lisbon. The Court has argued that national parliaments are the most important institutional sites for garnering

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[2] Recent studies include O'Brennan/ Raunio (ed). 2007, Auel/ Benz 2006, Kijver 2006, Raunio 2009.

democratic legitimacy and that they must have an important role in European policy-making. According to the Court, it is national Parliaments and not the European Parliament that guarantee that democratic principles are respected. National parliaments thus have a political function, which cannot be substituted by the European Parliament or any other institution. Giving national parliaments a central role in the European institutional system is thus the *conditio sine qua non* of democracy in Europe and a matter of utmost importance to the integration process.

Although most observers agree that national parliaments must be better integrated in the European multi-level system, there is no consensus yet of how to divide the "multi-level parliamentary field" (Crum and Fossum 2009) among the national parliaments, the European parliament and the Council. Whilst some observers claim that "parliamentary democracies and multilevel governance co-evolve in processes of mutual adjustment" (Benz 2011: 13), others (Herzog and Gerken 2007) question whether formally parliamentary systems like Germany still deserve that attribute. Integrating national parliaments into multilevel governance has proven difficult. Empirical studies show that parliamentary majorities are more than hesitant to use their control competencies (cf. Auel and Benz 2005). Most often national parliaments shy away from publicly scrutinising their government in European politics and are content to support them.

European integration is thus faced with a pressing question: What to do with national Parliaments? What is their adequate place in the European multi-level polity and how can they be empowered to occupy that role? This paper approaches this question in three steps. The following section argues that the two most influential proposals have only limited normative appeal because they reflect an insufficient theoretical conception of European democracy. Section three submits an alternative approach, established on the idea of multi-level governance and a concept of legitimacy that centres on the individual right to justification. The section argues that national parliaments could fulfil a most useful function if they were given a more active role in the European constitutional process. Such a role could be realized if the "Conférence des organes parlementaires spécialisés dans les affaires de l'Union" (COSAC) were transformed into an Interparliamentary Constitutional Assembly that would act as a transmission belt between member state citizens and the European level.

2. The debate

The debate on the adequate role of national Parliaments in the European Union is still nascent. It is true that most observers agree in applauding the Treaty of Lisbon and the German Constitutional Court's judgement for its emphasis on additional parliamentary control mechanisms. There seems to be a broad political consensus that national parliaments should have an important role in European politics and be equipped with the necessary legal and administrative resources. There is, however, hardly any explicit constitutional debate on the exact role of national parliaments in the European political

system that goes beyond a mere "more of the same". This section is intended to introduce and criticize the two most prominent perspectives on the role of national parliament in European multilevel governance. Both perspectives will be presented in a somehow stylized manner to distinguish the arguments clearly and to lay the ground for a third perspective that combines the strengths of the two approaches without taking on board their deficiencies.

2.1 Supranational Parliamentarism

Supranational parliamentarism starts from the suggestion that the European Parliament (EP) is the legitimate institution for representing the European demos.[3] It is the only directly elected European institution und thus in a superior position to connect the European citizens directly to the European policy-making process. For supranationalists, the EP should be treated on at least equal footing to the Council. It would be even more adequate to follow the example of most federal democracies and to make the EP the first legislative chamber and the Council the second. It also follows this line of reasoning to reject the refusal of the Member States to open the intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy as well as home and justice institutions to full parliamentary participation. The more competencies the EP acquires, the more the European citizens will be represented and the higher will be the legitimacy of the EU.

National parliaments have no important role in supranational conceptions of democracy in Europe. Most conceptions follow the logic of a European federal state in which the competences of regional (member state) parliaments are implicitly limited to issues of minor importance. National parliaments should have their legislative and control competences limited to domestic issues and refrain from getting involved in European affairs. The way ahead to a European democracy is via extending the EP's competences with the ultimate goal of "a full parliamentarisation in a European federation" (Fischer 2000). From an orthodox supranationalist's perspective, any specifically European activity of national parliaments distorts in the natural division of competencies between the European and national parliaments. European parliamentary involvement is to be conducted by the European parliament and must not be replicated by similar efforts on the part of national parliaments.

Although the supranationalist's conceptualisation of European parliamentarism has the benefit of simplicity, it is not without deficiencies. The major problem of applying standard concepts of democracy to the EU is that its very structure is built on the principle of difference, and not of equality, among citizens. The principle of degressive proportionality of Art.14 Treaty of Lisbon (ToL) provides that citizens from small states generally have a greater say than citizens from the bigger states. It is true that this critique applies to all

[3] The supranational perspective is a stylized concept. It is most closely represented, however, by Fischer (2000), Hix (2008) and Eriksen (2009).

federal states with a chamber in which the states are represented according to the principle of one state one vote. The EU, however, differs from all federal states in that unequal representation is not only a matter of its second legislative chamber but is well institutionalized in both chambers, the European Parliament and the (European) Council. Difference, and not equality of citizens, is an organizing principle of the EU. Inequality thus not only constitutes a deficit in the organisational structure of the EU but also gives expression to an emphasis on intergovernmental equality, which is alien to the emphasis of democracy on individual equality. The EU thus is not undemocratic by mistake but deliberately violates one of the constituting principles of democracy. It is the price that is paid for the legacy of the European history and the resulting emphasis on protecting the small states against domination by the bigger ones.

It is also a serious hindrance that the EU lacks a number of empirical pre-conditions that make democratic discourses likely. As has been repeatedly said, the European demos is strongly divided along national lines and non-expert cross-border political discourses are hard to find. Extending the EP's competences would thus amount to a mere formal democratisation that lacks the underlying foundation of a vibrant political discourse. It would mean to empower an institution that is not accepted by the European peoples as the appropriate site for setting the European agenda. It would thus not reduce the democratic deficit of the EU, but risk adding to the already existing alienation between the European citizens and the EU.

2.2 Intergovernmental Parliamentarism

The intergovernmental interpretation of EU parlamentarism is directly opposed to its supranational counterpart. Intergovernmentalism assumes democracy to be a political practice that is closely tied to the nation-state. According to Scharpf (2009: 181), "the EU must be seen and legitimated not as a government of citizens, but as a government of governments". Only the nation-state has the cultural heritage, the constitutional foundation and the institutional equipment to foster democratic practices. Thus, it is the member states that are the most important institutional sites for providing legitimacy to the EU. The major democratic problems resulting from European integration are the empowerment of national executives, the bypassing of national legislatures and the new opportunities for the governments to influence the domestic agenda (Moravcsik 1994). Europeanisation thus has important effects for the quality of domestic democracy and threatens to distort the balance of power between the executive and the legislative. Most intergovernmentalists would therefore subscribe to the statement that all political competences on the European level are – and must be – of an enumerated quality and closely limited to those areas where the nation-state is functionally deficient and where democratic societies are ready to pool political resources with other member states.

The implications for the role of national parliaments in the EU are straightforward. There is no way of accepting the claim that a supranational Parliament's competences should be as broad as those of the democratic member states. Only the latter are fully democratically legitimated whereas the formers' contribution to the EU's legitimacy is of an only supplementary, if not negligible, nature. From an orthodox inter-governmentalist's perspective, there can be no such thing as law above the nation-state, or, in our context, European law. Law proper is tied to democracy, and democracy is tied to the state. National parliaments thus may delegate norm-setting competences to intergovernmental bodies or supranational agencies but must at the same time institutionalise proper control mechanisms for safeguarding that those norms do not contradict national constitutional provisions and that the agents do not misuse their discretionary powers. The German Constitutional Court's ruling expresses such an understanding of the adequate role of national parliaments in Europe. Its green-lighting of the Treaty of Lisbon was made conditional on a previous strengthening of the Bundestag whilst the expansion of the competences of the EP was understood to be largely irrelevant from the point of view of democracy.

The intergovernmental perspective has much strength but is also not without deficiencies. Democracy in Europe can neither be adequately established at a purely national level nor can it be adapted to the complex interdependence of the European societies by simply adding an intergovernmental layer of governance. The arguments are well known (cf. Føllesdal and Hix 2006, Eriksen and Fossum 2011): National democracy has external effects on neighbouring states, is thus imposing own rules on foreigners, and is structurally handicapped in terms of input legitimacy. It is, furthermore, too small for coping with many cross-border challenges (environment, migration, security, etc.) and thus lacks output-legitimacy. Simply adding an intergovernmental layer of governance on top of the nation-state implies negative feedback effects on the domestic political setting (see above) and cannot solve the problems of democratic legitimacy either.

3. Multi-Level Parliamentarism

Supranationalism and Intergovernmentalism are still dominating the constitutional debate. They figure prominently in the German Constitutional Court's decision on the Lisbon Treaty and in most political debates on the future of the EU. They are not the only approaches, however. The academic debate increasingly turns to multi-level governance approaches for analysing the EU. Their starting point is to understand the EU as a form of governance that combines supranational, intergovernmental and domestic components (Hooghe and Marks 2001, Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2007, Benz 2010). This new type of order can neither be adequately described nor normatively assessed if not all three elements of governance are taken into account. It describes a form of government where authority has come to be dispersed across levels. The state is vertically and horizontally segmented and its role has in many areas changed from authoritative allocation of power to the facilitation of collective problem-solving.

The multi-level concept has recently been applied to European parliamentarism (cf. Benz 2011). Crum and Fossum (2009) use the notion of a “multilevel parliamentary field”. They argue that the national Parliaments and the European parliaments cannot not be viewed in isolation from each other but that they together form a combined system of citizen representation. European citizens have some of their concerns being represented at the national level and some at the supranational level. Both levels of representation coexist and complement each other without necessarily having conflicting claims with a view to their competences. Accepting this concept as a starting point opens a helpful way of reconstructing the role of national parliaments in the European multi-level political system.

3.1 Multi-Level Governance and Normative Theory

The concept of multi-level governance has its strength in describing institutional complexities. It is rather weak, however, in guiding normative analysis. Recent assessments of the normative quality of multi-level governance are ambivalent. Papadopoulos (2010: 1034-1039) argues that multi-governance is hard to reconcile with democratic principles. The network character of multi-level governance fosters a policy-making style that is “deliberately informal and opaque” with often unclear attributions of responsibility. Control on the part of national parliaments is difficult because the “length of the chain of delegation combined with the magnitude of administrative discretion makes their democratic accountability fictitious”. Networks are dominated by policy experts who “must be unaccountable to constituencies” in order to remain credible to their professional communities. Participating NGOs represent well-organized interests rather than the median voter, and their internal organizational structure hardly ever lives up to the standards of democracy. To be sure, all this does not necessarily imply that multi-level governance is illegitimate or unaccountable. It points, however, to a tension between two different types of accountability, namely horizontal and vertical accountability. Vertical accountability is the classical mode of garnering legitimacy in a democracy. It refers to the control of decision-makers by parliament and of parliamentarians by citizens. It is a mode of safeguarding accountability that is typical for formalized principal-agent relationships and often involves legal rights on the part of the principals and corresponding duties on the part of agents.

Horizontal accountability works more indirectly and often without formal legal rights or duties. It is based on oversight by actors different from the delegating principles and uses “soft” mechanisms such as lending political support to actions or, conversely naming and shaming, peer review, media control, stake-holder participation, good administrative procedures and the withdrawal of political support in case of mal-performance. In networks, formal mechanisms of vertical accountability are often hard to employ because decision-making structures are informal and escape the logic of legal delegation. The literature on accountability in network governance thus often uses an understanding of accountability that goes beyond formal rights and duties. It refers more broadly to a type of social relation or mechanism that involves an obligation to explain conduct and give reason for the actions

taken. It involves “the provision of information about performance, … the possibility of debate, of questions by the forum and answers by the actor, and eventually of judgement of the actor by the forum” (both cites by Bovens 2010: 951).

Accountability has become a new analytical focus for much of the literature because it promises to combine an emphasis on input-legitimacy without unduly limiting the problem-solving capacity of the EU. It underlines the need for transparent decision-making, legal oversight and good administrative procedures without necessarily imposing participatory requirements that would endanger the efficiency of decision-making. It is, finally, a concept that is very much in accordance with the practices of the EU. Although the concept is clearly adapted to analysing EU practices, it also has its shortcoming. Accountability has recently been described as a “dustbin filled with good intentions… and vague images of good governance” (Bovens, 2007: 449). Bovens describes the contribution of accountability to democratic governance as “ensur(ing) that public officials, or public organisations remain on the virtuous path”; it may foster “public catharsis”, “identify and address injustices and obligations”, “establish public control”, “prevent and detect corruption and the abuse of public power”, “help creating checks and balances” and “induce reflection and learning” (Bovens 2010: 955). Accountability matters to legitimate governance “because of the presumption that its absence means that those in power have the capacity to act without regard for those who authorize their actions and for those whose lives are affected by those actions” (Barnett/ and Finnemore 2004: 171).

All this sounds good and is surely welcomed by any democratic process. What the concept lacks so far, however, is an explanation of its normative foundations. It is, in the words of Lord and Pollak (2010), an “unsaturated concept”. It does not answer the most pressing questions such as who should be accountable to whom, when or for what reasons. The approach most often used for finding an answer to these questions is principal-agent analysis (Auel 2007). According to principal-agent analysis, those who delegate power have the right (and the power) to demand accounts on the part of those actors or institutions to whom powers are delegated. Accountability is thus an element in a relationship between a sender and a receiver of political competences. An important strength of principal-agent analysis is its clarity and its parsimonious character. Political relationships are clearly structured and responsibilities are easy to locate. Political reality, however, is often too complex for easy analytical concepts. Principal-agent analysis systematically overlooks the possibility that actors who are commanding delegated competences might either deliberately or non-intentionally use them for negatively affecting the interests of third parties who have neither delegated nor received any competences. According to the theory, affected actors who have not delegated competences would have no right to demand and receive an account. In European politics, such situations are ubiquitous. The introduction of the Euro, to take a prominent example, was to a significant degree, motivated by the interest of the member states to curb the power of the German Bundesbank. Before the introduction of the Euro, the Bundesbank only took into account the concerns of the German economy. Due to

the dominant role of the Deutsche Mark as the strongest currency in the EU, the Bundesbank's decisions had a significant effect on the currencies of all other member states. If the Bundesbank decided to raise or lower its interest rates, all other European central banks were de facto forced to follow its example, even if their domestic economic interests strongly differed. The decisions of the Bundesbank thus had a strong effect on third parties who, according to principal-agent analysis, would have neither the power nor the right to influence them. Similar examples could be taken from trade policy, migration policy and many other areas. All these examples point to the normative limits of principle-agent analysis and its structural negligence of the external effects of decisions on third parties.

An alternative way of explaining the normative thrust of accountability is to contextualize it with a theory of justice that focuses on the right to justification (cf. Forst 2007; Neyer 2010). The idea of justice as a right to justification is established on the assumption that we have a human right to demand and receive justification from all those individuals or organisations that restrict our freedom. We, as the citizens and the ultimate bearers of the right to justification, are entitled to explanations and good reason-giving on the part of all political institutions that wield power. This does not necessarily imply that no limitations of our freedom by a government or by other political actors are legitimate. It only holds that the legitimacy of any such intervention depends on the reasons that are given to explain it. As a person (or organisation), I have the right to have any restriction of my individual freedom justified by whoever causes that restriction or has the intention to do so. This argument takes the freedom of the individual from domination as a starting point, and places all restriction of this freedom under the reservation of good reasons (cf. Neyer 2013, chap. 6). It is a procedural understanding of justice that emphasizes not only individual freedom but also the duty of the community to produce the material conditions under which individual freedom can exist.

Understanding justice as the right to justification gives the notion of justice an intrinsically procedural and discursive character. Any question regarding the specific implication of justice in a given context is answered with reference to a normatively demanding discursive procedure. All parties concerned, be they individual or governmental, must be given the chance to voice their concerns and to have them properly respected in the formulation of binding rules. In this way, the search for justice becomes an inclusive, discursive and always only temporarily concluded project. Though those concerned by a regulation may temporarily agree upon a specific accord, they often will only do so with the reservation of possible later changes.

3.2 Obstacles to Justification

Norms and facts are unfortunately hardly ever identical. In an ideal world, all political actors would permanently justify their policies to all possibly affected parties and abstain from conducting any policy that cannot be fully justified or that has not yet been fully justified. No

implementation of policies would be realized before an inclusive debate on the merits and problems of policies is concluded. Critics would be invited to raise their concerns and be given opportunity to address them directly via policy-makers. The arguments brought forward would be weighed according to their relative merits. Policy would not follow interests but arguments. It will come as no surprise to the reader that real-world of politics in the EU – as everywhere in the world - is somewhat different. Justificatory relations are about relationships of power (Keohane, 2006). To demand justification is to ask someone to do something he or she would otherwise not do. Policy scrutiny might lead to additional opposition by revealing conceptual flaws in a policy or by pointing to its distributive effects. Justificatory discourses nearly always imply additional costs to a policy entrepreneur and are only sometimes beneficial from the point of view of the respondent. Thus, only very few political actors subject their own actions to the critical scrutiny of others where they are not forced to do so.

It is also clear that the institutional order of the EU attributes asymmetrical power resources to different classes of actors. Governments, to start with, are the most powerful actors in the European multi-level system. They act as gatekeepers for political proposals and have a monopolistic say over the setting of the European political agenda via the European Council. Governments have huge informational advantages regarding the positions and scopes of action of other executives and are in a much better position than all other actors to identify what is politically feasible. Governments can finally influence the domestic political agenda via the EU. Many observers thus analyse the EU as a de facto intergovernmental regime in which the supranational institutions are servants of the member states rather than masters of the political discourse. As opposed to the member governments, individual citizens are often claimed to be the least powerful actors in the European multi-level system. They have only very indirect options for demanding justifications by either using the preliminary ruling procedure (that is after a policy has been adopted and implemented) or by trusting the European Parliament to adopt their concerns and demand the adequate reforms. The European Parliament, however, is equally remote from most European citizens and often represents well-organized interests rather than the concerns of the median-voter. It is true that the extension of the EP's rights in the European political process has made an important inroad into the member governments' former monopoly of demanding and receiving justifications. The EP has become an important co-legislator and today critically follows the Commission's and the Council's legislative work. The EP, however, still lacks the right to set the political agenda, it is only the second and not the first legislative chamber and it does not have the right to submit legislative proposals. The EU's institutional system is thus strongly detached from the citizen level and is in need of new mechanisms for bridging the gap between the ultimate holder of the right to justification and the policy-making level.

3.3 Fostering Justification: Bringing National Parliaments Back in

If all this is true then we are forced to diagnose serious obstacles to realizing the individual right to justification in European politics. Politics in the EU is about power at least as much as about arguments, and the most powerful actors' activities are very difficult to scrutinize by citizens. There is no reason for complete disillusionment either, however. It was already mentioned in the introduction that the last years have seen a number of efforts to increase the role of national parliaments in the EU and thus to reduce the gap between the EU citizen and the EU policy-maker. It must be underlined that national parliaments are a very specific type of political institution. They are the only ones who combine a close attachment to the citizens of a polity with explicit legal rights to participate in policy-making. They are the locus in which the sovereignty of a people is institutionalized and the most prominent place where the people formulate their preferences and ideas in a politically effective way. National parliaments are thus the prime candidate and the most crucial element in the policy-making process for giving a prominent role to the individual right to justification.

3.3.1 The Control Function

The recent debate on the role of national parliaments in the EU reflects these insights. It builds on an understanding of the role of parliaments in the democratic process that centres on their function to represent the people and to take care that governments are actually doing what the people want. It is built on the idea of a linear stream of bottom up delegation and control that runs from the citizens to parliamentarians and from here to government. In this perspective, efforts at strengthening national parliaments would have to centre on giving them as many rights as possible to make governments accountable to parliamentary scrutiny.

Most of the recent political innovations in the role of national parliaments in the European political process reflect this idea. The member states have adapted the ToL and implemented domestic legislation to ensure that national parliaments can better control their government's activities in EU policy-making. The new provisions in the ToL stipulate in its protocol on the role of national parliaments in European the desire to "encourage greater involvement of national Parliaments in the activities of the European Union and to enhance their ability to express their views on draft legislative acts of the European Union as well as on other matters which may be of particular interest to them". To implement that goal, all Commission consultation documents, draft legislative Acts and the minutes of Council meetings shall be forwarded to national parliaments. The national parliaments are also granted an eight-week period between when a draft legislative Act is being made available to national Parliaments and the date when it is placed on a provisional agenda for the Council.

In addition, the protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality stipulates that the Commission must review a proposal if reasoned opinions by a group of

Parliaments (quorum depending on the legal matter) claims the proposal to be violating the subsidiarity principle. The Commission must "justify why it considers that the proposal complies with the principle of subsidiarity" if it nevertheless decides to proceed with the proposal. It must also follow a procedure that opens further avenues for the Member States and the European Parliament to stop it.

All of these changes in the institutional architecture are to be applauded for the new awareness that they attribute to national parliaments. It must also be said, however, that their effect will probably not reach far beyond political symbolism. It is difficult to imagine how a quarter or even a third of all national parliaments could, in less than eight weeks, formulate coordinated reasoned opinions. In most cases, it will take probably exceptional circumstances to overcome the costs of coordination between the parliaments. In addition, a clever timing on the part of the Commission might use the parliamentary breaks for making it even more difficult for national parliaments to achieve common reasoned opinions.

The effort to strengthen national parliaments control competencies is not limited to the EU level but is shared by most of the member states. European Affairs Committees have been set up in all member state parliaments and most of them have been equipped with the necessary legal resources for scrutinizing their government's policies (see the introduction by Auel and Raunio). The role model for many of these institutional reforms has been the Danish Folketing (Laursen 2001). The Folketing participates in governmental policy-making by tying the government to a mandate given in advance of intergovernmental negotiations. Before entering negotiations, the responsible minister has to present a proposal in person to the European Affairs Committee of the Folketing and must obtain a supportive majority. The members of the committee not only vote on the proposal but also have the right to propose amendments. The minister has no right to enter into any negotiations in Brussels if s/he fails to convince the majority of the committee of his/her proposal. Likewise, if the negotiations in Brussels make it necessary to change the Danish position, and if s/he wants to go beyond the authorisations given by the mandate, s/he must present new suggestions to the committee and wait for new instructions.

The Folketing has also opened an EU information office open to citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs) for providing informational resources on European issues. A recent comparative study on consultation processes in the EU reports that CSOs' representatives are systematically consulted by the European Affairs Committee (EAC) on all proposals of interest (Volonteurope 2010). The openness of the EAC to the public results in "a kind of common ownership of the EAC" (Volonteurope 2010: 20) that is shared between citizens, the parliament and the government.

The Danish practices of making the EU an issue of public debate have been widely applauded in the literature. Although some observers criticize that mandating may hamper the negotiation strategies of the Danish government, there is also a broad appraisal of the

public effect of close scrutiny. Observers have noted that the salience of European affairs in Danish domestic politics has been high if compared to other Member States. European politics in Denmark has become an essential part of domestic politics. It has moved out of bureaucratic interaction and entered the public discourse. Although this awareness may, from time to time, lead to a critical stance of the public towards the EU, it is attractive from the perspective of a justificatory discourse. Critical inquiries and public contestation force a government to explain its case, to respond to critiques and to justify its course of action. Policies become public and outcomes have a higher probability to reflect the variety of citizens' concerns.

It must be added, however, that the salience of European politics in Denmark is not only the product of the activities of the Folketing and its EAC. According to Art. 20 of the Danish constitution, all transfers of political competences to supranational institutions require a 5/6 majority in the Folketing or a simple majority plus a referendum. In practice, all European treaties since the accession of Denmark to the EU had to pass through the bottleneck of the referendum and thus received broad public awareness. An equally important aspect is the fact that Denmark has since had long minority governments. Much of the salience of European politics in Denmark is explained by the fact that the opposition parties use the EAC for criticizing governmental policies and indirectly addressing the Danish public. The Danish case thus not only highlights the importance that a national parliament can have in processes of post-national governance, but also the difficulty to generalize from this case and to expect that its success story can be easily exported to other member states parliaments. It is not surprising, therefore, that many other member states have had less convincing experiences with strengthening the control competences of their parliaments. The Austrian example provides a telling case of a parliamentary European Affairs Committee that is equipped with strong control and monitoring competences but hardly ever uses them (See the contribution by Pollak and Slominski in this collection). It underlines that national parliaments are not only losers of the integration process but only too often "voluntary victims" (Auel). A most important reason for this political failure is that the majority of MPs in a parliamentary system, represent the same party as the government is composed of. They thus have few incentives to scrutinize their government's activities. "The result would be similar to a defeat of a governmental bill, namely a public and therefore humiliating opposition to the government by its own parliamentary majority, something the majority will usually have no incentive to risk, because it may undermine their own political credibility" (Auel 2007: 492). Strengthening the control competences of national parliaments might thus be simply the wrong strategy if the goal is to bind citizens and European politics closer to each other and to prepare the ground for an effective justificatory discourse.

3.3.2 The Communicative Function of National Parliaments

Control is fortunately not everything. An alternative option for increasing the role of national parliaments in the EU is to emphasise their communicative function. The so-called

communicative function of parliaments has since long been highlighted by classics such as John Stuart Mill. According to Mill, it is a most central function of the parliament to provide a space for debating politics. The parliament is not only the agent of the citizens and the principal of the government but a political space in its own right. It is a forum in which preferences and concerns can be voiced and differences articulated. It is towards parliament that the government must justify its policies.[4] It is true that the communicative function of parliament and its role as a transmitter between governmental activities and citizen awareness has somehow lost in importance in domestic politics since the times of Mill. Newspapers and other media today closely watch all domestic governmental activities. Some observers al-ready describe the advent of a media democracy in which newspaper and television programs have adopted many of those functions that were formerly in the hands of parliaments. In European politics, however, things look quite different. Peter and de Vreese (2004) report that television coverage of EU politics takes place only sporadically and is of limited visibility. Newspapers are only slightly better adapted to European integration. Although Sifft et al. (2007) observe an intensifying scrutiny of EU politics by newspapers, they also conclude that most EU politics takes place unnoticed. Gerhards (2000: 294) adds that "European questions receive the lowest level of media attention in comparison to all other … issue-areas" and Risse and van den Steeg (2003:3) report that the European public discourse is "fragile, fragmented, and constrained to particular sets of issues". The defect is the more serious as European news coverage is strongly biased towards governmental activities and by and large overlooks parliaments, party actors, and civil society (Koopmans 2007). Inclusive and effective justificatory public discourses thus face serious obstacles.[5]

Important reasons for this meagre role of the public discourse in European politics are probably that most citizens are already well-occupied with following national politics. Many citizens do not have the additional time and resources to get informed on the often very technical and complex details of European affairs and to gather the necessary information for formulating a well-reasoned opinion. In addition, many relevant political issues today have a level of complexity, which can be processed only by the average citizen if it is reduced to its most important ethical or redistributive implications. For very practical reasons, debates on nuclear energy, global warming, genetically modified organisms or the intricacies of health reform need to be simplified and organized into a limited set of options for making them accessible to the public discourse. An active role of parliamentarians is thus a precondition of reasonably autonomous decision-making by citizens. The need for parliamentarians to adopt an active role is aggravated by the fact that the media are often slow in reacting to real-world problems and operate according to own economic standards. Politically relevant topics are also often overlooked due to limited public interest or lack of

[4] A more recent formulation of the same argument is Norton (1996:1). According to Norton, parliaments are usually seen as 'the means by which the measures and actions of government are debated and scrutinised on behalf of citizens, and through which the concerns of citizens . . . may be voiced. The extent to which they carry out such actions, and are seen by citizens to carry out such actions, may be argued to constitute the essential underpinning of legitimacy of the political system in the eyes of electors'.

[5] For a recent excellent overview on the literature cf. Risse (2010).

expertise on the part of journalists. Relying on the media for facilitating discursive processes between government and citizens might thus be overly optimistic.

A more promising way to revitalize the communicative function of national parliaments might be to awaken the EU's sleeping beauty, the "Conférence des organes parlementaires spécialisés dans les affaires de l'Union" (COSAC). COSAC is a body that brings together members of the committees of the national Parliaments of the Member States dealing with European affairs as well as representatives of the European Parliament. Their most important task is to promote the exchange of information and best practice between national Parliaments and the European Parliament. COSAC also has the right to submit non-binding contributions to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. COSAC thus serves as a kind of informational platform that organizes discourse among the European Affairs Committees of the national parliaments.

Although it is true that COSAC today has hardly any significant effect on either policy-making in the EU or the development of its constitutional order,[6] it is nevertheless an institution with a huge potential for giving effect to the right to justification. It combines all those aspects that the EU is in urgent need of. COSAC brings together national parliaments and can thus pool resources on the European level without further adding to the predominance of member state executives in the political process. COSAC, however, should not be involved with day-to-day decision-making. That task is already well conducted by the European Parliament and there is no need for duplication. What is urgently needed, however, is a permanent constitutional body that overcomes the defects inherent in the treaty changing provisions of the Lisbon Treaty. The ambivalence of the Treaty in giving parliaments a role in the constitutional place reflects the EU's international legacy and is hopelessly outdated today. COSAC should take the ambition of the EU to better integrate national Parliaments seriously and demand to be transformed into an Interparliamentary Constitutional Assembly (ICA) with the sole competence to propose treaty reforms. It should have the competence to review all practices and competences of the EU, to propose amendments to the Treaty or any other legal documents of the EU. The new ICA would safeguard that the EU's constitutional development reflects not only intergovernmental bargaining but be via its members in permanent close contact with the national parliaments and thus the democratic sovereign of the member states. If COSAC were transformed into an ICA, the European Affairs Committees of the national parliaments would no longer only observe and eventually criticize governmental politics but become crucial actors in the EU. National parliaments would re-adopt the role the constitutional importance as it is foreseen in national constitutions, is demanded by the German Constitutional Court and that is nevertheless so difficult to realize under the conditions of and the incentives set by domestic parliamentarism. It would also be an important corrective to the role occupied by the European Court of Justice. Turning COSAC into an ICA would be an important institutional reform for helping to justify European

[6] Good literature on COSAC is still hard to find. Overviews are given in O'Brennan/ Raunio 2007 and Raunio 2009.

structures of justification. These structures would no longer be unduly shielded from critical scrutiny by the requirement of intergovernmental unanimity but become subject to permanent critique and eventual reform. The ICA could propose a harmonization of corporate taxation, the introduction of a European tax for financing infrastructure, the fading out of the outdated structural funds, a balancing of the four freedoms with the social protection of workers, and many other projects that are today blocked by the opposition of single governments. The ICA would thus have the potential to move the EU a significant step closer towards a fully justified structure of justification.

4. Conclusion and Research Agenda

This paper has undertaken a – somewhat sketchy - tour de force through European constitutional thinking and a discussion of adequate normative standards. It has analysed difficulties to democratise multi-level governance systems and taken issue with the possible contribution of national parliaments to remedying normative problems of the EU. It has worked on the assumption that national parliaments are the institutional backbone of any proper working democracy. They are the mediating link between government and citizens and carry much of the burden of safeguarding responsible and responsive governance. The establishment of political structures above the nation-state and, by implication, beyond democratic governance is a serious challenge to the institutional order of democracy. It threatens to disable the parliamentary link between citizens and government and to open a window of opportunity for the de-coupling of governance from democracy. Parliaments today do not yet live up to the challenge of re-establishing their central role in the political process. Dominant incentive structures for most MPs militate towards downplaying and de-politicizing Europe domestically. Hardly any European parliament thus uses its legal competences fully. Most seem to be content with being the losers of integration and accept to be side-lined by a growing importance of the executive.

Much of this discussion has been brief, lacks proper systematic evidence and must be preliminary. What the discussion should have been helpful for, however, is to situate the analysis of national parliaments in the EU in wider constitutional and normative debates and to identify important future research questions. We do not know, for example, too much about the practices of national opposition parties in bringing European topics closer to their domestic audiences. Where and when do they undertake such efforts and under what conditions are these efforts successful? Does the media listen to the opposition’s efforts to politicise European politics? When and how does that happen? What impact on the public discourse can additional mechanisms such as the Danish use of mandating and public relations offices have in other member states? Do national parliaments still have the capacity to mediate between citizens and European governance or are we forced to look for new non-parliamentary means for legitimizing the EU?

How we answer these questions is important for understanding the future of parliamentary democracy in the EU and beyond. If (a) the EP remains for the foreseeable future too weak in terms of both competences and normative potential to compensate for the losses of domestic legislative power, and if (b) national parliaments face incentive structures which militate against taking their role in the European multi-level system seriously, then we are in the midst of a deep crisis of European parliamentarism. How this crisis will unfold depends at least to some degree on the creativity of academia to find convincing answers to the challenge of situating national parliaments in multilevel governance structures.

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I. COMPARING PLENARY DEBATES ON EU ISSUES

Debating the State of the Union? Comparing Parliamentary Debates on EU Issues in Finland, France, Germany and the United Kingdom

Katrin Auel and Tapio Raunio

Abstract

Over the last 20 years, the role of national parliaments in EU affairs has gained considerable academic attention. Much of the literature has focused on the parliamentary control function and shown that national parliaments are no longer docile lambs willing to be led to the European slaughtering block, but exercise tighter scrutiny of their governments in EU affairs. What tends to be overlooked, however, is that the parliamentary communication function is at least as important in EU politics. Yet while the literature has discussed reasons why MPs (or political parties) may prefer to 'depoliticise' EU issues by conducting their EU business away from the prying eye of the public, so far we have little empirical data on how parliaments communicate EU politics. The paper will therefore provide a comparative analysis of parliamentary debates on EU issues in the UK, Finland, Germany and France. The data consists of debates and documents on three major EU issues: the Services Directive, the European Arrest Warrant, and providing financial aid to Greece in the spring of 2010 ('cash for Greece'). Moreover, we provide longitudinal data on the overall level of plenary debates on European matters in the four countries, with our findings demonstrating significant variation between both the four member states and different types of EU matters.

1. Introduction

Parliaments are multi-taskers. They perform a large number of functions, including the election or selection of the government, policy-formulation and legislation, controlling the government and holding it accountable, aggregating and representing the interests of their citizens and informing them on important policy issues. Among the most important means for parliaments to fulfil a range of these functions, and most importantly the information and

communication function, are public debates in the plenary or – to a lesser extent – in committees. Debates are vital elements of electoral competition as they provide for a public articulation of societal interests and the discussion of policies thus informing citizens about complex political issues. Without debates allowing the electorate to identify competing leaders and policy agendas it is difficult for them to assess the performance of the government and to hold it accountable.

As mentioned in the introductory article, previous research has suggested that the role of the plenary has so far been limited in European issues (Bergman et al. 2003: 175). However, this comparative data is somewhat dated, and it is possible that the debates on transparency in EU affairs as well as on the role of national parliaments in EU governance have led to a greater involvement of the plenary. More recent research has at least suggested that more salient EU topics – such as financial frameworks (de Wilde in this Collection of Working Papers), Treaty reforms (Maatsch 2010), or European Council meetings (van de Steeg 2010) – do appear to trigger plenary debates (Zajc 2008; Raunio and Wiberg 2010). In addition, previous research has paid hardly any attention to the variation between legislatures or policy areas, nor to the relationship between parliamentary cultures and debates.

Hence this article contributes to the literature through a comparative analysis of EU debates in four member states – Finland, France, Germany and the UK. In the next section we discuss both institutional and party-related factors that may impact the emphasis of parliamentary debates and introduce our hypotheses. In section three we justify our case selection and data, and provide an overview of the variation between the four legislatures. Section four contains the empirical analysis of the debates on three major EU issues: European Arrest Warrant (EAW), the Services Directive, and providing financial aid to Greece in the spring of 2010 ('Cash for Greece'). In the fifth section we provide longitudinal data on the overall level of plenary debates on European matters in the four countries. We show how both institutional and party related factors impact the level and nature of debates, with our findings confirming significant variation between both the four member states and different types of EU matters.

2. Institutional Context + Party Interests = Different Outcomes?

Our basic premise is intuitively very simple: the institutional context, expressed through different parliamentary rules and cultures, should produce variation in our dependent variable – parliamentary debates on EU issues. While European parliaments perform largely the same set of functions in their respective national systems, previous literature has shown there to be significant variation between the legislatures in terms of which function is emphasised most (Döring ed. 1995; Norton ed. 1998; Strøm et al. eds. 2003; Arter ed. 2006). 'After all, the institutions provide venues for the interactions between MPs and ministers, rules for behaviour of participants and above all, role models for the "inmates" of the parliamentary/governmental complex' (Andeweg & Nijzink 1995: 157). In addition,

national parliaments are party-political institutions, bringing together legislators representing different political parties. Government formation is based on bargaining between political parties, with the opposition parties trying to unseat the cabinet or increase their support in the run-up to the next elections. Parties are also responsible for setting the parliamentary rules of procedure: the agenda and powers of committees and the plenary as well as the rights of individual members and party groups are all decided by political parties. Hence any realistic explanation of parliamentary activities must also include the incentives of parties (Bergman et al. eds. 2000; Strøm et al. eds. 2003).

2.1 Institutional Factors

Turning to institutional factors first, a much-used distinction is that between 'working' and 'debating' parliaments (Arter 1999: 211-217), or between 'legislating' and 'deliberating' parliaments (Loewenberg and Patterson 1979). Working parliaments are characterised by standing orders that emphasise committee work over plenary debates, with a parliamentary culture where MPs focus on scrutiny of documents in committees instead of grand speeches on the floor. As the name implies, in debating parliaments, on the other hand, the focus is more on plenary debates. In addition, debating legislatures are, on average, less consensual, with the opposition using plenary to criticise the government. The 'ideal' example of a debating parliament is arguably the British House of Commons, with the Nordic parliaments constituting typical cases of working parliaments (Arter 1984, 1999: 211-217; Bergman and Strøm eds. 2011).

H1: *Debating vs. working parliaments*: the more the parliament resembles a debating legislature, the more we expect parliament to fulfil its communication function through plenary debates.

It is plausible, however, to argue that participation in EU governance has contributed to all national parliaments becoming more committee-based. After all, all national parliaments have established one or more European Affairs Committees (EAC) for coordinating parliamentary work in EU affairs, and the specialised standing committees are becoming more regularly involved in EU matters in many parliaments. But parliaments differ with regard to the degree to which they have delegated EU affairs to committees. While in some parliaments the EAC (or the standing committees) regularly act on behalf of the whole parliament, for example when issuing resolutions on EU documents or mandating the government, others require or at least permit a vote on the floor of the house and thus the involvement of the plenary – even if this does not always include a debate.

H2: *Delegation to committees*: the more EU affairs have been delegated to committees, the less we expect parliaments to fulfil their communication function through plenary debates.

This leads us to a third institutional factor. Even if the bulk of parliamentary work in EU affairs takes place in Committees, plenary debates may still take place, for example based on motions on EU documents, interpellations, topical hours etc. Thus, another factor is the ability of backbenchers to influence the parliamentary agenda, i.e. to initiate debates on EU issues. The easier it is for single MPs or groups of MPs to put EU issues on the plenary agenda, the more plenary debates we can expect. This is especially the case regarding opposition rights. In parliamentary systems of government, public assessment and criticism of the government's actions is mainly the responsibility of the opposition, while we can hardly expect the majority party or parties to have a great incentive to engage in publicly scrutinising and much less criticising the government (Auel 2007).

H3: *Backbench Agenda Control*: the greater the ability of backbenchers (and the opposition in particular) to influence the parliamentary agenda in EU affairs, the more we expect parliaments to fulfil their communication function through plenary debates.

2.2 Party Strategic Factors

Institutional factors, however, only provide or constrain opportunities for parliamentary activities. Whether these opportunities are actually used also depends on party political incentives. As mentioned above, we therefore expect party-related factors to play a decisive role regarding whether parliaments (or MPs) will emphasise the communication function and thus have an impact on the importance of parliamentary debates in EU affairs.

In general, one can assume that where EU issues are electorally salient, parties have to compete publicly over these issues to address the interests of their voters. This is even more the case, where public opinion is unsupportive or sceptical of EU integration. In this case, parties have to assure their voters that they will defend their national interests at the European level. However, these general assumptions have to be qualified as it may not always be in the interest of parties to politicise EU issues. Where parties are internally divided over EU issues, and/or considerably more supportive of EU integration than their voters, this may in fact impact negatively on their electoral success (Hooghe and Marks 2009). For them, EU issues are thus more of a liability than an asset, and we can assume they will focus on traditional socio-economic issues in public debate. Eurosceptical parties, in contrast, and especially those on the ideological fringes, have an interest in politicising EU issues to broaden their voter base, because their position on the left/right dimension is likely to limit their potential voter pool (De Vries and Edwards 2009). This leads us to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

H4: *EU-scepticism in public opinion*: the greater the electoral salience and the stronger the EU-scepticism in public opinion, the more we can expect parliaments to fulfil their communication function through plenary debates.

H5: *Distance*: the greater the distance between parties and their voters regarding their support for EU integration, the less we can expect parliaments to fulfil their communication function through plenary debates.

H6: *Internal cohesion*: the less parties are internally cohesive regarding EU, the less we can expect parliaments to fulfil their communication function through plenary debates.

H7*: Presence of anti-EU parties*: the greater the share of Eurosceptical parties, the more we can expect parliaments to fulfil their communication function through plenary debates.

3. Data and Case Selection

The hypotheses developed above should be seen as neither complementary nor as necessarily competing. Rather, we investigate what factors and in which combination have explanatory value with regard to the degree to which parliaments fulfil their communication function through public debates. We have therefore chosen the parliaments of four member states: Finland (Eduskunta), France (Assemblée Nationale), Germany (Bundestag), and the United Kingdom (House of Commons). The case selection is primarily explained by institutional and partisan variation, with the parliaments differing from one another in terms of parliamentary rules, EU scrutiny models, and party politics (see below). Given the low number of cases, and the fact that some of the variables, especially the institutional factors, are difficult to quantify in a consistent and comparable manner, we do not attempt a quantitative analysis, but rather follow a qualitative-interpretative approach.

With regard to the dependent variable, our empirical analysis is based on two sets of data. First, we examine the parliamentary processing of three major EU issues – the European Arrest Warrant, the Services Directive, and the decisions to provide financial aid to Greece through the establishment of the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism in May-June 2010 ('Cash for Greece'). All three issues were undoubtedly highly salient, both domestically and at the European level. We are particularly interested in the public debates in the four parliaments, but also analyse how the issues were overall processed by the legislatures. Parliamentary scrutiny of the three cases can be divided into two stages: scrutiny of the initial EU level decision and scrutiny of the domestic laws implementing the European decisions (which necessitated parliamentary approval). We examine both stages with the exception of the Services Directive where we focus on the processing of the proposal for the directive, which was far more important and contested than domestic implementation. In addition, transposition in the case of the Services Directive was achieved through changes to a multitude of domestic laws (or executive regulations without parliamentary involvement), which makes it almost impossible to distinguish between EU-related and domestic debates.

Our second data consists of a longitudinal comparison of the share or amount of EU debates in the four parliaments as well as the issues debated in the plenary to gain insight into the

general importance of parliamentary debates in EU affairs. In this context, we also examine whether the parliaments hold debates about European Council meetings (either ex ante or ex post). This choice is explained by the role of the European Council, which 'functions as the principal agenda-setter, the ultimate arbiter in decision-making, and the motor behind European integration' (van de Steeg 2010: 118). For both data sets, we used mainly information resources the four parliaments provide via the Internet.[1]

3.1 Institutional and Party-Related Factors in Finland, France, Germany and the UK

Regarding the institutional factors, we can observe significant variation between the four parliaments. The Eduskunta and the Bundestag can be considered 'working parliaments' due to the central role of committees, with MPs clearly focusing on legislative scrutiny behind the closed doors of the standing committees. The role of the plenary is more limited in both parliaments, but particularly so in the Eduskunta, where the government also exerts firm control over the plenary agenda (despite it being the Speaker's Council that formally determines the agenda). In the Bundestag, in contrast, the plenary agenda is decided by the parliamentary party groups in the Council of Elders, and all groups (but no individual MPs) have the opportunity to put their issues on the agenda. In terms of policy influence, the Bundestag and Eduskunta are also arguably the strongest of the four legislatures.

The 'rationalised' Assemblée Nationale (Huber 1996), in contrast, has traditionally been a weak legislature under the Constitution of the 5th Republic, with limited policy influence and firm government control of its agenda (Kerrouche 2006; Meny 1996; Grossman and Sauger 2007). The effects of the constitutional and procedural constraints were summed up by Frears (1990: 33): 'complete executive supremacy in the legislative process, severely limited opportunities for general debates criticizing government, virtually no opportunities for scrutinizing executive acts and making the executive give an account of them […] executive power is a little too immune from proper scrutiny.' Recent amendments to the Constitution (2008) and the Parliamentary Standing Orders (2009)[2] have strengthened the role of the Assemblée and its committees, but the long-term impact of these reforms is not yet clear.

The House of Commons, finally, can be categorised as a true 'debating parliament', where the role of the plenary is central to parliamentary business, at least in domestic affairs, while committee work plays a less important role in legislation. In addition, the government is in firm control of the parliamentary agenda, giving backbenchers little opportunity to shape the agenda more regularly outside of adjournment debates, opposition days or the topical hours introduced in 2007.

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[1] In addition, we carried out interviews with selected MPs and parliamentary civil servants in the four countries. We are particularly grateful to Graham Ziegner and Peter Saramo for their generous help regarding the House of Commons and the Eduskunta data.

[2] For details see Assemblée Nationale (2009a).

The four legislatures also differ regarding government-opposition dynamics. In the working parliaments relations between parties in general and between government and opposition in particular are more consensual. Clearly, the Finnish and German polities are dominated by strong coalition cabinets, but in both parliaments cooperation between policy experts from all parties in the standing committees is fairly common. In EU politics, in particular, the government-opposition dimension in the Eduskunta, but also in the Bundestag, is not as significant in EU affairs as in domestic politics (Auel 2006; Raunio 2007). In addition, the opposition enjoys strong control rights including the right to co-decide the parliamentary agenda (in the Bundestag) or to introduce bills, amendments and motions. The British and French systems, on the other hand, are more adversarial, with the government-opposition cleavage more prominent in parliamentary work. At the same time, control rights of the opposition are less pronounced in both parliaments. This applies especially to the 'tribal politics' of the House of Commons, which usually rules out cooperation between the opposing parties.

A similar pattern can be found in EU affairs, where the Eduskunta has the strongest scrutiny system of the four parliaments due to its mandating system, the broad involvement of the standing committees[3] and the early involvement in the European legislative process (Jääskinen 2000; Raunio 2007). Delegation to the EAC is extensive: The Grand Committee (the EAC) is the only parliamentary body that can issue a mandate. Overall, the processing of EU matters in Finland has been characterised by consensus and pragmatism, with little if any (public) conflicts between the parties or between government and opposition. This is, however, less due to a broad cross-party consensus on EU affairs (see below), but rather to a coordination system designed to manufacture national unanimity or at least broad agreement, which can arguably be translated into additional influence in EU level bargaining (Johansson and Raunio 2010).

The Bundestag is also considered as one of the more powerful parliaments in EU affairs (Auel 2006) due to the formal responsibility of the standing committees for all EU policies except 'high politics' issues, which are dealt with by the EAC. Resolutions of the Bundestag, which can be introduced by a committee or by a party group, have to be voted on in the plenary. According to Article 45 of the German Basic Law, the EAC can adopt a resolution on behalf of the plenary – either if specifically authorised by the Bundestag or as long as none of the standing committees disagree - but it makes only rare use of this right. Formally, the government is able to decide against the opinion of the Bundestag where important foreign or EU affairs are concerned, but it must report on the reasons why it had to deviate from the parliamentary resolution – in a plenary debate if so demanded.

[3] The designated standing committees have an obligation to report to the EAC, but in less salient questions at least some committees just indicate their position briefly in the minutes of the committee meeting (for example, that the committee agrees with the government position) (Eduskunta 2010: 30).

The Assemblée Nationale, in contrast, is categorised as having a weaker EU scrutiny system, at least with regard to parliamentary influence (Nuttens and Sicard 2000: 61; Szukala and Rozenberg 2001: 229; Grossmann and Sauger 2007). The EAC is the main forum for EU affairs, but resolutions (proposed by the EAC or individual MPs) require the involvement of the Assemblée. The EAC can only formulate a proposal for a resolution, which then has to be sent to one of the standing committees. They can adopt the proposal as is, amend or reject it, and their final motion for a resolution can then be put on the agenda of the Assemblée upon the request of a party group, a committee chair or the government. If no such request is made, the text adopted by the standing committee is considered final and transmitted to the government. Resolutions, however, are explicitly non-binding and considered as having less of a politically binding effect as well. Assemblée Nationale (2009b).

The House of Commons is also considered as weaker when it comes to actual policy influence. European documents are first transferred to the permanent European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) whose task is to examine their legal and political importance. Important documents are then referred for debate to an ad hoc European Committee[4] or to the plenary. In either case, resolutions require a final vote on the floor of the house, but where debates have taken place in a European Committee, the plenary usually votes without further debate. The process is also completely controlled by the government (House of Commons 2010a): it not only decides whether a document will be referred to a committee or the plenary, it also formulates and puts down the final motion for the resolution in the plenary without having to take into account the view of the European Committee.

Finally, the four parliaments also differ with regard to the party related factors. We base our assessment on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006 and the European Election Studies (EES) 2004/2009 as well as the comparative project of Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008) who distinguish between three broad types of contestation: limited, open and constrained. The Chapel Hill data measures party positions and internal party dissent on EU as well as the salience of Europe for national parties, whereas the EES data is used to examine opinion congruence on the EU dimension between parties and their voters (see the appendix for details).

According to Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008: 351) ‘Germany provides perhaps the best paradigmatic example of a system of limited contestation’, with the main parties solidly supportive of further integration. Indeed, the German party system is overall the most pro-European of the four countries with only one truly anti-European party, the Left List (formerly Party of Democratic Socialism, PDS). In addition, most parties experience little internal dissent over integration, the exception being again the Left List, curiously one of the very few

[4] Until 2005, the European Standing Committees had permanent memberships. Since then, a European Committee is appointed for each document referred for debate.

Eurosceptical parties in our sample not to be firmly united in their anti-EU stance. In Germany the gap between voters and their parties over EU is much smaller than in the other three countries. European issues also have a relatively low electoral salience, both for the parties and for public opinion, and 'Europe' has only rarely featured among the issues German citizens considered important (Auel 2006). Thus, overall Germany is still characterised by a relatively broad elite and public pro-European consensus, even though more recently first cracks have begun to appear. In addition to the Left List, the Christian Social Union (CSU) has also adopted more cautious positions on Europe, not least concerning Germany's contributions to the EU budget and enlargements.

In the Finnish party system we also find a broad but less enthusiastic partisan consensus on the EU. Strong anti-EU sentiments have largely been confined to the The Finns (previously known as True Finns), which have significantly increased their support in recent elections. However, the Left Alliance as well as the Christian Democrats are also more neutral, if not to say lukewarm in their position on European integration. Yet as mentioned above partisan conflicts about integration are (intentionally) reduced through the consensual EU scrutiny system. As Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008: 352) point out, Finland is 'an interesting case of limited contestation … conflict over the European issue is not absent and remains as a potential characteristic of party competition, but … the structures of Finnish politics limit its manifestation.' Parties are also internally rather cohesive in their stance on European integration, with only the Centre Party and the Left Alliance experiencing some internal dissent. However, the commitment to integration, which prevails among the parties, is not shared to the same extent by the Finnish electorate, with a notable lack of congruence between the citizens and the political parties (Mattila and Raunio 2005, 2012). The opinion gap is most pronounced in the three largest parties: Centre, National Coalition, and the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

In France, mainstream parties are also largely supportive of integration with anti-EU parties found mainly at the fringes, such as the Communist Party, the Front National and the Movement For France. European matters have, however, produced strong divisions in the main parties, especially in the Socialist Party and the Greens, but also in the centre-right Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) (Bornschier and Lachat 2009). Opinion congruence between parties and their electorates over EU fell quite significantly between 2004 and 2009. However, the fluctuating nature of the party system together with highly contested referendums on Treaty amendments (1992, 2005) has contributed to Europe making occasional waves instead of constituting a permanently salient issue in domestic party politics. The same is true for public opinion. While the French public is in general pro-EU, anti-EU sentiment has occasionally flared up and made Europe much more salient. As Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008: 351-352) summarise: 'despite Euroscepticism emerging throughout the party system, the dominant pro-European consensus means that it has not resulted in any of the major parties in the two blocks taking a consistently Eurosceptical

position, nor have European issues played a decisive role in determining domestic political outcomes.'

The UK, finally, is the only clear case of open contestation, with Europe as an issue also causing severe internal divisions within the main parties. Euroscepticism is not confined to smaller parties at the fringes, such as UK Independence Party, but is also represented by the Conservative Party. And while competition over European issues now largely follows the pronounced confrontational two-party competition between the overall more pro-European New Labour and the Eurosceptic Conservatives, both large parties have been and still are internally divided over Europe. While the salience of European integration is not greater for British parties than for parties in the other member states (with the exception of the single issue UKIP), public opinion is traditionally rather sceptical of EU integration. The UK exhibits low levels of opinion congruence between parties and their supporters, with the British party system in fact having least opinion congruence in 2004 of all the EU member states. Particularly the Conservatives are out of tune with their electorate over integration. (Mattila and Raunio 2012) According to Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008: 354-355) the 'British case serves as the pre-eminent case of a party system in which Europe has featured as an issue of contestation and in which there has been a wide range of opinions on European integration …in terms of Euroscepticism, the UK has had it all: major party Euroscepticism, factional Euroscepticism within major parties, Euroscepticism within peripheral parties, Europe as an issue of importance in party politics, and single-issue Eurosceptical parties.'

Table 1: Comparison of the Lower Houses of the Finnish, French, German, and UK Parliaments

Parliament	Parliamentary culture	EU scrutiny system	Party-related factors
Eduskunta	Working parliament: emphasis on legislative scrutiny in committees, firm control of government over plenary agenda	Very strong scrutiny system, regular involvement of standing committees, extensive delegation: EAC acts on behalf of parliament (plenary cannot make decisions on mandate)	Limited contestation (partly due to the consensual EU scrutiny model), small anti-EU party, parties are internally divided over EU, larger opinion gap
Assemblée Nationale (until 2008/9)	Until 2008/9: more debating than working parliament, more limited role for committees, almost complete government control over plenary agenda, weak opposition rights (until 2008/9)	Weaker, regular involvement of standing committees, broad delegation: standing committees (but not EAC) can act on behalf of parliament, but any party group can request EU resolution be put on agenda	Limited contestation, but main parties internally divided over EU, small anti-EU party, occasionally strong conflicts over EU issues, smaller opinion gap, but growing
Bundestag	Working parliament: emphasis on legislative scrutiny in committees, but parliament controls plenary agenda, strong opposition rights regarding agenda	Moderately strong: standing committees have formal responsibility for EU policies, limited delegation: EAC can act on behalf of parliament under specific circumstances, but rarely does so	Limited contestation: fairly solid pro-European consensus among the main parties, share of anti-EU parties relatively small, parties are cohesive over EU, small opinion gap
House of Commons	Debating parliament: plenary in a central role, almost complete government control over the plenary agenda, weak opposition rights, main instrument: opposition days	Emphasis on careful committee scrutiny of documents but weak influence, limited delegation: resolutions have to be voted on in the plenary, but usually without debate, process dominated by government	Open contestation: strong Eurosceptic party, Europe features regularly in party competition and parties are internally divided over EU, large opinion gap

The four parliaments and political systems thus exhibit significant variation regarding their institutional context or parliamentary cultures, EU scrutiny models, as well as electoral salience, public Euroscepticism and levels of party contestation over Europe (Table 1). At the same time we can see interesting similarities, especially concerning the increasing use

(except in the House of Commons) of standing committees in EU affairs. In the following sections, we test our hypotheses, with the next section examining our concrete cases (EAW, Services Directive, Cash for Greece) and the fifth section providing an overview of the share of EU debates in the four parliaments.

4. Empirical Analysis of three EU issues

4.1 European Arrest Warrant

The European Arrest Warrant framework decision, adopted in June 2002, requires the judicial authorities of EU member states to recognise (with certain exceptions) requests for the surrender of a person made by the judicial authority of another member state. Through its principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions, the EAW hence brought to the fore the sensitive question about the division of competencies between the EU and its member countries, especially as the national criminal justice system has traditionally – but also very recently in the German Federal Court's decision on the Lisbon Treaty – been considered a key area of statehood and sovereignty (Sievers 2008; Fichera 2009). Interestingly, however, the EAW did not produce much contestation in Finland, Germany or France, either in the society at large or in parliament.

In the Eduskunta the EAW was not debated in the plenary at all. Two standing committees reported to the Grand Committee on the EAW, with the EAC basically just rubber-stamping the nearly unanimous opinion – only the The Finns recorded a dissenting opinion – of the committees without any real debate. The subsequent domestic law implementing the framework decision was again processed by two committees, with the plenary adopting the bill without debate.

In France, the proposal for the EAW framework directive was dealt with in the EAC, which produced an information report and a favourable opinion, but did not deposit a proposition for a parliamentary resolution. As a result, there was no further deliberation in the standing committees or the plenary. The transposition of the framework directive into French law, however, made an amendment of the French Constitution necessary. Consequently, the constitutional amendment bill was introduced in a first reading in November 2002 and sent to three committees for further consideration. The Committees for Legal Affairs and Foreign Affairs and the EAC each produced a report in mid-December 2002, and the plenary debate took place on 17 December 2002. After the Senate had also ratified the amendment bill in early 2003, the final ratification took place on 17 March 2003 in the Congrès du Parlement (joint session of the two houses). The session included a statement of the minister of Justice on the EAW and the constitutional amendment, which was followed by a short debate in

which party representatives explained the motivations for their vote ('explication des votes'). Only the Group Communists and Republicans voted against the bill.[5]

In Germany, the Bundestag hardly noticed the Council framework decision of June 2002. The issue was transferred to two committees (EAC and Legal Affairs), which seem to have merely taken notice of the matter.[6] The same is true for the first implementation bill: in the debate on 11 March 2004, only the MP from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) actually gave his speech, while the responsible MPs from the other four parties only submitted written statements which were added to the minutes. In the end the bill was approved unanimously despite the fact that some of the statements did express concerns about the framework. However, the Bundesrat vetoed the bill and called for the establishment of a mediation committee. After negotiations in the mediation committee failed, the Bundestag decided to treat the draft as an objection bill (Einspruchsgesetz), which enabled it to overrule the veto. The issue only became truly salient for the Bundestag when the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) ruled the first transposition Act unconstitutional in July 2005. The renewed legislative process triggered two further debates: the first took place in January 2006 based on a government report, which was followed by a plenary session in June 2006 on the revised Act. However, both debates were rather short, and it is fair to say that if the Bundesrat had not exercised its veto and the FCC had not ruled the Act unconstitutional, the transposition would have happened almost unnoticed by parliament. When the framework decision was amended in 2009, on the initiative of – inter alia – Germany, the Bundestag again simply took notice of the decision in the committees without any further deliberation.

In the UK, on the other hand, the EAW resulted in rather extensive debates, with both Eurosceptical and left-wing MPs criticizing the bill. Much of the debate focused on the differences between the common law system in the UK and the continental civil law systems. It had in fact been the Labour government that had initially suggested the principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions as a way of preventing harmonisation in judicial matters. The ESC published three reports on the proposal for EAW, with the European Standing Committee B holding two public hearings with the minister responsible for the matter. In addition to committee deliberations, the plenary debated the domestic law, the Extradition bill, twice, with the second reading (9 December 2002) lasting around six hours and third reading (25 March 2003) over five hours. The parliament was very critical of the Extradition bill, with backbench Labour MPs demanding changes to the government's proposal as well.

[5] Further transposition bills included a law on the adaptation of the justice system to development in crime (Loi n° 2004-204 du 9 mars 2004 portant adaptation de la justice aux évolutions de la criminalité), which, however, concerned a large number of domestic changes unrelated to the EAW. This bill was extensively debated in May and November 2003, but in the debates the EAW was very rarely mentioned.

[6] Since committee meetings are private, the parliamentary search engine does not give any information about the processing of the matter. Indeed, during the proceedings before the FCC, MP Kauder, the only speaker during the debate in March 2004, declared not to have been able to reconstruct the development of the framework decision (see the stenographic minutes of the proceedings in Schorkopf 2006: 43).

Parliamentary scrutiny of the domestic law EAW was stringent, with the Commons making several amendments to the bill (Sievers 2008: 117-118; House of Commons 2009a).

4.2 Services Directive

The Services Directive of 2006 aims at the removal of legal and administrative barriers to trade in the services sector. Thus it dealt with an issue of fundamental importance to Europeans, the delivery of public services, exposing a strong cleavage on the left-right dimension – or between regulators and liberals. Positions on the directive depended also on the goodness of fit between the existing domestic policies and the draft directive. Finland, France and Germany had in this sense more to lose, whereas the UK government was from the start more supportive of the proposal (Chang et al. 2010; Crespy and Gajewska 2010).

The Eduskunta did not debate the directive in the plenary. This is highly interesting given the salience of the welfare state and the role of the public sector in providing public services. The directive did attract considerable media coverage throughout the Nordic EU countries, with especially left-wing parties and interest groups concerned about the impact of the directive on the Nordic welfare state model. None of the Finnish parties recommended that the directive should be debated in the plenary (the same applied to the EAW). The Services Directive was, however, discussed rather extensively in the committees, with seven standing committees (due to its horizontal nature the initiative belonged to the jurisdiction of several committees) reporting to the EAC, which in turn also debated the proposal quite thoroughly.

In France parliament started to deal intensively with the directive in February 2005. The EAC deliberated the directive and published a report together with a proposition for a resolution in early February 2005. In addition, members of the Socialist Party (PS) submitted their own report and proposition for a resolution, which again triggered a third report and proposition for a resolution of the governing Union for a Popular Movement (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, UMP) group. This report was nearly identical to the EAC report. The main difference between the EAC/UMP and the PS reports were the conclusions drawn: while the former demanded a thorough revision of the directive, the report by the socialists demanded its complete withdrawal. All three reports were subsequently sent to the Economic Affairs Committee, which adopted the EAC/UMP report and submitted the proposition for a resolution to the Assemblée. It was debated in mid-March 2005 in a very long plenary session, and the Assemblée finally adopted a rather critical resolution, which clearly stated that the parliament ‘considered the directive proposal to be unacceptable and resolutely demands its re-examination’.

What raised the salience of the directive further is the fact that debates on the directive took place at the same time as the debates on the French referendum on the Constitutional Treaty started to heat up. Not surprisingly, the left coalition against the Treaty used the directive in its campaign as the symbol for the social consequences of neo-liberal EU

policies (Crespy 2010: 10). March 2005, the month in which the Assemblée adopted the above-mentioned resolution against the directive, was the same month that also showed the first clear shift in public opinion against the Treaty. In 2006, the directive was again subject of a parliamentary debate. The group Communists and Republicans under Alain Bocquet submitted a report and proposition for a resolution, which was subsequently debated in a plenary session on 14 March 2006. The Communists severely criticised the government for not pursuing the concerns expressed by Assemblée a year earlier in the negotiations on the directive at the European level but rather ignoring the issue level as soon as the referendum had been over. In addition, the directive was one of the major topics in the June 2006 debate on the government's European Council declaration. In both instances, the French left saw the referendum as a clear and binding verdict of the French people on neo-liberal policies in the EU in general and on the directive in particular.

In the Bundestag, the first Commission draft on the Services Directive was merely taken note of in committee without further debate or report. It was only several months later and after massive protests by German trade unions that the Bundestag took notice of the issue. When in March 2005 the government submitted the first revised draft of the directive, it was subsequently sent to the Economic Affairs Committee (and 11 other committees in advisory capacity) for further deliberation. In late May 2005, the Economic Affairs Committee organised a first public hearing (with trade unions, employer associations and other interest groups and policy experts) on the issue, and in late June the committee issued its report and proposal for the parliamentary resolution, which was put on the plenary agenda for a short debate on the next day (30 June 2005). According to Crespy (2010: 11), the fact that the Bundestag did deal with the directive was mainly due to MP Siegrid Skarpelis-Sperk, a prominent left-wing figure in Social Democratic Party (SPD) and close to the services union federation Verdi. Skarpelis-Sperk was nominated as rapporteur for the directive in the Committee for Economic Affairs and was able to convince the main parties to 'reopen' the parliamentary process on the directive and to put it on the plenary agenda.

Due to the summer recess and the general elections in September 2005, public debate on the directive reopened once the new grand coalition government had settled into office. In November 2005, the Left List had initiated a debate based on a major interpellation but since the interpellation was not put on the plenary agenda until December 2006, when the legislative process at the European level was finished, speakers from all parties merely submitted their statements to be added to the minutes. In January 2006, a larger debate took place on the basis of two opposition resolutions, which called for radical changes to (SPD-Greens) and the complete rejection (Left List) of the directive, respectively. In addition, and as in France, several MPs used the opportunity of a government declaration on the European Council in March 2006 to discuss the directive. The final revised version of the directive, proposed in April 2006 by the Commission and adopted in December 2006, in contrast, was not subject of a debate. The Committee for Economic Affairs, however, organised a second public hearing in October 2006.

In the House of Commons the Services Directive enjoyed a much smoother passage than in the other three parliaments. The lack of any serious contestation is probably in large part explained by the above-mentioned domestic support for the proposal, with both the Labour government and the Conservatives in favour of the liberal draft Act. The ESC reported on the proposal four times, and while it did consider the directive as politically important the committee raised no serious concerns.[7] Consequently, it did not recommend it for debate on the floor but in committee. The document was debated on 16 May 2006 (and thus far later than in the other three parliaments) in European Standing Committee B. During the meeting, which started with an evidence-taking session with the minister for trade, all parties expressed their support for the directive, but also their disappointment at the watering down of the first directive proposal. The directive was not debated on the floor, with the plenary 'taking note' of the matter (deciding without debate) on 22 May 2006.

4.3 Cash for Greece

In what we have somewhat disrespectfully termed ‘Cash for Greece’ decisions, the Eurozone countries agreed in late spring 2010 to bail Greece out of its near-bankruptcy and to set up the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism.[8] The total amount of the loan was 110 billion Euros, with the Eurozone countries covering 80 billion and the International Monetary Fund 30 billion Euros. Germany (22.4 billion) and France (16.8 billion) were the largest lenders, with Finland contributing 1.5 billion Euros. The loan package was obviously a major financial and political commitment from the Euro countries. Considering the large sums involved, it is not surprising that the Greek crisis provoked throughout Europe serious debates about the fate of single currency, European identity and the solidarity of EU countries. As the UK is not in the single currency area, it did not take part in the specific rescue operation by lending money to Greece. However, given the salience of the Euro debate in the UK and the fact that – until 2013 – all EU member states including the non-Euro countries, take part in the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (though not the financially far more important European Financial Stability Facility), it is well worth including the House of Commons in this case study as well.

[7] ‘As we noted previously, this is a proposal which could be of significant benefit to UK consumers and businesses’, Select Committee on European Scrutiny Third Report 2005, online at: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmeuleg/38-iii/3803.htm, last accessed 18.03.2011.

[8] In May 2010, the Council decided to establish (under Article 122(2) TFEU) a European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (EFSM) for giving financial assistance to a member state in the form of loans or credit lines raised from capital markets or financial institutions guaranteed by the EU budget (up to 60 billion Euro). Additionally, a voluntary intergovernmental Special Purpose Vehicle, the European Financial Stabilisation Facility (EFSF), was established by and for Eurozone countries. The EFSF can issue bonds or other debt instruments on the market to raise funds (up to 440 billion Euros) needed to provide loans to Eurozone member states. The EFSF is to expire in June 2013. In late 2010, the European Council agreed to amend Article 136 TFEU in order to allow Eurozone member states to establish a permanent crisis mechanism — the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), which will replace both the EFSM and the EFSF after June 2013.

The financial aid package stimulated colourful debates in the Finnish, French and German legislatures. In Finland plenary involvement was obligatory for legal reasons, as lending money to Greece required an additional state budget and the establishment of the European Stabilization Mechanism necessitated the adoption of domestic laws. However, it is obvious that even without such legal imperatives the political pressure to hold debates was formidable. The Eduskunta debates were exceptionally colourful, with most of them lasting several hours each. It is fair to claim that no other EU matter has produced similar tensions in the chamber after Finland's entry to EU and the Eurozone. In the debates, especially the more Eurosceptical parties (The Finns, Christian Democrats, Left Alliance) and the main opposition party, SDP, attacked the government, with the Social Democrats adopting a highly publicised position against lending money to Greece and the opposition parties in general voting against the aid measures.

While the opposition parties, as well as a notable share of individual backbench MPs from governing parties, were clearly aggravated by the EU's response to the Greek crisis, it is clear that the debates were also strongly influenced by the upcoming Eduskunta elections scheduled for April 2011. The support of the SDP had, according to public opinion surveys, declined rather drastically, and this probably explains in part the aggressive strategy of the party. Many representatives also emphasized the problems involved in adopting such decisions with potentially significant long-term implications without sufficient time for proper parliamentary deliberations.[9] But whatever the reasons behind party behaviour, the 'Cash for Greece' debates were in many ways the first time when the government really was forced to justify and defend its EU policies in the plenary – and when the opposition truly attacked the cabinet publicly over the handling of EU matters.[10]

In the Assemblée Nationale, the budget revision necessary for the aid package was introduced rather early, on 21 April 2010, which gave parliament more time to deliberate the measures. The Committee for Economic Affairs, Finances and the Budget issued its report on 28 April 2010 and organised a hearing with the Minister for the Economy and the Minister for the Budged on 3 May. On the same day, the Assemblée debated the European financial stabilisation measures in one very long debate (5h 30 min) on the Revised 2010 Budgetary Act ('projet de loi de finances rectificative pour 2010') followed by final ratification in which party representatives explained the motivations for their votes in short statements. During the heated debate, strong criticism was expressed by MPs from the left wing groups

[9] Subsequently the issue became one of the main themes of the spring 2011 Eduskunta elections, this being the first time that European matters feature prominently in parliamentary elections. The opposition, led by the Left Alliance, also tabled an interpellation (VK 6/2010 vp) on government positions regarding the financial stabilization measures in March 2011.

[10] In fact, a rare piece of drama was seen in the debates held on 9 March 2011 on the stabilization of the European economy when PM Mari Kiviniemi accused the opposition of 'regrettable and unpatriotic behaviour'. The PM and the government also stressed that Finnish positions and bargaining strategies should be discussed in the EAC and not in the plenary (PTK 168 2010 vp).

Democratic and Republican Left[11] and Socialist, Radical, Citizen and Miscellaneous Left[12], but in the end the Act was adopted with only the GDR voting against it. Four weeks later, on 31 May and 1 June 2010, the Assemblée debated the measures regarding the European Stabilisation Mechanism. The debate was continued on the next day with short statements of group representatives outlining the motivations for their vote. The bill was supported by all groups except the Democratic and Republican Left and the New Centre.[13] As in Germany (see below), the Assemblée was not involved in the European Financial Stability Facility Framework Agreement.

In the Bundestag, the extensive parliamentary debates (almost nine hours in all) took place amidst heated discussions in the media[14] as well as the public. The debates started on 5 May 2010 with a declaration of the chancellor on the stabilisation measures and the special meeting of the Eurozone countries on 7 May, followed by a high-profile 90-minute debate with party group leaders as speakers. In addition, the first reading of the 'Act on Financial Stability in the Monetary Union' (Währungsunion-Finanzstabilitätsgesetz, WFStG), was introduced in first reading and transferred to the Budget Committee and several other committees, including the EAC as advisory committees. On the same day, the Budget Committee held a public hearing on the Act. The second long debate took place on 7 May 2010. During the debates, all parties except the Left List supported the measures, but the government was severely criticised by the opposition for the late involvement of the Bundestag that now had to pass the measures under immense time pressure.

Debates continued in mid-May (19 May 2010) with a declaration of the Chancellor on the measures to stabilise the Euro and the introduction of the Act on the European Stabilisation Mechanism. In addition, the Budget Committee held a second public hearing on the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism on the same day. A second debate (second and third reading of the Act) followed on 21 May. In this case, the government lacked the support of SPD and Greens who abstained in the final vote. In addition, six members of the governing coalition voted against the Act, among them CSU MP Gauweiler, who later filed a constitutional complaint against the Stabilisation Mechanism. Finally, in July conflicts arose in the Bundestag over the lack of parliamentary involvement regarding the European Financial Stabilisation Facility Framework Agreement of 7 June 2010. On 8 July, the Greens

[11] In the 13th legislative period, the parliamentary party group Democratic and Republican Left (Gauche démocrate et républicaine, GDR) consists of the MPs of the Communist Party, the Greens and further small left-wing parties.
[12] In the 13th legislative period, the parliamentary party group Socialist, Radical, Citizen and Miscellaneous Left (Socialiste, radical, citoyen et divers gauche, SRC) consists of the MPs of the Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste) as well as a number of smaller left-wing parties.
[13] The New Centre (Nouveau Centre) is the main successor of the liberal Union for French Democracy (Union pour la Démocratie Française, UDF).
[14] The mass tabloid BILD was especially hostile towards any financial help for Greece, famously demanding in early March 2010 that 'if we have to help them with billions of Euro, they should give us something in return – for example some of their beautiful islands'. 'Verkauft doch eure Inseln, ihr Pleite-Griechen ... und die Akropolis gleich mit!', BILD 4 March 2010, online at http://www.bild.de/BILD/politik/wirtschaft/2010/03/04/pleite-griechen/regierung-athen-sparen-verkauft-inseln-pleite-akropolis.html, last accessed 18.3.2011.

introduced a bill on the Agreement, which was delayed until the fall and voted down without debate in October 2010.

In the House of Commons the situation was different as UK is not in the Eurozone. Hence the financial crisis touched the country less directly as Great Britain did not lend money to Greece. However, while the Greek bankruptcy and the problems facing the Euro were not debated as topics of their own, the issues did nonetheless surface in the plenary several times during spring and summer of 2010, for example in connection with debates on the European Council meetings held in March and June. The elections held on 6 May 2010 also complicated the situation as the Commons was dissolved on April 12 and returned to work only in late May. However, subsequently in late 2010 and early 2011 the European Stability Mechanism and more broadly the challenges facing Euro were debated quite extensively in the plenary and in the committees. Overall the tone of the debate has nonetheless been quite different given the partly 'outsider' status of the UK. In particular, the debate has not been characterised so much by a government-opposition cleavage as the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition did not need to justify its decisions to the same extent as the Finnish, French or German governments. Hence the debates have focused more on the overall effects of the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism and associated measures.[15]

[15] This may be in part explained by the fact that it was the Labour government which agreed in May 2010 that the UK would take part through the EFSM in subsequent bail-outs. Hence the decision to lend money to Ireland, which also included a bilateral loan from the UK, was attacked and defended by both the opposition and governing party MPs.

Table 2: Parliamentary EU debates in the four parliaments (2002 – 2010)

	Eduskunta	Assemblée Nationale	German Bundestag	House of Commons
Overall share of EU debates	Focus on high politics issues, EU laws have been debated only twice during EU membership, no debates on European Council	2002-7: 30/577 5.2% 2007-2010: 32/467 6.8% Focus on high politics issues, but also debates on EU laws, ex ante debates on European Council	2002-5: 39/187 21% 2005-9: 44/233 19% 2009-10: 27/82 33% Both high politics and normal EU matters are debated, ex ante debates on European Council	0,4 % of floor time (1997-2010) spent on EU documents, i.e. between 1 and 4 debates per year Focus on high politics issues, but also debates on EU laws, rarely debates on European Council, short oral statement by PM
EAW	No plenary debate	No debate on original framework decision, one long debate on const. amendment for transposition (17.12.2002), short debate in Congrès du Parlement (17.3.2003)	No debate on original framework decision, committee simply took note. Three plenary debates on implementation Act: 11.3.2004, 25.1.2006, 29.6.2006	Two long plenary debates (9.12.2002, 25.3.2003) Public hearings in European Standing Committee B (3.12.2001, 10.12.2001)
Services Directive	No plenary debate	No debate on initial proposal, later two plenary debates (15.3.2005, 14.3.2006), also debated in several debates on broader issues	No debate on initial proposal, later two debates (30.06.2005, 26.1.2006), also debated in several debates on broader issues Two public hearings in Committee for Economic Affairs (30.5.2005, 16.10.2006)	No plenary debate Public hearing in European Standing Committee B (16.5.2006)
'Cash for Greece'	Several long debates (4.5.2010, 12.5.2010, 8.6.2010, 16.6.2010, 21.6.2010, 23.6.2010, 30.6.2010)	Two long debates (3.5.2010, 31.5.2010 followed by explanation of votes on 1.6.2010)	Several long debates (5.5.2010, 7.5.2010, 19.5.2010, 21.5.2010) Two public hearings of Budget Committee (5.5.2010,19.5.2010)	No actual debates, but the issue did surface in other debates

5. Overall Share of EU Debates

Before proceeding to our analysis, it is necessary to emphasise that the four parliaments have rather different procedures regarding plenary involvement and how the role of plenary is recorded in parliamentary documents and search engines. For example, EU matters can officially be on the plenary agenda even if the full chamber only sends the proposal to a standing committee or approves it without debate or vote. Moreover, European matters are often introduced in parliaments as domestic bills (for example for the transposition of directives or other EU decisions), and hence these may not even be identifiable as EU debates. In the Bundestag and the Assemblée it is relatively straightforward to calculate the share of EU debates. Both parliaments provide a list of what they regard as their 'EU debates' on their websites for the last three legislative periods. And while these may not include all debates that have an EU focus, one can argue that these are the debates both parliaments advertise as their important debates on European issues. Yet given the differences in terms of number of sessions per year, the number of issues debated per session and in the length of the debates for each topic, it is almost impossible to calculate the precise share of EU debates out of all debates. In the case of Germany and France we therefore resorted to calculating the share of plenary days with a major EU debate out of all plenary days. Both the Eduskunta and the House of Commons, in contrast, do not provide such information on their websites, and identifying EU debates would require going manually through the minutes of all plenary sessions.[16] Hence the analysis of Finland and the UK is based on multiple sources of parliamentary documents as explained in the text.

5.1 Finland

In the Eduskunta, plenary involvement in European matters has so far been limited. While data problems do not allow us to calculate the percentage of EU debates out of all debates, analysis of plenary records between 1995 and 2011 shows that the share of European debates has been very small, and most likely below that found in the Assemblée and House of Commons (see below). Debates have almost exclusively focused on 'high politics' matters such as Treaty amendments, Finland's EU presidencies, single currency, and security and defence policy. The Eduskunta does not debate annual EU budgets or European Council meetings, with the latter on the plenary agenda basically only when the European Council has convened to amend the Treaties. Proposals for European laws have only twice featured on plenary agenda, in 2008 when three EU draft acts dealing with energy and environmental policies were debated in the same plenary session (the debate preceded the European Council meeting that discussed the proposals), and in late 2010 when the chamber debated the Commission's legislative package for strengthening the Stability and Growth Pact.

[16] Both have a search engine that allows for the search according to specific key words (such as European Arrest Warrant), but without going through the debates manually it is impossible to distinguish between debates on the issue and debates where the key word was simply mentioned in the context of the debate on a different matter.

5.2 France

In the Assemblée topics are usually debated only once, but in rather long sessions. The share of 'European' debates has averaged 5-7 % of all debates between 2002 and 2010 . In particular, plenary debates on parliamentary resolutions have decreased over the years: the Assemblée adopted 74 resolutions in the 10th, 51 in the 11th, 41 in the 12th and 32 resolutions in the current 13th legislative period. Of these, only 33 were debated in the plenary during the 10th, 8 during the 11th, 6 during the 12th and 2 (both by individual MPs) during the 13th legislative term (Assemblée Nationale 2010). In France, EU debates have largely focused on 'high politics' matters, but also select European laws (including annual debates on the EU budget) are debated on the floor. European Council meetings are debated ex ante in the plenary.

5.3 Germany

In the Bundestag, issues are often debated several times, for example in a short debate before and a longer debate after the committee stage. At the same time, debates are usually shorter than in the other parliaments, between 30 minutes and two hours, which allows the Bundestag to deal with more issues. Approximately 20 % of the debates in the 2002-2005 and 2005-2009 legislative periods were designated as 'EU debates', with the share reaching over 30 % in the current electoral term since 2009. The high number in the current term is partly due to a number of debates on legislation concerning the involvement of the Bundestag in EU affairs. Still, as indicated by this much higher share of European debates, the Bundestag plenary has debated EU laws and other 'normal' European matters more often than the other three parliaments. With very few exceptions, these debates also concern 'genuine' EU-matters rather than domestic implementation laws. European Council meetings were debated ex post until the 15th legislative period, but since then the debates have been held before the meetings.

5.4 United Kingdom

The ESC has the right to recommend EU documents for plenary debate, but the government decides which topics are debated on the floor – and indeed sometimes the cabinet does not follow ESC's recommendations. The number of documents recommended by the ESC for plenary debate varies, but since the 1997-98 session on average five documents per year have been considered salient enough by the ESC to warrant plenary debate. The highest figure has been 11 (2001-02, 2007-08) and the lowest one (1998-99). Between 2002 and 2009, only between one and four documents were actually selected for a debate on the Floor (House of Commons 2009b). On average, 0,4% of annual plenary time was taken up by such matters between the 1997-98 and 2009-10 sessions (high of 1 % in 1997-98 and low of 0,02 % in the 1999-2000 session). These EU affairs range from individual directives and policy questions (such as EAW) to the EU budget and broader questions such as economic

governance in the Union. It must be remembered that according to parliamentary standing orders these debates can only last for an hour and a half, with longer debates taking place only if agreed to by the government. However, this share does not include European matters that are debated in the plenary in the form of government bills (such as domestic transposition laws or Treaty reforms). Nor does the figure include so-called 'opposition days' during which the opposition can introduce debates on topics of its own choice. However, the opposition has only very occasionally wanted to debate EU issues during these sessions.[17] 'High politics' European issues, are normally debated on the floor, with particularly Treaty amendments inspiring long debates in the chamber. Finally, the prime minister also gives an oral statement in plenary on European Council meetings (often both ex ante and ex post), but debates on the meetings are very rare. When all these various forms of European debates are combined, it seems that the share of floor time spent on EU matters is roughly similar to the situation in the Assemblée.

To conclude, it must be emphasised that we have focused on actual plenary debates only – both regarding the three concrete cases and in our longitudinal analysis. All of the three cases, in particular the Services Directive and the decision to lend money to Greece, have also been mentioned or debated shortly in connection with other matters. This is especially true for the Greek crisis which surfaced repeatedly in subsequent debates on the financial crisis. These issues and other European matters also surface in oral parliamentary questions, but we have excluded them from analysis as question times typically contain a lot of questions from a broad range of policy areas. The impact of Europe or the EU framework also often features, or forms a part, of a question on a domestic matter. Hence it can be very difficult to separate EU issues from domestic matters, a topic that we shall return to in the concluding section.

6. Concluding Discussion

This article has compared parliamentary EU debates in four member states. The analysis has been guided by a number of hypotheses explaining variation between the legislatures with both domestic institutional and party-related factors. Our results provide support for our hypotheses, but we can also observe interesting deviations that deserve further research.

Analysis of the three highly salient EU issues – EAW, Services Directive, and Cash for Greece – showed clear differences between the four parliaments. While all three issues were debated at some length in the Bundestag and the Assemblée, the Eduskunta only debated the financial loan to Greece in the chamber, while the House of Commons debated only the EAW. The loan to Greece, in particular, was the subject of heated debates, with Finnish, French and German MPs engaging in wide-ranging and colourful debates that touched on

[17] A list of Opposition Day debates since 1997 can be found at http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/briefings/snpc-03190.pdf, last accessed 19.3.2011.

fundamental questions about European identity and the future of integration. That the House of Commons did not debate the Cash for Greece decisions can be explained both with the limited involvement of the UK and the fact that the general elections took place precisely at the same time.

As regards the general data on plenary EU debates, the Bundestag had by far the highest share of EU debates. It is also the only legislature where standard EU legislation and policy are often debated on the floor. European matters features far more rarely on the agendas of the Assemblée, the House of Commons and especially the Eduskunta. In the Assemblée and the House of Commons, select 'normal' EU issues are debated in the plenary, though very infrequently. In the Eduskunta, finally, essentially only 'high politics' EU matters are debated in the chamber, while normal EU policies are dealt with exclusively in committees.

We believe that our results are primarily explained by party politics. Institutional factors do play a role, but only insofar as they serve either the interests of the government (especially in the UK) or the main party groups. In particular, our findings suggest that the general distinction between working and debating parliaments seems to have little explanatory value in EU affairs. This is especially true for the Bundestag, which is the most active when it comes to plenary debates on EU affairs, and the debating chamber House of Commons, which clearly emphasises committee work in EU affairs (see also Neuhold and de Ruiter 2010).

In Germany, parties are clearly more cohesive in their pro EU stance than parties in the three other countries, and given the rather broad support for European integration in the public, parties do not have to fear a serious electoral backlash due to anti-EU sentiments. In addition – and in contrast to the other parliaments – the government has a more limited control of the parliamentary agenda with all party groups, including the opposition, having the opportunity put their issues on the agenda. As the lists of EU debates in the Bundestag show, opposition motions feature prominently on the agenda. This does not, however, translate into heated party competition over EU issues given the overall broad support for integration. While parties differ on specific EU policies, all have an incentive to demonstrate that they are 'good' Europeans. Even the Left List, the only Eurosceptic party in the Bundestag, is not united in its opposition. Hence in the Bundestag both the government and the main parties have less reason not to debate EU policies in the plenary, and both government and opposition groups use the opportunities to put EU issues on the agenda.

In the other three parliaments, party politics clearly work against a politicisation of EU issues through plenary debates. This is especially the case in the House of Commons where the Labour government had few incentives to politicise EU affairs. This was not only due to their internal division over Europe potentially triggering criticism from their own backbenchers, but also because public debates would have given the Eurosceptical Conservatives the opportunity to accuse the government publicly of 'selling out to Europe' and to score points

with the Eurosceptic public and media. It is therefore hardly astonishing that British governments prefers to 'park' EU issues in the European Committees whose recommendations and opinions the governments can also safely ignore. While the European Committees meet in public, it is obvious that similar criticism in the plenary would attract much more (media) attention that might cause serious problems for the cabinet. Thus, in the UK, the Labour government used its firm control over the agenda to keep EU issues out of the plenary. And considering the internal splits of the Conservatives, even the main opposition party had fewer incentives to engage in public debates about Europe. It will be interesting to see whether this changes under the current Conservative-Liberal Democrats coalition. The very high level of internal dissent in the Conservatives over the EU and the fact that conservative EU-sceptics and the pro-EU Liberals have to work together, however, lead us to believe that great changes are unlikely.

In the Assemblée, proposals for resolutions can be put on the agenda by party groups, and government control of the plenary agenda is therefore somewhat less tight in EU than in domestic affairs. Reasons for the small share of EU debates thus lie not only with the governing parties but also with the opposition. Here, the internal divisions of the main parties over the Europe also provide a strong disincentive to politicise EU issues. This is especially the case for the largest opposition party, the Socialist Party, which is characterised by severe internal dissent over EU. In addition, the gap in support for European integration between the parties and the public has widened over the last years. Thus, even though in opposition, the Socialist Party may have little to gain from initiating public debates outside of their traditional issues which also touch French voters' sensitivities regarding neo-liberal EU policies such as the Services Directive. Expressing their position on EU affairs is generally difficult for the Socialists, which have been accused of both selling out socialist values to an increasingly neo-liberal Europe or of getting into bed with anti-EU extremists. The two anti-EU right wing parties, the Front National and the Movement for France, finally, have little direct influence on the plenary agenda, although they do, of course, influence the French debate on the EU. While the Front National is not represented in the Assemblée at all, the Movement for France has currently only 2 MPs, which leaves the small Democratic and Republican Left as the only united Eurosceptic parliamentary party group in parliament.

The share of EU debates is lowest in Finland. Here, institutional factors do play a larger role since according to the constitution the plenary can debate EU matters but is not entitled to take decisions on such issues (with the exception of those questions that specifically require parliamentary ratification). This contributes to the Eduskunta essentially only debating 'high politics' EU matters in the chamber. The Eduskunta is also exceptional as it is the only parliament where European Council meetings are never debated on the floor. Plenary debates are thus less attractive, as Finnish MPs clearly do not like to just 'talk' about matters – regardless of whether they are domestic or European issues. However, the decision to delegate EU affairs almost completely to the EAC and other committees is, of course, an intentional decision of political parties who have designed a scrutiny system for EU affairs

which aims at the effective scrutiny of the government and is geared towards achieving a broad domestic consensus behind closed doors rather than making EU affairs a matter of public party competition.[18] One of the reasons is that for a smaller EU member state speaking with a strong and united national voice at the European level (arguably) strengthens their bargaining position at the European level – which is less of a worry for the other three more powerful member states. In addition, parties are not only internally divided over Europe, the gap in opinion between the parties and their voters also presents a problem especially for the main pro-EU parties.

Our findings are also interesting in terms of evaluating the involvement of domestic legislatures in EU affairs. The powerful Finnish EU scrutiny model, based on the famous mandating model of the Danish Folketinget and adopted by many of the newer member states, performs clearly worst in our comparison. The Eduskunta is actively involved in EU affairs, but essentially all of this involvement takes place behind closed doors. The Eduskunta has argued that the confidentiality of committee deliberations facilitates government accountability, but it also means that the electorate receives very little information about European matters.[19] Considering the limited role of plenary debates in European matters, citizens and the media have – beyond access to documents – hardly any possibilities to follow parliamentary activities in EU affairs. Although the Assemblée Nationale and the House of Commons did not fare that much better with regard to plenary debates on EU issues, both provide at least much better access to committee meetings and information. Although the Eduskunta is the only parliament in our sample with a mandating system, which makes generalisations difficult, our findings do suggest that strong parliamentary influence and a system geared towards mandating the government's negotiations position may come at a cost regarding transparency.

However, perhaps the most important result of this article concerns the methodological difficulties involved in separating EU affairs from other matters handled by national parliaments. While certain matters such as Treaty amendments, the EU's budget and other laws can be categorised rather easily as European issues, more typical are cases where EU and domestic spheres become so intertwined that 'isolating' the EU dimension is very challenging. This applies particularly to policy-related questions (e.g., agriculture, economy, environment), regardless of whether the matter is of European or national origin. Not only does an increasing share of matters formally decided at the national level have a European

[18] Interestingly, when Finnish and Swedish MPs were asked in a survey carried out in 2001/2002 who should have influence in domestic EU decision-making, Swedish MPs placed the electorate in second place (together with the cabinet) after the parliament, whereas Finnish MPs placed the electorate in the eighth position after the various national political institutions (Ahlbäck Öberg & Jungar 2009).

[19] This lack of openness was noted by a visiting delegation from the House of Commons. According to Matthew Kirk, the UK ambassador to Finland, the visitors had been particularly struck by the strong consensus among Finnish politicians, the broad cooperation between the government and the opposition in EU affairs, and the fact that in an otherwise transparent society such a high share of parliamentary work is conducted behind closed doors. See Annamari Sipilä, 'Suomen eduskunta antoi briteille mallia EU-asioiden käsittelyssä', Helsingin Sanomat 23.3.2005.

dimension, but also debates on EU laws or European level processes can be dominated by domestic issues. This was certainly the case in each of the four parliaments analysed in this article – and there is no good reason to expect the situation to be any different in the other member states. This interesting finding is also in line with multi-level governance theorizing according to which integrative Europe is characterised by growing inter-connectedness of national and EU agendas.

Finally, as our study has been limited to four parliaments, we must also underline the preliminary nature of our findings. However, we believe that our results and the hypotheses informing our article can be utilized in subsequent research on other national legislatures. The picture painted by our limited investigation so far is rather bleak. Over the last two decades, parliamentary attention for EU issues has clearly increased, and national parliaments now also provide more information on EU politics and their own activities to their electorates, for example through the access to documents or minutes of committee meetings. While this may have increased the transparency of EU politics at the domestic level, it has not, however, led to a greater politicisation of EU politics or increased party competition over EU issues. On the contrary, the comparison suggests that plenary debates are more frequent only in the absence of party political conflict and Eurosceptic public opinion. While specific and very controversial EU topics and decisions are being debated, so far most parliaments do not live up to their task of bringing ‘Europe’ closer to the citizens or enabling them to make informed political (electoral) choices and to exercise democratic control on EU affairs.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 - Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006 Data

Country	Party	Position	Pro-anti	Salience	Dissent
Finland	Social Democratic Party	6.17	3	2.75	2.80
	National Coalition	6.67	3	3.25	1.03
	Centre Party	5,75	3	2.75	5.00
	Left Alliance	4.50	2	2.45	4.64
	The Finns	1.64	1	3.64	.55
	Swedish People's Party	6.33	3	2.91	1.73
	Green League	5.67	3	2.82	3.09
	Christian Democrats	4.00	2	2.27	2.73
Germany	Christian Democrats	6.36	3	3.00	1.90
	Christian Social Union	5.36	3	2.73	2.80
	Free Democrats	6.27	3	2.45	1.80
	Social Democrats	6.00	3	2.55	2.60
	The Greens	5.82	3	2.73	2.70
	Left List/ PDS	3.27	1	2.00	3.86
France	Extreme Left	5.33	3	2.44	2.86
	Communist Party	2.11	1	3.00	2.44
	Socialist Party	5.00	3	3.11	8.67
	The Greens	4.78	3	2.44	5.44
	Union for the French Democracy	6.33	3	3.33	1.22
	Union for a Popular Movement	5.67	3	2.67	4.00
	Front National	1.00	1	3.22	.22
	Movement for France	1.38	1	3.38	1.00
UK	Conservative Party	2.56	1	2.56	6.22
	Labour Party	5.22	3	2.33	4.00
	Liberal Democratic Party	6.22	3	3.00	1.89
	Green Party	3.78	2	2.33	4.00
	United Kingdom Independence Party	1.00	1	4.00	1.44

Position: overall orientation of party leadership towards EU integration from 1=strongly opposed to 7=strongly in favour. Q1 in questionnaire: How would you describe the general position on European integration that the party leadership took over the course of 2006?. Pro-anti: recoding of position on trichotomous variable: 1=anti (3.5 or less), 2=neutral (3.51 – 4.5), 3=pro (greater than 4.51). Salience: relative salience of EU integration in the party's public stance: 1=no, 2=little, 3=some, 4=great. Q2: Over the course of 2006, how important was the EU to the parties in their public stance? Dissent: party unity/dissent over European integration: from 0=completely united to 10=extremely divided. Q3: What about conflict or dissent within parties over European integration over the course of 2006? The CHES dataset is available online at: www.unc.edu/~hooghe. See also Hooghe et al. (2010).

7.2 Appendix 2 - European Election Survey 2004 / 2009 Data

Country	Party	EES 2004	EES 2009
Finland	Social Democratic Party	1,68	1,46
	National Coalition	1,76	1,89
	Centre Party	1,53	1,95
	Left Alliance	0,75	0,01
	The Finns	0	0,32
	Swedish People's Party	1,01	0,45
	Green League	0,44	0,9
	Christian Democrats	1,4	1,19
Germany	Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU)	0,97 (CDU), 1,23 (CSU)	1,48
	Social Democrats	0,36	0,55
	Free Democrats	-0,48	0,65
	The Greens	0,68	0,34
	PDS / The Left List	-1,53	0.84
France	Extreme Left		0,05
	Communist Party	0,1	
	Socialist Party	0,64	0,7
	The Greens	0,35	1,24
	Democratic Movement		2,87
	Union for the French Democracy	0,55	
	Union for a Popular Movement	1,13	1,31
	Movement for France	0,08	
	Front National	0,42	
UK	Conservative Party	2,29	2,28
	Labour Party	0,94	1,34
	Liberal Democratic Party	0,98	1,3
	Green Party		0,14

Respondents were asked to place both themselves and the parties in their respective countries on the EU dimension, which was operationalised in the questionnaires as a 1–10 scale measuring respondents' attitudes towards European unification. The exact wording of the question was: 'Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a 10-point scale. On this scale, 1 means unification "has already gone too far" and 10 means it "should be pushed further". What number on this scale best describes your position?' This question was followed by several questions where the respondents were asked to indicate, using the same scale, where the main parties of their countries were located. The entries in the table report the difference between the average party position and the average voter position per party. Positive values indicate that parties have more pro-integration stances than their voters. For details, see Mattila and Raunio (2012).

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Talking Europe, Using Europe - The EU's role in Parliamentary Competition in Italy and Spain (1986-2006)

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Abstract

The EU's influence, pressure for adaptation exercised on domestic political institutions and actors, has been studied in different and complementary ways. Regarding political parties and party competition, the analyses have been mainly centred on electoral competition, while studies on parliaments have focused more on institutional adaptation, the development of European committees and other control mechanisms. However, in addition to this more technical role, parliament also plays an important role as an institution for debating political and policy alternatives. The relevance of the parliamentary arena is even more important when dealing with the EU and how parties and leaders 'domesticate' and use European opportunities and constraints. The increasing European competences and their growing relevance for an increasing number of policy domains means that references to EU's processes and decisions have become almost unavoidable for presenting coherent and feasible political and policy proposals, which is a crucial and distinctive aspect of the parliamentary arena.

In this article, rather than focusing on specific European issues (such as treaty ratifications or government conclusions on Council meetings) the analysis will be centred on general policy debates analysing the role that the EU plays in parties' and leaders' discourses. This approach can be useful in different ways. First, in contrast to elections, some parliamentary debates are held annually, which is crucial when dealing with a time sensitive issue such as integration and its policies. Second, strategies and issues may vary between the electoral and the parliamentary arena, where certain debates may be unavoidable and parties have to take a more or less clear position. Third, parties' and leaders' strategies may vary depending on their role on the system and whether they are in government, in opposition or supporting the incumbent party. Thus, political competition dynamics, the role of "Europe" on parties' and leaders' discourses and the way they conceptualise it vis-à-vis the citizens can be different than in electoral competition, providing us with new and complementary insights in the ways parties adapt and react to integration. The article therefore analyses the usages of "Europe" in parliamentary debates in the two largest Southern European countries Italy and Spain, including 13 parties/coalitions covering the whole political spectrum. Two broad and relevant types of debates have been selected, investiture debates and budget debates covering a long time span (1987-2006). The comparative research

design, analysing different parties and debates in a 20 year period, allows us to observe whether the EU is gaining importance over time (or not), the impact of Europe on parliamentary competition, the evolution of parties' position towards the EU and, more generally, the consequences of integration for parties and citizens.

1. Introduction

The European Union's (EU) influence, pressure or impact on domestic political institutions and actors has been studied in different and complementary ways. Regarding political parties and political competition, the analyses have normally been centred on the electoral arena, while studies on parliaments have focused more on institutional adaptation, the development of European committees and other control mechanisms. However, EU's importance for political competition is not just restricted to elections, as parties also compete in the parliamentary arena. The Parliament's role regarding the EU and its policies is not limited to the more technical scrutiny role within specific commissions or debates on European issues, as it plays an important part for understanding how the EU plays a role in domestic systems. For understanding the EU's relevance we should move from specific and technical debates to those with a more general scope, especially debates with a high salience and impact on public opinion, normally broadcasted and with a wide newspaper coverage. The relevance of the parliamentary arena is even more important when analysing how parties and leaders internalise and use European opportunities and constraints. With the growing European competences, their "objective" relevance is increasing in a wider range of policy domains, which are becoming more communitarised. This implies that references to EU processes and decisions are almost unavoidable for presenting coherent and feasible proposals in almost all domestic policies. In contrast to elections, where parties can strategically downplay certain issues, the parliamentary arena does not, in many aspects, allow avoiding, crucial issues, especially if parties want to present feasible policy proposals.

The aim of this article is to analyse the importance and usages parties make of the European context and its policies in parliamentary debates. To do so, this article is focused on the most important national-based debates for observing the relevance, usages and interiorisation of European opportunities and constraints in domestic political competition, Investiture and Budget debates. The former presents the government programme for the legislature, while the latter concerns what is probably the most important law approved by the Parliament each year and makes reference to economic policy. Both debates have a very high salience in public opinion and the media. Furthermore, as the scope is to analyse how parties internalise the EU and its policies and why they stress these during parliamentary debates, I will use a comparative research design analysing the two biggest Southern European countries, Italy

and Spain, and 11 parties over a broad time period (1986-2006)[1]. This research design allows both a synchronic and diachronic analysis and can provide a wide range of cases for analysing parties' usage of Europe.

The focus on the usages of Europe in parliamentary debates in two countries and for several different parties can provide us with new and alternate insights in the way parties stress the European issue, how they internalise it and why they do it. In addition, this focus helps us to understand the ways parties' adapt and react to European integration and its consequences for domestic political competition. In undertaking such analysis, this article is structured as follows. The following section contains a brief account of the different theories for understanding the relation between European integration, domestic political competition and the role of national parliaments. Then, the case selection and methodology will be dealt with. Following this, the empirical analysis will be done in two steps, the first one focusing on the importance of Europe in both types of debates and the second on the usages of Europe. The final section discusses the findings and concludes.

2. Political competition, parties and the EU: New insights from a different perspective

Without denying the importance of elections, campaigns or manifestoes, parliamentary competition provides, in a certain way, a far more realistic, clear and constant position of political parties. Is more realistic because parties have to present and explain specific policies, to defend their ideas and position on issues that are sometimes impossible to downplay. Equally, as the debates almost always include a final vote, parties have to explain the direction of their vote in a clear way. Finally, this position has to be sustained over a certain period of time, being therefore more constant. Consequently, the analysis of the parliamentary arena provides different insights on how parties and leaders react to, interiorize and use Europe in domestic political competition. Moreover it can help to overcome some of the problems that arise if we just focus on the electoral arena. Notably, three main problems are important: declared salience, because parties emphasise positive and cohesive issues during elections; dissent, minimised within the party during campaigns; and timing, as elections are held only every four or five years, which is especially relevant in a time-sensitive issue such as European integration (Marks et al. 2007). The analysis of parliamentary competition helps to reduce these problems, and provides new perspectives for analysing the impact of, reaction to and interiorisation of Europe by political parties.

In the analyses of Europeanisation of political competition, scholars have normally focused on direct impacts. However, this perspective implies certain limitations and some scholars have pointed out the existence of indirect impacts, such as the reduction of policy

[1] Contrary to elections, where, since 2001, parties are present under coalition labels presenting a unique electoral programme (Casa della Libertà and L'Ulivo), in the parliamentary arena each party has its own parliamentary group, helping to disentangle the different positions of each party of the coalition.

decidability or the disempowerment of election and voters (Mair 2001, Hix and Lord 2001, Bartolini 2005), but few empirical analyses have been conducted to demonstrate them. For the purpose of this article, the focus on indirect impacts is crucial and the notion of usage is fundamental.

For analysing the usages of Europe, different theories and concepts need to be addressed. In the first place, the way the European environment is conceptualised is relevant. Normally, studies on Europeanisation tend to conceptualise European integration as a fixed and given exogenous environment. However, in this article this environment is assumed to be endogenous, that is, parties and leaders help to construct it for adapting the European context to match their values, strategies and preferences. The idea that parties help to shape their environment has been a matter of discussion between party politics scholars (Panebianco 1988; Deschouwer 1992; Harmel and Janda 1994). The nature of the environment in which parties operate is crucial when dealing with the consequences of European integration because, as some scholars have correctly argued, domestic institutional settings and context are essential to understanding how parties react to the external environment (Garret 1998; Rosamond 1999; Hay and Rosamond 2002; Hay and Smith 2005). As Garret claimed in his analysis of the relationship between partisan politics and globalisation "one cannot accurately delineate the impact of market integration on the political economy of the industrial democracies by assuming that globalization has been a process that has affected all markets and all countries equally" (Garret 1998: 24). Indeed, domestic political actors can enact these external factors in different ways and use them for different means, shaping the environment in which they act. This argument is consistent with the idea that European integration is not an external and uniform constraint for all Member States, and therefore "[t]he question of intentionality is here crucial. It is important, at the outset, that we differentiate between the internalization of a discourse of globalization as an accurate representation of the relevant 'material' constraints and the more intentional, reflexive and strategic choice of such a discourse as a convenient justification for policies pursued for altogether different reasons (Hay and Rosamond 2002:150, cursive in the original). Again, domestic political actors can use these external factors in different ways and for different purposes. As Hay and Rosamond argue, in many EU countries, European integration acted as a substitute for Globalisation as the cause for 'painful' economic and social reforms. Consequently, the integration process is not an external and uniform context that affects all countries and all parties in the same way. Indeed, institutional, economic, social and cultural factors play a role in the conceptualisation of European opportunities and constraints. That is why "there is no single unifying discourse of globalisation and/or European integration; rather such notions are appealed to in different ways in different contexts. This highlights the need to map and compare the appeals to discourses of globalisation and European integration in different national settings" (Hay and Smith 2005: 125). Thus, European integration cannot be considered as an objective and uncontested exogenous process.

This idea is relevant in understanding the importance of the usage political actors can make of perceived opportunities and constraints, making it necessary to turn our focus to the notion of usages. This concept derives from sociological institutionalism, because parties are actors and institutions that operate in the domestic political system. New institutionalism offers certain insights (Hall and Taylor 1996) but, with some limitations for explaining how, why and when parties internalise the new European polity as they deal more with continuity rather than change (Blyth 1997, 2002, Schmidt 2002). In this debate, some scholars turned to ideas for explaining change. In this sense, Schmidt considers that communication is the missing link because just with discourse alone, defined as “whatever policy actors say to one another and to the public in their efforts to generate and legitimize a policy programme” (Schmidt 2002:210), change is sometimes possible to explain. And, as discourse is elaborated within certain institutional patterns, she speaks of discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2002; Schmidt and Radaelli 2004). It is in this sense, as argued above, that the notion of usage is crucial. Jacquot and Woll (2003: 4) define usage as "practices and political interactions which adjust and redefine themselves by seizing the European Union as a set of opportunities, be they institutional, ideological, political or organisational". It has to be intentional, they continue, because “whatever might be the nature of specific opportunity […] actors need to seize them in order to transform them into political practices. The whole process of transforming resources or constraints into political practices constitutes a usage” (ib: 4). So, to sum up, “political usage describes the mediation done by an actor to transform a material or immaterial resource provided by the European institutions into a political action”. (ib: 6).

Finally, Jacquot and Woll (2003) elaborate a classification of usage according to their functionality: a) Strategic Usage, b) Cognitive Usage, and c) Legitimising Usage. The first type of usage, strategic, is the most common and implies the transformation of certain resources into political practices to pursue a specific and clearly identifiable goal. Cognitive usage is more related to public policy interpretation and persuasion and makes reference to the diffusion of ideas to understand and deliberate over certain policy issues. In this case, policy discussions may lead to the adoption or the rejection of new policy interpretations or definitions. The final type of usage, legitimising, is closely related to the political process and basically "the reference to Europe as a way of legitimising national public policies” (Jacquot and Woll 2003: 7). It is specifically used by governments to stress the opportunities and constraints derived from European integration (in similar ways as discussed by Rosamond 1999; Hay and Rosamond 2002; Hay and Smith 2005). Based on this definition and the different interpretation and perception of opportunities and constraints offered by the European context, some possible usages of Europe have been selected. Europe can be conceptualised as an incentive or constraint for action, for legitimising some policy options, for evaluating positively or negatively some European policies or simply for using Europe as a frame of reference to compare policy performance. Equally, and as European policy outcomes are not ideologically-neutral, different parties with different ideologies, in government or in opposition, may use Europe and its policies in different ways and, so, the

politicization of Europe and its policies can play a role in parliamentary competition. Therefore, is necessary to focus on political parties, their relation with European integration and their own competition strategies.

According to Bartolini (2005), national political parties face serious challenges when dealing with European integration. On the one hand, with the growing visibility of the EU, anti-EU positions can be a common denominator in discontent parties. On the other hand, national parties and elites are less able to meet these new challenges posed by European integration than when the frame of reference was a clearly bounded national territory. Thus, some issues are no longer under national control. Domestic political elites are less proactive in dealing with integration issues and in incorporating them within their programmatic profiles and competition. Thus, they tend to collude and to neglect those issues that are not under national control (Bartolini 2005: 319-320). In this sense, Bartolini distinguishes four main models for analysing national parties' attitudes towards the EU: a) The Geopolitical Model; b) The Institutional Model; c) The Partisan Model; and d) The Genetic Model. As he argues, all these models have some truth even if the partisan and genetic approaches are the ones used to explain the difficult relationship between national parties and European integration.

The *Geopolitical Model* "assumes that support/opposition is mainly determined by national specific features or geopolitical interests", including state formation, contestation of national unification, the existence of centre-periphery conflicts and different cultural factors. (Bartolini 2005: 321). In this case, differences in support/opposition among national parties should be less significant than the differences across nations. Some clear examples support this approach, for instance Great Britain's and France's 'national independence' position, as well as the generally supportive position of countries such as Germany or Italy due to their problematic national unification, and finally, Southern European countries' support for integration due to their peripheral status.

The *Institutional Model* "explains attitudes to the EU as a function of the parties being in government and opposition at the national (and therefore European) level" (Bartolini 2005: 321). This model suggests that parties in government are generally more supportive of European integration than those in opposition, and that those parties, whether in government or in opposition, that belong to the EU-level coalition tend to be more supportive. An institutional factor can identify 'pre-post' membership attitudes or national alliance change of attitude while in government.

The *Partisan Model* "interprets orientation to the EU of national parties on the basis of the main dimension of competition prevalent at the national level" (Bartolini 2005: 321), such as left-right, libertarian/authoritarian or materialist/post-materialist. In this model, in contrast to the geopolitical one, variation within a party family in different European countries should be reduced, while variation among different national parties' families should be much higher.

Finally, the *Genetic Model* "interprets party orientation towards European integration as shaped by or related to their original national cleavage position. Mapping parties according to their genetic cleavage produces hypotheses about the level of internal tensions that the integration process creates within them" (Bartolini 2005:321). A strict Genetic Model approach starts from an objective definition of the main EU features (Centralisation, bureaucratisation, economicism/national regional independence, resistance to market economy and globalisation) and then relates them to domestic cleavages. The problem is clear: opposition lines that were historically bridged and integrated successfully at the national level by party organisations, may become the source of internal problems in relation to the integration process. This is because some combinations that are compatible at the national level (liberal pro-market non-urban or rural and right wing) are incompatible at the European level as pro-market is positive and rural negative in support towards European Integration (Bartolini: 324-325).

For our purposes, Bartolini's models can help us trace some important variables for our analysis, such as the relevance of domestic consensus on the benefits of EU's membership, the relevance of government/opposition status or the importance of ideology for understanding the way parties conceptualise, internalise and use EU's outcomes on parliamentary competition.

Consequently, one last aspect has to be addressed, that of parties' strategies. Shifting the focus on how parties compete stresses the relevance on how parties frame the European context with different cultural, institutional and ideological factors and how they adapt their strategies for their own purposes and goals. Normally, political competition is explained by theorising parties' strategies at the electoral level. However, if we consider that parties compete in the parliamentary arena as well, we can also translate these strategies to this level. Firstly, it is useful to consider the distinction between vote-seeking, office-seeking, policy seeking and cohesion-seeking strategies and their relevance in the parliamentary arena (Strøm 1990; Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Vote-seeking strategies consider that parties try to maximise their votes, and therefore we can assume that these parties follow the median voter theory and present broader (and, in some sense) less clearly ideological policy positions. The second possible strategy, derived from coalition studies, considers parties' aim to control office, rather than votes. The third focuses on those strategies aimed to maximise their effect on public policy and the fourth strategy, especially relevant for our purposes, comprises cohesion-seeking approaches. In this case, party leadership may downplay some issues to avoid party splits. Hence, the usage of Europe may be influenced by the strategy a party aims to pursue: if Europe or notably some policy outcomes are negative for a specific country or group (and leaders perceived constraints that may affect their domestic performance), the issue can be politicized by one party. Furthermore, Europe and its goals, especially in intense periods of integration building, can be a cohesive objective that helps to build political coalitions (as was the case, in Italy and Spain, with the

creation of the EMU and the launch of the Euro) or, conversely, a problem for intra-party or intra-coalition consensus.

Secondly, another set of strategies is relevant when shifting to the European level whilst maintaining influence in the domestic one. In this sense, some scholars have adapted the notions of Exit, Voice and Loyalty (Cotta 2005). The first and most drastic option is exit. While total exit has never occurred, partial exit from a specific policy or opting out from a new one is quite common and has its domestic benefits (keeping control of certain policy tools) even though some problems may be present. The second option available is Voice, which consists of defending domestic interests and claims at the European level and of trying to influence European policy outcomes in order to have favourable domestic effects. It can have some benefits, that are impossible to achieve at the national level, but also come with costs, as agreements may imply different trade-offs that can be used by domestic oppositions. The last option, Loyalty, instead of being a proper strategy, emphasises the relations between leaders and the EU. Loyalty strategies imply adopting European policies even if they do not represent domestic elites' preferences, therefore demonstrating a high degree of pro-Europeanism even where the consequences may be negative. At the domestic level, these three strategies can produce different usages of Europe. If a party or leader follows an 'exit' strategy, they will demand to opt-out from a specific European policy emphasising constraints or negative effects for Europe. If parties use Voice, this implies a mixed account of positive as well as negative references. Finally, if leaders follow a Loyalty strategy, they will use Europe for legitimating certain policy decisions at the domestic level, even if they have some possible negative consequences.

From the previous discussion we can affirm that the interiorisation of the European environment relies on different, although interrelated, factors such as national characteristics, domestic institutional factors (government/opposition status; majority/minority relationship), the type of party system and the relationships within the system, especially the relevance of the predominant cleavage, the position of the party on the overall political system (mainstream/non-mainstream position), and internal party features such as ideology, party position towards European integration, party strategies and the role of leaders in adapting and constructing their discourse. Hence, the European dimension can be subsumed in domestic political competition, allowing us to analyse the impacts of Europe, whether direct or indirect. Therefore, we can elaborate the following working hypotheses:

H1. The EU's importance and relevance in domestic debates should increase with time, due to the growing European policy competencies. In addition, European integration timing will be important.

> H1.1 The political and economic context, perceived differently by each country, should have an impact on the way European opportunities and constraints are perceived. In countries with high economic growth, European outcomes should be less contested than in countries with low or inexistent growth.

As hypothesised, the increasing EU's competencies in growing policy domains make the European issue increasingly relevant for domestic politics. This rising importance is even more relevant due to the different political and economic contexts, making European incentives and constraints, different in each country.

H2. Usages of Europe vary depending on the type of party.

> H2.1 Parties in government, that are also part of the European majority, present more positive usages than parties in opposition. In turn, opposition parties can present negative accounts of European developments and policies and use the EU as another tool for criticising the government.
>
> H2.2 Larger parties with vote-seeking strategies use Europe in a more positive way than smaller and policy seeking parties, who will use more negative accounts. Furthermore, in two mainly pro-European countries, larger parties tend to be pro-European while smaller ones can present a more critical position on integration.

H3. Indirect impacts: The EU, reduces policy decidability for those policies that are substantially communitarised.

These hypotheses deal with the different incentives parties have for stressing European outcomes in a more positive or negative way such as institutional factors, ideology or position in the party system.

3. Case Selection and Methodology

Three aspects are especially relevant in this analysis: country, parties and debates selection. In this project, two countries, Italy and Spain, and eleven parties have been selected.

This selection has been made for a variety of reasons. Firstly, Italy and Spain joined the EU in different periods. Italy was a founding member while Spain entered in the third enlargement round, and some scholars agree that the longer a country is an EU member, the more 'Europeanised' it should be (Pennings 2006). Secondly, their party systems are different, with diverse institutional settings, party system dynamics, and effective number of parties or degree of polarisation. Equally interesting, both countries experienced a reconstruction of their party system. On the one hand, Spain reconstructed and consolidated its party system after almost 40 years of authoritarian rule, while Italy suffered a major party system change in the beginning of the 1990s. In both cases, the European Union was already a developed political entity, and may have played a role in the redefinition the new parties' policy priorities. Thirdly, Spain and Italy are the two biggest Southern European countries, with similar European interests and where Europe has been traditionally conceptualised as an opportunity for modernisation in order to overcome domestic constraints. However, over the past years and related to the growing policy competences of the EU, European integrations has started to become politicised, showing potentially negative effects and an end to the traditional permissive consensus, especially among parties and certain sectors of the electorate. Hence, unlike other major European countries, where the EU was already a contested issue, Spain and Italy's problematisation may be

starting now, as the consequences of further integration are increasingly perceived as negative by relevant sectors of society, resulting in greater incentives for some parties to politicise it. Therefore, change in the conceptualisation of the EU seems to be taking place. Finally, both countries differ regarding economic performance. Even though Italy and Spain faced serious constraints and pressures to adapt their economy to fulfil the Maastricht criteria, only Spain was successful, taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by the Single Market, while Italy seemed to be struggling with its adaptation, as statistics in economic growth and public debt control demonstrate[2]. This different success in their adaptation to European policies is also interesting for analysing the perceived consequences and usage of Europe in national political parties and competition.

As mentioned above, party systems are different. To cover the broadest examples, different parties have been selected, including both government and opposition parties, vote- and policy-seeking ones and parties that represent the different cleavages at work, especially the ideological and centre-periphery ones and those with a different position towards integration including more Eurosceptic ones (see Table 1 below). Interestingly, whereas in Spain there are only one-party governments, in Italy the governments are supported by electoral coalitions that include both in their centre-right and centre-left governments, Eurosceptic parties.

Finally, the selection of the debates is crucial. Taking into account the purpose of this article, two prominent types of debates have been selected. The first are Investiture debates, where the new government presents its political programme for the entire legislature. The second are Budget debates, which produce the most important law approved each year as well as Economic policies that are increasingly influenced by the EU, notably by the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) ant the European Central Bank's (ECB) role in monetary policy. Consequently, there is a possible reduction on the policy tools available for governments. Both debates are transversal, presenting a great number of political issues. Due to their relevance, interventions are usually made by the party leader. For this analysis, the first intervention of each party's representative has been selected and, in the Italian case, the vote declaration of the most prominent political leaders. Each intervention comprises the unit of analysis and has been codified following a specific codebook that includes different variables. Due to the purpose of this article, the time span is also relevant. As we want to study the evolution and interiorisation of the EU and its policies, we have considered the Maastricht Treaty as a "critical juncture" in the process of European integration[3]. Hence, the selection of investiture debates starts in 1986 for Spain and 1987 for Italy, while the analysed Budget debates cover a period from 1990 to 2006.

[2] For example, Economic growth, measured by real GDP growth rate shows that in the period 1992-2007, Spanish mean growth was 3,24 while Italian was 1,41. Since the adoption of the Euro (1999) to 2007 the mean rate has been 3,74 and 1,46 for Spain and Italy respectively.

[3] Scholars agree about the importance of the Maastricht treaty as a qualitative step forward in the integration process, with growing European competences in key policies (see Hix 2005: 20-21). However, some scholars consider the Single European Act as the critical point (Ladrech 2002: 393)

This leads to the final aspect regarding methodology. A specific codebook has been built to track down different usages of Europe in domestic debates. On the one hand, it provides structural information (party, year, government status, party family). On the other hand, the following specific variables and usages have been selected: a) Importance of Europe, that is, if Europe is important or not in each intervention; b) Impact of Europe on domestic politics, where specific European policy outcomes can be considered either as opportunities (with positive domestic consequences), constraints (with negative ones), mixed accounts, and no references; c) Domestic action, implying that the European context and debates can be conceived as incentives (for helping to foster domestic action), constraints (representing different limitations for domestic political action), mixed accounts or no references; d) Legitimation, with or without mention of Europe, that legitimises political action (or non-action) or that shows the importance of implementing a certain policy; and e) Evaluation of European policies, where leaders evaluate European policies as either positive (stressing the benefits of certain EU's policies for the country), negative (where the stress is related to the negative impacts of European policies for domestic interests), use mixed accounts or make no references.

Table 1: Parties' and Parliamentary Debates' Selection

PARTIES	ITALY	SPAIN
Left	Rifondazione Communista (RC)	Izquierda Unida (IU)
Centre-Left	Democratici di Sinista (DS)	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)
Centre	Democrazia Cristiana (DC), La Margherita	
Centre-Right	Forza Italia (FI)	Partido Popular (PP)
Right	Alleanza Nazionale (AN)	
Ethoregionalist	Lega Nord (LN)	Convergència i Unió (CIU), Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV)
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (number of debates analysed)		
Investiture Debates (Years)	91 (1986, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2004)	30 (1987, 1988,1989, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998,1999, 2000, 2001, 2006)
Budget Debates (years)	108 (yearly since 1990 to 2006)	80 (yearly since 1990 to 2006)

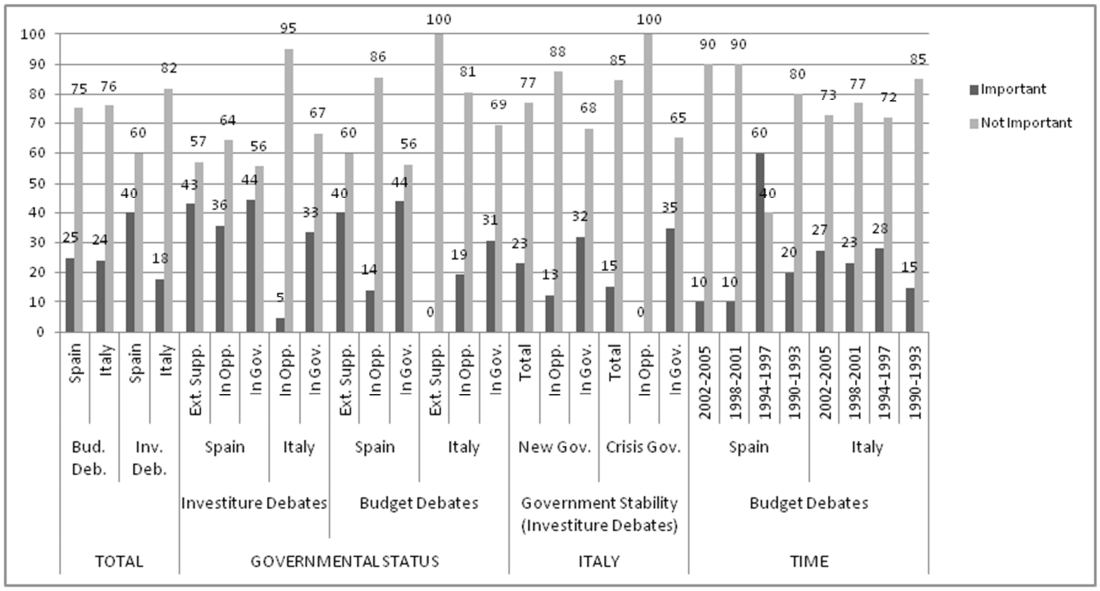
To sum up, the selection of two countries, a wide range of parties and two prominent parliamentary debates, as well as a focus on usages and internalisation of European policies, can provide new insights into the role of Europe in domestic political competition and its effects on parties' proposals, and shed more light on the relationship between the European and the national arena and the role of domestic parliamentary competition in this relationship.

5. The importance of Europe on Investiture and Budget Debates

Before looking at the way in which parties' and leaders' use and internalise the European context, it is central to analyse the importance attributed to Europe, (understood in very broad terms including integration, policies, regulations, institutions such as the ECB, etc.), in leaders' political discourse. Is it relevant or marginal? Furthermore, do all leaders stress it in the same way or do some relevant factors play a role, such as governmental status or timing?

The following graph provides data on the relevance of Europe in domestic debates highlights certain factors: the difference between countries and debates, the relevance of governmental status and the importance of the timing of European integration.

Graph 1: Importance of Europe in Investiture and Budget Debates[4]



Looking at the data, we can observe the varying importance of Europe depending on the country and the debates. Even though Italy joined the EU well before Spain, Europe is, generally speaking, more important in Spain than in Italy, especially regarding Investiture debates (in 40% of the Spanish interventions, Europe is important while it is important in only 18% of the interventions in Italy) while regarding Budget Debates, the importance of Europe is similar in both countries (25% and 24% for Spain and Italy respectively). In the latter case, the difference can be due to the diverse nature of both debates. This is because European relevance is less stable in the more concrete economic domain, whereas opposition parties

[4] All the data, in this and the following graphs, present the percentage of interventions that are included in each category.

have a nationally based strategy, making the government itself responsible for possible dysfunctions, rather than blaming the EU or other international factors. This makes the EU's issue less appealing for competition. However, while the importance of Europe is similar in Budget debates, it is very different during Investiture debates.

Why is there this huge difference? In this case, we have to take into account certain systemic factors such as the type of party system and the way parliaments work. Regarding the party system, Spain can be conceptualised as an example of "imperfect" bipartisanship, with an electoral law that benefits the two largest parties, while in Italy the effective number of parties (both electoral and parliamentary) is much higher.[5] Furthermore, certain aspects of the Spanish electoral law, especially the blocked-list system, grants great powers to the party in central office, making party cohesion almost "perfect". Meanwhile, Italy, with its diverse electoral formulas (both majoritarian and proportional), open lists, weak institutionalised parties, parties splits, electoral coalitions but different parliamentary groups (with a de facto two party system, Bardi 2006), has less cohesive parties. Consequently, Spanish governments are stronger and more stable than Italian ones. Indeed, while Spanish governments tend to fulfil their terms or anticipate elections for strategic reasons[6], Italy is probably one of the clearest examples of government instability. In the period under analysis (1987-2006), there have been 6 elections and 13 governments, including the all-time longest government (Berlusconi II, 2001-2006). So, governmental strength can be an important factor for explaining the importance of Europe in investiture debates. This is because Europe is much more relevant in debates held after elections than in those held in the middle of the legislature, after a governmental crisis. Why is this so? In the case of a new government being invested after winning the election, its electoral legitimacy marks the type of debate, and so can present a coherent and broad political programme for the entire legislature. In contrast, Investiture debates held after a political crisis are normally focused on the legitimacy of the specific government that does not have an explicit electoral support. In such cases, governmental and opposition parties face the debate in a different way and with different strategies and incentives. In the case of opposition parties, their interventions are focused more on systemic issues (the working of the political system) and on the governments' legitimacy (government cohesion and other related issues). In Berlusconi's words, after the 1998 centre-left new government led by D'Alema:

> (…) a government that births not from the votes but from the fear of the vote, does not have democratic legitimacy, and can be defined just as the usual cheat. 'Cheat, again' was the title of the Times. (Berlusconi 1998)

[5] The effective number of parliamentary parties in Spain goes from 2, 85 (in 1989 elections) to 2, 53 (in 2004 ones) while in Italy is stable around 5,77 (in the 1992 elections) to 5, 06 (in 2006 ones). Source, Michael Gallagher. Available at ttp://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/Staff/Michael.Gallagher/EISystems/Docts/ElectionIndices.pdf

[6] Even with minority governments as it was the case in González IV (1993-1996), Aznar I (1996-2000), Rodríguez Zapatero I and II (2004-2008 and since 2008).

Hence, the importance of Europe diminishes, indeed it disappears in opposition parties (where Europe is important in 0% of their interventions) as their main focus is not on the government's political programme but rather on its legitimacy and the necessity to call new elections. Consequently, European issues (among others) are completely downplayed in their interventions. However, while opposition parties tend to completely neglect the European issue when a new government is formed in the middle of the legislature, the incentives are different for the new government. As shown by the data, the importance of Europe in government interventions is higher in this situation, rising to 35%, compared with the mean importance of Europe in these debates (24%). How can we explain this increasing importance? Again, the incentives are different, and for governmental parties the EU legitimises their incumbency by providing different arguments for the need of a new government and their political programme. As D'Alema (DS) claimed in his programmatic declaration in the 1999 Investiture debate:

> I have never thought that the alternative advocated with strength by the opposition of Polo della Libertà, to call new elections, was inacceptable. It is evident that, in the case that there was not a majority in this Parliament, it should have been compulsory. But in the current Italian situation it is not convenient. Not because of formal prejudices, but for concrete and substantial reasons, starting with a fundamental one: new elections, as it is known, would have prevented from approving a new Budget law […] with negative repercussions not just on our country's image and credit but also, in a period in which the introduction of the Euro is approaching, for the concrete interests of millions of Italians. This fundamental worry […] has pushed for an alternative and political solution, as an act of responsibility towards our country and its interests. (D'Alema 1998: 7)

So, current European developments, such as the creation of the Euro, create a structure of opportunity for the new government, as there is no time for calling elections and, indeed, a strong government is needed. This leads directly to governmental status, which is a second important factor for explaining Europe's importance. Parties in government, both in Italy and Spain and in both debates, accord Europe a higher importance than opposition parties. This is due to different reasons. Notably, the incumbent Prime Minister presents the government's political programme, and Europe is important in two ways. On the one hand, it is relevant as an issue per se, referring to the process of European integration. As Felipe González claimed in his 1993 Investiture debate:

> "…the programmatic offer that I present is centered along four main axes: the first one, to overcome the economic crisis and to impulse the economy; the second, the democratic impulse; the third, the regional development; the fourth, foreign policy and the impulse towards the European Union". (González 1993: 2)

This issue is common to all governmental parties, as European integration will be a relevant aspect of their government priorities. Equally, as I will show below, the EU, its policies and timing represent an opportunity for justifying domestic governmental action. For example, it helps to explain why Europe is indeed important in the Italian Prime Minister's programmatic declaration after a governmental crisis, as it helps to justify the need for a new government and their political action for fulfilling European policies and deadlines, while opposition parties are merely focused on the new government's lack of legitimacy, completely neglecting the European issue. Equally, governments benefit of their key role at the European level, having more information on key European policy debates, while opposition parties are less active and represented in key European institutions, such as the European Council, making their strategy and discourse more nationally based and consequently downplaying European importance. The Spanish case shows another interesting factor related to the fact that Spanish governments have always been a one-party government. In the case of minority governments, they rely on the external support of smaller parties, notably the ethnoregionalist ones (CIU and PNV) that supported, in different periods, both Socialist and Conservative governments. Indeed, it seems that Europe plays a key role in their support, both in Investiture and Budget debates (European issues are important in 43% and 40% of their interventions, respectively). It seems that the process of European integration has helped to construct stable governments and that Europe is used to justify that support. The analysis of usages will provide a more in-depth investigation of this possible "coalition-building effect".

A final important aspect is European integration timing. While elections are held every four or five years, Budget debates are held annually and so leaders' reaction to European issues is quicker. In this case, the European integration's timing is important for understanding its salience in domestic debates. The period under analysis was characterised by the approval and implementation of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the adoption of the Euro. As a result of the Maastricht Treaty (1991-1993), governments faced the need to adapt and implement different reforms to comply with the so-called Maastricht criteria (on budget deficit, government deficit and inflation) and with a clear deadline of 1999. These reforms were difficult and unpopular in both countries, implying privatisations, public expenditure cuts, the "freezing" of public servants' wages and other reforms affecting the welfare system. Thus, we should expect a high importance of Europe during the crucial years of EMU's implementation, between 1994 and 1999. As Graph 1 shows, the importance of Europe in Budget debates is indeed higher in the 1994-1997 period (60% in Spain and 28% in Italy). The EMU played a key role, especially for governmental parties, as they had to implement difficult policies, not only due to European opportunities but also to constraints, in a short period of time. However, Spain and Italy differ in the importance attributed to Europe after the introduction of the Euro. While its saliency sharply declined in Spain (10% importance in the 2002-2005 period), in Italy its importance was sustained over time and even increased in the last period, almost to the levels of the crucial 1994-1997 years. What explains this divergence? In this case, we have to take into account the fact that the political context and,

notably, economic performance, vary greatly between both countries. While Spain was considered as a successful case in the adaptation to the Euro, which was accompanied by strong economic growth during the 1995-2007 period, the Italian economy was characterized by high public debt and slow economic growth[7]. Again, the opportunities and constraints posed by European policies did not affect the two countries (and its parties) in the same way. This helps to explain why the salience of the EMU issue declined in Spain, while it grew in Italy. Perception of political and economic constraints aroused not only opposition and minoritarian parties in Italy, but also governmental ones, as they were forced to accept suboptimal performances at the domestic level (Cotta 2005).

In short, the importance of Europe in Investiture and Parliamentary debates relies on four factors: a) country; b) type of debate, c) governmental status; and d) timing of European integration. However, the analyses focusing only on the salience of Europe, shows some limitations. Therefore, it is necessary to turn to the idea of usages. How do parties conceive European opportunities and constraints? Why do they conceptualise EU policies in a certain way?

5. Using Europe in domestic debates

For a deeper understanding of the EU's influence on parliamentary and political competition at large, we have to turn to the idea of usages. What are the usages parties make of the European environment? Factors such as country, context and governmental status are obviously important, but other ones, such as ideology, come into play, because, as argued above, European opportunities and constraints do not affect all countries in the same way. Some European policies, like the EMU, are closer to some parties' ideas than to others. Hence, the perception of opportunities, constraints, evaluation, and so on, should also be dependent on parties' ideologies.

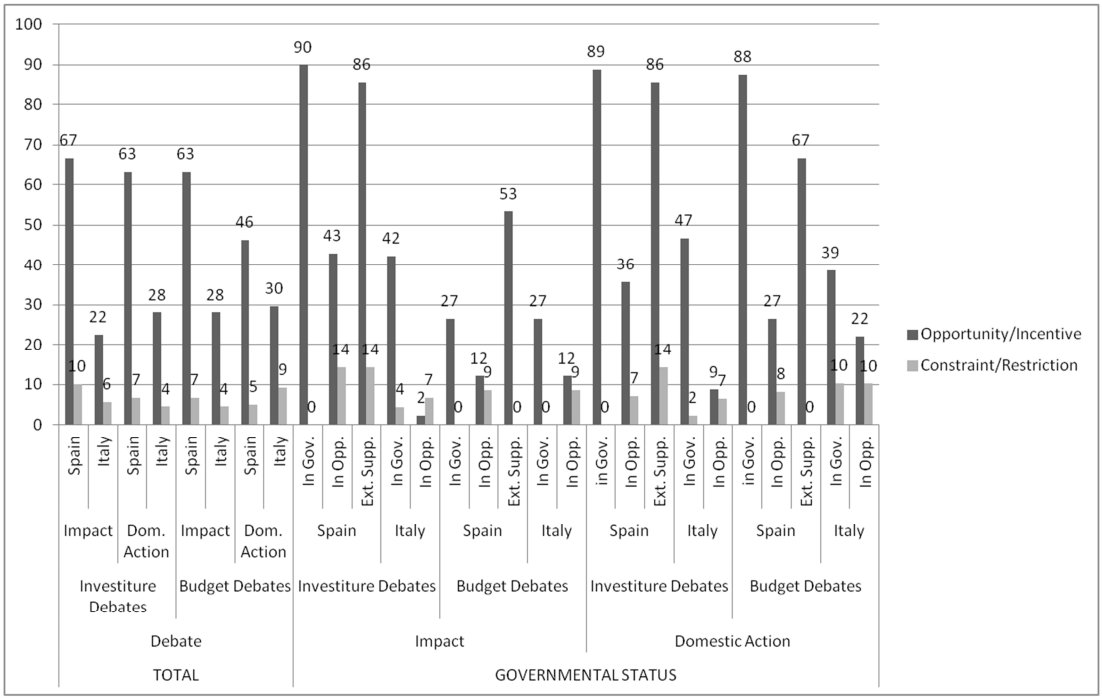
5.1 A general overview: Positive or negative usages?

As we have seen in the previous section, the importance of Europe depends on different factors. However, when it is important, what kind of conceptualisation do parties and leaders have of European opportunities and constraints? Is it positive or negative? Generally, we can observe that both countries present a clearly positive conceptualisation of the European arena and policies as fostering political action or as an incentive for the adoption of certain policies, both in Investiture and Budget debates. As we can see in Graph 2, usages of Europe are mainly positive, while we find fairly few negative accounts. Europe is conceptualised as an opportunity (67% and 63% of interventions in Investiture and Budget debates in Spain and 22% and 28% in Italy) rather than as a constraint (10% and 7% in

[7] Furthermore, ECB monetary policy, limited to inflation control, suited Spanish economic needs while penalized Italian need of economic growth with low inflation. See footnote 2 for GDP growth during and after Euro implementation.

Spain and 6% and 4% in Italy). In a similar way, Europe is internalised as an incentive for domestic political action (63% and 46% in Spain and 28% and 30% in Italy). Furthermore, the EU and its policies are conceived as a source to legitimise certain policy preferences in both Investiture and Budget debates (respectively, 60% and 50% in Spain and 34% and 31% in Italy). In addition, the evaluation of European policies at the domestic level is mainly positive (60% and 39% in Investiture and Budget debates in Spain and 22% and 17% in Italy), while a negative evaluation is still rare. Logically, due to the higher importance of Europe in the Spanish case, these usages are higher than in Italy. And not surprisingly, due to the pro-European position of most parties under analysis, the negative usages are less relevant. However, a more in-depth analysis qualifies this general picture, showing the increasing relevance of negative, and especially mixed, accounts on the effects of European policies on domestic competition. This is true for opposition parties, in particular, especially in Italy, where governmental parties are starting to criticise some European outcomes and limitations. Hence, we can see a loyalty strategy being partly transformed into one of voice.

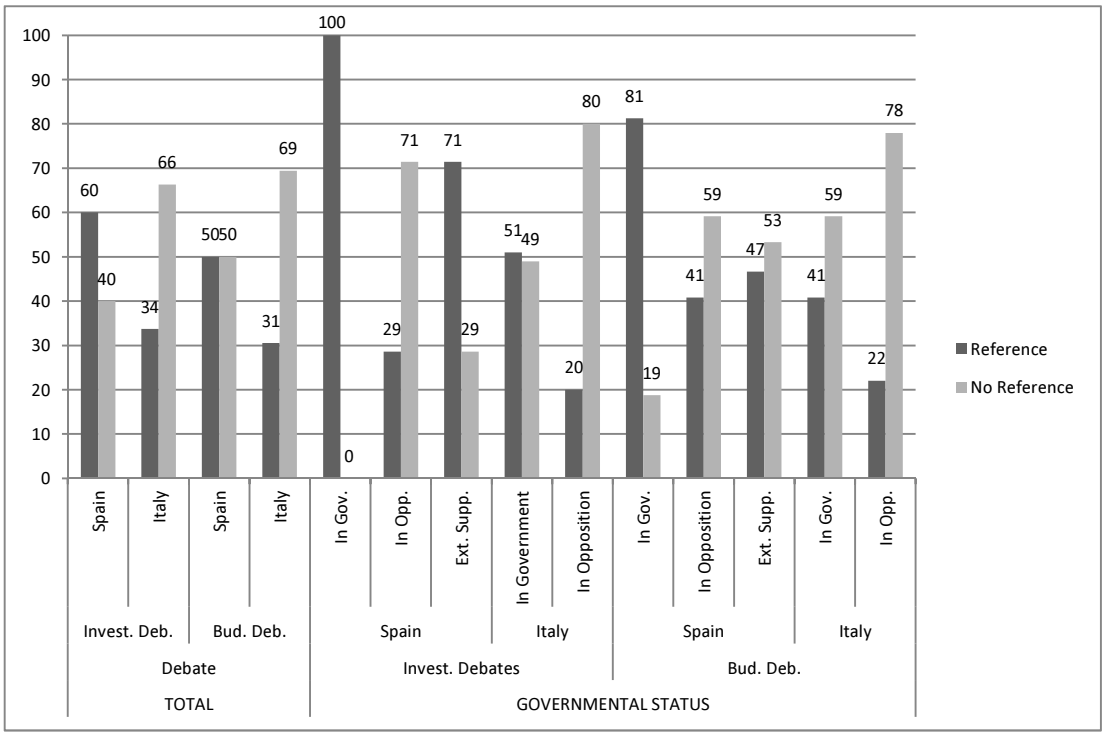
Graph 2: Impact and Domestic Action and Reaction to Europe[8,9]



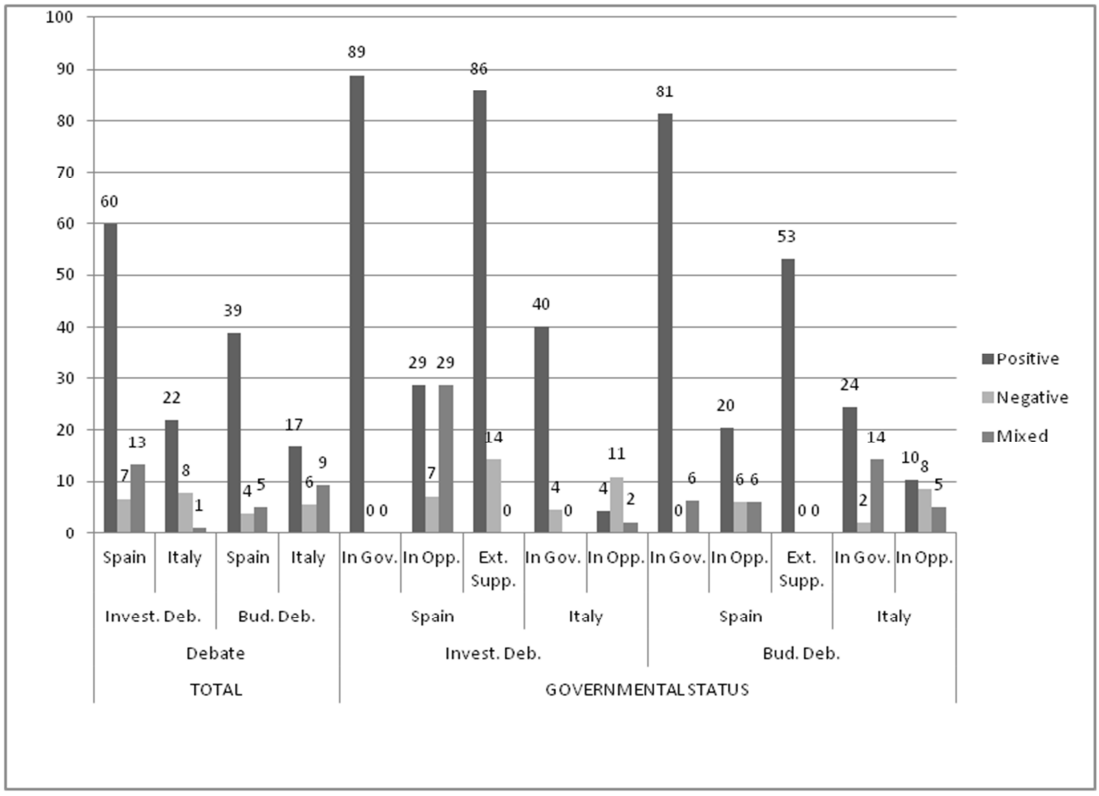
[8] The two categories do not sum 100%. For clarity in the presentation of the data, “Mixed” and “No Reference” categories have been omitted. Most of the missing data belong to the “No Reference” category. In just two cases (in Budget Debates - In Government in both Italy and Spain) the percentage the “Mixed” category is over 10%.

[9] For Impact of Europe, the classification is Opportunity or Constraint. Meanwhile, for the usage of Domestic Action and Restriction, the classification is Incentive for Action and Restriction.

Graph 3: Europe as Legitimation



Graph 4. Evaluation of European policies



5.2 Government Status and the perception of European opportunities

Governmental parties place more stress on the opportunities derived from the EU (90% and 27% in Investiture and Budget debates in Spain and 42% and 27% in Italy) and, even more interestingly, no negative perceptions are present (see Graph 2). This positive position is reinforced by the widespread use of Europe as a source for legitimising policy decisions. This is especially clear in the Spanish case (in Investiture and Budget debates, with 60% and 50% respectively) and more so in governmental parties (100% of cases in Spain and 51% in Italy in Investiture debates), although we can observe an important difference regarding Budget debates (81% in Spain but just 41% in Italy). The logic seems clear. Governments are part of the European consensus participating with other European governments in specific negotiations in different Councils. Then those regulations approved at the EU level are subsequently adopted or inspire domestic ones. So, EU regulations are conceived as a positive impact, fostering domestic action with legitimating effects. Finally, governmental parties have more information on European issues, implying a better knowledge of European process than opposition parties (Raunio 2002). Consequently, it will be very difficult to vote a European law and then reject it at home. This would imply a lack of credibility both at the domestic as well as the European level. As a result, governmental parties pursue a loyalty strategy, reinforced by the widespread pro-European consensus in each country. Opposition to European regulations and consequences is mainly left to opposition parties. In both countries, these parties monopolise the negative perceptions of European outcomes. In Spain, a mere minority of interventions criticise the EU, however, while in Italy criticism is much more evident in both debates. Another interesting aspect is shown by the positive conceptualisation of Europe by external supporters to the Spanish governments, especially the PNV and CIU. Does Europe play a role in explaining these parties support of the government? Which parties criticise Europe and in what ways? And, even more importantly, are negative perceptions of Europe evolving from the politics of opposition to parties in government? In answering these questions, we have to focus on an analysis of each party.

5.3 Parties' ideology and position in the party system

This poses the question of how Spanish and Italian parties use Europe? In the Spanish case, we can observe that all parties analysed, except the United Left, present positive usages and furthermore do not, with few exceptions, have negative usages. Whether in government, in opposition or acting as external supporters, negative accounts are not present. The two vote-seeking parties, PP and PSOE, are part of the European coalition and play an active role at the EU level. In both cases, Europe is used for legitimising their policy options and for stressing the positive impacts and incentives for action that European policies imply. Indeed, they do not present any negative perception of Europe, either in

government or opposition[10]. Moreover, they have been able to adapt their proposals (especially in economic policy) to make them coherent with European policies, facilitating their implementation and reducing potential stress between EU policies and their domestic proposals. Equally, CIU and PNV have played an active role in this implementation, acting as external supporters for the socialist and conservative governments[11]. As we can observe in our data, external supporters to the government (in our case, mostly CIU and PNV) show this positive position in our different usages[12]. The fear of Spain not being able to join the Euro helped the possibility of supporting the Socialist party, as the CIU did in the 1993-95 period. In that last debate, the PSOE minority government was not able to get the new budget approved. The CIU speaker was clear:

> We understand, Mr. Minister, and we share your demands for 1996 not to be a lost year in the process towards the EMU. It is true that from this year depends, in a good measure, the fact that Spain may be able to join in 1999 the third phase of the Monetary Union. But, do you really think, Mr. Minister that you have to remind it to us that, for that powerful reason and against our parliamentary custom […] we have supported your Government's budget during the last two years? (Molins 1995: 9522).

Using similar terms, the PNV justified their support for the first Aznar government (1996-2000):

> Facing this situation, no country that aims to be in the single currency in 1999 can allow to rule without a budget, nor bear the situation of incertitude that will provoke in the international markets this situation. Even if we consider that this budget law [...] can be improved, we think that political responsibility and the common good of all the citizens of this State demands an effort by political forces to give preference to this rather than partisan or strategic issues. (Zabalia Lezamiz 1996: 1401).

Therefore, the process towards the single currency downplayed parties' strategic positioning in political competition. We can observe how parties took into account national interests, rather than mere partisan ones, when deciding to support minority governments in achieving political and governmental stability during this crucial period. In this case, the positive position of both parties towards the EMU fostered this support. If we take into account their

[10] The data of parties in government reflect their position, as all Spanish governments have been single-party governments, both from the Socialists (1982-1996 and 2004-2008) and Conservatives (1996-2004) regardless they had an absolute majority or just a relative majority of seats.

[11] CIU supported the Socialist government during the 1993-1995 period and CIU and PNV, with other minor parties, the conservative government in the 1996-2000 legislature.

[12] For example, they conceptualise Europe, as external supporters to the government, as a positive impact in Investiture and Budget Debates (86% and 53% respectively), as an incentive for domestic action (86% and 67%), or evaluate, positively, European policies, 53% in budget debates (and no negative account) showing their positive stance on the EMU. As the PP and PSOE, they do not have almost any negative or mixed perception of European impacts.

positive stance towards this specific European policy, as shown in their budget interventions as external supporters (see Graph 4), the clear objectives stated by the Stability and Growth Pact along with the consequent reduction of policy instruments and manoeuvrability, it can be expected to lead to a collusion between parties on their economic policy proposals. This is clearer in the speaker interventions, such as that of the PP's Minister of Economy Rodrigo Rato:

> [...] there is no doubt that we are all conscious that during the last year an important consensus has been adopted, an important convergence in the position related to political economy; on the one hand, with a wide majority of this Chamber supporting European integration, since the process started in 1986, the Single Market, and afterwards, the processes of convergence derived from the European Union Treaty. (Rato 1996: 1320).

Or the socialist speaker, Josep Borrell, who demonstrated this common understanding of economic policy priorities:

> Hon. Member, I will like to be clear with the Government that we agree with the macroeconomic objectives of inflation reduction and the deficit you are proposing. They were also our objectives. They are ambitious and difficult to obtain, but they are necessary. (Borrell 1996: 1333).

Therefore, some European policies, especially those that are more communitarised, such as monetary policy, reduce governments' policy manoeuvrability and policy instruments, resulting in a decrease in decidability, especially with the main opposition party. The consequences are manifold. Firstly, the reduction of policy options produces less variety in policy proposals and as a consequence, a disempowerment of voters (Mair 2001; Bartolini 2005). Secondly, the collusion of mainstream parties leaves opposition to the EMU to policy-seeking parties that may, however, play a role in governmental stability as external supporters (such as in 1993, 1996 and 2004). Thirdly, and taking into account the equally positive interiorisation of European opportunities by the two leading ethnoregionalist parties, we can conclude that the EMU has facilitated the stability of governments.

Thus, the IU is the only party analysed that presents negative and mixed conceptualisations of the impacts, constraints and consequences of European policies. Indeed, with very few exceptions, all the negative usages in our data reflect the IU's position. For example, the IU's speaker in the budget debates stressed the negative impact, the restriction of action, and a negative evaluation of the EMU during the crucial years of the Euros implementation (1994-1997). This position, rather than being labelled as mere Europesceptic, is more of a principled criticism, not against the process of integration per se but based on the democratic but for the democratic deficit, the mainly economical approach and lack of social policies produced by the Union. As the IU's leader, Julio Anguita, claimed in the 1996 Budget debate:

> In other words, do the Spanish people, through their Members of Parliament's debate, have sovereignty to discuss about economy? Or that sovereignty has already been given? One part of it is already outside national frontiers. In other words, for what is useful this debate? Do we have decision powers after the vote if there are some criteria and deadlines of Maastricht convergence that influence this debate we are having? We will celebrate the debate of national sovereignty or we will held the debate of something that comes from outside? And naturally, and who is speaking to you, in name of the federal group, supports European construction. But, Hon. Members, if the convergence criteria mark the limits of this debate, the political force I am representing in this moment does not agree with the content and the instruments that the Government is handling, nor with the objectives that the Socialist party shares with this political force. We, opposite, do not share the objectives or the instruments, we do it from an alternative philosophy, from another view of European integration. (Anguita 1996)

In this intervention we can observe the relevance of ideology in understanding the way parties conceptualise European opportunities and constraints and the way in which parties internalise European policies.

The Italian case differs slightly from the Spanish one. As we claimed above, for governmental parties Europe is conceived more as an incentive for action, where positive impacts are stressed together with a positive evaluation of European policies. On the other hand, opposition parties tend to neglect Europe in their interventions, enhancing the idea of the de-politicization of the European issue (Mair 2001). For example, opposition parties do not use Europe for legitimising their positions in 80% of Investiture debates or 78% of Budget ones (see Graph 3). However, we can observe a new and different trend. As Graph 1 shows, in Spain the importance of the European issue declined once the country joined the Euro, whereas in Italy the opposite occurred. For Italy, the period 2002-2005 presents almost the same percentage of interventions where Europe is important as that during the crucial years of the Euro's creation (27% and 28% respectively, see Graph 1). This could be due to the perceived negative consequences and limitations for domestic performance that the Euro implied for Italy and its economic performance. As a consequence, more parties, notably governmental parties and even the main party of the centre-right, present mixed or clearly negative positions and accounts of European policies. This is clear in our data, especially in Budget debates. As Graph 2 shows 10% of their interventions in these debates consider Europe as a restriction for domestic action or, in Graph 4, 14% of their interventions present a mixed evaluation of European policies, that is, both positive but also negative accounts, implying a growing perception of constraints and limitations rather than opportunities and incentives for action. So two questions now arise: Is the loyalty strategy of governmental parties changing, due to the perceived negative consequences of the increasing European competences for Italy, especially in the economic domain? What are the specific usages of Italian parties in the specific debates? In trying to answer these two questions, we must now turn to the analysis of single parties.

Regarding the two largest parties, we can observe a clear difference between the DS and FI. The DS, together with the once predominant DC, has a very positive conceptualisation of Europe, with no negative references to Europe in either budget or investiture debates. Therefore, in their evolution from the PCI, the DS seems to have internalised Europe as an incentive for action and a legitimising factor, which helps to adopt unpopular decisions, especially for a centre-left party. As Morgando's budget debate intervention clearly shows, there is a link between Europe and domestic reform:

> If we want to consolidate our European prospective we have to start a period of reforms that reshapes our Welfare state. (Morgando 1996: 4).

On the other hand, FI has a more critical and ambivalent position due to different factors, such as the perception of European constraints, their coalition partners (with contrasting and even very negative European positions), and other political factors. The latter is especially relevant. Italy joined the Euro, against all expectations, under Prodi's and D'Alema's centre-left coalition governments. Hence, for the centre-left it was a major political success and a political asset. Indeed, in the 1996-2001 period, when they were in government, they evaluated European policies positively (when they went back into opposition, they made no reference in their interventions). However, it was FI and the centre-right coalition that gained office when the Euro was adopted in 2001 and experienced its policy limitations. Consequently, their position is different to the centre-left one. Then, even if the usages of Europe in Investiture Debates are neglected or a loyalty strategy is adopted, the focus should be on the possible benefits rather than criticising any possible negative effects. In Budget debates the position is much clearer, showing how European economic constraints and domestic suboptimal performance are present[13]. As Gianfranco Conte claims:

> We do not have to forget that, while we, as government and as country, are trying to follow the commitments adopted in the European Union, countries economically much stronger than us, such as France and Germany, have remarkable problems to maintain the stability pact and many support that, finally, something has to be revised. (Conte 2001: 4).

Therefore, from the idea shared in the 1990's, where it was a matter of national interest to be part of the EMU, the strict measures of the Stability and Growth Pact posed a limitation on government performance, implying a more critical vision and demand to reform it, fostering a strategy of voice. As Guido Crosetto (FI) said in the 2004 budget debate:

> In fact it is undeniable that, after the adoption of the Euro, the limits and the structural weakness of our economic system are now manifest with evidence never seen before. The Italian economy has not the instrument of competitive devaluation, very used in the past,, precisely when the

[13] With 3, 7% of mixed impacts of Europe, 2, 8 % of restriction for action and 4, 6% of mixed evaluations.

> competition challenge, often disloyal, of some emerging countries is more obvious. (Crosetto 2004: 43).

A second interesting aspect concerns the number and type of parties with negative perceptions of Europe: AN, LN and RC, all with different ideologies, share a more negative account of Europe and its policies. The RC offers a good example of a negative position towards the EU's current developments, and how ideology plays an important role in explaining their position. After the Euro implementation, it conceives the EU and the Maastricht Criteria as a negative impact, especially evident in their Speaker's Budget debate speeches during the 2001-2003 period. Notably, they criticise Europe on the same grounds as the Spanish IU, showing the relevance of the Partisan model[14]. As Russo Spenna (RC) claimed in the 2001 Budget debate:

> Not by case our primary objective, our amendments to this budget law tend to break down the European Stability Pact, straightjacket I think, against the proletariat, against the demands of the society for creating a macroeconomic context favouring a qualified expansive policy. This is the philosophy of our alternative project regarding the budget law proposed by the Government. We try to operate, through our amendments, a great redistributive operation that we also propose to the centre-left. (Russo Spenna 2001: 29)

In the case of the conservative, post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale, the most interesting fact is the way the European issue is constantly neglected. In parliamentary debates the importance and role of Europe in the AN's interventions is minimal with none of the 14 interventions under analysis presenting an assessment of European policies. The ethno-regionalist Lega Nord, offers us a good example of an evolution from Functional Europeanism to a soft or even hard Eurosceptic position (Conti and Verzichelli 2003). Until the mid 1990s, LN's support for Europe and the EMU was based on their idea that only Northern Italy could fulfil the Euro criteria and hence, a consensual division of Italy should be possible, with the rich North joining the Euro without the South. This idea coincided with the party's goals, and thus the Euro and the necessary reforms had the LN's complete support:

> The best laws approved by the Parliament in the last years have been those that have taken in European directives and the great opportunities we have missed refer to the missed reception of European principles. (Pagliarini 1996: 5084).

Even more clearly, Pagliarini argued:

> The monetary union will give a great contribute to the feeling of belonging, of being part of a unique entity of European citizens [...]. Surely the participation in the single currency means to definitively

[14] No positive references and 2, 8 % of impact of Europe as a constraint and restriction for action and 3, 7% of negative evaluations of European policies.

> lose the possibility of currency devaluation, but it also means, above all, to eliminate the risk of value change and the differential interest rates. (Pagliarini 1996: 5085).

The idea of the Italian division in joining the Euro is clearly stated in the same debate:

> [...] is necessary to save Southern Italy and to face the unemployment problem. Well, the only way to achieve this objective is to make a consensual split-up. In Padania we will use the Euro as currency, because we will use the European currency, while our fellow European citizens of Southern Italy will use the European single currency only some years latter: before they will have to improve their economic, productive and financial system. (Pagliarini 1996: 5087).

The Euro provided the perfect opportunity for pursuing the party's final goal, to divide Italy into two autonomous entities. Therefore, once Italy as a country joined the Euro, the incentives for supporting Europe disappeared, and so did the LN's positive European policy. In contrast to other explanations of this U-turn offered in the literature, the LN's change in this policy is not due to office seeking motivations but due to their functional support of European integration[15]. Thus, as soon as there were no incentives for support, they completely changed their position. As Giancarlo Giorgetti explained in the 1999 debate, once Italy was part of the Euro, what had been best for the Italian economy three years prior had now become a problem:

> The choice of the Euro has been, for us, in a certain way conditional. Today, a posteriori, we are able to understand how have been paid [...]. To whom observes the acquisition of the big credit and assurance groups, of some national air company, he will not miss that the interlocutors are part of those countries that at the time put a lot of obstacles to the entrance of the lira in the Euro and that miraculously have changed idea. […] Now the problem, joining the green grassland of the Euro, is the one of a global economy in which, paradoxically, goes in contradiction with an economic system based in the small enterprises, but also of big enterprises that, at least in the domestic market, were the masters; now, even these enterprises are too small in the global scenario and the whole mechanism by which the fragile Italian economy relied risks to enter in a crisis. (Giorgetti 1999: p. 26-27).

The LN clearly exemplified the idea of Functional Europeanism until 1998, and then moved to a Eurosceptic position once the EU was not functional anymore (Conti and Verzichelli 2003). Considering the more critical position of FI, the AN's low European usages and some mixed accounts, along with the positive position of the UDC, we can get a good idea of how Europe can be a divisive issue within the CDL coalition. Furthermore, it helps the DS-Ulivo strategy as their main rivals from the right and left have a more negative and/or conflicting position.

[15] For a contrasting view see Chari, Iltanen and Kritzinger (2004).

6. Using Europe in the Parliament – Some conclusions

The analysis of the usages of Europe in parliamentary competition has proved useful and has provided us with complementary insights into the analyses of salience. Furthermore, this analysis has given empirical backing to some of the consequences theorised by scholars, especially those regarding impacts. This article has analysed the usages parties make of the EU and its outcomes. So, why do parties use Europe and what can we learn by focusing on the parliamentary arena?

In the first place, it is important to take into account that European opportunities and constraints are not the same for countries and parties. Thus, the European context is not an exogenous environment that provides equal pressures or opportunities, but is, in a way, endogenous, as each party can pick those parts that better suit their ideology, interests or political needs. Hence, depending on the political and economic context, party position in the party system, governmental or oppositional status and party ideology help us to understand how and why parties consider the European arena important and internalise it in the way that they do. Italy and Spain provide two divergent examples of economic performance. While Spain adapted, joined and implemented the Euro in a period of high economic growth, Italy did so during a period of low growth. As a consequence, the two biggest parties in Spain did not have any incentive to stress the EMU's possible constraints (especially the loss of monetary policy and the role of the ECB), whereas in Italy the issue gained salience, as those constraints were clear and influenced government performance. Therefore, in the Italian case we are starting to observe a growing politicisation of European outcomes and, remarkably, not only in policy-seeking and small parties but also in governmental and larger parties, such as Forza Italia. Mixed and negative usages, focusing on policy constraints and limitation for action, are starting to become present in the political discourse, and criticism of the EU is starting to arise.

Secondly, government status plays a key role in showing the importance of the Institutional Model (Bartolini 2005). When government parties do not criticise the EU and its outcomes, they present a loyalty strategy stressing opportunities, incentives and positive evaluations and use Europe to legitimise their political and policy decisions. Meanwhile, parties with a more critical position towards European integration - when in government - downplay the issue in their interventions. However, as shown above, this is starting to change.

Therefore, we have observed that party ideology is important in understanding the different ways in which parties conceptualise the EU. In the two strongest parties with larger parliamentary groups, the position tends to be positive, stressing incentives for action, legitimation and the positive evaluation of European policies. Where the position is negative, usage of Europe tends to be mixed. This makes sense because they are the parties that, when in government, participate in the European decision-making process, and presenting opposing discourses at the European and at the national level is difficult to maintain. Thus,

real opposition to European outcomes comes from smaller parties that, however, may still play a role in government formation, especially in Italy. The role of ideology is especially evident for communist parties, both in Italy and Spain. Their political discourse is remarkably similar, showing the importance of ideology for conceptualising the European environment as well as the value of the Partisan Model (Bartolini 2005). The Lega Nord case shows us two further important aspects. Firstly, it demonstrates the way in which the EU can be used to pursue a specific political project, and the analysis of parliamentary debates has offered us a good explanation of the U-turn in their European position. Secondly, it stresses the importance of parliamentary debates. If we take into account that 1996 was the last election where the LN participated alone (since then, it has been part of the Casa delle Libertà coalition), the analysis of electoral programmes does not allow us to see and understand such a specific and radical change.

The analysis of the usages of Europe has also helped to overcome some of the limitations of focusing purely on electoral competition or salience. In particular, it has shown the importance of indirect impacts of Europeanisation such as the reduction of policy decidability and the disempowerment of elections, the de-politicization of the European issue and even other effects, such as the coalition-building effect (Mair 2001; Bartolini 2005). The reduction of policy decidability is clear in Spanish Budget debates as both PSOE's and PP's speakers state that they pursue the same economic goals. When there is a substantially communitarised policy, with clear objectives, deadlines and goals, the room for manoeuvre by governmental parties is reduced. Therefore, successive governments have to implement the same policy, with little room for different proposals. The idea of de-politicization is also clear, especially, but not only, in Italy. Parties in government tend to stress European opportunities and incentives while opposition parties tend to neglect them. As some scholars have shown, this can be due to the asymmetry of information and the government's role in European negotiations, where the opposition is absent (Raunio 2002). This "one-way" importance implies that there is not a real debate on European issues in general parliamentary debates. This de-politicization can, especially if we take into account the growing European competencies, produce a clear deficit in the relation between the parliamentary debate, political competition and the voters. Finally, the Spanish way of adopting the Euro with minority governments has demonstrated the EU's role in fostering government stability with a coalition-building effect. CIU and PNV supported different governments (socialist and conservatives) to assure Spain's success in joining the Euro. These two ethnoregionalist parties have a positive position towards the EU, and their support was oriented towards the final goal of joining the Euro.

To conclude, the analysis of the usages of Europe in parliamentary debates shows the importance of dealing with this other crucial area of parliamentary competition. Indeed, it complements other types of analyses and provides diverse evidence of both direct and indirect impacts of European integration on domestic systems. Context, timing, governmental status, ideology or type of party and party systems are all important factors for understanding

why and how parties internalise Europe along with its multiple consequences for political competition, voters and the process of European integration at large.

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II. PLENARY DEBATES AND THEIR IMPACT

The Operating Logics of Weak and Strong Publics and the Communication of Europe

Pieter de Wilde

Abstract

This contribution assesses the explanatory power of European integration theory for the communication of EU issues in mass media and national parliaments. By comparing debates on the EU budget in The Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland, on three different budget negotiations, in newspapers and in plenary parliamentary sessions, a rich picture is presented of how visible the EU is, who communicates and how EU issues are made sense of. The comparative framework allows for the isolation of the effects of different national interests, the contentiousness of European integration and institutional operating logics. Institutional operating logics clearly affect the actors dominating the debates and the way budget negotiations are framed, whereas a combination of national interests, contentiousness of issues and institutional operating logics accounts for the visibility of the negotiations in both media and national parliaments. The importance of operating logics in explaining communication patterns draws attention to both parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms and media logics of news value criteria. Theoretically, it is demonstrated that different European integration theories can be fruitfully combined to increase our understanding of how EU issues are communicated in the public sphere.

1. Introduction

The emphasis this Collection of Working Papers lays on the communicative function of national parliaments in the European Union (EU) (see also Auel, 2007; Raunio, 2009) highlights their importance as ‘strong publics’ (Eriksen and Fossum, 2002). They form a part of the public sphere (Habermas, 1991). This public sphere is a key forum for democratic legitimacy of modern polities where collective will-formation takes place through the exchange of arguments in front of a wider audience. The public sphere ought to be an arena

where everyone has access to present and follow arguments and where authority is forced to account for its actions in front of the wider audience. Through rational debates, arguments are tested, gain legitimacy, are improved or discarded. As a result, a collective will flows from this practice of discourse that provides the basis for democratic rule. The most accessible arenas for public debate in modern Western democracies are constituted by mass media. These 'weak' or 'general' publics (Eriksen and Fossum, 2002; Fraser, 1992) are accessible to all citizens and present a key channel for political communication between representatives and represented. Yet, mass media are not directly linked to binding decision making, hence the label 'weak'. In contrast, parliaments – especially plenary sessions – perform the key role of linking public deliberation to the making of binding decisions. The power this implies is captured in the label 'strong publics'. Taken together, mass media and parliamentary debates provide the core infrastructure of European public spheres. As such, they are indispensable to both the formation of collective will as well as the translation thereof into policy. They stand at the core of the democratic legitimacy of the EU (Fossum and Schlesinger, 2007; Lord and Beetham, 2001).

Breaking new ground in the literatures on EU communication and the role of national parliaments in the EU, this contribution aims to explain communication on EU issues in both mass media and national parliaments. It does this through a comparison of plenary debates and media coverage. Drawing on European integration theory for its explanatory framework, the extent to which the communication of Europe adequately reflects political decision-making in the EU is highlighted. Three alternative theoretical perspectives are outlined and then combined to present a rich understanding of communication of Europe. In the first *liberal intergovernmentalist perspective* (Moravcsik, 1993; 1998), EU politics reflects the uploading of national economic interests to the supranational level. Its explanatory power would be reflected in strong differences in the communication of Europe across countries, depending on the different national interests at stake. In the second *functionalist perspective* (Haas, 2004; Schmitter, 1969), the increasing pooling of sovereignty in European integration becomes reflected in increasing awareness, mobilization and polarization over EU issues, as the EU has gradually become 'politicized' (De Wilde, 2011c; De Wilde and Zürn, 2012; Hooghe and Marks, 2009). The functionalist expectation would thus be that communication of Europe in both media and parliaments increases or alters over time, rather than across countries. The third *institutionalist perspective* (March and Olsen, 1984; Olsen, 2007) understands European integration as a continuously evolving system of interacting political institutions, partially in symbiosis and partially in competition with each other. These institutions have a profound effect on human behavior, as political actors adapt their behavior to the operating logics of their institutional environment. According to the institutionalist perspective, the largest difference in operating logic is between national parliaments and media, rather than across countries or over time. This third perspective thus predicts differences between these two publics to dominate communication of Europe.

This public sphere perspective points us to several key questions concerning the communication of Europe. These include: 1) how much communication is taking place, or how *visible* Europe is in the public sphere (De Vreese, 2001; Koopmans and Statham, 2010); 2) how *inclusive* is the public sphere, or who are the dominant actors making arguments about European integration and the EU (Koopmans, 2007; Meyer, 1999; Statham, 2010); 3) and how are the process of European integration and the EU polity made sense of through the practice of *framing* issues (De Vreese, 2007; De Vreese and Kandyla, 2009; Diez Medrano, 2003; Gamson, 2004; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000).

Interestingly, studies focusing on the communication of European integration have predominantly targeted the reporting of EU issues in mass media (De Vreese, 2001; 2007; Koopmans, 2007; Koopmans and Statham, 2010; Kriesi et al., 2007; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). In addition, there are studies on the communication strategy of EU institutions, and the European Commission in particular (Meyer, 1999; Michailidou, 2008). So far, few studies exist taking a public sphere perspective to include both mass media coverage and national parliaments' involvement in European affairs in an encompassing research design (De Wilde, 2011a; 2011b). As a result of including both weak and strong publics, a rich understanding of communication patterns on EU issues is generated and differences and commonalities between mass media and parliamentary arenas, between countries and across time become apparent.

2. National Interests, Contentiousness, and Institutional Operating Logics

What might explain the communication of Europe in strong and weak publics? To answer this question, the present contribution draws upon the European integration theories of liberal intergovernmentalism, (neo- and post-) functionalism and institutionalism. These theories have been designed to explain the politics of European integration, rather than its communication. In extending their use to explain public communication, this contribution breaks new ground. As will become clear, these theories are not fully excluding each other as their premises focus on different dynamics that can coexist in practice. Thus, it is here argued that they should be understood as alternative vantage points or theoretical ideal types (George and Bennett, 2005) from which to make sense of observed communication, rather than as mutually excluding explanatory theories to be tested. As Puchala (1972) noted, individual theoretical vantage points from which to study European integration only create partial pictures of reality. He compared EU studies to blind men studying an elephant. The man touching the elephant's trunk concludes the beast is slender and tall. In contrast, the man touching the elephant's ears concludes the beast is flat and oblong. To gain a more complete understanding of the nature of the beast, we need to study it from multiple vantage points. That there is added value in shifting theoretical 'frames of reference' to generate a more complete understanding has been demonstrated in Allison's (1971) study of the Cuban missile crisis. Heeding Puchala's call by using Allison's method, the aim of this contribution is to evaluate the explanatory power of each theoretical perspective individually as well as to

generate a rich understanding of communication of Europe by complementing the perspectives with each other. Each perspective is brought to bear on the visibility, inclusiveness and framing of communication of EU issues respectively.

In the first, liberal intergovernmentalist, perspective, national interests may be understood as key to communication of the EU budget. According to Moravcsik (1993; 1998) major steps in European integration since the 1950s can be understood as compromises between national governments based on economic interests. The premise is that member state governments are and remain in control of the integration process. Economic interests are aggregated at the domestic level and at the same time negotiated among national governments in 'two-level games' (Putnam, 1988). If the communication of Europe would reflect such intergovernmental politics based on economic interests, we may expect visibility to be highest in countries with clear economic interests at stake on the issue in question. These countries will be more forceful in negotiations within the EU framework and this will be reflected in more heated debates. In terms of inclusiveness, this first perspective expects the dominance of national executives over supranational institutions and domestic interest groups. Finally, framing according to the liberal intergovernmentalist perspective emphasizes conflict between member states especially, and conflict between domestic interest groups to a lesser extent. The issue in question would be presented as a zero-sum game, where negotiations and compromises determine who gets what.

In the second, functionalist, perspective, communication of the EU budget may be a product of the extent to which European integration as a political process and the EU as its intermediary result are controversial within the national context. As European countries have increasingly pooled sovereignty, expectations and orientations of citizens and interest groups are directed at the supranational level (Haas, 2004). Whereas the early neo-functional theorists expected these reorientations to be positive and demand more integration, recent post-functionalist theorists emphasize the rise of Euroscepticism, as national identity perceptions foster negative opinions towards supranational governance (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). It is well known that some Member States feature more Euroscepticism than others (Harmsen and Spiering, 2004; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008). That is, Member States such as the UK have traditionally been ambivalent to EU membership. Its citizens and political parties, generally oppose further steps in integration which is clearly reflected in national discourse (Diez Medrano, 2003). Other Member States, such as Belgium or Germany, have traditionally been much more 'pro-European'. Yet, the attitudes of citizens, positions of political parties and national discourse are not static. According to Hooghe and Marks (2009), European integration has become markedly more controversial since the late 1980s throughout the EU. National interests have been more prominently articulated and defended in EU framework as political elites increasingly feel pressure from public opinion not to proceed further with integration and not to compromise on key national concerns. Referenda on Treaty changes may have brought European integration as a politicized issue to the fore and amplified contentiousness within the Member States that have held referenda in the last

two decades (Hobolt, 2009). Based on this second perspective, we may expect communication of Europe in mass media and parliaments to become more visible over time and well as more inclusive as EU politics feature a 'widening of the audience or clientele interested and active' (Schmitter, 1969, p. 166). Framing is likely to portray EU politics as increasingly conflictual over time, particularly with regards to questions of further pooling of sovereignty. In addition, EU issues are likely to be particularly contested in countries with Eurosceptic populations, a history of referendums or where referendums on EU issue have recently taken place.

The third perspective may be labeled an institutional perspective (Jupille and Caporaso, 1999; Pierson, 1998). According to Olsen (2007), the European political order has been transformed through the creation and subsequent evolution of a variety of institutions. These include, in particular, the institutions of the EU – especially the European Commission, the European Parliament etc. – but numerous others as well at both national and supranational level. Once created, institutions develop operating logics, and societal actors' behavior follow a logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen, 1984) which is constrained by these operating logics. Thus, parliaments have developed into arenas for party competition (Burns, 1999; King, 1976; Strøm et al., 2003). Members of Parliament (MPs) group into party factions and these parties compete with each other in elections for office. Parliamentary proceedings in between elections are dominated by continued partisan conflict, particularly between government and opposition. On the other hand, mass media follow a media logic structuring what to report on and in what way. This media logic includes the reporting of personalized conflict and topics of particular relevance to the national audience (Altheide, 2004; Bennett and Entman, 2001; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Both parliamentary logics and media logics remain relatively stable across the countries of Western Europe, although there are differences between Anglo-Saxon and Westminster models on the one hand and continental consensus models on the other hand (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Strøm et al., 2003). National parliaments have adopted a range of different scrutiny mechanisms that range from strong ex ante control like in Denmark or Finland, to limited control such as in the Southern member states (O'Brennan and Raunio, 2007). As these institutional logics are resilient to change, little change over time in parliamentary debates can be expected. Based on the institutionalist perspective, we would thus expect communication on Europe in parliaments to be framed as domestic partisan conflict whereas media coverage of the EU would be more framed as intergovernmental conflict, emphasizing the national interests at stake and (personal) conflict between Member State government leaders.

In short, the three perspectives based on European integration theory lead to different expectations concerning patterns and trends in the communication of EU issues in mass media and national parliaments. If communication is primarily a product of national interests, countries with clear economic interests at stake in the issue in question will feature more visible and more conflictual debates than countries with less pronounced interests at stake. Following the functionalist perspective, communication of EU issues will become increasingly

visible and contentious over time from the late 1980s onwards. Furthermore, debates will be particularly heated around referendums on Treaty changes or EU accession and in the aftermath thereof. Thus, the most observable communication patterns in this second perspective are expected to unfold over time, rather than across countries. Thirdly, according to the institutionalist perspective institutional operating logics structure political behavior, and thus also communication. To the extent that institutional logics structure communication, differences will manifest themselves strongly between different institutional arenas. In other words, differences will be most pronounced between weak and strong publics rather than between countries or over time. Taken together, these three perspectives highlight the need for a comparison of communication patterns between countries, over time and between different institutional arenas to assess their relative and combined explanatory power.

3. Claims-Making in a Comparative Case Study of EU Budget Negotiations

In order to assess the explanatory power of these three theoretical perspectives, this study presents data from EU budget negotiations taking place between 1992 and 2005, in three different Member States, including both newspaper coverage and plenary parliamentary debates. The EU budget is a recurrent major political package dealing with a clear difference in economic interests among EU member states (Laffan, 1997). It also has direct bearing on the integration process as the size of the budget and the degree of freedom supranational institutions enjoy in allocating funds greatly affects their power vis-à-vis national governments and EU citizens. Budgetary politics traditionally stand at the core of democratic politics (Kahn, 1997). Policy formulation on the EU multiannual budget culminates in European Council meetings with strong media coverage. As member state governments need to agree unanimously, national parliaments are involved in controlling their own government. Negotiations are held every seven years. The three countries included represent a net-contributing country (The Netherlands), a net-recipient country (Ireland) and a country paying more or less as much as it received (Denmark) between 1992 and 2005. The inclusion of these three countries allows for assessing the validity of the liberal intergovernmentalist perspective's expectations. The inclusion of three budget negotiations (Delors II, negotiated between February 1992 and December 1992; Agenda 2000, July 1997 – March 1999; and Financial Perspectives 2007-2013, February 2004 – December 2005) allows for the mapping of trends over time and the assessment of the explanatory power of the functionalist perspective. All three budget negotiations coincide with ratification processes on EU Treaties. During the negotiations of Delors II in 1992, the Treaty of Maastricht was ratified with referenda in Denmark (2 June 1992: 52% against) and Ireland (18 June 1992: 68,7% in favor). The Treaty of Amsterdam was ratified during the negotiation of Agenda 2000 including referenda, again, in Denmark (28 May 1998: 55,1% in favor) and Ireland (22 May 1998: 61,7% in favor). Finally, during the negotiations of Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 the Constitutional Treaty's ratification failed with a referendum in the Netherlands (1 June 2005: 61,5% against). Besides facilitating the tracking of trends over time, the inclusion of these three budget negotiations thus allows linking the visibility of the

EU budget to moments of explicit contestation about European integration in the form of referendum campaigns. Finally, the inclusion of both newspaper coverage and transcripts of plenary debates allows an assessment of the explanatory power of the institutionalist perspective. The comparative research design resulting from the case selection may thus be characterised as a 3x3x2 comparative case study (Yin 2003: 39ff). That is, three budget negotiations (Delors II, Agenda 2000 and Financial Perspectives 2007-2013), times three countries (the Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland), times two forums (media and parliament) result in eighteen separate cases in which to study communication of the EU budget.

Newspapers included in the sampling are *NRC Handelsblad*, *Trouw* and *Algemeen Dagblad* for the Netherlands, *Berlingske Tidene*, *Politikken* and *B.T.* for Denmark, and *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* for Ireland. This study thus incorporates both quality and sensation-oriented newspapers of different political signatures in all three countries. As differences between quality and sensation outlets are larger than between different media – e.g. TV and printed press – this sample forms a representative sample of national media (Semetko et al., 2001). Newspaper articles and plenary parliamentary debates were sampled from digitalized archives using the search string: “European budget” OR “EC / EU budget” OR “Delors II / Agenda 2000 / financial perspectives”, with the exception of plenary debates from 1992 in the Netherlands and Denmark, which were manually selected from the physical archives of the *Tweede Kamer* and *Folketing*.

To measure the three key aspects of communication derived from the public sphere approach – visibility, inclusiveness and framing – this study employs claims analysis (Koopmans and Statham, 1999). Claims analysis is very suitable for measuring the communication of the EU budget as it takes a very small unit of analysis – a ‘claim’ – and measures relevant variables at that level. A claim is defined as a unit of strategic or communicative action in the public sphere: ‘... which articulate[s] political demands, decisions, implementations, calls to action, proposals, criticisms, or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors in a policy field’ (Statham, 2005, p. 12). Coded variables of claims include WHERE and WHEN, WHO makes a claim, on WHAT, HOW, addressing WHOM, for/against WHOSE interests and WHY. The amount of claims functions as an indicator for the visibility of communication. The inclusiveness is measured through the relative amount of claims made by each actor in comparison to other actors present in the debate. To map the presence of national parliaments as a collective and individual MPs, this group is contrasted to government officials including heads of state and all senior and junior Ministers on the one hand and ‘others’, including EU institutions, other Member State governments, civil society organizations, journalists and organized interests on the other hand. Finally, the ‘why’ variable here refers to how the EU budget is ‘framed’. In other words, how claimants organize ‘[...] an apparently diverse array of symbols, images and arguments, linking them through an underlying organizing idea that suggests what is at stake on the issue’ (Gamson, 2004, p. 245). A distinction is made between framing EU budget negotiations as 1)

'intergovernmental conflict' where different Member States are pitted against each other in a zero-sum game of national interests; 2) 'supranational conflict' where EU institutions are involved, either as opposing other supranational institutions or opposing Member States; 3) 'domestic conflict' which in particular includes partisan conflict within a single Member State; 4) 'other conflict' which may include sectoral interests or regional governments; 5) 'cooperation' which does not portray EU budget negotiations as conflict, but rather as an effort to maximize utility for everyone based on values such as economic growth, sustainable development or solidarity; 6) claims without framing. In total, 462 newspaper articles and 133 parliamentary debates were coded, resulting in 4435 claims.[1]

4. Findings

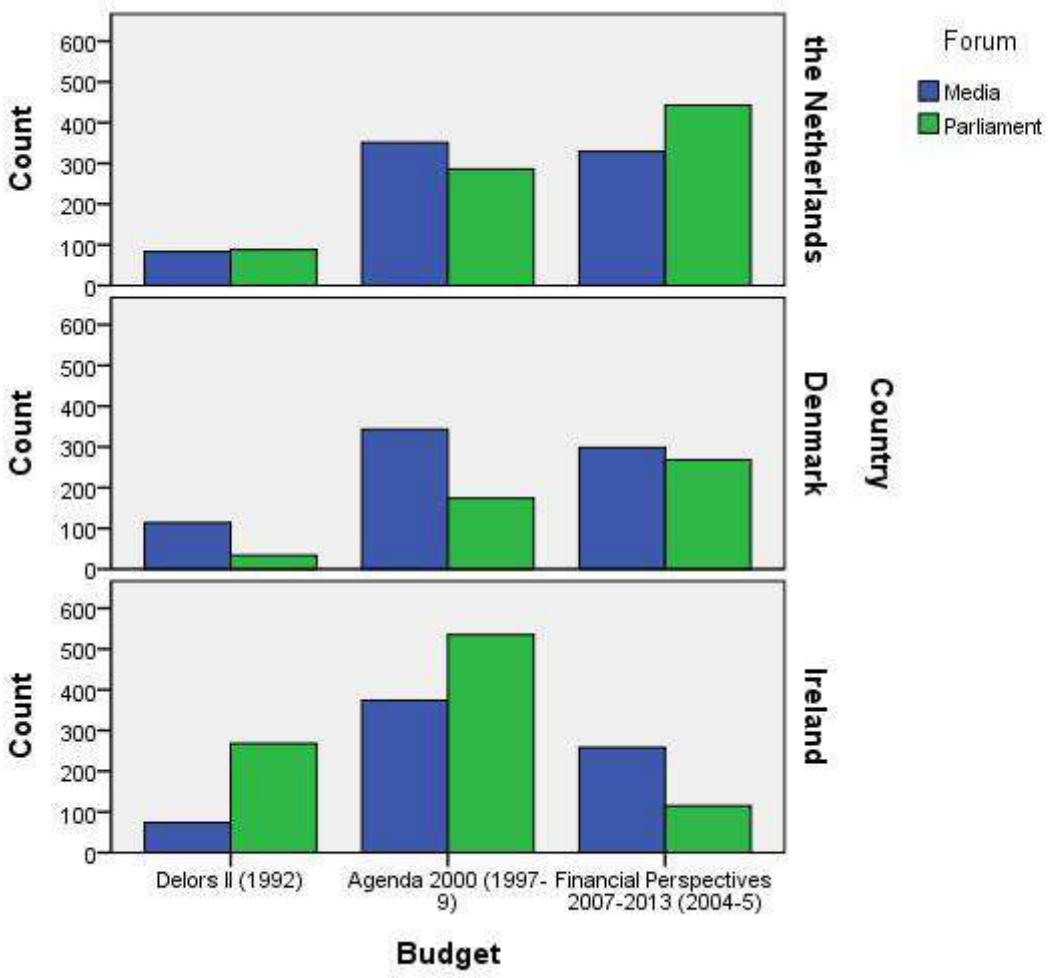
This section proceeds with the assessment of the explanatory power of the three developed perspectives – the national interests, contentiousness of European integration and institutionalist perspectives – to the three key components of communication: visibility, inclusiveness and framing. In effect, the three perspectives are applied three times allowing for the assessment of their relative explanatory power concerning each of the three components as well as for generating a rich understanding through their combination.

4.1 Visibility

Visibility of communication on the EU budget is operationalised here as the total amount of claims made in the mass media and in plenary sessions of national parliaments. Graph 1 below, displays these amounts per country, budget and forum.

[1] The codebook, the heuristic ATLAS.ti files and the SPSS database can be obtained from the author upon request. To safeguard reliability of the data, the coder received intensive training (Krippendorff, 2004).

Graph 1: Visibility of EU budget negotiations



Following the liberal intergovernmentalist perspective, we would expect communication on the EU budget to be particularly visible in the Netherlands and Ireland in comparison to Denmark. This is because, during the time of study, both the Netherlands and Ireland had clear national economic interests at stake in the EU budget negotiations as large net-contributor and net-recipient country respectively. In contrast, Denmark received more or less as much as it paid and thus did not have national interests at stake to the same extent as the other two Member States. However, the data do not support this expectation. Taking into account that the exact numbers for Ireland are based on more stringent sampling of material, the Agenda 2000 budget negotiations were particularly visible in Ireland. Yet, the differences between the Netherlands and Denmark are not pronounced.

The functionalist perspective would generally expect visibility of EU budget negotiations to increase over time as the process of European integration became more controversial

between 1992 and 2005. In addition, one might expect the budget to be more visible in Denmark than in the other two countries as Denmark has been a notably more Eurosceptic country than the Netherlands or Ireland. Finally, we might expect visibility to be particularly pronounced in Denmark and Ireland in 1992, fueled by the referendum campaign on the Maastricht Treaty. Similarly, we expect high visibility in Denmark and Ireland during the negotiation of Agenda 2000 and in the Netherlands during the negotiation of Financial Perspectives 2007-2013. These expectations based on the politicization perspective are only partially supported by the data. Media reporting of the latter two budgets is clearly higher than on Delors II, but there is no clear trend upwards. In fact, Agenda 2000 negotiations were the most visible in absolute numbers of claims in the media. Visibility in parliaments increased steadily over time in the Netherlands and Denmark, but there is a sharp drop in Ireland. Whereas there is limited empirical evidence in this study to support the functional perspective as a general trend over time, the impact of coinciding referenda on Treaty reform with budget negotiations has no clear effect. In the first two budget negotiations, visibility of the budget negotiations was not higher in Denmark and Ireland than in the Netherlands, nor was the reverse true during the last budget's negotiations. This would have been the expectation if the coinciding of referenda and budget negotiations would reinforce each other's salience and visibility. EU referenda do not seem to influence the visibility of EU budget negotiations. This is remarkable especially in case of the Netherlands and Ireland, as it has been argued that net contributions and receipts have played an important role in Dutch and Irish national perceptions on EU membership and on the referenda outcomes (Gilland, 2008; Petter and Griffiths, 2005). Instead, the communication of EU budget negotiations appears relatively self-standing.

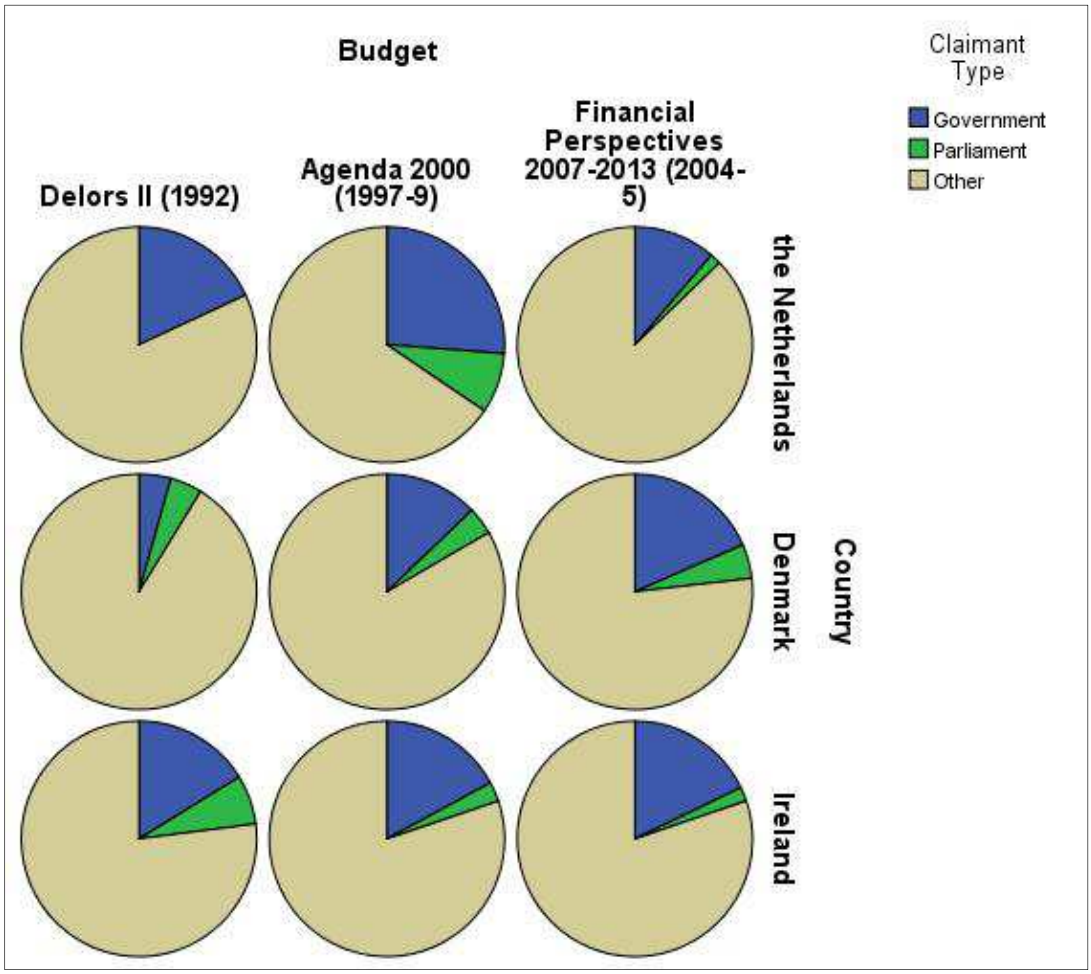
Finally, the institutional perspective expects the clearest differences to be observable between mass media and parliaments, rather than between countries or over time. Interestingly, media coverage patterns are strikingly similar in all three countries. There was most reporting on Agenda 2000, followed by slightly less coverage of the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 and very little coverage of Delors II. Not only this pattern, but also the absolute numbers of claims in the media in all three countries are remarkably similar. This suggests that the agenda of the mass media in all three countries is more influenced by common overarching negotiations in Brussels than by differing national political contexts. In contrast, parliamentary debates diverge. The larger visibility of parliamentary debates in the Netherlands in comparison to those in Denmark can be explained by the organization of EU scrutiny in ex post plenary debates in the Dutch case, whereas Danish scrutiny relies on ex ante mandating behind closed doors (De Wilde, 2011a). Parliamentary debates in Ireland, following the Westminster model, have long been particularly vibrant (Mitchell, 2003) in comparison to continental consensus based models, also on EU matters. Yet, in 2002, The Irish Parliament adopted the EU Scrutiny Act creating a formally much stronger European Affairs Committee (Barrett, 2008; Conlan, 2007). As indicated by the presented data, this may have the side effect of reducing the importance of plenary sessions for debating EU affairs. The visibility of EU budget negotiations thus reflects the liberal intergovernmentalist

perspective to some extent as the negotiations were more visible in The Netherlands and Ireland than in Denmark. In addition, the functionalist perspective highlights a clear increase of visibility between the first and second budget in the mid 1990s, but this trend does not carry on into the 21st century. Of the three adopted explanatory perspectives in this contribution, the data reflect the institutionalist perspective most when it comes to visibility. Whereas media coverage is strikingly similar in all three countries, the visibility of plenary debates differs highly according to the organization of EU scrutiny mechanisms.

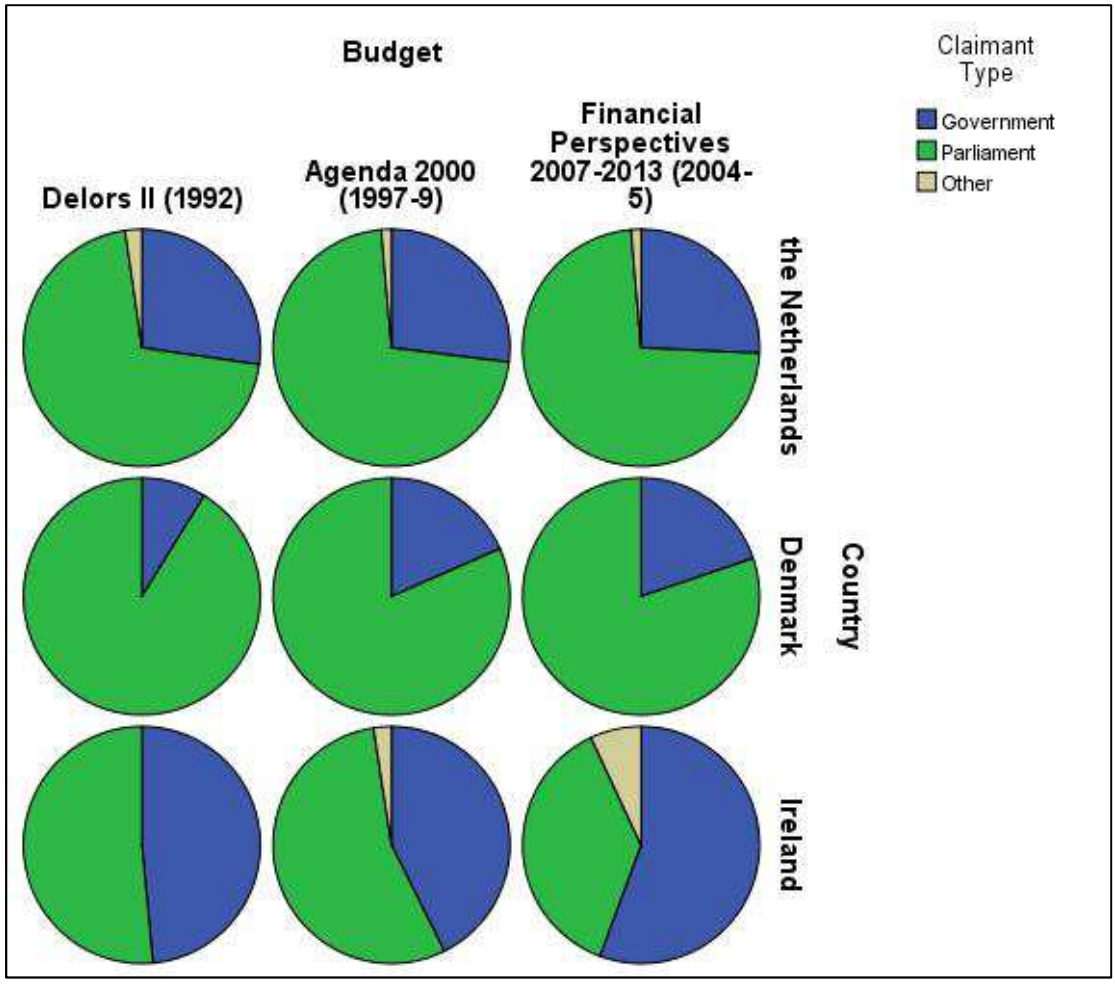
4.2 Inclusiveness

Graphs 2a and 2b present the share of total claims made in the media (2a) and parliaments (2b) by the government, Members of Parliament and others.

Graph 2a: Actors in the Media



Graph 2b: Actors in Parliament



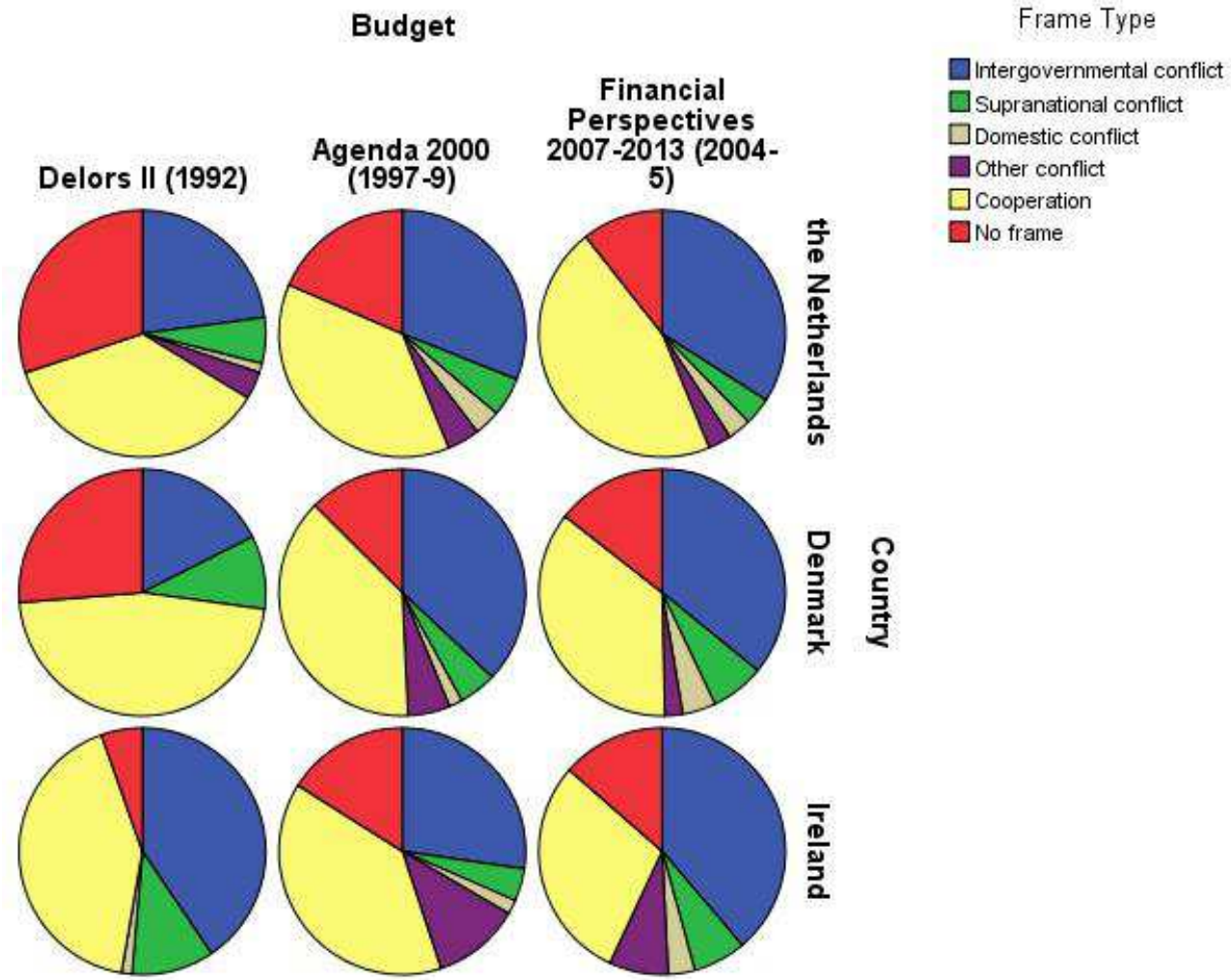
As clearly shown by the Graphs 2a and 2b, national politicians – government and parliamentarians combined – are responsible for about 10 to 20 per cent of claims made in the media and, unsurprisingly, for close to 100 per cent of claims in parliaments. Whereas parliamentarians are more vocal than government members in parliaments, the reverse is true in the media. When it comes to explaining the observed patterns, it is very clear that the difference between the mass media and parliaments is much more pronounced here than either the differences over time or across countries. Regarding the actors dominating political communication about Europe, the data presented here is best explained from an institutional perspective. In fact, it is striking to see the similarities in media coverage across countries and time. Apparently, media logics in all three countries under study here result in relatively stable patterns where national governments are featured much more prominently than parliamentarians and both categories together are only responsible for a minority of the total amount of claims made. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that all three countries

under study here are small Member States. Media in all three countries focused strongly on the actions of what are often considered the most influential EU Member States: Germany, France and the UK. Other important actors in the case of the EU budget include the European Commission, farmer associations, and Spain as arguably the most influential net recipient Member State. Differences in the parliamentary composition of claims-making can also be explained by institutional factors. Whereas Government ministers in Ireland formally remain MPs, this is not the case in either the Netherlands or Denmark. Following the Westminster model, Irish parliamentary debates are characterized by conflicts between members of government and opposition MPs resulting in similar amounts of claims by both groups of actors. In contrast, the parliaments of the Netherlands and Denmark feature tripartite debates between members of government, opposition MPs and coalition MPs leading to a smaller section of claims by government. To the extent that national interests or the general politicization of European integration affect communication in either mass media or parliaments, it is not observable in the composition of actors and their relative presence in terms of percentage of claims made in the public sphere.

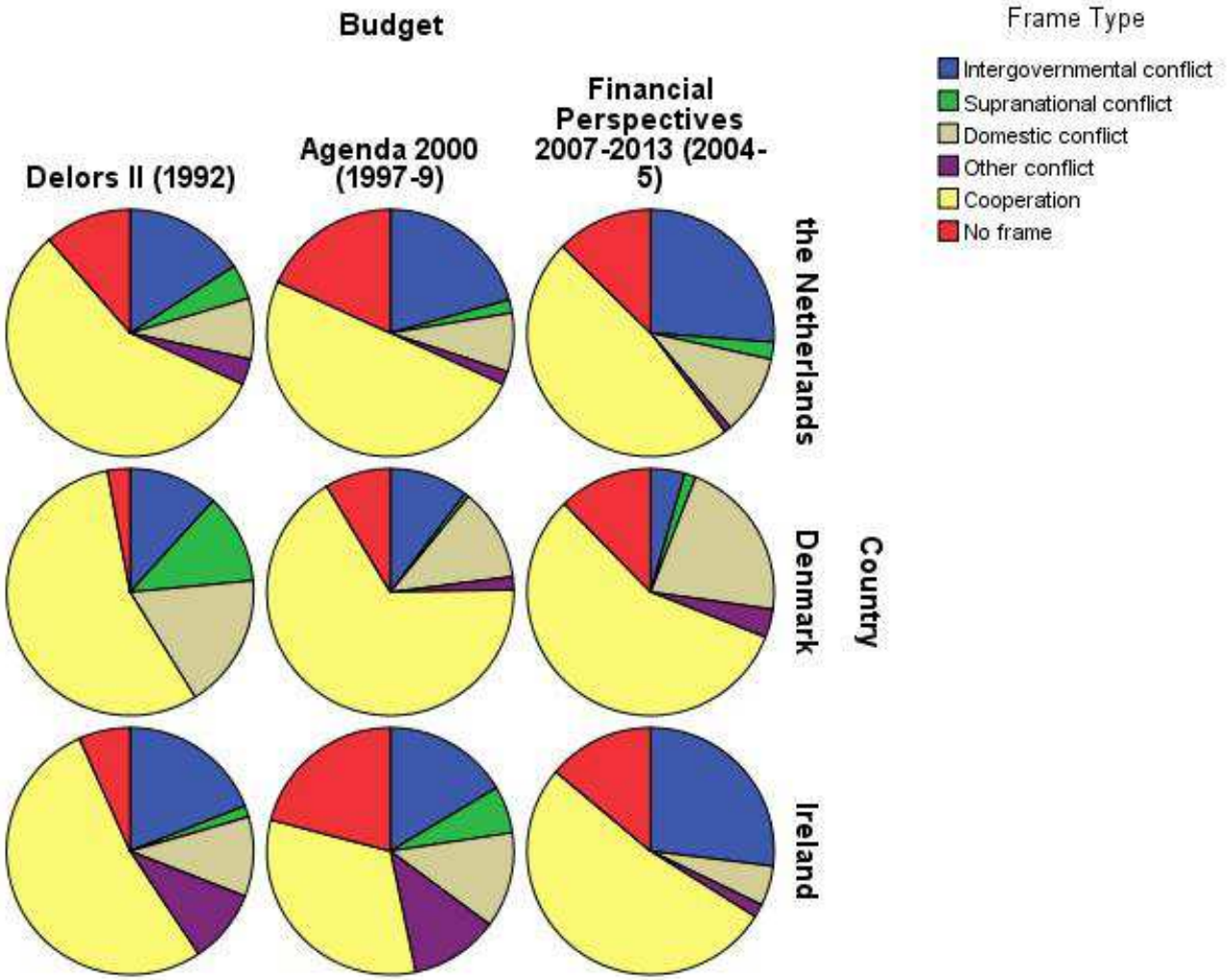
4.3 Framing

In the case of EU budget negotiations, framing might emphasize different types of conflict such as those between richer and poorer Member States, between those advocating a stronger redistributive role for the EU against those advocating a free market polity, between farmers and consumers and – in the case of regional policy – between richer and poorer sub national regions. But framing could also be ‘cooperative’ through stressing common values that might be advanced through certain budgetary programs, like solidarity within Europe, the competitiveness of the EU in the world economy or sustainable development of third world countries. Graphs 3a (media) and 3b (parliaments) display the relative amount of different types of framing in the debates in the Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland during the three budget negotiations in question.

Graph 3a: Framing in the Media



Graph 3b: Framing in Parliament



Dominant national interests, as assumed in the liberal intergovernmentalist perspective, would be reflected in a dominance of intergovernmental conflict framing in the debates of both media and parliaments. Furthermore, we would expect this to be the case especially in the net-contributing country (The Netherlands) and net-recipient country (Ireland). Yet, from this perspective, it would not be surprising to find domestic conflict framing as well. A domestic conflict concerning the establishment of the national interest co-occurs with intergovernmental conflict between member state governments in 'two level games' (Moravcsik, 1998; Putnam, 1988). Graphs 3a displaying the nine debates taking place in the media show a strong presence of intergovernmental conflict framing. In Parliaments, this is much less pronounced. That is, the framing in parliamentary debates frames the EU less as an arena for intergovernmental conflict based on mutually exclusive national interests than the media does. There is not a clear difference among the three countries included in this study in the media debates. However, the liberal intergovernmentalist perspective carries considerable explanatory power with regards to parliamentary debates, as EU budget negotiations are more often framed as a case of intergovernmental conflict in the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* and the Irish *Dáil Éireann* than in the Danish *Folketing*.

Following the functionalist perspective, we would expect rising levels of conflict framing in relation to cooperative framing over time. In particular, as national identity has increasingly become a prominent factor in EU politics since the late 1980s (Hooghe and Marks, 2009), this conflict framing would involve intergovernmental conflict framing, but also supranational conflict. In other words, the changing public attitude in Europe from a 'permissive consensus' to a 'constraining dissensus' may be reflected in political communication becoming increasingly characterized by a framing in which Member States are portrayed as in conflict with each other and with EU institutions. Yet, this 'postfunctionalist' theory (Hooghe and Marks, 2009) does not appear to be able to shed much light on how the EU budget negotiations are communicated. There is little evidence to speak of either decreasing amounts of cooperative framing or of increasing amounts of intergovernmental conflict framing. Rather, the debates continue to be characterized by a plurality of framing including intergovernmental conflict framing, conflicts involving EU institutions, domestic conflict framing and cooperative framing.

Finally, the question remains to what extent an institutionalist account may be able to explain patterns and trends in the framing of the EU budget. When looking at framing, differences are clearly less pronounced than the differences in actors featured in the debates (Graphs 2a and 2b). Yet, in comparison to differences between countries and over time, there are notable differences between media and parliaments. In particular, the framing of intergovernmental conflict in the media is much more prominent than in parliaments. Parliaments, in contrast, feature more domestic conflict and more cooperative framing. This confirms that the media logic of focusing on stories that are characterized by personalized conflict as well as a media bias towards executive actors are reflected in an emphasis on European Council meetings (Koopmans and Erbe, 2004). Although this framing is also

present in parliamentary debates, there is relatively more emphasis on domestic conflict as different political parties and opposition and coalition MPs contrast their visions to those 'on the other side of the aisle' and challenge other party representatives on the consistency and value of their positions. Furthermore, parliamentarians tend to bring more cooperative framing into the debate as they make a stronger effort than mass media to relate EU budget issues to societal values such as solidarity, competitiveness and sustainable development. When it comes to explaining patterns and trends in framing the EU budget, the institutionalist perspective provides the richest picture of the three perspectives as is the case for explaining actor constellations.

5. Discussion

This contribution has investigated political communication of EU issues in a comparison of weak publics (mass media) and strong publics (national parliaments). A major contribution to this research is provided through a comparative case study of debates on the EU budget during negotiations of EU's multiannual financial perspectives. Observed differences and similarities in patterns and trends of communication across countries, time and forums are explained by assessing the relative explanatory power of national economic interests, increasing contentiousness of European integration and the operating logics of mass media and parliaments. These factors resonate with the three prominent theories of European integration of liberal intergovernmentalism, functionalism and institutionalism respectively.

The major finding is that communication of Europe, at least in the case of EU budget negotiations, differs mostly between mass media and parliaments, rather than across countries or over time. This is very clearly the case for the inclusiveness of the debate and to a lesser extent also for how the budget negotiations are framed or made sense of by those contributing to the debate. Visibility reflects more the national interests at stake and the contentiousness of integration when it comes to mass media coverage, while visibility in parliamentary debates is highly influenced by the organization of scrutiny procedures. Whereas parliamentarians are responsible for a majority of claims in parliament, this study finds clear executive bias in the media in their coverage of EU affairs. Although less pronounced, there is also a clear difference between the framing of EU budget negotiations in the mass media and in national parliaments. While there is a plurality of conflict and cooperation framing in both mass media coverage and parliamentary debates, there is more emphasis on conflict in general and intergovernmental conflict in particular in the media. That is, more so than parliamentary debates, the mass media depict EU budget negotiations as a conflict between Member State governments based on mutually exclusive national interests where victory of the one means defeat for the other. Domestic partisan conflict, where different national political parties contest each other's vision on the EU budget, is much less prominent in the mass media than in parliaments.

These findings have clear repercussions for the possibility of institutional reform to affect the communicative role of national parliaments in EU affairs. Clearly, parliamentary organization and different scrutiny mechanisms have profound effects on the extent to which parliaments perform their communicative function. Firstly, parliamentary communication is prominent when the plenary has a substantial role in the scrutiny of EU affairs, such as the Irish *Dáil Éireann* before the constitutional reform of 2002 and – to a lesser extent – in the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*. In contrast, strong emphasis on committee work in EU scrutiny leads to a less publicly visible parliament, such as in the case of the Danish *Folketing* and the Irish *Dáil Éireann* after 2002. Secondly, a temporal link of parliamentary activity to European Council meetings stimulates communication. Ex post debates soon after such meetings are very lively, precise in terms of issues and feature vocal contestation between parties. In contrast, plenary debates early on in the policy cycle are relatively timid and parties articulate only broad issue preferences (cf. De Wilde, 2011a). At the same time, this study provides evidence that increasing the extent to which parliaments publicly debate EU affairs, or its 'transparancy' (cf. introduction to this Collection of Working Papers), only marginally affects its 'publicity' in the sense of reaching mass audiences through media coverage. To bring out national parliaments as actors and debating arenas more in EU politics, the operating logics of mass media would have to change.

The differences between mass media coverage and parliamentary debates are more pronounced than either the differences across countries or the differences over time in debating EU budget negotiations. However, that does not mean there are no considerable differences across space and time. When major national interests are at stake, such as when a Member State is either a large net contributor or a large net recipient of EU funds, debates tend to be more visible than when no clear national interests are at stake. The most visible debate took place during the negotiations on Agenda 2000 in the Irish media and *Dáil Éireann*. This can be explained as Ireland was at the time a major recipient of EU Agricultural and Structural Funds with a considerable impact on Irish economy. Similarly, as the Netherlands turned from a net recipient of EU funds up until the early 1990s to the largest net contributor per capita in the late 1990s, the visibility of EU budget negotiations in both media and the *Tweede Kamer* rose considerably. The functionalist perspective expecting a general rise in the visibility of EU budget negotiations as the political climate of the EU turned from a 'permissive consensus' into a 'constraining dissensus' directs attention to the clear difference in visibility between the first budget in the early 1990s on the one hand and the second and third budgets on the other hand. As the second of three budget negotiations – Agenda 2000 – was the most hotly contested budget in all three countries, challenges arise for the postfunctionalist theory to explain communication of Europe, however. The biggest change in politicization of European integration may have happened in the early 1990s after which levels of contestation leveled off. The presentation of Agenda 2000 by the European Commission as financing Eastern enlargement may have added to its visibility whereas the 2002 deal between France and Germany on keeping CAP spending equal in the next budget kept this major issue off the agenda during the third budget negotiations and thereby reflect,

to some extent, a temporarily successful elite de-politicization strategy of closing opportunity structures for politicization (De Wilde and Zürn, 2012). Finally, taking into account the co-occurrence of national referendums on Treaty changes does not provide a clear understanding of EU budget debates. Had this been the case, we would have expected debates to be particularly visible in the Netherlands during the negotiations of Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 (coinciding with the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty) and in Denmark and Ireland during Delors II and Agenda 2000 (coinciding with referendums on the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties). However, neither an amplifying nor a crowding out effect of referendums during budget negotiations could be observed.

Of the liberal intergovernmentalist, functionalist and institutionalist perspective, the third clearly carries the most explanatory power for communication of EU issues in weak and strong publics. Taken together, the three theoretical perspectives drawn from European integration theory provide a richer understanding of communication of Europe in mass media and parliaments than any one of them individually. This raises two interesting points for further research on European integration and its communication. First, it demonstrates that theories of European integration, created to explain the political process of sovereignty pooling by European countries, can also shed valuable light on the public communication of this process. This contribution thus presents a modest argument that communication and politics in the case of the EU are not disconnected. Secondly, this study demonstrates the use of combining these three theories of European integration to shed light on communication of EU issues. Rather than only viewing them as alternatives and testing their relative strengths, they can be considered complementary to a certain extent. These perspectives present different angles, if you will, from which to study communication of Europe. Combined only, they provide a full picture of the nature of the beast.

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EU Politicisation and National Parliaments: Visibility of Choices and Better Aligned Ministers?

Eric Miklin

Abstract

Recently, there have been calls for a politicisation of EU decision-making to reduce the EU's democratic deficit. This article takes the debate to the EU's national channel of representation. It discusses, how politicisation could be achieved and how it affects the way national parliaments fulfil their citizen-related and their government-related functions in EU decision-making. Two arguments are developed. First, I argue that politicisation requires legislative proposals that polarise between centre-left and centre-right actors. By changing the incentive structure of national parties, such proposals help to overcome parties' current reluctance to publicly discuss European issues. This leads to open parliamentary debates where parties discuss their different views and provide citizens with choices in EU decision-making. Second, I argue that the higher salience of polarising proposals also increases national parliaments' attention for, and hence control over, the processes on the European level. This reduces the risk of agency losses in Council decision-making—leading to ministers better aligned to their constituencies' interests. The plausibility of the arguments is evaluated empirically through a qualitative comparative case study of the discussions in Germany and Austria on one of probably the most politicised examples of EU decision-making in recent years—the EU Services directive.

1. Introduction

Discussing the EU's alleged democratic deficit, several scholars have recently criticised the missing communicative or electoral link between the institutions on the European level and the citizens on the national level (see esp. Føllesdal and Hix 2006; Hix 2008, Thomassen and Schmitt 1999). While the EU today is dealing with highly political issues, there still is hardly any public debate about these issues between the actors involved resulting in 'policies without politics' (Schmidt, 2006). As a consequence, citizens' knowledge about what is going on inside the EU, and about the alternatives available, is low. This leads to a lack of opposition, which makes the EU largely unresponsive in terms of elections (e.g. Mair, 2007).

To overcome this problem, voices have been raised that call for a targeted politicisation of EU decision-making (Føllesdal and Hix 2006; Hix 2008; Zürn 2006). According to these voices, reforms should be taken that increase ideological conflicts within and between the EU's institutions, and make them better visible to the public. This would provide citizens with alternatives in EU decision-making which they could take into account at the next election. This article takes up on this debate and takes it to the national level. It discusses how politicisation could be achieved and how it would affect the way national parliaments fulfil their functions in EU decision-making.

In a first step, the article is looking at national parliaments' citizen-related functions and at how the currently weak electoral link between national parliaments and their electorates could be strengthened. Building on insights from research on party competition and issue salience, I argue that politicisation requires polarising legislative proposals on which centre-left and -right parties take different positions. By changing the incentive structure of the parties within Parliament, such proposals lead to open parliamentary debates, where parties publicly present and justify their different views on the issue.

In a second step, the article discusses the effect of such a politicisation on national parliaments' *government-related* functions. Thus, it relates the debate about electoral linkages back to the debate about parliamentary scrutiny in EU affairs. Based on a Principal-Agent model it is argued that, despite several improvements throughout the years, attention of national parliaments to European politics is still limited. This involves the risk that ministers in the Council take up positions that are not in line with their national parliaments' interest. Politicisation through polarising legislative proposals, I argue, reduces this risk as the higher saliency of these proposals increases parliamentary attention for, and hence control over, the processes on the European level. This, again, leads to ministers better aligned to their constituencies' interests.

The plausibility of both arguments is evaluated through an analysis of parliamentary discussions and position-finding processes in two EU member states (Germany and Austria) on probably the most politicised (and most polarising) example of day-to-day EU decision-making in recent years – the Services directive. The empirical data supports both arguments. Comparing parliaments' behaviour *before* and *after* the polarising nature of the directive was detected, I show that once the Services directive became politicised, this led to intense plenary debates in which the parties communicated and justified their different views.

Looking at the level of parliamentary control, comparing the two phases shows that national parliaments paid hardly any attention to the directive before politicisation set in. In both countries, this allowed the ministers in charge to take up a position that later turned out not to be in line with their constituencies' interest. Once politicisation set in and parliaments took a closer look at the directive, however, both ministers had to realign their position significantly.

The article proceeds as follows: the next section introduces the theoretical framework that underlies this study. Section two briefly outlines the research design and explains the case selection. In section three and four, I present the empirical findings for the two country studies. Section five discusses the results in light of the theoretical framework and concludes.

2. EU Politicisation and Domestic Impact

2.1 The effect of polarising legislative proposals on the communicative link between national parliaments and their electorates.

So far, much of the debate about the missing link between citizens and EU decision-makers has focused on the relationship between voters and the institutions on the European level (see esp. Hix 2008). However, the same (or an even worse) situation can be found also on the national level when looking at the relationship between national parliaments and their national electorates (e.g. Schmidt 2006).

According to the responsible party model (e.g. Thomassen 1994; Thomassen et al. 2004), democratic representation in any political system crucially relies on political parties taking different positions on the issues at stake and communicating these positions to their voters – thereby providing them with policy choices between which they can choose at national elections.

> '[P]ublic contestation or political competition has been generally recognized as one of the most essential characteristics of modern democracy (Dahl 1971). As modern democracy is hardly conceivable without political parties, political competition implies a major function for mass political parties' (Thomassen et al. 2004, p.141)

Providing a forum for this competition is exactly what the *communicative* or *citizen-related* function of national parliaments is about (see also the introduction by Auel and Raunio in this volume). However, research so far suggests that national parliaments currently restrict their EU-related activities mainly to scrutinising their governments (i.e. their government related functions) but hardly discuss EU issues in plenary (Bergman et al. 2003). More recent studies show that today, salient EU issues can cause some debates (see the contributions by Auel and Raunio and de Wilde in this volume). However, they also suggest that national MPs are overall rather reluctant to communicate Europe to their citizens (see also the contribution by Pollak and Slominski in this volume) and that also outside the parliamentary arena, national parties have shown little interest to put European issues on their agenda (Ladrech 2007).

The reason for this situation lies to a large extent in the incentive structure of the parties themselves. According to theories on party competition and issue salience in particular,

parties generally only raise those issues, from which they expect to gain an electoral advantage (e.g. Budge and Farlie 1983). For this to be the case, four conditions must be met:

First, an issue must have at least some salience for the parties' potential voters and hence potentially affect their voting behaviour. Second, parties only raise issues on which they hold a position different to their main competitors as otherwise there is not only little to discuss about, but also not much to gain from discussing these issues in electoral terms (e.g. Taggart and Sczcerbiak 2008, p. 349). Third, to gain from raising an issue, the position of the party must be in line with the interests of the voters it seeks to attract. Finally, the party needs to be internally cohesive regarding the issue as otherwise politicising it would first and foremost lead to detrimental conflicts within the party.

Looking at national parliamentary parties in EU decision-making today, these four requirements are rarely met. First, while the question of EU integration with the end of the 'permissive consensus' recently increased its salience (Hooghe and Marks 2009), public and citizen attention to EU 'day-to-day' decision-making is still low and plays a minor role even at elections to the EP let alone in national elections (e.g. Thomassen 2009).

Second, it has been stated that amongst European elites (i.e. between mainstream parties), there is rather broad consensus about questions of EU integration (Ray 2003). In recent years, this elite consensus, as the citizens' permissive consensus, may have been reduced, and indeed actors (parties) holding different ideological positions today often take different views regarding how things should be handled on the EU level (Hix 2008). Still, the question is whether the actual legislative proposals presented by the Commission regarding these issues can stimulate real political 'battles' and hence significantly increase public attention. This because these proposals usually already reflect a rather 'centrist' compromise as, to get its proposal through, the Commission needs the support of both centre-left and centre-right actors within the Commission, the EP and the Council. As a result, the very nature of legislative proposals often remains quite uncontested, and discussions are therefore confined to more or less small details, which are of little interest to both the media and the broader public.

Third, at least with regard to the question of EU integration in general especially the large parties at the ideological centre usually hold more positive views than their voters (Mattila and Raunio 2006). And finally, these parties are also often internally quite divided on EU issues (Hix 1999). The last three points may be less true for parties located further to the left or right. These parties generally take positions different to those of centrist parties, they are often internally more cohesive than bigger parties and their own position is also frequently more in line with the position of their electorates. However, these parties are usually too small to enforce broad plenary debates.

In sum, while some authors have argued that politicisation cannot be enforced on national parties top down but that it is the parties themselves who would have to start debating EU issues (Ladrech 2007), the likelihood for this to happen is low. What seems necessary therefore is to change the nature of the issues discussed in a way that they change the incentive structure of the parties. This, I argue, could be achieved through stronger polarising legislative Commission proposals on which centre-left and centre-right parties hold different views. For various reasons, such polarising proposals should 'help' national parliamentary parties to overcome their current reluctance to debate EU issues.[1]

First, they increase conflict and contestation between and within the institutions at the European level—thereby increasing the salience of the issues for national voters. This not only makes it more interesting for parties in national parliaments to take them up, too, but it also makes it harder for them to ignore these issues, even when they are internally divided, or when their (initial) position might not be in line with their potential voters.

Second, and probably even more importantly, polarising proposals (as on the European level) should break up the 'grand coalitions' at the ideological centre within national parliaments, which often involve major parties from both government and opposition, and stimulate discussions between these parties not only about technical details, but about the very nature of the proposal. They create an incentive for e.g. a large centre-left opposition party to criticise its centre-right opponent(s) in government for either supporting a proposal or for supporting it not strongly enough. This, on the one hand, forces governing parties to publicly explain their position. Opposition parties, on the other hand, cannot restrict themselves to criticising the government, but need to present an alternative position and to argue why this position would be better for the country.

In sum, therefore, I expect *top-down* politicisation through polarising Commission proposals to lead to (a) open parliamentary debates in which (b) national parties outline and justify their different positions.

2.2 The effect of polarising legislative proposals on minister alignment in Council decision-making

By now, debates about the missing electoral link between citizens and EU decision-makers on the one hand, and debates about the classical critique about the EU's 'institutional' democratic deficit on the other, have proceeded by and large in separation from each other. However, in the following I will argue why - especially when looking at national parliaments - there might actually be a link between how national parliaments fulfil their citizen- and their

[1] Due to restrictions in space the question, how such proposals could be achieved will not be addressed in this article.

government-related functions and how EU politicisation may not only strengthen the former, but also the latter - leading to ministers better aligned to their constituencies interests.

The shift in the debate about the EU's democratic deficit from institutional shortcomings to missing electoral linkages is, inter alia, owed to the fact that several prominent scholars during the last years have argued that – after various institutional reforms that strengthened both the EP and national parliaments – the EU's current institutional setting indeed ensures that, most of the time, the outcome of EU decision-making reflects the interest of the European 'median voter' (e.g. Hix 2008, pp. 67-86; Moravcsik 2002; Scharpf 2009, p. 177). However, based on a principal-agent model I will argue below why, (a) at least when looking at national parliaments, parliamentary control is still far from perfect and how (b) politicisation could reduce this problem.[2]

Decision-making in the Council is characterised by a long chain of delegation. In parliamentary democracies, this chain starts at the national electorate, goes on to the national parliament, the government and finally ends up at the minister in charge of the issue discussed, her ministry, and its civil servants (cf. Strøm 2000). While principal-agent problems can of course occur between every two links in this chain, for now I focus on the problems that may occur in the delegation from the national parliament to the minister in charge and her ministry.

As agency theory argues, each act of delegation is faced with two problems (e.g. McCubbins et al. 1987). First, principal and agent may have conflicting interests (*interest heterogeneity*). Second, there may be a structural *information asymmetry* between principal and agent regarding the agent's behaviour. If both conditions are met, delegation bears the risk of *agency loss*, which means that the agent is not acting according to the principal's, but according to her own interest.

Both problems can be found in the relationship between national parliaments and the ministers sitting in the Council. First, and looking at interest heterogeneity, a minister and her civil servants may have biased preferences and may use Council decision-making to pursue their own (ministry's) instead of the parliament's interest (e.g. Steunenberg 2003). While parliaments usually take into consideration the expected effects a proposal may have on a large number of policy fields or societal groups, a single minister may be quite willing to accept a proposal that fits her sectoral interests, even if it involves considerable societal costs, as long as these costs do not fall into her area of responsibility. Such biases are even more likely, as the sectoralization of Council decision-making also raises major challenges within governments to develop a coordinated and well balanced position (Kassim et al, 2000).

[2] For principal-agent problems in Council decision-making see also Miklin (2009).

Second, the *two-level game* nature of Council decision-making makes it particularly prone to *information asymmetries* between the minister on the European level and the parliament on the national level (cf. Moravcsik 1994; Putnam 1988). Despite some improvements regarding its openness, negotiations in the Council still largely take place behind closed doors. This not only makes it very hard for parliaments to control the behaviour of their agents in the Council, but it also makes it difficult for them to judge whether their agents' position is appropriate in the light of the positions of the other member states.

Principals that want to avoid agency loss despite heterogeneous preferences and information asymmetries need to create a system that allows them to effectively control and monitor their agents' behaviour and hence to detect potential problems in time (e.g. McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). Research on national parliaments in the EU shows that parliaments have responded to this challenge by continuously adopting formal measures that allow them to scrutinise the governments' activities in the Council (e.g. the creation of specialised EU-committees or the introduction of increased reporting requirements; for a review see Raunio 2009). Still, research looking at national parliaments' actual behaviour rather than at formal provisions suggests that control of national parliaments over Council decision-making is still far from perfect. There are two main explanations for this.

First, national parliaments face a lack of resources. While in the early days of EU integration it was difficult for parliaments to receive sufficient information about the processes on the European level, getting enough information today is often not a problem anymore. But as all national parliaments have to deal with EU issues in addition to their 'normal' tasks in national decision-making, they often simply lack the resources to screen all the documents effectively, critically and in time (e.g. Pollak and Slominski 2003).

Second, like in the case of plenary debates, the incentive structure of the parties within the parliament works against spending more of their time on EU issues rather than on national issues (Raunio 2009, p.328). Given the current low salience of EU issues, most national voters mainly base their votes on parties' stands towards 'national' issues. Hence, for 'vote seeking' parties, it is perfectly rational to spend their scarce time on national, rather than on European issues.

In sum, heterogeneity of interest between national parliaments and their ministers as well as the limited resources national parliaments have available for, and are willing to spend on, EU decision-making bear the risk that representatives in the Council pursue their own rather than their national parliaments' interest. However, as with regard to the missing communicative link, there are at least two reasons for why a politicisation of EU decision-making should reduce this risk.

First, intense debates about polarising issues at the European level, and the public and media attention they generate in the member states, simply make it less likely for

parliaments to miss important matters. Second, the higher salience of these issues for national voters again changes the incentive structure of parliamentary parties in a way that parties spend more time on them. Looking at formal provisions, Saalfeld (2005) has shown a positive link between the political saliency of EU integration overall in a given country and the scrutiny rights of this country's national parliament vis-á-vis its government. There is little reason to assume that this causal mechanism does not also work for the actual attention paid to specific European issues.

Hence, I expect 'top-down' EU politicisation (a) to increase parliamentary attention for, and control over, Council decision-making, which (b) results in ministers better aligned to their parliaments' interests.

3. Data and case selection

The plausibility of the hypotheses formulated above is evaluated through a qualitative comparative case study of parliamentary activities in two member states (Germany and Austria) with regard to the first Commission draft on the 'Directive on Services in the Internal Market' (COM2004/02 final). The Services directive is a particularly interesting case for two reasons. First, it probably is the most highly politicised and polarising issue of day-to-day EU decision-making in recent years that sharply divided actors located left and right of the ideological centre. The directive, therefore, provides one of the rare opportunities to look at the effect EU-level polarisation and politicisation actually has on the variables of interest in this study: parliamentary debate, visibility of choices, parliamentary control, and minister alignment.

In January 2004, the European Commission presented its first draft, which aimed at removing obstacles that hampered intra-EU trade in services. While this first draft was by and large welcomed by (centre-) right actors, it met with serious criticism from (centre-) left actors for two reasons mainly: Opponents (a) criticised the directive's de-regulatory character, and especially the inclusion of the so-called country of origin principle (CoOP). The CoOP provided that a service company, with certain exceptions, would have to follow only its homeland's regulations when providing services in other member states on a temporary basis. Together with trade unions and small and medium sized enterprises (SME) organisations, (centre-) left parties in the EP, and at the national level, feared that the principle would lead to social dumping and a regulatory 'race to the bottom'. Criticism (b) was raised against the inclusion of services of general economic interest into the scope of the directive, which was feared to force member states to liberalise their public-services sectors.

After intense debates within and between the Commission, the Council and the EP and even the European Council, the EP, therefore, adopted a strongly revised version of the directive in its first reading in February 2006. Most importantly, the EP eliminated the CoOP and also clarified the scope of the directive with regard to services of general economic interest. In

April 2006, the Commission by and large agreed on the EP's amendments and presented a revised draft. The Council agreed on this new draft in August 2006.

What also makes the Services directive an interesting case is the fact that the problems the initial Commission draft caused from a left-wing perspective remained undetected for several months after the proposal was presented. As a result, politicisation set in only after a considerable time lag. This provides the analysis with variation over time on its independent variable and facilitates a *quasi-experimental* setting in which I (a) compare the way national parliaments dealt with the issue *before* and *after* it was politicised and (b) analyse how this has affected the ministers' positions in the Council.

The idea behind choosing Germany and Austria was to hold factors other than the degree of politicisation that might influence national parliaments' behaviour constant as far as possible. Comparative research on parliamentary control in EU decision-making has shown very similar results for Germany and Austria, and both belong to the countries with comparatively active parliaments and strong scrutiny rights (Bergman et al. 2003; Raunio 2005).

In the following, I reconstruct the processes of position-finding in the countries *before* and *after* politicisation set in. For both cases, I first examine the way national parliaments dealt with the directive before and after it had become politicised. I then show whether and how potential changes in the parliaments' behaviour affected the positions of the ministers in the Council.

Data used for the analysis are official documents and protocols mainly from national parliaments and governments, as well as position papers and press releases from various national actors and the national news coverage. In addition, I conducted 26 semi-structured expert interviews with actors directly involved in the discussions both at the European level (i.e. representatives from the Commission or the member states sitting in the Council's working groups and the Council itself) and at the national level (members of the national governments and parliaments, civil servants from the ministries in charge, and representatives from national interest groups).[3]

4. The Services Directive in the German Bundestag

4.1 Parliamentary Debates and Visibility of Choices

When the Commission published its draft in January 2004, public and media attention for the directive in Germany was low for several months. During these months, no debate on the directive in the plenary of the *Bundestag* took place. The first and only time the directive was

[3] Interviews were conducted with the assurance of the anonymity of the interviewee. References therefore follow the system 'Interview number: Line in transcript' (e.g. Int99:356). The full transcripts are accessible through the author.

mentioned at all was a brief and very general statement of a Green parliamentarian in April (plenary protocol 15/102: 9222). Apart from that, no party took up on the issue, let alone did parties discuss their views on it.

Politicisation in Germany set in during early summer 2004, about half a year after the proposal was presented. This was stimulated mainly by the increasing debates in the EP and massive public protests mobilised by national trade unions and SME organisations. From autumn onwards, these debates increasingly also found their way into the plenary sessions of the *Bundestag*. After some rather muted discussions as of November 2004, debates clearly intensified in spring 2005. Between March and June the directive was discussed in several plenary sessions, either directly or in the context of other debates (e.g. plenary protocols 15/166; 15/167; 15/175; 15/181; 15/184). After the 2005 summer break and early federal elections in September, debates started again in December and reached a second peak during the weeks before and after the EP's First Reading in February 2006. Again the directive was addressed repeatedly either directly or during debates on other topics (plenary protocols 16/14; 16/22; 16/28; 16/29; 16/30; 16/36).

The positions of the parties in these debates reflected the classical left-right divide. On the left side, the two governing parties, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Bündnis90/Die Grünen (Greens), were in principle positive about the idea to increase the integration of the European services market but clearly rejected the Commission's actual draft (Int08:25; Int06:145). They strongly criticised both the inclusion of services of general economic interest and the CoOP. The latter they expected to lead to a comprehensive regulatory *race-to-the-bottom*, which would harm especially rich and highly regulated countries like Germany. Instead of a 'radical' de-regulatory framework-directive, the parties therefore advocated a more restrictive approach, accompanied with EU-wide regulatory minimum standards. In their position, SPD and the Greens were joined by the even more critical Left party, who also rejected the very idea of the necessity of increasing intra-EU trade in services (Int33:10).

It was mainly these left-wing governing parties that motivated the debates in the plenary. One reason for this was their aim to further increase public pressure and hence to prevent the directive from becoming adopted. But for the SPD there was also a second reason. At this time, the party had just lost a number of regional elections and also did rather badly in electoral forecasts for upcoming elections. In this situation, making the Services directive an issue was seen as a welcome opportunity to re-build the party's tattered reputation on the social dimension (Int04:308; Int07:64; Int09:271; Int12:195).

On the right side, the (centre-) right opposition parties, the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and especially the Free Democratic Party (FDP), took a much more positive position. Both parties basically welcomed the Commission's draft, the inclusion of services of general economic interest and also the CoOP. They rejected the left-wing parties' claim that the CoOP would lead to a race-to-the-bottom and regarded

Germany as one of the big winners of the draft. Also, they rejected the idea of the governing parties to achieve integration via common minimum standards as un-realistic (e.g. plenary protocol 16/14: 1008; Int02:78).

This left-right divide became also visible in the voting results on two parliamentary motions. A motion supportive of the Services directive moved by the FDP and endorsed by CDU/CSU (Bundestag Drucksache 15/5131) was rejected by the left parties, who in turn adopted a 'dismissive' motion (Bundestag Drucksache 15/5832) against the votes of CDU/CSU and the FDP. The cleavage disappeared only in February 2006, when the EP presented its revised draft. This new draft was by and large welcomed as a successful compromise by CDU/CSU and SPD, but was criticised for still being too liberal by the Green party and the Left party and for being too restrictive by the FDP.

4.2 Parliamentary Control and Minister Alignment

During about the first five months after the presentation of the draft, parliamentary engagement with regard to the directive was basically inexistent. Interviewees from opposition and governing parties uniformly confirmed that initially the parties paid hardly any attention to the directive. Rather, 'as usual' the parties just relied on the information they received from the government and especially from the ministry in charge, the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (FMEL; e.g. Int04:96; Int02:261; Int03:270). As a result, the minister in charge, economics minister Wolfgang Clement (SPD), was quite free to choose his position during this phase. Even more so, as during this early phase hardly any coordination regarding the directive had taken place within the German government either (Int04:260; Int08:367).

In this phase, the ministry adopted a very positive position at the European level (Int20:270; Int10:154; Int26:355) and at the national level, with members of the Bundestag describing the ministry's position as almost enthusiastic (e.g. Int04:260; Int09:262; Int03:73). Minister Clement welcomed both the directive in general and the CoOP, which for him formed the heart of the directive. No critique was raised with regard to services of general economic interest, and Clement expected Germany to be a clear winner of the directive, which he expected to create about 100,000 jobs in the German services sector.

Parliamentary attention for the directive increased only in early summer, when politicisation set in and the parties were woken up by the debates in the EP and the protests of national interest groups (Int12:317; Int04:89/285). Especially the two governing parties now took a closer look at the directive and Clement's position, and both set up an internal working group to do so. This soon resulted in the very critical positions discussed above.

While forming their position, the two governing parties soon realised the mismatch between this critical position and the positive position of their minister. As of the summer months, this

led to quite severe debates, especially between minister Clement and the SPD. Conflicts increased further throughout autumn 2004, as Clement still stuck to his positive position (e.g. Int08:101). By then, this position was also supported by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD).

However, as a result of the ongoing public debates and the increasing conflicts within the party, but also with other ministers, Schröder changed his position in early 2005. At a meeting with then French President Jacques Chirac, he even called on the Commission to withdraw its draft.[4] Now, Schröder also urged Clement to pay more attention to the objections raised, and told him he needed to involve other (more critical) ministries better in the development of the German position if he wanted to retain the leadership on the directive (*Der Spiegel* 21 February 2005: 85). As a result, Clement gave in, and the FEML as of February 2005 adapted to the critical position of the parliamentary majority (Int26:156; Int10:153; Deutscher Bundestag Ausschussdrucksache 15(9)1853).[5]

5. The Services Directive in the Austrian Nationalrat

5.1 Parliamentary Debates and Visibility of Choices

In Austria, public attention for the directive was also low in the early months of 2004. During these months, no debate on the directive took place in the Austrian parliament or its EU committee either. Until October 2004, the directive was not mentioned a single time, let alone discussed among the parties or between them and the government in the plenary.

Politicisation in Austria started in about June 2004 and really took off as of September. As in Germany, this was mainly driven by protests of employee- and SME organisations, as well as by the debates in the EP. Additionally, politicisation in Austria was also a result of a spill-over from other member states, where debates on the proposal had already started earlier (Int28:251; Int24:415).

As of late autumn 2004, these debates found their way into the Austrian parliament. While the directive was mentioned in some plenary meetings as of November 2004 (plenary protocols XXII/85; XXII/84; XXII/83) and discussed with the minister in charge, minister of economics Martin Bartenstein (ÖVP), in the EU committee in December (Austrian Parliament, 2005), debates intensified throughout 2005 and proceeded until the parliament's summer break (plenary protocols XXII/97; XXII/99; XXII/102; XXII/104; XXII/109; XXII/115; XXII/124). After the summer break, debates started again with a lengthy discussion of the

[4] For Schröder's full speech see: http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/allemand/ansprachen_und_dokumente/2005/pressekonferenz_mit_staatsprasidenten_chirac_und_bundeskanzler_schroder_in_blomberg.33201.html (last accessed: 18.12.2009)

[5] After early elections in September 2005, a new government composed of CDU/CSU and SPD assumed power. Because of an internal conflict on the CoOP, this new government and the minister now in charge, Michael Glos (CSU), never took a clear position on the draft but rather waited for the revised draft coming from the EP.

directive in September (plenary protocol XXII/124) and intensified again in the weeks before and after the EP's first reading in February 2006 (plenary protocols XXII/131; XXII/133; XXII/138; XXII/144; XXII/152).

Looking at the positions of the parties, again a left-right divide comes to the fore. The two left-wing opposition parties, the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Green Party (Greens), adopted a very critical position (e.g. plenary protocols XXII/124:58f; Int24:24; Int34:10). Both parties principally welcomed the idea of a directive to increase the integration of the EU's market for services, but strongly rejected the Commission's proposal. They criticised the inclusion of services of general economic interest and, most importantly, the CoOP. Like their German sister parties, they expected it to lead to a regulatory race-to-the-bottom, which would especially harm countries like Austria.

Again, it was mainly these centre-left parties that motivated the debates in the plenary and criticised the, here centre-right, governing parties for being reluctant to discuss the directive (plenary protocol XXII/109:73). To force a debate, the Social democrats also addressed a number of parliamentary inquiries to various ministers from February to March 2005 (2686/J XXII. GP; 2752/J XXII. GP; 2687/J XXII. GP; 2688/J XXII. GP; 2685/J XXII. GP).

The critique from the left was initially largely rejected as unfounded and unrealistic by the centre-right governing parties, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Austrian Freedom Party/Alliance for the Future of Austria (FPÖ/BZÖ).[6] While the governing parties also stated that some aspects of the directive still needed to be clarified, during the first wave of debates they clearly welcomed the Commission's comprehensive de-regulatory approach, and also voiced their support for the CoOP. This left-right cleavage was also reflected in the voting results on a critical motion brought by the SPÖ in May 2005 (plenary protocol XXII/109: 157f) which received the support of the Green party, but was rejected by the majority of the governing parties.

After the 2005 summer break, the picture somewhat started to change, though. Especially the FPÖ/BZÖ, but also the ÖVP, now asked for a number of clarifications and new exceptions from the directive, most notably in the field of services of general economic interest. Still, despite this more nuanced position, the governing parties continued to defend the directive against the criticisms of the opposition. In line with this, they voted down another critical motion from the SPÖ and the Greens and adopted their own, more positive one, instead (plenary protocol XXII/124: 61, 68, 72, 92, and 94). The left-right divide disappeared only after the EP's first reading. The EP's new draft was welcomed as a successful compromise by the ÖVP, the SPÖ, and the FPÖ/BZÖ. Only the Greens rejected the new draft as still too neo-liberal.

[6] In April 2005 the majority of FPÖ delegates (including all government representatives) left their party and joined the newly founded BZÖ. However, within the *Nationalrat*, the parties still acted as a uniform parliamentary party.

5.2 Parliamentary Control and Minister Alignment

In Austria, parliamentary control with regard to the directive was also completely absent for at least the first six months after the proposal was presented. Again, members of the parliament confirmed that they had simply overlooked the proposal (Int24:397; Int34:283) and that nobody was interested in it (Int28:257). Hence, in Austria the ministry in charge, the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (FMEL), and its minister, Martin Bartenstein (ÖVP), were largely free to choose their position as well, not least because at that point other ministers did not pay any attention to the directive (Int28:251; Int24:366).

In this phase, the FEML adopted a very positive position at the European level (Int05:333; Int10:36) and at the national level (Austrian Parliament, 2004). Minister Bartenstein welcomed the Commission's proposal, its de-regulatory character and especially the CoOP as the cornerstone of the directive. Austria was seen as one of the big beneficiaries of the proposal, and no criticism was raised regarding the inclusion of services of general economic interest.

Parliamentary attention for the directive started to increase only during the summer of 2004. It was again the centre-left parties that first reacted to the discussions on the European level and in other member states, and to the protests of national interest groups. Once the SPÖ and the Greens took a closer look at the directive and adapted their critical stance on it, they started to criticise the minister in the parliament repeatedly for his positive position and, by doing so, also tried to 'wake up' the governing parties who until then had not paid any attention to the directive (Int24:373).

And indeed, while in the first debates the governing parties clearly supported the minister's position in the course of the discussions they became more critical. While members of the ÖVP raised their critique mainly 'off the record' (Int35:213; Int24:515), BZÖ members also publicly criticised the minister for his, in their view, too positive position (Austrian Parliament, 2005). Inside the government, some ministries also took a more reserved position when they had to reply to the SPÖ's inquiries. As a result, the FEML gave in to this internal critique step-by-step and adopted a more critical, although still basically supportive, position (e.g. Int10:43; plenary protocol XXII/124: 65, 82).

In November 2006, another change in the Austrian position occurred. At a social-partner meeting in Brussels, Austrian chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel (ÖVP) surprisingly called on the Commission to withdraw its draft and to replace it by a new one that would prevent social dumping and should not threaten member states' systems of public services (BKA 2005). After a short delay, also minister Bartenstein and his civil servants adapted to this position (BMWA 2006).

This change in the Austrian position this time was not the result of inter-party or intra-governmental discussions, though. Rather it was a reaction to the ongoing and still increasing public critique on the directive. As members of governing- and opposition parties stated, strategic electoral considerations within the ÖVP played an important factor in this context. At this time, the ÖVP had just faced a major defeat at a regional election and therefore wanted to improve its social profile for an upcoming national election (Int24:263; Int25:78, also Int28:181). Giving up its previous position, however, was clearly alleviated by the fact that - at this point - it had become already clear that the initial Commission draft would not get sufficient support either in the EP or in the Council. Hence, the costs for the government from a policy-seeking perspective were modest.

6. Conclusion

This article takes up recent arguments that EU decision-making should be politicised to strengthen the electoral link between the institutions on the European level and the citizens on the national level (Hix 2008; Føllesdal and Hix 2006; Zürn 2006). To advance this debate, the article discussed how a *top down* politicisation through polarising Commission proposals would affect the way national parliaments fulfil their citizen- and government-related functions in the European Union.

Looking at national parliaments' *citizen-related* functions, I have argued that greater polarising of legislative proposals helps to overcome parliaments' current reluctance to publicly discuss and compete on EU issues because such proposals change the incentive structure of those large centrist parties that are able to enforce broad parliamentary debates. In a second step, I have argued that EU politicisation also improves the way national parliaments fulfil their *government-related* functions because it increases their attention for Council decision-making, and hence reduces the risk that ministers pursue idiosyncratic positions.

The empirical findings of the study on the debates in Germany and Austria about the Services directive clearly support the argument that politicisation stimulates open parliamentary debates in which national parties discuss and justify their different views. Once the Services directive's 'polarising' nature had been detected and it had become politicised, the directive was publicly discussed several times in both parliaments. Additionally, a number of parliamentary motions and inquiries forced the government, the governing parties, but also the opposition parties to explain and justify their position.

These debates also clearly disclosed the differences between the parties in the parliament. (Centre-) Right parties welcomed the Commission's approach of a de-regulatory framework-directive covering basically the whole services sector. To some extent, they also welcomed the inclusion of services of general economic interest and the CoOP as the directive's main instrument. (Centre-) Left parties, except for the Left Party in Germany, were also in favour of

a deeper integration of the services market. However, they feared that a comprehensive approach, as was included in the first draft, based exclusively on de-regulation in a field as diverse as the services-sector, would probably create more problems than it would solve. Therefore, these parties favoured a more restrictive approach, where remaining barriers should be removed later via sectoral directives and EU-wide regulatory minimum standards.

The results also support the argument that politicisation increases parliamentary attention for, and hence control over, EU decision-making—which leads to a better alignment of the actors sitting in the Council. In both countries, the phase before politicisation was marked by a classical principal-agent problem. First, there were large *information asymmetries* between the parliaments and the ministries in charge. Not only did parliamentary parties fail to publicly discuss the directive, they did not engage with it at all. Information asymmetries were removed only after about six months, when parliaments were woken up by the debates on the European level and interest group protests in the member states.

Second, not removing these asymmetries would have been problematic as in both countries there was a substantial (Germany) or at least significant (Austria) heterogeneity of interests between the ministers in charge and the parliamentary majority. In Germany, minister Clement took a very positive position on the directive, while both governing parties later rejected the Commission's draft completely. In Austria, the governing parties did not oppose the draft completely. Still, they took a much more reserved position on the directive than the Austrian minister in charge, Martin Bartenstein. However, once the parties had been woken up and noticed the mismatch between their own and their minister's position, they entered into a debate with their government, which in the end forced both ministers to adapt their position to their principals' interests.

Of course, generalisations from these findings to other examples of EU decision-making - as well as to the general ability of politicisation to strengthen the electoral link between national parliaments and citizens in EU decision-making - have to be made with care. First, this paper only shows that there were public debates in the parliaments. It did not examine, whether and to what extent, these debates were indeed absorbed by the media and - as a consequence - the national electorate. Second, given its left-right nature and the fact that it fit perfectly with established dimensions of party contestation in both parliaments, the Services directive is certainly a *most-likely* case for finding parliamentary debates on EU issues.

Still, what the results suggest is, first, that addressing a political question, on which parties left and right of the centre provide different answers, may be a necessary, but not necessarily sufficient, condition for a legislative proposal to cause broad plenary debates. In addition, the proposal itself needs to cause polarisation. Both Commission proposals (the initial draft and the revised draft) were dealing with the same question ('How to regulate the internal market for services?'). Only the first draft, however, generated comprehensive parliamentary

debates. These debates were driven mainly by centre-left social democratic parties. And it was only they who could do so, because they were large/powerful enough to repeatedly put the issue on the plenary agenda. Once the Commission presented its revised, 'centrist', draft that took Social democrats on board again, debates stopped quickly. The only parties now still opposing the directive (the Left Party in Germany and the Green Party in Austria) simply did not have sufficient power to keep them on their parliaments' plenary agenda.

Second, in contrast to other views (cf. Ladrech 2007), the results also suggest that politicisation can be imposed on parties top down and that even internal differences do not necessarily lead parties to suppress an issue. While, for example, German Social democrats were heavily divided on the issue initially, this did not detain them from raising the issue. Rather, it simply forced them to agree on a joint position internally before politicising the issue. In sum, while parliamentary parties both in scholarly and political debates are often criticised for hardly debating EU issues in public, this study did not reveal any hints that parties themselves try to avoid such discussions. What they seem to need, however, is something to compete on in the first place.

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Public Parliamentary Activities and Open Methods of Coordination

Rik de Ruiter

Abstract

This article investigates for the United Kingdom and the Netherlands how MPs of opposition parties go public with information on the performance of national policies from six Open Methods of Coordination (OMCs), and to what extent country differences in parliamentary procedures and the set-up of democratic systems matter in this context. The empirical findings indicate that Dutch MPs use more information from OMC reports to shame the incumbent government than British MPs. In both parliaments these shaming activities take primarily place in committee meetings and have no link with the newspaper coverage on OMCs. Activities of MPs aimed at going public with information from OMC reports established only a weak link between OMCs and the citizens in EU member states.

1. Introduction

Although regulations and directives remain the main output of European integration, new modes of governance (NMGs) - such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) - gained prominence in the EU decision-making process in the last decade. Through the publication at the EU level of OMC reports, on the performance of national policies and the sharing of information on policy practices between member states, national governments can gain insights on the performance of national policies. From the start of the OMC processes the European Commission and the member states were aware that their introduction could go hand in hand with the introduction of a new democratic deficit due to the dominance of national executives in OMCs at the EU level. Hence, the architects of the OMC included in the design of the method the promise of openness to stakeholders, MPs and the public in order to guarantee the input legitimacy of the method (Buchs 2008b; Smismans 2008; Zeitlin 2008; MacPhail 2010). The European Commission fulfilled its part of this promise by publishing online OMC-related documents, including reports with country-specific information on the performance of national policies. Yet, it is unclear to what extent this information is known among a larger group of actors at the national level other than only to representatives of the government, and whether this larger group of actors discussed the country-specific information on the performance of policies in publicly accessible fora (Kroger 2009a; De La Porte 2010).

This paper looks at the public parliamentary aspects of the promise of openness included in the institutional design of OMCs and aims to answer two questions: how do MPs go public with information on the performance of national policies from OMC reports, and to what extent do country differences in parliamentary procedures and the set-up of democratic systems matter in this context? In this paper two possibilities are identified for MPs to go public with country-specific information on the performance of national policies from OMC reports; i.e. i) shaming the incumbent government by MPs from opposition parties in the parliamentary arena with the use of information from OMC reports and ii) MPs from opposition parties influencing journalists to raise attention for these parliamentary shaming activities in the media. These two strategies could contribute to raising wider awareness for OMCs in national politics and for the public at large. This paper is especially interested in the first possibly, but also pays some attention to the presence of OMC related parliamentary activities in newspaper coverage.

In the next section background information is provided on the origin and functioning of OMCs, the literature on the involvement of MPs in OMCs is reviewed and the two possibilities for MPs to go public with information from OMCs are elaborated on. Second, hypotheses are formulated on possible country differences with regard to the frequency of the shaming activities in the parliamentary arena by MPs of opposition parties. Next, information is provided on the data collection and analysis to assess to what extent the two possibilities to go public with information obtained from OMC reports are used in practice by MPs from opposition parties, and how country differences in the use of OMC-related parliamentary shaming activities can be explained. Fourth, results are presented of the analysis of parliamentary and media data on six OMCs for the United Kingdom (UK) and the Netherlands in the period 1996/1999-2009. In the concluding section it is assessed to what extent the activities of MPs aimed at going public with information from OMC reports provide a link between new modes of EU governance and the citizens in EU member states.

2. Open Methods of Coordination: origin, functioning and openness

The heads of state and government of the EU member states codified the OMC in 2000 by including four elements in the Lisbon presidency conclusions, together forming the institutional infrastructure of an OMC (Council of the European Union 2000).[1] The complete infrastructure of the OMC consists of guidelines/objectives, indicators and benchmarks, reporting via National Action Plans (NAPs), and peer reviews. In subsequent years these four elements came to function as a template for implementing the OMCs education, Research and Development (R&D), e-Europe/i2010 (internet), social inclusion, and pensions. Because of the use of this template national governments play the central role in all OMCs. They approve by qualified majority in the Council the guidelines, indicators and

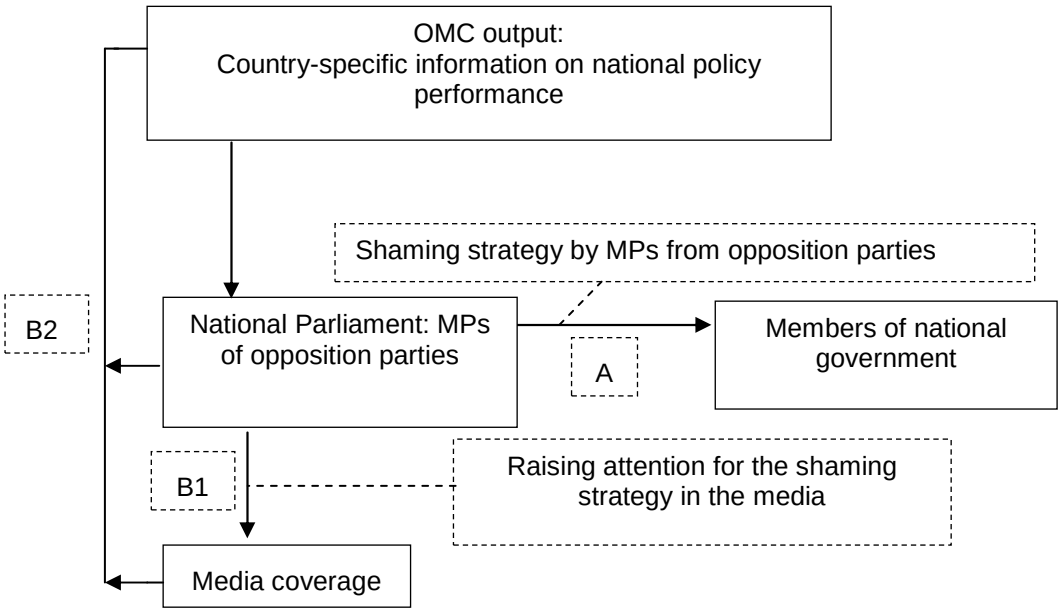
[1] This OMC template was strongly inspired by the Luxembourg process, designed in 1997 to establish the European Employment Strategy (EES). The latter strategy is referred to in this article as the OMC employment.

benchmarks on which the different national policies are scored, and formulate NAPs in which it is specified how they plan to improve their policies. The respective European Commission DGs and experts of national ministries identify the factors that cause a national policy to perform best and review the NAPs and policies of the member states in peer learning groups. The Commission and the Council draw up joint reports in which a summary is given of the progress made in each member state towards the objectives and worst and best policy practices are identified. Although these reports are non-binding, they do contain information on the performance of national policies for each member state – both worst and best policy practices are mentioned – including recommendations on how to improve dysfunctional policies. The reports are publicly available and are the main information source from OMCs on the performance of national policies.

It is claimed in this paper that MPs have two possibilities to go public with information from OMC reports. First, MPs of opposition parties can 'shame' the incumbent government in the parliamentary arena with the use of information from OMC reports (Weishaupt 2009; De Ruiter 2010; Tholoniat 2010; Føllesdal 2011). Such a shaming strategy can lead to greater contestability of national policies of the incumbent government when the strategy is used in public meetings of parliamentary committees and in plenary debates and is documented in the minutes and are made publicly available afterwards (see A in figure 1).

Second, MPs from opposition parties can influence journalists to try to raise attention for the OMC-related parliamentary shaming activities in the media (Meyer 2005). This second possibility for MPs to go public with information on the performance of national policies from OMC reports can result in direct references in the media to the OMC-related shaming activities by MPs (see B1 in figure 1), or more indirectly by references in the media to the bad performance of national policies in OMCs around the same time as MPs shame the incumbent government with the use of information included in OMC reports (see B2 in figure 1). In figure 1 an overview is provided of the relationships under study in this paper. Because of the focus of this Collection of Working Papers on the communicative function of parliaments through parliamentary channels, more attention is paid in this paper to the first possibility for MPs to go public, i.e. shaming the incumbent government by MPs of opposition parties with the use of country-specific information from OMCs in parliamentary committee meetings and plenary debates.

Figure 1: Two types of OMC related public parliamentary activity



Until now, scholars paying attention to the practical involvement of MPs in OMCs came to a rather negative assessment, claiming that MPs are not interested in OMCs because they judge their impact as marginal (Duina and Raunio 2007: 298-299), and are not able to scrutinize OMCs, due to the absence of scrutiny rules for OMCs, the open-ended nature of OMCs, and the concentration of information from OMC policy comparisons in the executive branch outside of the control of the legislature (Armstrong 2005; Jacobsson, 2005: 123; Visser 2005: 199-200; Raunio 2006; Benz, 2007; Tsakatika 2007; Papadopoulos 2010; Føllesdal 2011). However, these assessments are often based on the study of the OMC employment and OMC social inclusion, and do not look empirically at the actual amount of information on the performance of national policies which is publicly available for MPs to use. Hence, it is impossible to assess, on the basis of previous studies, to what extent MPs learned over the years how to use information from OMC reports to, for example, criticise the performance of policies of the incumbent government. This study aims to shed light on these issues.

A second question answered in this paper is to what extent country differences in parliamentary procedures and the set-up of democratic systems matter for the extent to which shaming strategies are used by MPs. It is expected that the 'shaming' public parliamentary activity related to OMCs is not present to the same extent in the countries under study in this article, i.e. the Netherlands and the UK. On the basis of two structural differences between the parliamentary system of the UK and the Netherlands, three

hypotheses are formulated. First, the formal procedures with regard to parliamentary questioning differ between national parliaments of EU member states. Russo and Wiberg (2010) rank the UK parliament higher than the Dutch parliament on the formal procedures with regard to parliamentary questioning of the government, meaning that MPs in the UK have more opportunities to ask questions than in the Netherlands. In the next section it will be assessed whether the difference in formal procedures on parliamentary questioning between the two countries influences the public parliamentary activities related to OMCs in practice. This leads to the following hypothesis:

1. MPs of opposition parties in a parliamentary system with extensive formal procedures to question the government, more often go public with information from OMC reports to shame the incumbent government, than MPs of opposition parties in a parliamentary system with more restrictive formal procedures to ask questions of the government.

Second, parliaments in EU member states differ from each other with regard to the degree they are a 'debating' or 'working parliament'. In a working parliament, parliamentary activities take primary place in the parliamentary committee meetings, whereas in debating parliaments, discussions more often take place in plenary sessions. As a result, working parliaments often have a more developed committee system than debating parliaments. Hence, it can be expected that:

2. MPs of opposition parties in a debating parliament more often go public in plenary debates, with information from OMC reports, to shame the incumbent government than MPs of opposition parties in a working parliament.

Third, and related to the second hypothesis, working parliaments have a give-and-take relationship between the legislature and the executive, with the latter trying to achieve a broad consensus for its plans, also among MPs of opposition parties. Debating parliaments are characterised by a more confrontational attitude between the government and the MPs in opposition. This increases the likelihood that MPs in a debating parliament are more eager to shame the incumbent government with information from OMC reports – both in committee meetings and plenary debates – than MPs in working parliaments. This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

3. MPs of opposition parties in a debating parliament more often go public with information from OMC reports to shame the incumbent government than MPs of opposition parties in a working parliament.

Whereas the second hypothesis only formulated an expectation of the difference in number of plenary debates between working and debating parliaments, the third hypothesis formulates an expectation of the total of parliamentary shaming activities in committee

meetings and plenary debates and the difference between working and debating parliaments.

Table 1 gives a summary of how, according to the three hypotheses, the main differences between the Dutch and British parliamentary systems are likely to impact on public parliamentary activities by MPs of opposition parties in the context of OMCs.

Table 1: Parliamentary procedures and OMC related shaming strategies by MPs of opposition parties in the UK and the Netherlands

	H1: parliamentary questioning		**H2/H3: type of parliament**		
	Formal procedures	Expected degree of shaming through written or oral questions	Working or debating parliament	Expected degree of shaming in plenary debates	Expected degree of total shaming in public parliamentary arena
The Netherlands	Restrictive	**Less**	Working	**Less**	**Less**
United Kingdom	Extensive	**More**	Debating	**More**	**More**

3. Data collection and analysis

The occurrence of the two possibilities for going public for MPs with information from OMC reports on the performance of national policies is studied through an analysis of parliamentary debates in the Dutch and British Upper and Lower House. The OMCs studied in this article are explicitly labeled as such by the European Commission and the Council. Multilateral Surveillance tools adopted at the EU level, that were in practice never developed as OMCs or only recently introduced, were not included in the analysis. These criteria resulted in the selection of the following OMCs: employment, social inclusion, pensions, education, R&D, and e-Europe/i2010 (internet). The period under study for the OMC employment runs from 1996 till 2009. Because of the later starting date for the other five OMCs the time period studied for these OMCs runs from 1999 till 2009. The end date of

December 2009 is chosen because of the new EU2020 strategy launched at the beginning of 2010, which led to a considerable restructuring of the patchwork-structure of OMCs that emerged during the last decade.

The Netherlands and the United Kingdom were selected in this study because these member states differ from each other on the main independent variables of the three hypotheses (see table 1). The bicameral parliamentary system of the Netherlands is a working parliament. It has a highly developed committee system, while the formal procedures to ask parliamentary questions are somewhat restrictive (Russo and Wiberg 2010). The bicameral system of the UK is a debating parliament with, as a result, a strong focus on plenary debates and a less developed committee system. Also practical reasons are underlying the choice for the UK and the Netherlands as country studies in this paper. In both countries the minutes of plenary and committee meetings are public and easily accessible via databases on the internet.

The use of information from OMC reports by MPs is measured through the coding of minutes of plenary debates and public committee meetings, and questions by MPs. Documents for coding were selected through the use of search strings consisting of references to the European Union and the policy field on which the OMC is adopted. The documents were obtained from the databases on www.overheid.nl and http://www.parliament.uk, which provide access to all documents related to the plenary and committee debates of the Dutch and British Upper and Lower House. The parliamentary documents were analysed in detail and subsequently coded. When an MP of an opposition party, in a written or oral question, criticized the incumbent government using information from OMC reports, this was coded as one shaming question. Questions were only counted if they were explicitly addressed to the government and if the government was required to give an answer to them. An example of parliamentary shaming is the question asked to the Dutch government by three social-democratic MPs in the Lower House of the biggest opposition party (PvdA: Hamer, Van Dam en Tichelaar) on the low number of students obtaining a degree in technical studies at Dutch universities. This information was obtained from the OMC policy comparisons and was summarized in one of the joint reports of the OMC education.[2]

The number of shaming questions is aggregated for six month periods for each OMC (January-June; July-December) in the period 1996/1999-2009. A distinction was made in the data between OMC-related parliamentary shaming questions (in oral or written form) in plenary debates and in committee meetings. The latter category was further divided in ‘written questions’ and ‘oral questions’.

[2] Aanhangsel van de Handelingen, Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer, met de daarop door de regering gegeven antwoorden, kvr18297, August 14 2003.

The media coverage on OMCs and/or the shaming activity of MPs of opposition parties was measured for the same periods in both EU member states through a content analysis of national newspapers included in the Lexis-Nexus database. For the Netherlands this resulted in a study of articles occurring in the following newspapers: *Algemeen Dagblad*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *de Volkskrant*, *Trouw*, *Het Parool*. In the case of the UK, articles for the following newspapers were studied: *The Independent*, *The Times/Sunday Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Sun*, *The Daily Mirror/Sunday Mirror*. The articles were selected with the same search strings as used in the case of the parliamentary databases.

The coding results were used to construct a dataset with the two countries as the units of analysis and the parliamentary questions by MPs of opposition parties as units of observation, aggregated for the six OMCs per six months. Regression models were estimated to test the third hypothesis,[3] with the total number of parliamentary shaming activities by MPs of opposition parties as the dependent variable. Several variables were included in the regression model, in order to control for effects unrelated to the differences between the British and the Dutch parliamentary system that are expected to have an impact on the extent of public parliamentary activities in the context of OMCs.[4] The political orientation of the minister responsible for the policy field on which an OMC is adopted is included as a variable in the analysis. This variable is coded as follows: 0 = left (NL: PVDA; UK: Labour); 1 = centre (NL: CDA, D'66; UK: Liberal democrats); 2 = right (NL: VVD; UK: Conservatives). This variable controls for the possibility that a minister of an 'issue owning' political party is in office. It can be expected that a right-wing opposition party is generally more critical towards a (centre-) left wing minister responsible for social policies – a so-called issue owner – than a (centre-) right wing minister responsible for social policies. Because such a dynamic is not related to the differences in parliamentary procedures in the two member states, this party political factor needs to be controlled for. A second control variable measures the change in government in a six month period (0 = no change; 1 = change). When changes in government take place it is likely that the use of information from OMCs by MPs and journalists is affected, possibly leading to a decrease in OMC-related parliamentary questions or newspaper articles. Hence, it is needed to control for the influence of changes in government after elections or government crises, in order to assess the influence of the differences in the set-up of parliamentary systems in the Netherlands and the UK. Third, other period effects were controlled for by including the total number of parliamentary documents related with policy fields on which an OMC is adopted. This variable controls for

[3] Only the third hypothesis is tested in a quantitative way. The other two hypotheses could not be tested quantitatively because of the low number of observations in each sub-category (i.e. parliamentary oral or written questions and plenary or committee debates). In the next section descriptive results are presented related with these two hypotheses, in order to shed light on the country differences in plenary debates/committee debates and oral/written questions.

[4] The degree of Euroscepticism of MPs is not controlled for because the OMC touches upon national policies and does not result in any shift of competences from the national to the EU level. This is also explicitly recognised by MPs in the UK and the Netherlands, who expressed support in parliamentary discussions of the government on the principles of cross-national policy learning through OMCs.

fluctuations in parliamentary shaming questions that cannot be attributed to the use of OMCs, but are related to a change in the general attention for a policy field. The dependent variable with a time-lag of half a year is included in the analysis to control for the series past. Ordinary least square regression models with panel corrected standard errors were calculated in order to correct for problems of autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity (Beck and Katz 1995).

4. Results

Before we can discuss the results of the data collection and analyses on the public parliamentary activities in the Netherlands and the UK, it is necessary to assess which information is included in the reports published in the context of the six OMCs on the performance of Dutch and British policies. Subsequently, the use of this information by MPs of opposition parties in the Netherlands and the UK is assessed. The results section concludes with discussing the three hypotheses in light of the empirical findings.

4.1 The performance of Dutch and British policies in OMC reports

Negative aspects of Dutch employment policies mentioned by the Commission and Council in the context of the OMC employment are the lower participation rates by women measured in hours, partially ineffective back to work schemes, differences in earning power between men and women, and the higher unemployment rates among ethnic minorities. In the context of the OMC social inclusion, critical remarks were made with regard to inefficient integration courses for ethnic minorities, insufficient attention for gender imbalances in anti-poverty measures, and shortages in childcare. After 2005 the social inclusion agenda was discussed together with country-specific reporting in the OMC pensions through joint reports on social protection. In these reports, some concerns are raised with regard to the financial sustainability of the Dutch pension system due to its reliance on the stock market. In the context of the OMC education, the Commission and Council are critical of the percentage of early school leavers, and the low number of women studying mathematics, science and technology. Criticism is voiced at the EU level through the OMC R&D on the low public and private investment in R&D policies in the Netherlands and the low number of R&D related public-private partnerships. In the context of the OMC e-Europe/i2010, the Commission indicates that Dutch government services became only recently available online, which results in a low use of these online-services by the Dutch population.

In the UK, according to joint employment reports published in the context of the OMC employment, too few policy efforts are made to fight the long term unemployment, which is especially high among people with poor basic skills. Moreover, the UK has a large gender pay gap, low quality child care provisions and less active labour market policies than presented by the government. The joint reports on social protection and social exclusion make general statements on the need for the UK to reduce persistent inequalities, such as

those in income, health, skills and life chances. The social protection joint reports are more critical towards the adequacy of pensions in the UK and the decline in active participation in private pensions, causing a high risk-on-poverty among pensioners, particularly for those on low incomes. In joint reports published in the context of the OMC education, the Council and the Commission mention the relatively high share of early school leavers in the UK, ranging between 18.4% in 2000 and 13.0% in 2006. The reports published in the OMC R&D express concern about the relatively low UK government spending on R&D and the absence of a national target in line with the EU 3 per cent R&D investment target. In the e-Europe/i2010 benchmarking reports it is noticed that the take-up of eGovernment services by British citizens and enterprises slumped after 2008 and that the UK scores below average on ICT R&D intensity.

In sum, the OMC reports published at the EU level, on Dutch and British national policies, contain sufficient information that can be used at the national level in the assessment of the underperformance of national policies. In the next two sections it is determined whether this information from OMCs gained presence in the national parliamentary arena, and was referred to by, respectively, Dutch and British MPs of opposition parties and newspaper journalists.

4.2 Shaming

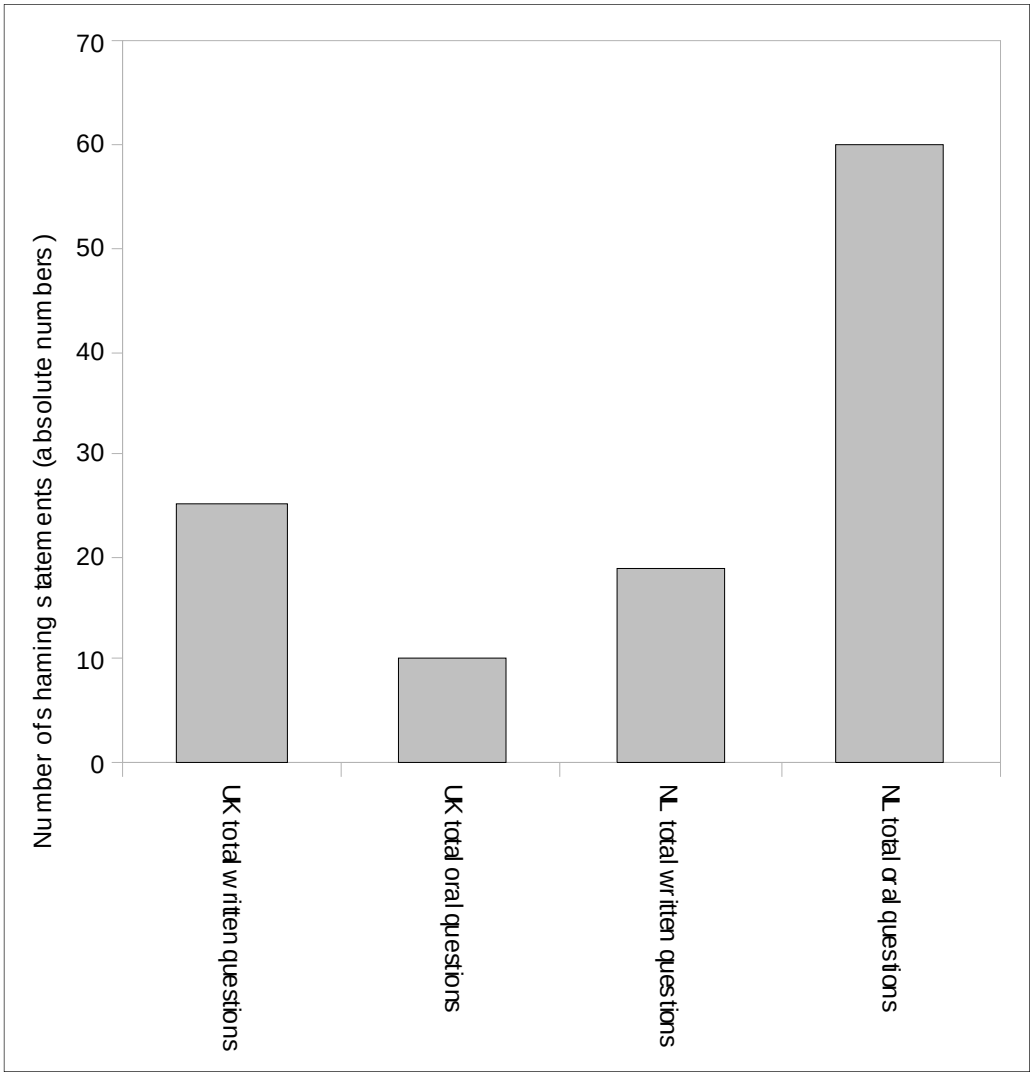
The data collected on the Dutch and British parliamentary debates show that Dutch MPs hardly made any use of information from the OMCs social inclusion, pensions and e-Europe/i2010. Before 2005 the OMC employment is the most used OMC by Dutch MPs. The information from the OMC employment is primarily used by (center) left-wing opposition parties (PvdA, SP, Groen Links). The topics on which the Dutch governments were shamed by these parties were the low participation on the labour market (measured in hours), ineffective back to work schemes and differences in earning power between men and women. Information from the OMC education is used by MPs of opposition parties to put emphasis on the poor performance of Dutch policies on the benchmark with regard to early school leavers and the low number of students in technical studies. In the context of the OMC R&D, MPs of opposition parties – from left to right – use information from peer review reports to criticize the low private investments in R&D in the Netherlands vis-à-vis other EU member states.

In the case of the UK, the shaming activity is highest for the OMC R&D, touching upon the low investment of the government and companies in innovation and ICT. The other OMCs have no more than 2 shaming questions.

The empirical findings further indicate that there are differences in shaming strategies by MPs between the UK and the Netherlands. These differences are only partially in line with the three hypotheses formulated. First, the type and number of parliamentary questions

asked by MPs differed for the UK and the Netherlands, resulting in different OMC related shaming activities by MPs from opposition parties. The amount of oral questions asked by opposition MPs is much higher in the case of the Netherlands than in the UK. The number of written questions is higher in the UK than in the Netherlands (see figure 2). These findings hold both in absolute numbers as well as in percentages of the total of shaming activities in each member state (see figure 3).

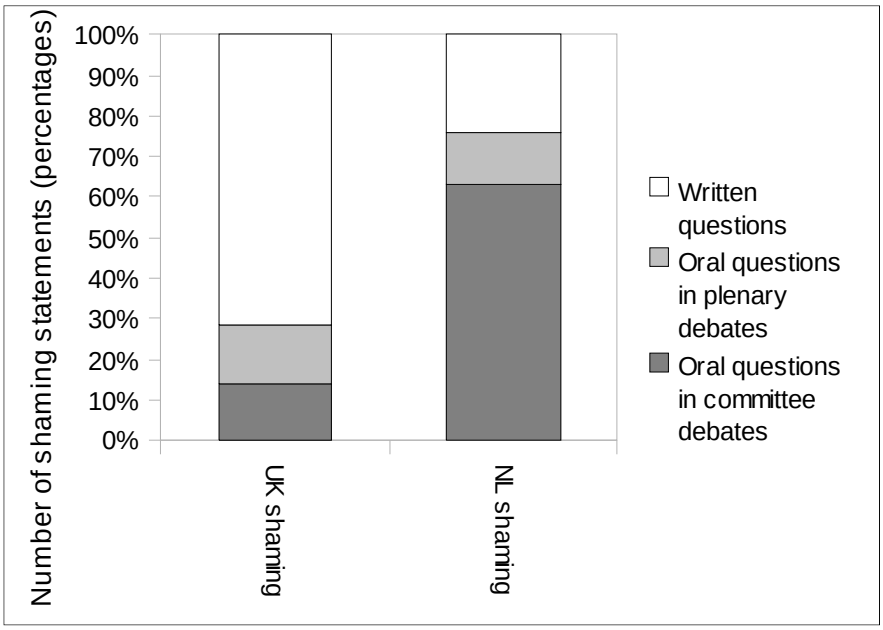
Figure 2: shaming questions by MPs of opposition parties



Most of the questions are asked in committee meetings, both in the UK and the Netherlands (see figure 3). The oral question category is high in the Netherlands because of the many committee meetings scheduled and the oral questions asked in those meetings. Here the 'working parliament' characteristic – with its developed committee system – of the Dutch parliament comes clearly to the fore. The oral questions, in the Netherlands, are most of the

time asked in specialized standing committees (i.e. on economic affairs, education, social policy, employment) and not in the European Affairs Committee.

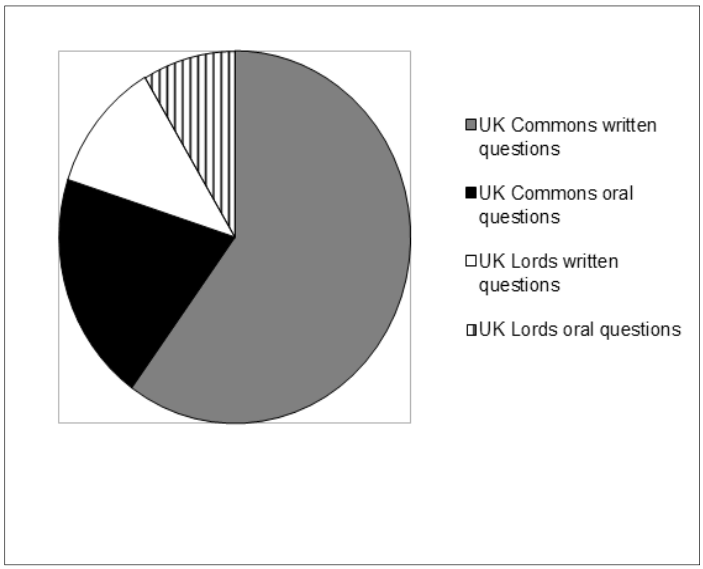
Figure 3: written and oral questions in plenary and committee debates (in %, UK/NL)



In the UK parliament oral questions are more rare (see figure 3). The shaming strategies of British MPs consist mainly of criticism on the incumbent government in written questions, based on information from committee reports of the European Scrutiny Committee, with the use of information on the bad performance of British policies included in the joint reports published in the context of OMCs. The European Committees used to be the most developed committees in the rather underdeveloped committee systems of the British parliament.

Whereas in the Dutch parliament only MPs of opposition parties in the Lower House ask questions to shame the incumbent government with the use of information from OMC reports, in the UK a more diverse picture emerges with regard to the OMC related shaming activities by MPs in the Upper and Lower House (see figure 4).

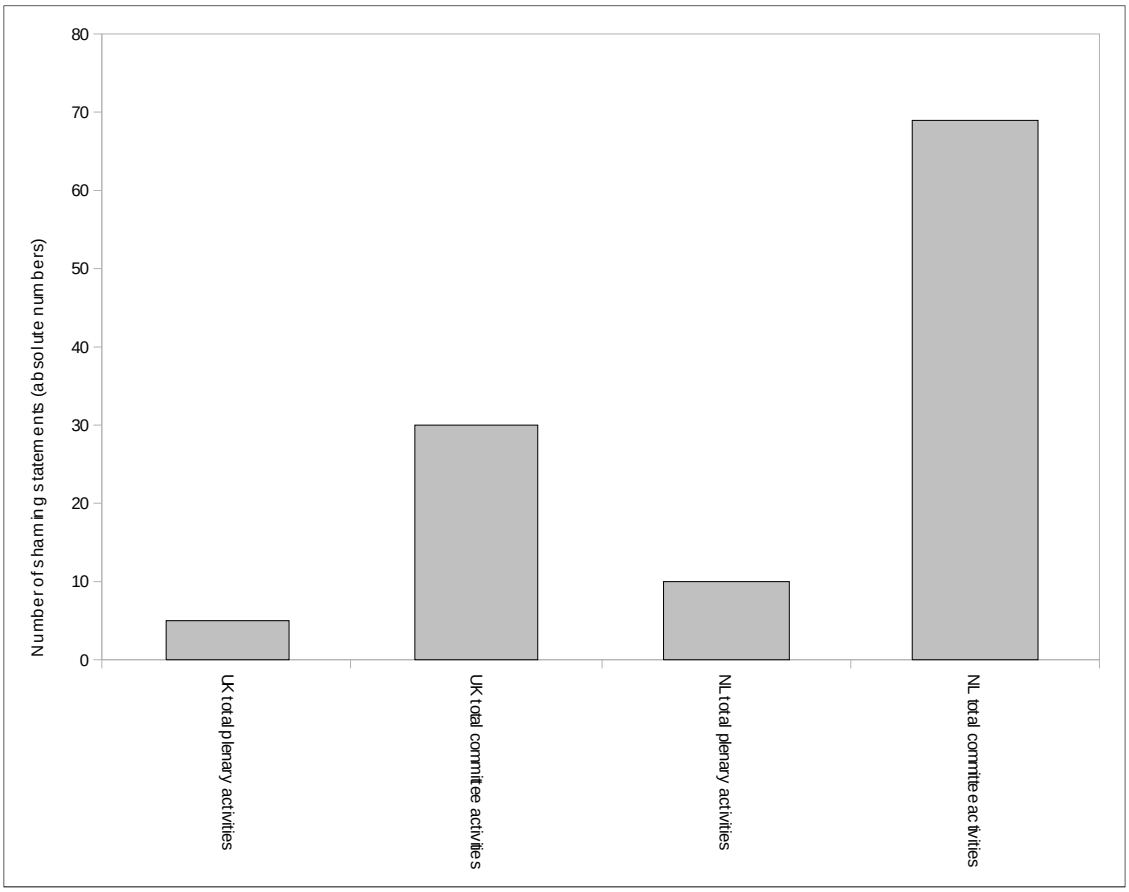
Figure 4: Shaming questions in the House of Commons and House of Lords in the UK



In the UK, the bulk of the shaming questions are asked by members of the House of Commons, both in written and in oral form. However, a considerable number of questions are asked by the Lords as well. Members of the House of Lords ask almost as many written as oral questions.

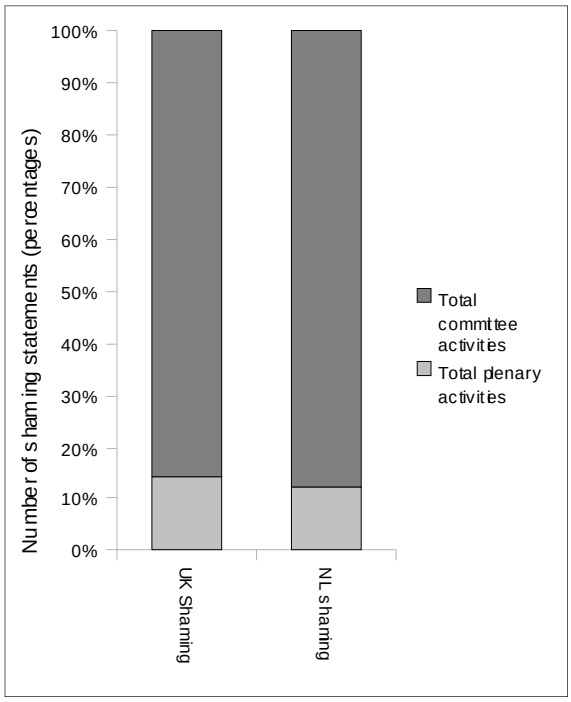
A second set of findings, relevant for testing the hypotheses formulated in this paper, touches upon the topic - in which sub-arena of the parliamentary arena the OMC-related parliamentary shaming takes place, i.e. in plenary debates or in committee meetings. It was hypothesised that in a working parliament the parliamentary activities primarily take place in the parliamentary committee meetings, whereas in debating parliaments, discussions relatively more often take place in plenary sessions. As a result, working parliaments such as the Dutch parliament often have a more developed committee system than debating parliaments, such as the British House of Commons and House of Lords. The results indicate, however, that MPs of opposition parties in the Netherlands make (percentagewise) as much use of plenary debates for their OMC related shaming strategies as British MPs (see figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5: shaming questions by MPs of opposition parties in committee meetings or plenary debates (in absolute numbers)



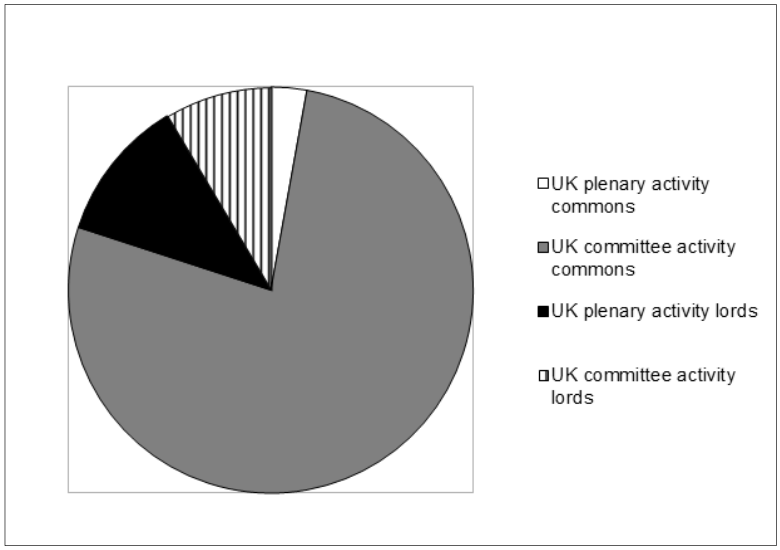
Although the absolute numbers are higher in the Netherlands for the number of shaming activities in plenary debates (see figure 5), the percentage difference between the two parliaments is marginal (see figure 6; around 12% in the Netherlands and 13% in the UK). In sum, the second hypothesis does not hold because the degree of plenary shaming activity is the same for the Netherlands and the UK.

Figure 6: shaming in plenary/committee debates (in %, UK/NL)



Apart from this similarity, there are also differences between the two countries. In the UK the Upper House is rather active, whereas the Upper House in the Netherlands is not involved in any kind of OMC-related shaming activity (see figure 7). Especially striking is the relative large amount of shaming activity in plenary debates in the House of Lords compared to the shaming activity in committee meetings of the House of Lords.

Figure 7: Shaming questions in plenary/committee in the House of Commons/Lords in the UK



The third hypothesis formulated an expectation on the overall difference between the UK parliament and Dutch parliament across all categories, i.e. written and oral questions in plenary and committee debates in the Upper and Lower House. It was stated that working parliaments - like the Dutch parliament - have a give-and-take relationship between the legislature and the executive, with the latter trying to get broad consensus for its plans. Debating parliaments are characterised by a more confrontational attitude between the government and the MPs in opposition. This makes it likely that MPs in a debating parliament are more eager to shame the incumbent government with information from OMC reports than MPs in working parliaments.

We already saw that MPs in the Netherlands ask the government in total more OMC related shaming questions than British MPs (see figures 2 and 5). When we control for changes in government, the political orientation of the incumbent government, and the total attention by MPs for a policy field on which an OMC is adopted, this country difference still holds. The results of the regression models estimated show that Dutch MPs use significantly more information from OMCs to publicly criticize the incumbent government than the British MPs (see table 2). There is on average almost one shaming question more every half year made by Dutch MPs of opposition parties than by British MPs of opposition parties. This is a rather small difference between the two countries, however, the difference is not random.

Table 2: Shaming questions by MPs, six OMCs, country differences

	Model I	**Model II**
Country	-.731**	-.715***
	(.293)	(.173)
Change of government	.203	
	(.234)	
Left political orientation	-.065	
	(.278)	
Right political orientation	-.513	
	(.323)	
Total parliamentary documents on policy field	.000	
	(.000)	
Lagged variable shaming	.435***	.456***
	(.058)	(.056)
Constant	1.679***	1.579***
	(.357)	(.292)
N	265	265
F-test	21.304***	62.173***
Adjusted R-squared	.315	.316

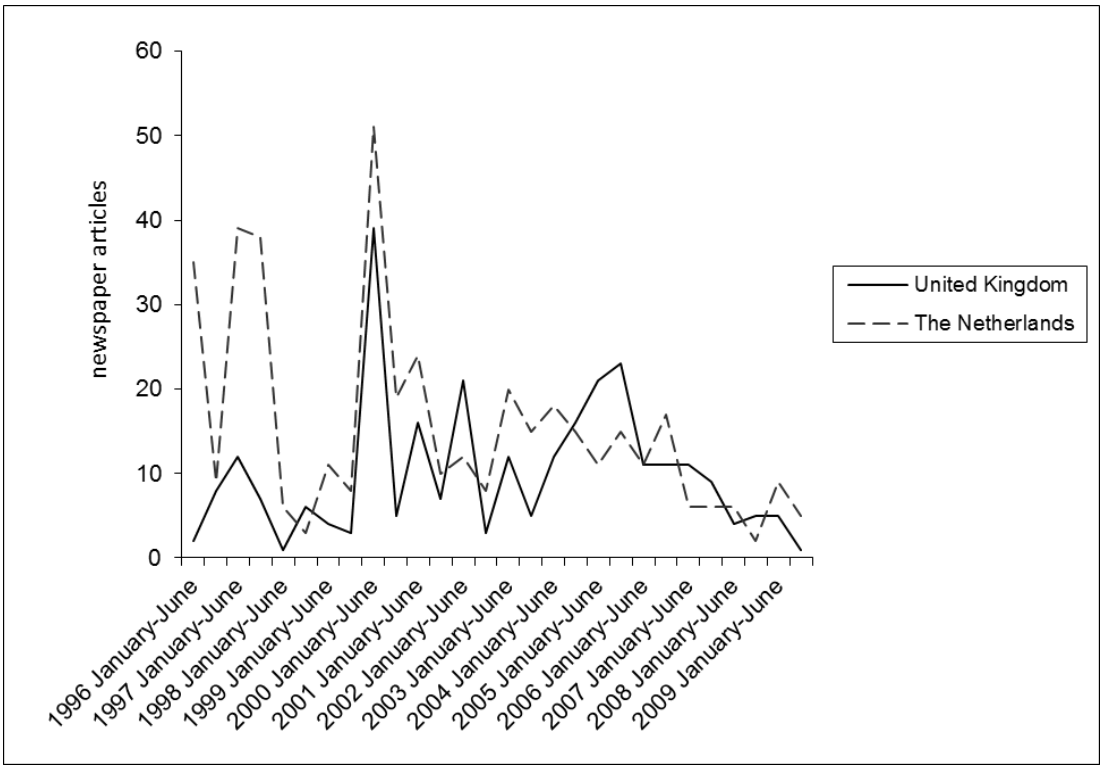
* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. OLS-regression models. Panel Corrected Standard Errors are shown in parentheses. Dependent variable is 'shaming government by MPs from opposition parties with the use of country-specific information from OMCs'.

In sum, MPs in the Dutch (working) parliament more often go public with information from OMC reports to shame the incumbent government than MPs in the British (debating) parliament. This finding is in contrast with the expectation formulated in the third hypothesis.

4.3 Media coverage

The empirical findings indicate that the public parliamentary activities do not have a link with the media coverage on OMCs. There is no explicit reference in the collected newspaper articles to shaming strategies of MPs or other parliamentary discussions on the substance of OMCs. Moreover, the media coverage on OMCs is neutral in character, both in the UK and the Netherlands. In other words, the information from OMC reports is not used to criticize the performance of the incumbent government but has an informative function to newspaper readers. The media coverage in newspapers only referred to the launch of OMCs at the EU level on specific policy fields and did not have any 'shaming' character or report on the results of the OMC policy comparisons; i.e. the country specific information on the performance of national policies included in OMC reports.

Figure 8: Neutral media coverage on six OMCs



The fluctuations in non-parliamentary related newspaper coverage on OMCs show a somewhat similar pattern for the UK and the Netherlands (see figure 8). In the introduction of

this Collection of Working Papers the expectation was formulated that media coverage on EU issues depends on the salience of 'Europe' in a country. The empirical findings seem to confirm this expectation for the neutral media coverage on OMCs when viewed through time. The studied newspapers report on the adoption of a Treaty article on the OMC employment in the Amsterdam Treaty around 1997, and on Council summits in which attention was paid to social and employment policies and the knowledge-based society through reporting on the start-up of OMCs. In the Dutch newspapers, this led to attention for the role of the Dutch Council Presidency in the negotiations leading up to the adoption of an employment chapter in the Amsterdam Treaty (1997-1998), and in both the UK and Dutch newspapers to coverage on the introduction of a Third Way/New Labour outlook for the EU through the Lisbon agenda (2000-2001). This agenda shows strong similarities with the active labour market policies of the Dutch (led by the social democrat Wim Kok) and British government (led by the Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair) in power at the time. Figure 8 also shows that when the UK or the Netherlands held the presidency of the Council of Ministers, this goes together with higher levels of non-parliamentary related newspaper coverage on OMCs in 1997 (NL), 1998 (UK), 2004 (NL) and 2005 (UK).

In sum, the public parliamentary OMC related shaming activities by MPs of opposition parties do not have any exposure outside of the parliamentary arena; British and Dutch journalists do not find the public parliamentary activities in the context of OMCs newsworthy or do not notice the activities. The latter is most probably related to the modest public parliamentary activities of MPs in the Netherlands and the UK related with OMCs – which most of the time take place in committee meetings. On a more speculative note, the lack of media attention for OMC related parliamentary shaming activities can also be related with the absence of a strategy of Dutch and British MPs to signal to journalists that they are actually using information from OMC reports to criticize the policies of the incumbent government.

4.4 Discussion

The results of the analysis of the Dutch and British parliamentary debates lead to the rejection of the three hypotheses. First, the number of oral questions is much higher in the case of the Netherlands compared to the UK. This finding leads to the rejection of the first hypothesis. A finding which is in line with the first hypothesis touches upon the amount of written questions: written questions are more often asked by British MPs than by Dutch MPs. Second, the Dutch and British parliaments have the same degree of shaming activities by MPs of opposition parties taking place in plenary debates. Hence, the second hypothesis needs to be rejected. Third, the empirical findings indicate that the total amount of OMC related shaming activities is higher in the Netherlands than in the UK. This is against the expectation formulated in hypothesis 3.

Given the almost complete rejection of the three hypotheses, the question arises whether any alternative explanations can be identified on the basis of the data analysed. At face value, there seem to be three alternative explanations for the differences found between the two countries in OMC related parliamentary shaming activities by MPs of opposition parties. First, OMC related shaming is an activity which, most of the time, takes place in committee meetings, perhaps because the information from OMC reports is too specific for plenary debates. In other words, it seems that OMC-related shaming is an activity which is more appropriate for committee meetings. Because the committee system is more developed in the working parliament of the Netherlands compared to the debating parliament of the UK, OMC related shaming is higher in the Dutch parliamentary arena. Second, British MPs of opposition parties do not take the information in OMC reports at face value. Although British MPs support the principles of cross-national policy learning through OMCs (see also footnote 4), they often expressed their dissatisfaction with how these principles were put in practice through country-specific reporting on OMCs, which they occasionally judged to be repetitive and superficial. In contrast, Dutch MPs take the content of joint reports as given and do not criticise the structure and content of these OMC reports. This less critical approach with regard to the substance of the OMC reports by the Dutch MPs compared to the British MPs increases the likelihood that Dutch MPs use more information from OMC reports for shaming the incumbent government than British MPs. Third, previous research indicated that the better the information provision to MPs by the government on how OMCs function, the more the subsequent OMC related shaming activity by MPs of opposition parties. It has been shown that Dutch MPs receive much more information on the functioning of OMCs from their government than British MPs, resulting in less OMC related shaming by British MPs of opposition parties when compared to Dutch MPs of opposition parties (De Ruiter 2010).

5. Conclusion

This article looked at the public parliamentary aspects of the promise of openness included in the design of OMCs. Two questions were addressed: how do MPs go public in the context of OMCs, and to what extent do country differences in parliamentary procedures and the set-up of the democratic system matter in this context? With regard to the first question the analysis of the data indicates, first, that OMC reports published at the EU level on Dutch and British national policies contain sufficient information that can be used at the national level in the assessment of the underperformance of national policies. Second, this information was sometimes used by British and Dutch MPs to criticize the incumbent government for its policy choices, foremost through questions by MPs of opposition parties in committee meetings. Whereas in the Netherlands more oral questions were asked in meetings of specialized standing committees by MPs of the Lower House, in the UK more written questions were asked by members of the Lower and Upper House. In the UK the questions were more often asked in the European Affairs Committees than in the Netherlands.

The data further indicates that country differences in the set-up of the parliamentary democratic system – with either a debating or working parliament – matter for the degree of shaming exercised by MPs of opposition parties, but not as initially expected. OMC-related shaming is an activity, which may be more appropriate for committee meetings because information from OMC reports touches upon topics which are too specific for plenary debates. Hence, MPs in a parliament with a highly developed committee system (i.e. working parliaments) may be more likely to use information from OMC reports to criticise the incumbent government than MPs in a parliament with an underdeveloped committee system (i.e. debating parliaments).

On the basis of the empirical findings it can be concluded that the activities of MPs aimed at going public with information from OMC reports established only a weak link between OMCs and the citizens in member states. The parliamentary shaming activity in the Netherlands and the UK did not have any exposure outside of the parliamentary arena, because journalists did not pay attention in their reporting on OMCs to the shaming strategies by MPs of opposition parties. Because of the marginal OMC related shaming activities by British and Dutch MPs in plenary debates – which receive in general more attention by the media than committee meetings – and the stronger presence of shaming activities in committee meetings, the link established between the citizens and OMCs through the communicative function of national parliaments is weak. Moreover, in many EU member states the committee meetings take place behind closed doors and the minutes are not public. Hence, in these member states there is likely to be no link at all through the communicative function of national parliaments between the citizens and OMCs.

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III. Beyond Plenary Debates: Informing the Electorate and Defending Constituency Interests in EU affairs

The Silence of the Shepherds – How the Austrian Parliament Informs its Citizens on European Issues

Johannes Pollak and Peter Slominski

Abstract

National Parliaments have a number of functions. Yet while their legislative function and their control function have largely fallen prey to party politics in domestic as in EU politics, the information function could be a last resort for the justification, explanation and communication of executive politics. National parliaments could provide the missing link between a national electorate and ever more supranationally acting executives. But the communication and information function can also be hampered, with parliamentary communication being perceived along the lines of government and opposition only. However, little empirical evidence exists to what extent national parliaments can and want to fulfil a communication function.

This paper addresses this research lacuna by providing an in-depth study of the Austrian parliament. Its objective is to investigate and compare the communication strategies of three different sets of actors, namely (1) the parliament as an institution, (2) parliamentary groups, and (3) individual MPs, and to show how these strategies have changed over time in the context of the last three ratification debates (Nice Treaty (2001); the Constitutional (2005); Lisbon Treaty (2008)). We will analyse if and how communication tools available to the Austrian parliament including press releases, organizing events and public debates as well as recent forms of internet and web-based tools such as websites, blogs, have been used to enrich the public debate on the ratification of EU Treaties. Given the increased level of politicization of EU integration, we expect an increased level of communicative action of all three sets of actors concerned. However, we suppose that Eurosceptical parties and certain individual MPs are more active than the parliament as an institution and governmental parties.

1. Introduction

Since the end of the permissive consensus in the early 1990s, national parliaments have been increasingly conceived as one of the crucial institutions to tackle the 'democratic deficit' of the European Union (EU). Every Treaty amendment since Maastricht as well as the Laeken Declaration and the Constitutional Convention stressed the importance of national parliaments and called for their greater involvement to increase the overall legitimacy of the Union.[1] However, the main thrust of these documents lay on keeping the parliaments informed, facilitating cooperation amongst themselves and the European Parliament (EP) and expecting them to monitor the application of the principle of subsidiarity. Informing the general public on EU affairs was not considered the primary objective of national parliaments.

What has escaped scholarly attention almost entirely is the question to what extent national parliaments are communicating EU affairs. We find some analyses on plenary debates (de Wilde 2008; Maatsch 2010) but hardly any research (notable exceptions are e.g. Marschall 1999; Schüttemeyer and Siefken 2008: 504-508) has been done on how parliaments try to connect with a domestically structured public sphere, i.e. how they engage in a dialogue with its citizens and how they initiate EU-relevant debates to reduce wide-spread stereotypes and to rationalize public discourse (Marschall 2009: 218). Thus, this paper asks whether and how national parliaments have communicated the EU to their citizens. Studying public activities of parliaments requires us to take into account the institutional setting and the political culture parliaments are embedded in. Gone are the days when parliaments acted as the only institutionalized representation of the electorate, which had an independent identity and indulged itself in the control of the executive. Parliaments have to vie for the attention of publics with civil society organisations claiming to have a better understanding of politics untainted by party politics, thus being in a better position to represent. Nowadays, parliaments in Europe are dominated by party government which implies that they are under the control of those parties which support the government thereby building a union (King 1976; Clett and Cotta 2000) which hardly allows for any independent parliamentary activity. Conceiving of parliaments as collective actors (Scharpf 2000: 101) allows us to distinguish three sets of actors (Marschall 1999: 23):

(1) Parliament as an institution;
(2) Parliamentary Party Groups;
(3) Individual Members of Parliament (MP).

The Austrian Parliament serves as a test case to assess whether a strong, constitutionally granted role in EU politics impacts on its communication function. This seems even more relevant since research (Pollak and Slominski 2003; 2009) suggests that more formal rights

[1] Declaration No. 13 attached to the Treaty of Maastricht; Declaration No. 23 attached to the Treaty of Nice.

do not translate easily into significant political influence. It is by no means certain that a strong legal position of a parliament in EU politics leads to more justification of the use of parliamentary resources for a topic rather distant to citizens' preferences. At the same time the Austrian population has a long-standing tendency not to trust the European Union and its institutions (e.g. Eurobarometer 2011: 46) which makes information not easier but all the more important. Since all parliamentary parties except the far right-wing Freedom Party agree on the value added of Austria's EU membership, it can be assumed that certain communication efforts are undertaken to increase systemic legitimacy. As case studies we selected the debates around the treaty ratifications of the Nice Treaty (August 2000 – to June 2002), the Constitutional Treaty (April 2004 – December 2005), and the Lisbon Treaty (June 2007 – October 2008).

Analytically we will focus on the supply side of political communication. Thus, we will analyse the scope of information and communication with regard to EU matters. In doing so we will analyse who – at which level (parliament, parliamentary party groups, MPs) – is providing information streaming (or rather trickling) from the Austrian parliament and how it has been communicated. Since lack of data prevents a systematic analysis of the demand side, i.e. if and how these communication offers have been received by the media and the general public, we nonetheless provide some data, if available, to illustrate how many people have actually used the information supplied by the Austrian Parliament. The paper is based on quantitative data as well as on a series of semi-structured interviews with representatives of parliamentary groups[2] and officials of the administration of the Austrian parliament conducted in February and March 2011.

The paper will proceed as follows: Section two will provide a brief overview on the communication function of national parliaments in general and of the three sets of actors in particular. In section three we will present data on the activities of all three levels in the Austrian parliament. A conclusion sums up our findings and presents the urgent case for more comparative research on the national parties communication function.

2. Information and communication efforts of parliaments

Scanning the literature (e.g. Beyme 1998; Patzelt 2003) on parliamentary functions we can differentiate between the (a) representative function: parliaments express the views and beliefs of their constituents and make certain that they are reflected in the house debates and enacted policies; (b) the scrutiny function which comprises the control of the executive as well as the implementation of policies as prescribed by law; (c) the legislative function: to propose, amend and pass laws and (d) the formation of government function. How parliaments fulfil those functions is determined by the institutional, operational and legal

[2] Social Democratic Party, People's Party, and Green Party. The right-wing Freedom Party refused to grant any interviews pointing to the confidential character of any information concerning communication structures.

framework they are operating in. Part of the representative function is the task of "explaining policy" (Fenno 1978), which can take place at various levels, reaching from the parliamentary presidium to the work of individual MPs in their electoral districts. Bagehot (1981: 150), in his famous analysis of the English constitution, further emphasises that informing the general public also implies an educative or teaching function. In the best Burkean tradition, parliament has to enlighten the general public, i.e. "to teach the nation what it does not know" (ibid.) so that it can gain an 'enlightened understanding' "about the relevant policy alternatives" (Dahl 2000: 37).

Before we discuss the three 'levels of actorness' (parliament, parliamentary party groups, MPs) in greater detail we have to clarify the crucial terms of this article, in particular information and communication. Informing the public on a given issue is typically a *one-way* and *top-down* process. In the field of policy analysis, information is regarded as a policy tool to – put bluntly – elicit desired policy outcomes (Weiss 2006: 218). By contrast, this paper deals with information policy which – in the words of Brüggemann (2005: 9) – can be broadly defined as "to give or deny information, to just respond to demands or to pro-actively inform citizens, to guarantee a right to information, to advertise or to explain policies, to centralize information in an information office or to spread it over all government agencies". It encompasses both the well-balanced, education-oriented piece of information as well as the selling of a (political) message by a parliamentary group or by an MP.

According to Brüggemann (2005: 9) information policy as "the aims and means of information and communication of a political institution" (ibid.) has three elements.

(1) Transparency: making information and documents available to the general public;
(2) Professional Public Relations: aims that the information seeks the audience (and to persuade it);
(3) Political Rhetorics: the communicative activity of the political management floor.

Contrary to information, communication is a more ambitious enterprise. Instead of one-way and top-down communication is a *two-way* process of talking and listening which is not solely concerned with delivering a certain message but also includes a deliberative element of listening to the arguments and concerns brought forwards by others which may transcend prior interests and ideas. As will be shown in the empirical chapter, the Austrian Parliaments only has an information policy on EU issues, i.e. providing basic facts, making parliamentary debates public in which individual party positions can be identified. A deliberative element could neither be found in the press releases from the parliament and the party groups nor was it claimed by any of the interviewees.

As said, European parliaments are dominated by party government (King 1976; Clett and Cotta 2000), which also affects the information and communication strategies of the three actors under scrutiny. Broadly speaking, we can regroup the three actors under two headers: (1) Parliaments as institutions can be expected to inform and communicate in a "neutral" well-balanced and fact-oriented manner. The officials of the parliamentary administration mainly define their communicative efforts as a civic education project aiming to enhance the political knowledge of the electorate. By increasing the knowledge of the citizens, parliaments hope to strengthen the acceptance of democratic principles and political participation but also to make them more immune towards populist rhetoric and political mistrust (Galston 2001). This educational undertaking of parliaments is usually carried out by the staff of the parliamentary administration and operates on two levels. First, it aims to provide basic knowledge on political institutions, procedures and – to a lesser extent – policies and tends to avoid current and contested political issues. Secondly, in cases where parliaments communicate current affairs, they are keen not to get lost in partisan turf wars and frame their information and communicative efforts in a cautious and carefully balanced way incorporating the views of all parliamentary groups involved. (2) By contrast, parliamentary groups as well as MPs are less interested in mere education but try to "sell" their views, policies as well as brands to win the hearts and minds of the electorate. Information and communication efforts of these actors are thus based on the logics of party politics operating along the government/opposition line, i.e. they try to sell their own position as well as to develop a negative spin on the other parties.

Linking political information and communication with parliamentary models we can see that the first approach mainly reflects the liberal model of parliamentarism, which regards parliaments as the prime location of political decision-making and deliberation (Bagehot 1981). However, the image of a monolithic parliament operating vis-à-vis the executive being the heart of political decision-making does not do justice to the role political parties have in contemporary political systems (King 1976). Since European parliaments are dominated by political parties, we also have to put emphasis on the relationship between the parliamentary groups which support the government and those which oppose it. Seen from that angle, not parliaments as institutions (collective actors) but political parties are the dominant actors (Sarcinelli 2011: 264-267; Fraenkel 1964: 110-117). With regard to the communicative efforts, we see that both types of parliamentary models can be discerned in the political reality. While the more educational effort corresponds with the liberal model of parliaments as a venue of deliberation and education, the latter model views parliaments as the main stage of airing partisan positions (Fraenkel 1991, quoted in Sarcinelli 2011: 255).

Taking into account the above mentioned three different actors, we may derive the following set of hypotheses:

(**ad 1**) Given the dominant impact of party politics, we expect that the Austrian Parliament, as an institution and collective actor, has few incentives to inform and communicate with the

general public on EU issues. In case it does, this takes place on the occasion of important European events and largely remains a one-off undertaking (e.g. ratification of EU treaties) broadly covering all issues and positions on that topic leaving controversial issues to partisan political communication.

(**ad 2**) The interest of parliamentary parties to inform and communicate the EU varies along the level of pro/anti EU sentiment in the electorate (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008; Raunio 2005). Against the background that in Austria support for the EU is weak, we expect that Eurosceptical parties will be more active in putting EU topics on the political agenda to exploit the anti-EU sentiments of the electorate. Similarly, given that most EU issues have limited political salience (Moravcsik 2002: 615; Saalfeld 2003) at first glance, individual MPs also have little incentives to deal with and communicate EU issues. Despite the increasing level of information MPs are receiving (comp, art. 12 TEU, Protocol No.1, art. 1), EU issues were only dealt with if (a) they are part of the MP's field of interest (e.g. GMO, transit, environment); (b) the MP is in charge of EU affairs within his/her party; (c) the MP has a personal interest in international and European affairs.

3. Empirical Analysis

3.1 Parliament as an Institution

The information and communication effort of the Austrian parliament is mainly carried out by the parliamentary administration (*Parlamentsdirektion*). While the main task of this body is to the support the day-to-day parliamentary activities, they also provide a number of information and communication activities for the general public. Since information necessarily includes transparency and making things public, we have to stress that this has always been an important part of the parliamentary activity. Plenary debates are usually open for the general public. The same holds true for the three EU committees of the Austrian parliament, which also hold their meetings in public. Since the start of the parliamentary website in 1996 the Austrian parliament has also made legally and politically important documents and activities as well as information on the individual MPs publicly available on its website. In cooperation with the Austrian Broadcasting Cooperation some plenary debates are also broadcasted via livestream. Given the importance of interparliamentary cooperation it is also of some relevance that the website contains information in other languages than German. While it goes beyond the scope of this paper, a first scan of the website reveals that all formal documents (motions, legislative proposals, bills etc.) are available only in German. Only general information concerning the internal organisational structure, information on MPs or on the legislative and control function of the Austrian parliament is translated into English. However, it is possible to state a query or concern to the Austrian Parliament in English. Apart from that the website also contains some information in French, Italian and Spanish mainly with regard to the visitors centre and the guided tours as well as a short fact sheet of

two pages in more than twenty languages.[3] Having said that, the following activities can be considered of particular relevance:

3.1.1 Press releases (Parlamentskorrespondenz)

The press office or 'Parlamentskorrespondenz' of the Austrian parliaments regularly covers the work of parliamentary activities, notably committee activities. Considering their work somewhere "between journalism and documentation" (Janota 2010: 84) the main task for the Parlamentskorrespondenz is to provide a comprehensive overview of parliamentary activities including the coverage of plenary debates and committee meetings of both chambers. Furthermore, the staff of eight press officers also provides short summaries of legislative proposals, parliamentary motions as well as international activities of and events taking place in the parliament. With regard to EU affairs, the Parlamentskorrespondenz covers the main and sub-committee of the *Nationalrat* as well as the EU committee of the *Bundesrat* and the so-called *Aktuelle Europastunde* – a new plenary format established in 2010 which allows a general debate on a current EU topic (for further information see § 77b Abs 2 GOG-NR). Nearly all press releases are sent to the Austrian Press Agency (APA) where they may find the attention of the general media and are also published on the parliamentary website.[4] In addition, it is also possible to subscribe to the Parlamentskorrespondenz and receive a newsletter of current press releases on a regular basis but only around 800 people have done this so far. According to one interviewee of the Parlamentskorrespondenz, the press releases are "a bit boring" to read which can largely be explained by the staff's endless effort to provide a well-balanced coverage of parliamentary activities including the views of all parties involved.

With regard to the ratification procedures of the selected three Treaties we can see that a modest number of press releases have been published revolving mainly around announcements, general description of parliamentary procedures and summaries of party positions and external experts, mainly legal scholars.

[3] For a short overview on various bi- and multilingual parliamentary websites in the EU see Schüttemeyer and Siefken (2008: 505-506).
[4] See http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/.

Table 1:

	Number of press-releases
Treaty of Nice (2000-2002)	10
Constitutional Treaty (2004-2005)	15
Treaty of Lisbon (2007-2008)	21

Source: Austrian Parliament; own calculation

It does not take a huge effort to see that the number of press releases in the wake of the ratification process is modest but that they have more than doubled in the last decade. This can be explained by more parliamentary activities. In the context of the Nice Treaty, the Parlamentskorrespondenz usually mentioned the various procedural stages of the ratification process. With regard to the Constitutional Treaty and even more so concerning the Lisbon Treaty we could observe slightly more parliamentary activities revolving around the mere ratification process including parliamentary *enquetes* involving external experts, political reactions to the adoption of the Treaty at EU level, summaries of pros and cons of the Treaty, debates on the impact of the Treaty in certain policy domains etc. Although the overall number of press-releases of the Austrian parliament is modest, it nonetheless reflects the increasing parliamentary involvement in EU affairs both in the extent of involvement of parliamentary committees and the willingness to react to EU events and discuss them on a broader basis than before. This modestly rising trend of EU-related press releases will probably continue due to the new participatory rights for national parliaments granted by the Lisbon Treaty.

3.1.2 Parliamentary website

The website of the Austrian parliament, which was re-launched after a comprehensive reform in 2004, contains numerous information on the EU in general as well as the participation rights of the Austrian parliament in particular including additional links to the agenda of the pertinent committees and a summary of the deliberations of all three parliamentary EU committees.[5] In addition is also possible to research every document (by date or subject)

[5] For further information see http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/SA-EU/SA-EU_00001_00279/index.shtml (EU sub-committee);
http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/DE/index.shtml?jsMode=&xdocumentUri=&NRBR=NR&ITYP=IV&INR=&SUCH=&listeId=120&FBEZ=FP_020 (EU main committee);
http://www.parlament.gv.at/PERK/PE/MIT/EUBundesrat/index.shtml (EU committee of the *Bundesrat*).

forwarded by EU institutions to the Austrian parliament[6] and to get a general overview of the interparliamentary activities, notably with regard to COSAC and the newly established Early Warning Mechanism. Especially the latter has been identified as a great potential for parliamentary activities in the years to come (for a sceptical view see Slominski and Pollak 2012). That said, while the parliamentary website offers citizens an abundance of information about the activities of the various EU committees, it is currently difficult to obtain detailed information on the early warning mechanism established by the Lisbon Treaty. In particular, it is surprising that the website does currently not have a link to the Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange (IPEX) database which enables citizens – at least in principle – to keep track of the scrutiny process of the individual national parliaments in the EU.

Particular attention has been paid to children and young adults by the parliamentary administration. Since 2009 the website offers selected school classes the possibility of on-line chats with MPs on a chosen topic. EU affairs have only once been selected for such an on-line chat. Apart from that, new online social media such as Facebook and Twitter have not yet arrived at the Austrian parliament. While these forms of communication are generally considered as important tools of political communication, talks about a possible introduction have been met with skepticism due to a lack of available resources which are required to communicate on a permanent basis.

3.1.3 Events and Visitors Service

The department of events and visitors service has a staff of 16 officers covering three kinds of activities, namely events, guided tours and the visitors centre. Since these activities do not include those which are organized by a parliamentary group, they are more of an informative nature and can therefore not be regarded as politicized in terms of left/right politics (Hix 2006). These guided tours attract a considerable number of visitors of which a large chunk are primary and secondary school pupils. While in 2000 56.600 people took part in a tour, this number more than doubled in 2006 and reached its height in 2009 when nearly 140.000 participated in such an event.[7]

[6] See http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/EU/.

[7] It has to be noted that the exceptionally high number of visitors in 2008 and 2009 can partly be explained by the fact that between November 2008 and April 2009 the parliament also organised an exhibition on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Austrian Republic, which attracted many people. Similarly a considerable share of visitors who came to Vienna during the European Championship UEFA Euro 2008 also led to a sharp increase of visitors.

Table 2: Visitors to the Austrian Parliament who took part in guided tours

YEAR	Visitors (total number)	Percentage of Pupils
2000	56.600	
2001	59.800	
2002	54.035	
2003	63.333	
2004	63.543	55 %
2005	73.989	52.4 %
2006	117.505	37.6 %
2007	112.045	43 %
2008	123.407	41.2 %
2009	139.443	42.8 %
2010	96.685	49 %

Source: Parliamentary Administration

Once again, European issues are not on the agenda very often. The dominant view of many MPs and other officials within the political parties and the administration of the parliament is – as an official put it – that "we are a national parliament and we focus on national affairs and legislative activities. Information and communication on EU issues are not our core business". That is not to say that there is no EU-related activity at all. For instance, the Austrian parliament in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education offers guided tours *inter alia* on EU affairs for Austrian pupils who are not from Vienna.

The same holds true with regard to the visitor centre which also primarily focuses on the Austrian political systems thereby only including some rudimentary EU information. However, since the re-launch of the visitor centre in October 2005 it presents video clips and interactive media stations where visitors are offered the possibility to "test" their knowledge on certain political and historical issues including the EU both in German and English.

Table 3: Hits of the EU-related information offered at the visitor centre

Year	Total	In German	In English
2005	3277	2325	952
2006	10553	4310	6243
2007	13691	8481	5210
2008	25406	16336	9070
2009	28101	17521	10580
2010	18920	12049	6871

Source: Austrian Parliament

But all this information is of a very general nature and aims to communicate only a basic knowledge of the EU including its institutions, a comparison between the Austrian and the European Parliament and how the Austrian parliament is involved in EU decision-making.

3.1.4 Democracy and EU Workshops

Since September 2009 the Austrian parliament offers special workshops on "the EU" for children and young adults (between the age of 8 and 14 years) in the context of its so-called "democracy workshop". Besides the EU, the workshops cover a variety of topics of political education including political institutions in Austria, the role of media or contemporary history.[8] Available data show that the absolute number of EU workshops considerably increased in the second year (from 51 in the school year 2009/10 to 74 in 2010/11), yet given the parallel rise of the amount of all democracy workshops the percentage of EU-related workshops remained roughly steady (13% in 2009/10 and 16% in 2010/11). The main aim of these EU workshops, which last around four hours, is not only to provide basic knowledge – which is obviously nearly non-existent at this particular age – but also to encourage the participants to express their opinion on the EU and to work out how EU decisions impact their own lives. By this, parliamentary officials hope to address the perceived complexity and remoteness of EU policy-making. This is of particular importance since nearly half of the pupils participating in these workshops are from secondary schools (*Hauptschule*) of which most have a migration background and/or are socially disadvantaged with poor educational opportunities who prior to these workshops have not devoted much time or interest towards the EU. The workshops also aim to complement teaching at school and to provide teachers with additional information on EU issues. Although we have not interviewed teachers and pupils on how

[8] See http://www.demokratiewebstatt.at/.

they experienced these workshops, responsible parliamentary officials told us in the interviews that an increasing number of schools are interested to attend the EU workshops and that they "are currently fully booked".

3.1.5 Conclusion

Overall, the Austrian parliament has increased its relations with the general public in the last decade. The parliamentary website has been modernized and re-launched in 2004 and a new visitor centre has been established in 2005. Despite the fact that national parliaments have gained more and more powers the officials in charge of parliamentary public relations still emphasise that "they are a *national* parliament" whose main task is to adopt Austrian laws and control the Austrian government (emphasis added). With regard to the EU, the parliament is meanwhile also aware that it has considerable powers at its disposal and can make an impact on national EU policy-making. But according to our interviewees informing let alone communicating Europe is not considered as a major task of the Austrian parliament. Although parts of the increasingly varied information supply are also devoted to EU issues the information can largely be considered as general and basic. This also reflects the wide-spread attitude found in the interviews that the EU is neither liked, not properly understood by most of the citizens due to its complexity and remoteness. While this may be true it is somehow surprising that this does not lead the Austrian parliament to improve the situation and embark on a comprehensive strategy to inform and communicate Europe. New media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and podcasts are generally regarded as relevant communication tools by parliamentary officials, but the same officials are also sceptical that there are enough resources available to make these things work on a permanent basis.

3.2 Parliamentary Party Groups and MPs

The analysis of the information and communicative effort of parliamentary party groups are difficult to assess for various reasons. First, with the exception of press-releases issued by the parliamentary party groups there are no quantitative data available allowing to track down communication activities to date. Second, given the dense relationship between the parliamentary group and the party organization it is almost impossible to determine which organization is responsible for a given activity.

Like the officials in the parliamentary administration many party officials who have been interviewed for this paper are convinced that communicating Europe is not part of the core tasks of a parliamentary party group. Although communicative efforts are regarded as important for the overall legitimacy of the Union, these activities should be pursued, at least in their view, by the EU institutions or the (national) party organisation and not the parliamentary party groups. The principle task of a parliamentary party group is to adopt laws, control the government and debate with other parliamentary party groups on policy issues. This modest ambition is consistent with three other views, which – according to our

interviewees – are also widely held within the parliamentary party groups: (1) Most MPs are neither interested nor capable to pursue such a communicative effort. (2) And even if they (would) do so, the media are also not interested in EU stories, which would make the whole strive to communicate Europe a rather futile exercise. (3) And finally communicating Europe is a safe bet in terms of losing votes given the widespread anti-EU sentiments of the citizens.

If the EU is communicated at all, these activities are in most cases the result of the initiative of individual MPs and are not part of a comprehensive communication strategy designed by the parliamentary party group or the party. Thus it largely depends on the personal initiative of individual MPs whether and how the parliamentary party group communicates the EU.

3.2.1 Press Releases

As mentioned above, the press releases of the parliament are well-balanced and informative and focus mainly on procedural issues of parliamentary activities thereby presenting the various party positions or providing background information. Press-releases of the parliamentary party groups, in contrast, follow a more contentious political rhetoric attempting to "sell" a political message and delegitimizing the position of the opponent. As said, it is not easy to count press-releases of a parliamentary party group because besides individual MPs, the parliamentary party group also issues press releases from party colleagues who are in fact MEPs9, ministers, or even the (vice-) president of the parliament.

Generally speaking, most press releases are clustered around specific times and events, which implies that they usually relate to each other and thus constitute a self-referential system. But it also indicates that parliamentary parties are by no means agenda setters but rather agenda takers. According to the dates of the press releases, parliamentary parties usually issue press releases either if the ratification of a Treaty is on the parliamentary agenda or if other important events on the national or EU level are taking place, such as EP or national elections, an EU summit etc. Apart from these event-driven occasions the communication effort through press releases can be regarded as non-existent.

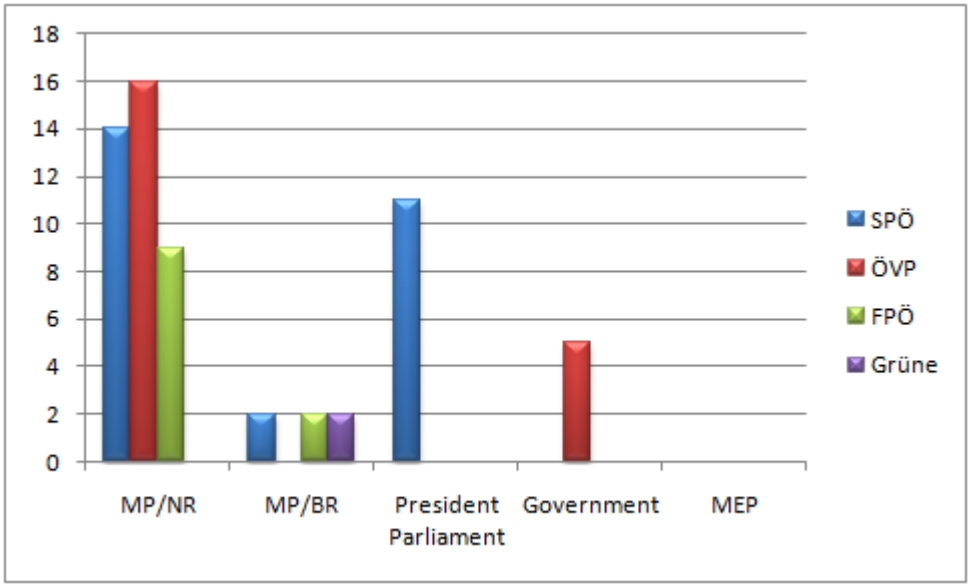
Similar to the press releases from the parliament, we can also observe a significant increase of the press releases of the parliamentary party groups.[10] While in the context of the ratification of the Nice Treaty parliamentary party groups issued a total of 61 press releases, the number sharply increased to 235 on the occasion of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty and raised again to 377 in the wake of the Lisbon ratification. The same holds true if we focus on those press releases, which come from MPs. While the ratification of the Treaty of Nice a meagre number of 39 press releases have been issued by all MPs, the amount

[9] All parliamentary parties allow "their" MEPs to participate in meetings of the parliamentary party (Luther 2007: 33).
[10] Press-release of the various parliamentary factions are published by the APA-OTS Originaltext-Service GmbH since 1999 and can be accessed via the following website: http://www.ots.at/.

sharply rose to 129 in the context of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty and further to 204 during the Lisbon Treaty.

If we compare the amount of press releases between the parties we observe that opposition parties are – by and large – more active that government parties. This can be shown in the context of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty when the Social Democrats (SPÖ) who were the major opposition party had more press-releases than the two government parties (the conservative People's Party (ÖVP) and the right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ)) combined (see figure 2). The same happened in the context of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty when the major opposition party, the FPÖ alone issued 132 press releases more than twice as much the two government parties combined (see figure 3). With regard to the Nice ratification we observe that MPs from the governing ÖVP and the main opposition party SPÖ issued almost the same number of press releases. However, if we combine these data with the press releases of the ÖVP-dominated ministries and the press releases of the parliamentary president which were held by the Social-Democrats at the time, we have again the same picture that the opposition party is the most active one when it comes to communicating the EU.

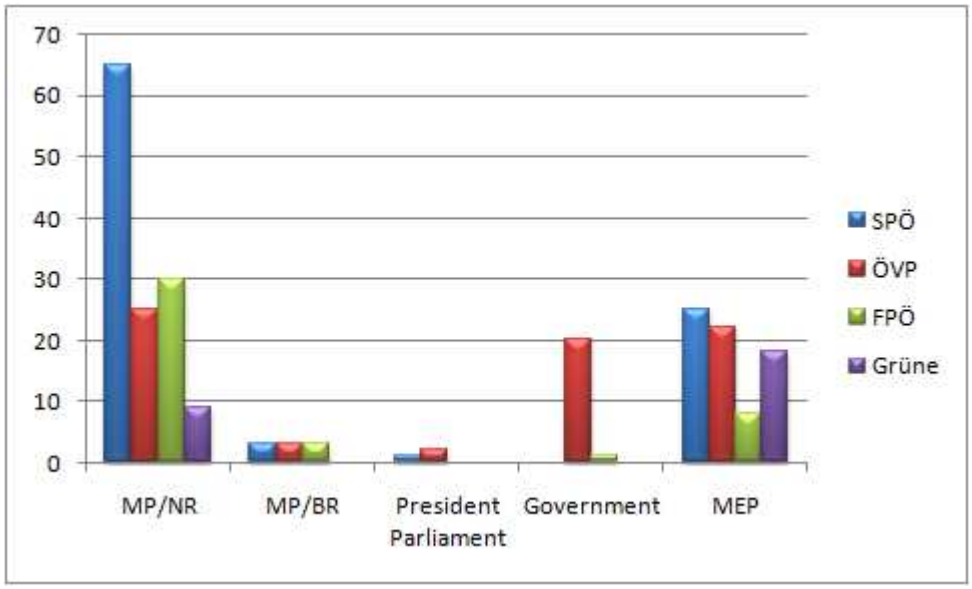
Figure 1: Number of press-releases on the occasion of the ratification of the Treaty of Nice
(Period: August 2000 - June 2002)



Source: APA-OTS Originaltext-Service GmbH; own calculation

Figure 2: Number of press-releases on the occasion of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty

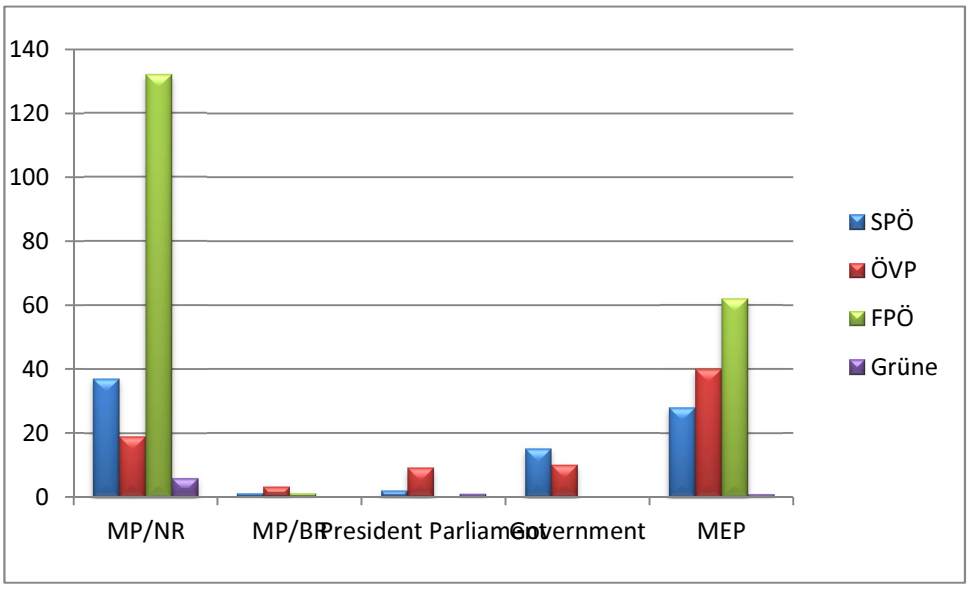
(Period: April 2004-December 2005)



Source: APA-OTS Originaltext-Service GmbH; own calculation

Figure 3: Number of press-releases on the occasion of the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon

(Period: June 2007-October 2008)



Source: APA-OTS Originaltext-Service GmbH; own calculation

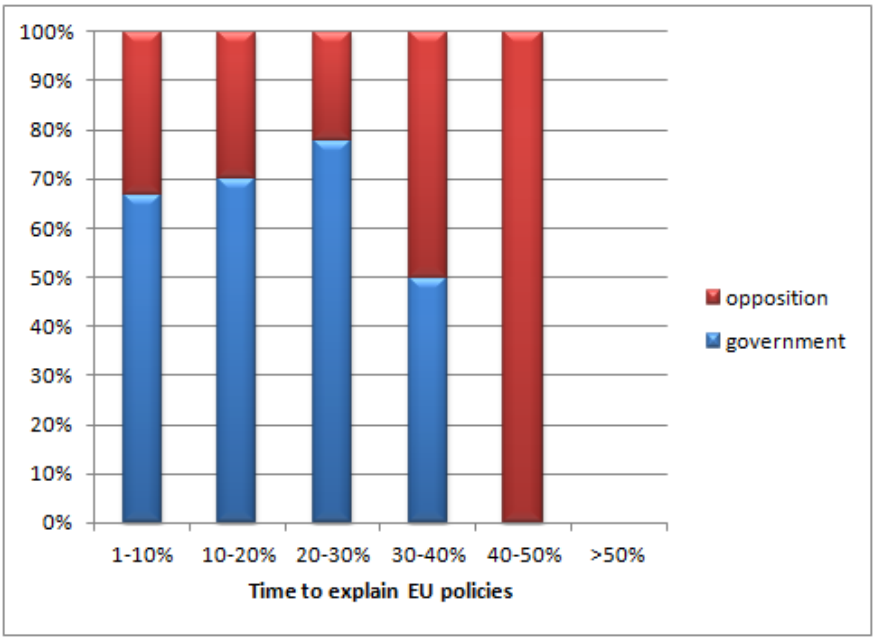
These data reflect the assumption found in the literature that governing parties, which are also present in the EU institutions and are held responsible for EU decisions, are generally more pro-European than opposition parties. Taking into account the notorious EU scepticism of the Austrian population it is hardly surprising that the opposition parties use press releases as a tool to attack government party positions by appealing to and nurturing the anti-EU sentiment of the electorate. The data also reveals that opposition parties are more active in their communicative efforts than incumbent parties, irrespective of the ideological position. This supports the thesis that communication activities by parliamentary parties are driven by voter preferences on the EU (Carrubba 2001) rather than by political ideology. That does not mean that party ideology (Hix and Lord 1997) does not play a role at all but it seems to be – at least in the Austrian case – less relevant than the government/opposition status of the party concerned. But within this dichotomy, party ideology as well as the principal view towards European integration also plays an important role. This implies that e.g. the SPÖ, during its opposition years (2000-2005), had to ponder their future perspective: as a potential governmental party aggressive anti-EU rhetoric is not a credible political option. By contrast the moderate amount of press releases of the FPÖ during their years in government seems to indicate that the party has not been able to live out their fully-fledged anti-EU rhetoric but seemed to unleash it only once they became an opposition party again leading to an unprecedented high number of press releases. This view can also be supported by the fact that as soon as the SPÖ re-entered government in 2006 it was only half as active during the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty than during the Constitutional Treaty.

3.2.2. Individual MPs

How much time do individual MPs devote to communicating Europe? What instruments are they using and how often? Furthermore, who is more active in communicating Europe, the MPs belonging to the government parties or the opposition? To get a grasp on these questions an online questionnaire was launched in fall 2011. All 183 members of the National Council were sent the questionnaire in October 2011, 43 MPs have replied (24%).

The general question of how much time of their working time MPs devote to explain and communicate EU policies was answered in the following way.

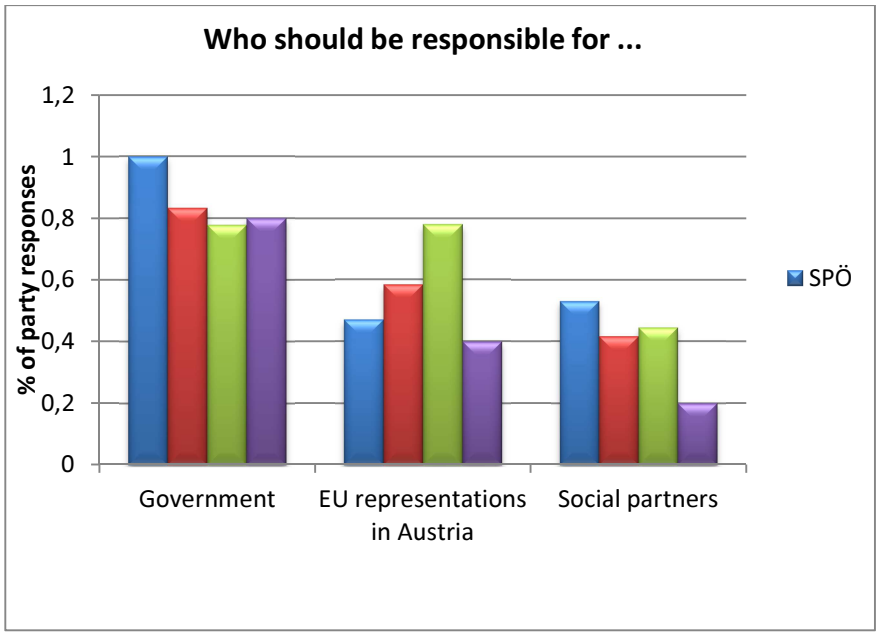
Figure 4: How much time to you devote to explain and communicate EU policies?



In line with our hypothesis about the higher activity of Eurosceptical parties, the chart shows that oppositional MPs devote a bigger share of their working time to EU issues than MPs belonging to government parties.

Concerning the question of who should be responsible for the communication of EU policies the MPs answered in the following way.

Figure 5: Who should be responsible for informing and communicating Europe?



The chart shows that all respondents whether from governmental or opposition parties see the primary responsibility for informing and communicating European policy lying with the government. This reflects the above mentioned self-understanding of the parliaments as a national institution responsible for national topics only. Considering the role of EU representations in Austria the Green Party most strongly wants them to play a role. In interviews, representatives of the Green Party explained this by hinting at the unbiased and more balanced way of communicating EU policies of EU representations in Austria compared to governmental sources and social partners. When it comes to the social partners it is shown that the FPÖ as an EU sceptic party and without a stronghold in the social partner representation shows no great interest in their communication efforts.

Finally, which media do MPs use and is there any difference between younger and older MPs? In general direct contacts are the preferred means of contact, as for instance party events, public events and lectures, are preferred over traditional print media and television. It is also clear that younger MPs see advantages in using social media whereas older MPs rely on traditional media (figure 6).

Figure 6: Media usage by age

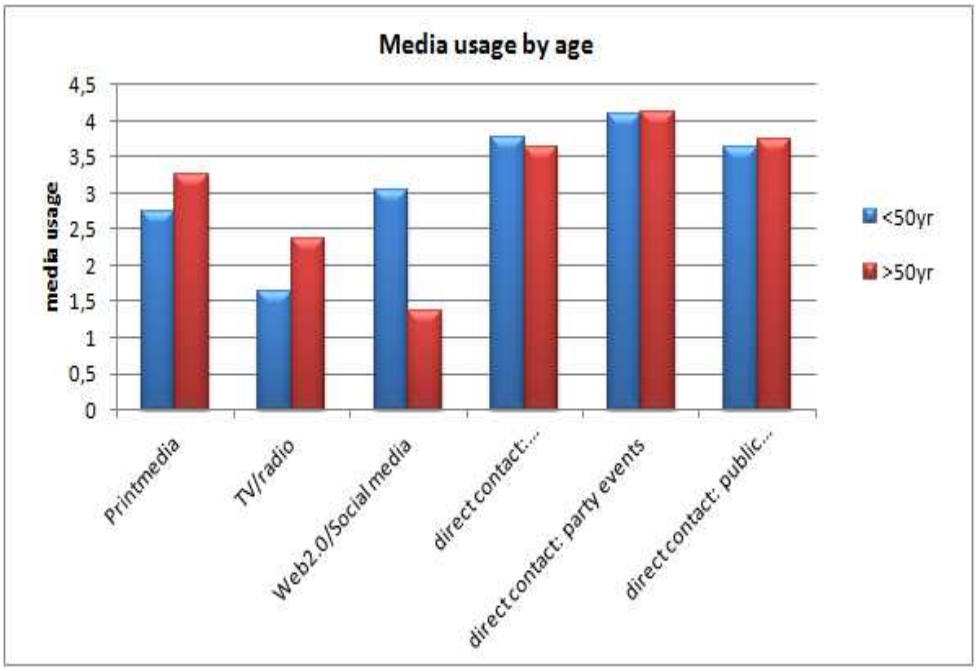
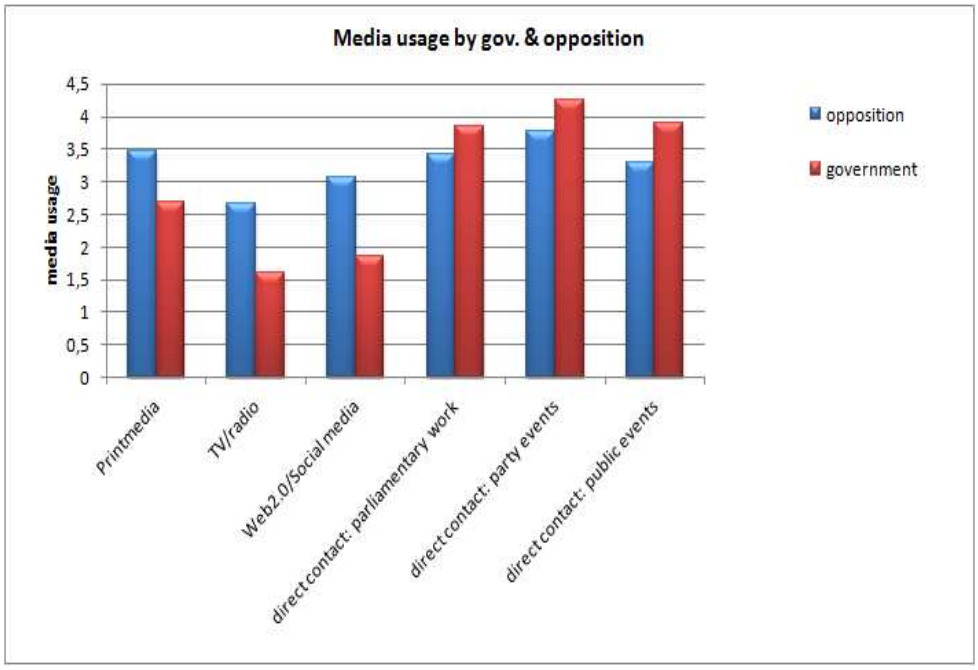


Figure 7 shows that in general direct voter contact is preferred over indirect ones by government as well as opposition parties. Regarding indirect media, the data hint at oppositional MPs being more prone to use social media than government MPs (not overall, since they prefer print media most out of all indirect media), whereas MPs belonging to governmental parties prefer print media.

Figure 7: Media usage by government and opposition MPs



3.2.3 Other Communicative Efforts

Apart from the presented data, there are no other quantitative data available. This suggests that there are no official records made by the (parliamentary) party on their communication activities on EU affairs. The interviewees confirmed this and explained it with their perception already quoted above that for the parliamentary parties the EU is (1) too complicated to communicate, (2) EU issues are not interesting neither for the media nor for the general public, and (3) public debate in Austria is dominated by a strong and persistent anti-EU sentiment which makes it even more difficult to communicate certain issues. As a consequence, most actors seem to draw the conclusion that there are no incentives for the party and individual MPs to embark on a comprehensive communication strategy on EU issues (Saalfeld 2003).

4. Conclusion

The data, which could be collected on the EU information and communication effort of the Austrian Parliament allow us to draw the following conclusions: (1) the parliament as a collective actor does not make any specific efforts to link the supranational level with the national electorate. (2) Parliamentary party groups, in the light of persistent anti-EU sentiments of the Austrian electorate (as well as the dominating position of one anti-EU tabloid), refrain from communicating Europe beyond press releases. Such press releases are mainly an instrument to react to other parliamentary party groups' releases and are not

perceived as having a lasting impact on the public. (3) Individual MPs are reluctant to engage in communicating Europe since it is neither rewarded by the central party nor is it considered to be advantageous in terms of vote-winning. Taken together, all communication efforts are top-down and do not aim at any deliberative engagement of the citizens. It seems that the provision of information and the offer to participate in guided tours or workshops of the parliament are currently the only structured efforts to spread knowledge about EU affairs. What has been slightly surprising, though, is the openly voiced critique of almost all party interviewees of the modest efforts to make Europe understood and the lack of any coherent communication structures. Neither do the Austrian parties keep track of any un/successful communication efforts nor do they actively aim at linking Europe with the citizens.

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Who Cares About the EU? French MPs and European Politics Since 1988

Julien Navarro and Sylvain Brouard

Abstract

Discussions on the Europeanisation of national parliaments have tended to focus predominantly on how national legislatures cope with the challenges of EU integration and decision-making processes by elaborating new scrutiny mechanisms and by granting more powers to their specialised committees. To some degree, this emphasis on the institutional aspects of Europeanisation overshadows the problem of the effective involvement of national representatives in EU affairs. Beyond the diverse existing institutional arrangements, one might indeed question the extent to which the Europeanisation of national politics affects the 'traditional' tools of parliamentary work, the manners in which MPs utilize these tools, and how this relates to the voters. In this paper, we investigate these problems by looking at the attention to EU-related issues in the parliamentary questions of French MPs since 1988. Parliamentary questions are particularly relevant as a measure of legislators' Europeanisation because they are an easily available tool at the individual level and because legislators can freely define their content. Thus, the study of parliamentary questions allows assessing whether national MPs are more attentive to EU issues as the course of European integration progresses and their underlying motivations for asking such questions. More precisely we are examining whether attention to EU affairs is simply varying according to the immediate saliency of European issues (due to the proximity of treaty negotiations, for example) or if there are other political factors that can account for it. Relying on individual-level data, we analyse the 'identity' of those MPs who ask questions on EU politics. Is there only a small group of specialized legislators interested in EU affairs? Are parliamentary questions an instrument of the opposition to scrutinize government's activities? Do Euro-sceptic MPs put more emphasis on European issues? Our analysis is based on a unique dataset of more than 334,000 questions in the French National Assembly from 1988 to 2007.

In a 1996 survey, a majority of the members of the National Assembly (59 percent) declared that the legitimacy of the European Union (EU) should be based on national parliaments,

while only a small minority (18 percent) saw the European Parliament as the main source of legitimacy for the EU (Wessels 2005). Compared to other nationalities, French MPs were amongst the strongest supporters of the national parliaments' role in EU affairs. This reflected, for 55 percent of them, a negative judgment about the working of democracy in the EU. 83 percent regarded the parliamentary control of the Council as insufficient and 68 percent (more than the EU average) acquiesced to the proposal that national parliaments should be able to instruct national ministers in EU policies.

The answers of French MPs suggest that they would seize any opportunity to bear upon the EU policy process. But there are grounds for doubt in some respects. Most studies of the National Assembly under the Fifth Republic highlight the fact that parliamentary behaviours are dominated by local constituency preoccupations as a consequence of the personalised electoral system and the frequency of dual mandates (Hayward 2004). Furthermore, earlier research into the impact of European integration on the National Assembly resulted in sceptical conclusions about the readiness of French MPs to deal with European problems (Grossman 2008; Rozenberg 2009). Given that the Lisbon Treaty gave new rights to national parliaments, one aim of this article is to assess the impact of European integration on the French parliament and the capacity of French parliamentarians to fulfil the mission that they are claiming for themselves.

The one simple premise on which this article is based states that attempts to strengthen the role of national parliaments in the European process will only succeed if they are accompanied by a change in the attitudes and behaviour of elected representatives. This point is closely connected to the debate on the Europeanisation of national parliaments and the increasing involvement of national parliaments in EU affairs which has attracted a significant level of attention from specialists of European integration and parliaments alike (Raunio 2009). The discussion has tended to focus on the organizational adaptation of national institutions to the challenges of European integration and on the evaluation of the parliaments' real level of influence on their government's European policies. But the necessity to move beyond these predominantly formal and institutional perspectives is now more and more recognised. The impact of European integration is then described in terms of 'adaptive' or 'strategic Europeanisation' relating to the change in attitudes, self-definition of role and behaviour of political actors (A.E. Töller cited in Wessels 2005).

Regarding national parliaments and parliamentarians, the establishment of new rules and procedures, as well as new institutional provisions, is well documented but it represents only one of the potential ways to adapt to the consequences of European integration. It implies neither that European integration has become a central dimension of parliamentary activities at large nor that it will change the way MPs generally behave. This is a major challenge since the capacity of national parliaments to cope with the consequences of European integration depends not only on the creation of ad hoc institutional procedures to scrutinize governments but also on the willingness and ability of national parliamentarians to get

involved in European affairs. The communication to national parliamentarians of the legislative initiatives taken by the Commission, or the opportunity that they have to vote on special resolutions, will remain virtual weapons until parliamentarians pay attention to European issues and decide to use them. But European affairs are only one of the many issues parliamentarians are expected to care about. And there might be reasons why they want to take care of them – or not. This is why we need to focus on the agenda of national parliaments and the attention that they are giving to European issues.

Taking the French National Assembly as our case study, we will address two complementary questions: To what extent is the French Parliament Europeanised? How can the varying degree of attention, given by the French Parliament, to European issues be explained? Looking beyond statutory powers and an assessment of the parliamentary input in EU national policies, we aim to analyse the parliament's Europeanisation by focusing on the content of parliamentary questions as an indicator of the attention paid by MP's to EU affairs. Based on the innovative research programme formulated by Baumgartner and Jones (2002) concerning agenda-setting in public policies, we propose to analyse how European integration affects the substance of parliamentary work in term of issues.

The first section begins with a presentation of what we know about the Europeanisation of the National Assembly and then moves on to propose an alternative approach to Europeanisation based on the idea of politics of attention. Our hypotheses regarding how attention to Europe is allocated are detailed in the second section. The third section is dedicated to analysing the evolution of parliamentary questions in the National Assembly and the proportion of Europeanised questions. In the third section we test alternative theories explaining the level of attention paid to the EU in the National Assembly. Our findings are then discussed in the concluding section.

1. Europeanisation and the politics of attention

Europeanisation has become an important research field over the last few years. The focus of research has progressively expanded from the impact of European integration on national policies and policy-making styles to the transformation of national political institutions (Auel 2006). The study of national parliaments' Europeanisation obviously belongs to this second category.

1.1 The impact of the EU on national institutions: the case of the National Assembly

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009, national parliaments have been recognized with an official role in the institutional structure of the EU. They appear for the first time in the text of the Treaty (article 12) and their 'contribution' now covers three areas: control of subsidiarity, treaty revisions, and the field of freedom, security and justice. This enhanced role of national Parliaments in EU affairs marks the latest realisation of a slow

maturation process that began with the negotiation of the Maastricht Treaty. The rationale for such an evolution is the belief that it might compensate for the alleged 'legitimacy deficit' of the EU.

National parliaments have actually been involved in European questions even before the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty (Maurer and Wessels 2001). In response to political developments in the member states, which supposedly advantaged executives to the detriment of legislatures, national parliaments have established new control mechanisms. These include the right to be informed about EU legislative initiatives and government's European policies, the creation of specialized committees and the right to express (binding or non-binding) policy opinions in EU affairs. To meet the European challenge, national legislatures also try to foster collaborations, horizontally, between each other (see, for instance, the role of the COSAC) and, vertically, with the European Parliament (Costa and Latek 2001).

Generally speaking France has followed a similar trend (Rizutto 2004). The 'Foyer law' of 1979 established parliamentary 'delegations' for the European Communities both in the National Assembly and the Senate. In 1990, the size of each delegation was increased and they gained the right to call before them ministers and Community representatives. With the entry in force of the constitutional law of 23 July 2008, the Delegation became the committee for European affairs (*commission des affaires européennes*). With 36 members, it has a dual mission of information and control of government. Since 1992, the French parliament may also vote resolutions on EU affairs (Grossman 2008). In 2003, the National Assembly opened an office in Brussels.

Although the French National Assembly has always pushed hard for giving national parliaments a greater – direct and indirect – role in the EU policy-process, one can question the capacity of its members to fulfil the role that they claim for themselves. Looking at the resolutions on EU affairs, Grossman (2008) has noted that their number tended to decrease after reaching its highest level in 1993. Rozenberg (2009), who investigates the management of EU committees by their chairman in France and the UK, highlights the lack of incentive of French MPs to deal with EU affairs. These observations converge and call for caution about the depth of change driven by European integration and the motivation of MPs to take care of the issue.

1.2 Theoretical framework: from an increase in statutory power to a shift in issue attention?

As already noted in the introduction, the establishment of new scrutiny mechanisms does not tell us much about how they are being used and, even less, about how 'traditional' (i.e. previously existing) tools of parliamentary control evolved with European integration. Some scholars have started to tackle this problem by analysing the impact of European integration on national law-making activities (Brouard et al. 2012a). The perspective remains

predominantly top-down with a focus on the response of national parliaments to the imperatives of European regulations. It is the European stimulus – the adoption of regulations or directives – that generates the Europeanisation of laws.

However, it is possible to view the Europeanisation of national institutions not as the implementation of norms defined at the supranational level but as *the greater level of attention to European affairs*. This is in line with the approach developed by Ladrech who defines Europeanisation as 'a process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree the EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organisational logic of national politics and policy-making' (Ladrech 1994: 69). Practically Europeanisation can, in this sense, have two kinds of consequences: it can bring about new political cleavages and it can become a more salient issue. Our focus is not on the first aspect (the degree of parliamentary support for the EU) but on the policy content, that is to say the salience of the EU in 'normal' parliamentary business. In other words, we are more interested in the salience of Europe than in the potentially changing attitude of MPs towards the benefits of European integration. Have national MPs developed a greater degree of attention to Europe not only when it comes to discussions about EU institutions, but also, more generally, in all fields of policy-making?

With this question, we can also reconsider the debate on the alleged parliamentary decline by looking more precisely at the capacity of parliamentarians to impact the governmental agenda. Although it is acknowledged that the French parliament generally plays a limited policy-making role in the Fifth Republic, parliamentary activity has been transformed and has developed alternative indirect forms of participation in the policy-process. To compensate for their marginalization in the production of law, parliamentarians concentrate on non-legislative activities that allow them to control the executive's actions, evaluate public policies and focus the government's attention on specific issues. It has been argued that the French parliament has the capacity to influence the governmental agenda even though its impact on the policy process is otherwise limited. Parliamentarians can generate controversies over governmental actions by stimulating debates on issues which would otherwise be considered only by specialists (Baumgartner 1987). Research should therefore concentrate on the allocation of attention between different policy areas.

Theoretical and empirical studies of agenda-setting stipulate that political institutions can devote only a limited amount of attention to different policy issues. As a consequence, giving more attention to immigration issues implies, for example, that attention to other issues, such as environment, education or taxes, will be reduced. This rule equally applies for parliamentarians at the individual level. Any representative faces cognitive and time constraints that will force him to make trade-offs concerning the problems that he will give priority to by asking questions, writing reports or speaking about in plenary sessions. Looking at Europeanisation from an agenda perspective therefore means that we are interested in

what issues MPs give priority to and how they allocate their attention to matters in connection with European affairs.

1.3 Questions in the National Assembly as an indicator of Europeanisation

Parliamentary questions have many qualities that make them an interesting and convenient indicator of Europeanisation.

First of all, thanks to parliamentary questions, we can effectively analyse how European integration impacts the content and issues that MPs are dealing with at the national level. Until now comparative politics focused mainly on institutions and actors, much less on the content of politics, that is to say on the issues that actors and institutions are dealing with (Wilkerson et al. 2009). Parliamentary questions allow filling this gap if we analyse their content and the issues they tackle.

Parliamentary questions are a relevant indicator of Europeanisation in the sense that, even if they are not considered the most powerful instruments that legislators dispose of, they are certainly instruments that allow legislators a large room-for-manoeuvre at the individual level (Raunio 2009: 324). Parliamentary questions as an institutional resource make it easy for individual deputies to raise problems about which they are concerned (Wiberg 1994). The use of parliamentary questions may hence be regarded as an extremely interesting indicator of how elected representatives prioritise issues. On top of that, as one traditional instrument of parliamentary government, they allow for cross-country and cross-time comparisons.

In the debate on the Europeanisation of national parliaments, parliamentary questions are also significant because they are as much an instrument of control as a means to gain information. This is particularly important because, as Raunio and Hix (2000) rightly point out, access to information in the field of European politics plays a key role in enabling parliamentarians to control their government. They note: ‘parliaments have secured gains from governments in the area of EU affairs precisely because it has been in the interests of parliamentarians to reduce the information gap’ (Raunio and Hix 2000: 162). If true, we should also be able to discern a greater attention for European matters in the questions that MPs submit to the ministers.

The empirical analysis is based on an exhaustive dataset of parliamentary questions in the National Assembly from the ninth to the twelfth legislature (i.e. from 1988 to 2007). There are three types of questions in the National Assembly: written questions (*questions écrites*), oral

questions to the government (*questions au gouvernement*) and oral questions without debate (*questions orales sans débat*)[1].

Written questions are addressed to individual ministers either to clarify some points about legislation or to receive information about government policies. Ministers have a two-month delay to give their answers, which are published in the Official Journal. MPs can ask as many written questions as they wish.

Oral questions are based on article 48 of the Constitution, which states that 'At one sitting a week at least precedence shall be given to questions from members of Parliament and to answers by the Government'. The rules regarding oral questions without debate have been modified several times since 1958. In March 1993, the sessions of oral questions were moved from Friday to Thursday morning so as to ensure a better attendance. In 1996, the session was moved again, this time from Thursday morning to Tuesday morning, to avoid a time conflict between the session of questions and the discussion of bills. Since the constitutional reform of 23 July 2008, oral questions are concentrated on Tuesday and Thursday mornings of the Parliament's 'control week' (that is outside of parliamentary holidays and special budget weeks). The number of questions is limited to 32 for each session with an equal number for majority and opposition parties; there are six minutes for each of the questions, which often address local issues.

Since a constitutional amendment of 1995, two parliamentary time slots are dedicated to 'Questions to the government' on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons and broadcasted on television (until 1995 there was only one time slot of questions to government); the fact that this change occurred during the studied period will allow us to investigate its consequences. Initially, questions to the government were divided equally between the government and opposition parties but since 1993 they are allocated to the parliamentary groups according to their size, which clearly favours the government. Parliamentary groups must announce in advance the author of the questions and to whom they are put. There is a limited time of two minutes for each question.

Between 1988 and 2007, the members of the National Assembly asked a total of 334,238 questions: 317,832 written questions, 10,555 questions to the government and 317,832 oral questions. By analysing the content of parliamentary questions during a long period of time (from 1988 to 2007) we can see whether Europe represents a growing concern for French parliamentarians and who is interested in this issue. In order to establish whether a parliamentary question is 'Europeanised', we rely on the indirect content analysis of parliamentary questions based on the National Assembly indexation system (see appendix).

[1] Oral questions with debate (questions orales avec débat), which constituted a fourth type, have de facto disappeared from the tool box of French MPs.

To sum up, Europeanisation is not defined as the implementation of a binding European decision at the national level. European integration is a multi-faceted phenomenon, not a single issue. And parliamentarians may use the EU as a policy frame for all kinds of problems.

2. Hypotheses: the impact of time, parties and institutional rules

We aim to test the hypothesis that the scope of attention to the EU will vary according to a number of political and institutional factors.

2.1 The changing level of attention to the EU across time

Time is the first factor that should impact the level of attention to the EU. It will do so in two ways. According to our first hypothesis, the presence of Europe in the work of French MPs should tend to increase during the period 1988-2007. *We therefore expect to observe more and more parliamentary questions mentioning Europe or the EU (Hypothesis 1a)*.

The fundamental reason for this is that the supranational level is more and more present in the policy process across the continent. Each new step in the process of European integration should bring an increased attention to Europe in national parliaments. The latter are involved in the reform of treaties through national ratification procedures: their attention should have been drawn by the succession of intergovernmental negotiations leading to the adoption of the treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon and national parliamentarians should be willing to control their government's European policies more strictly. Besides, national parliaments are also engaged in the national implementation of EU regulations and in the scrutiny of the executive's European policy: the inflation in the legislative activity at the European level (Brouard et al. 2012a) should result in a growing attention to Europe.

The temporal hypothesis is also strengthened by the evolution of public opinion about European integration. Parliamentary questions are not only a device for asserting governmental accountability to parliament. They also provide a forum for arousing public opinion against specific government policies. With the end of the 'permissive consensus' national MPs should be wary not to let the EU follow a course that will displease their electors. The saliency of Europe in the public opinion will act as an incentive for them. In other words, MPs might want to signal to their voters that they take care of European issues.

Beyond this expected long-term trend, *one should also expect to see ups and downs in the attention to the EU on the part of French MPs: events both at the national and European level should impact the likeliness that MPs raise European matters in the National Assembly (Hypothesis 1b)*. Questions mentioning Europe should be more numerous when there are important issues being discussed at the Community level (for instance, during

intergovernmental conferences or European Parliament elections) or when the national government is more directly involved in EU matters (during French presidencies). On the contrary, Europe should be less visible when major national events occur, especially in the periods surrounding national elections.

However, not all MPs have the same attitude towards the EU, nor the same incentives to address European questions. It is therefore important to concentrate on the factors behind differentiated individual levels of attention to the EU.

2.2 Patterns of party interaction and electoral incentives

One can make the general hypothesis that attention to the EU is inextricably linked to the party system and patterns of competition. As noted earlier, MPs are all the more interested in raising questions about European integration if they perceive that this is a salient issue in public opinion. This indicates that attention to Europe might be driven by electoral considerations. Earlier studies suggest that the translation of issues related to European integration into domestic politics is driven by the dynamics of long- and short-term government-opposition competition, and that the key driver of change is party strategy (Sitter 2001).

The number and proportion of Europeanised questions might in particular reflect individual motivations linked to party membership. Two dimensions can be distinguished: the attitude towards the EU, on the one side, and, on the other side, the political conjuncture which draws a line between governmental and opposition parties.

It has been demonstrated that the attitudes of French political parties towards Europe and European policies are closely intertwined with their position on the left-right axis (Sauger 2005). More precisely, the relationship is quadratic, which means that distance on the European dimension is the square of the distance on left-right axis. In other words, Eurosceptic parties are to be found on the extreme poles of the left-right axis, while moderate parties are also more pro-European.

Our expectation is that the EU will be more often mentioned by those who have a clear-cut vision – in favour of or against – European integration. However, it is generally recognized that mainstream parties – from the left and from the right – avoid dealing with European issues, which can be a source of inner divisions even when the attitude is overall favourable. On the contrary, Euro-scepticism can be used tactically by political parties in an electoral appeal against the government. *Extreme parties find it particularly attractive to put more emphasis on European issues in order to distance themselves from the mainstream parties. MPs belonging to Euro-sceptic parties from the far left and the far right should submit more questions about the EU than other MPs (Hypothesis 2).*

A complementary hypothesis relates to the government-opposition status. We anticipate that, *to distance themselves from the EU policies of the government, MPs from the opposition will submit more questions about the EU (Hypothesis 3)*. This is in line with earlier observations that MPs from the opposition as well as Eurosceptic members of majority coalitions are the most active on European issues (Raunio and Hix 2000, p. 163; Sitter 2001).

The propensity of MPs to signal to their voters that they are concerned about European matters might also be driven by constituency considerations. MPs might indeed have different incentives to raise European questions depending on the characteristics of their electoral district. The voters in border regions or in regions hosting EU institutions might have a deeper understanding of European politics and they might be more directly impacted by European decisions. In other words, *MPs from border constituencies and from constituencies hosting EU institutions should submit more questions about European politics (Hypothesis 4).*

Finally, we also expect MPs to adjust their strategies to the institutional framework and opportunities provided by the National Assembly.

2.3 Institutional factors

Different institutional structures create different opportunities and incentives to raise European issues in the National Assembly. In 1995 two reforms were passed which affected the work of French MPs (Hayward 2004). The parliamentary session ('*session unique*') was lengthened and the number of paid assistants on whose services deputies can call to help with the preparatory work increased from two to three. These changes should result in a higher overall level of activity, including questioning. It should thus reinforce the Hypothesis 1a.

The type of questions is probably the most important institutional factor influencing the scope of attention to the EU, because *questions orales*, *questions écrites* and *questions au gouvernement* fulfil different functions and can be expected to serve the MPs' electoral and policy objectives in different ways (Lazardeux 2005 and 2009). Written questions as well as oral questions hardly constitute effective means to criticise governmental policies. They generally aim at gathering technical or practical information on public policy. Conversely, questions to the government are one of the key moments of parliamentary activity and allow MPs to engage in a very public scrutiny of governmental policies.

Written questions are certainly the least visible to the general public. They are, generally speaking, perceived as a way for MPs to obtain information, not to raise politicised matters or to foster the electoral connection (Lazardeux 2005). It follows that attention to Europe in the written questions should be less strategic and should reveal more sincere feelings about

the MPs' real interest in European issues. From this, we can infer three hypotheses as far as written questions are concerned:

- *Attention to Europe in written questions should be less sensitive to short-term variations due to the immediate electoral context (Hypothesis 5a).*
- *The gap between majority and opposition MPs should be reduced (Hypothesis 5b).*
- Declared pro- or anti- European attitudes should be less important, but *MPs with strong feelings about the EU (either in favour or opposition to European integration) should ask more written questions with a European dimension (Hypothesis 5c).*

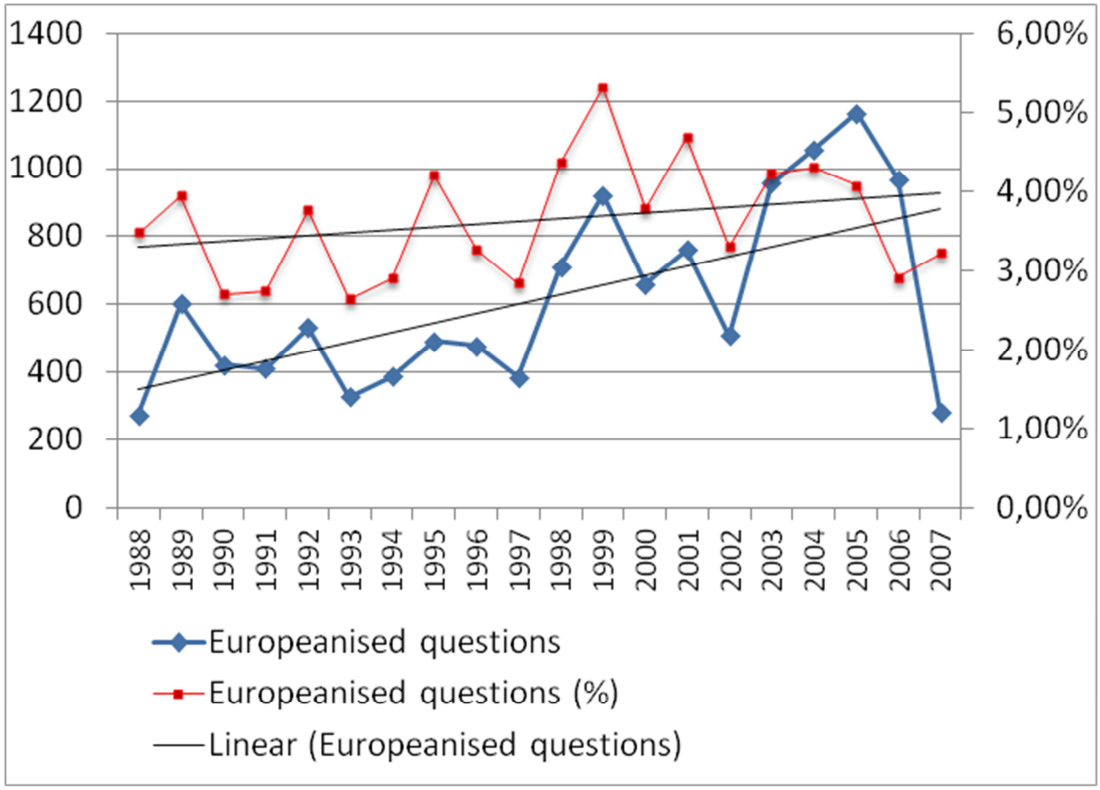
Oral questions fundamentally serve a local function: they are used by representatives to air minor constituency grievances. The hypothesis is that *Europe should generally be the least present in oral questions and party identities should play a minor role (Hypothesis 6a).* However, there is one exception which derives from Hypothesis 4: *MPs from constituencies with specific local European interests should submit more oral questions with a European dimension (Hypothesis 6b).*

Contrary to oral questions, questions to the government have a clear partisan function. It has been demonstrated that, in the field of defence policy, questions to the government are much less likely than oral questions to serve as a channel to raise local matters (Rozenberg et al. 2011). The same expectation can be had for questions about Europe. One can make the hypothesis that *the presence of Europe would be greater in the case of the highly politicized questions to the government (Hypothesis 7).* In addition, we expect that Hypotheses 2 and 3 on the role of parties are especially pertinent with regard to the questions to the government.

3. Are French MPs more and more attentive to European issues?

According to the first hypothesis there should be a general trend of increase in the share of Europeanised questions during the period under consideration. There are great variations in the number of Europeanised questions in the National Assembly. On the whole, 12,322 Europeanised questions were asked with a minimum of 328 in 1993 and a maximum of 1,164 in 2005 (the years 1988 and 2007 are not taken into consideration since they are incomplete). Although there are ups and downs, the overall trend during the period seems to be one of growth in the total number of Europeanised questions from 604 in 1989 to 969 in 2006. In detail, three periods can be distinguished. From 1988 to 1997, the number of Europeanised questions is stagnating, and even almost declining, with around 500 questions every year. During this first stage, a peak can be discerned in 1992 which coincides with the ratification referendum on the Maastricht Treaty. During the eleventh legislature, from 1997 to 2002, the number of Europeanised questions increases slowly. Finally, the twelfth legislature marks the strongest increase: the highest point is reached in 2005, the year of the referendum on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.

Figure 1: Total number of Europeanised questions



However, the changes in the absolute number of Europeanised questions must be analysed in the light of more general transformations of parliamentary activities. In France, as in other democracies, the level of activity increased steadily during the last decades (Kerrouche 2006). Moreover, the constitutional reform of 1995 replaced the two three-month legislative sessions of spring and autumn with a continuous nine-month session, with the intention of allowing a better control of government. By increasing the legislative session, the reform increased the time devoted to parliamentary questions (Lazardeux 2009). It is therefore not surprising that the higher number of Europeanised parliamentary questions does not result exclusively from a true 'conversion' to European issues but from this overall increase.

From the relative values, the growth in the proportion of European questions is extremely modest. The share was 3.28 percent for the ninth legislature, 3.25 percent during the tenth, 4.27 during the eleventh, and 3.73 percent during the twelfth. The highest point is reached in 1999, and not 2005 as for the absolute values. This compares poorly to the Europeanisation of laws, which - yearly variations aside - has been steady since 1986. From less than 7 percent in 1986, the proportion of the total number of laws with an EU impulse grew to around 10 percent in 1990 and 18.75 percent in 2007. Furthermore, in 21 years there was no clear decrease in the global trend of Europeanisation (Brouard et al. 2012).

This gap can be explained by the lack of visibility of the European stakes even for the parliamentarians. Grossman and Sauger (2007) have noted that the large majority of EU directives are transposed through governmental decisions (*arrêtés*), as they are considered to fall under the regulatory competences of the executive. As to the minority of texts transposed by law, the government often omits to specify that a given law transposes a European directive. As a consequence, the transposition of EU regulations is largely invisible to French MPs and, according to Grossman and Sauger (2007: 1128), European integration has not fundamentally altered the executive-legislative relationship in France: if anything, France's scrutiny of European affairs has even been weakened. Another explanation relates to the lack of incentives for individual MPs to tackle European issues, to which we will return later.

Beyond these medium-term trends, electoral cycles can also be seen throughout the period under study, with an important reduction in the proportion of European questions in 1993, 1997 and 2002. Two interpretations are equally likely: either this corresponds to a general decrease in the overall number of parliamentary questions (whatever the issue) because of a shorter parliamentary calendar, or an occultation of European issues in the context of a national electoral competition. In fact, since the number and percentage of Europeanised questions is lower in 1993, 1997 and 2002 than in the preceding and following years, both interpretations probably hold and strengthen each other. The electoral cycle also draws attention towards shorter but huge variations in time.

Attention to European issues is not constant over time but changes greatly from one month to the other. As hypothesised, peaks in the proportion of European questions seem to coincide with French presidencies of the Council of the EU (second semester 1989, first semester 1995, and second semester 2000). This is apparent for example in June 1989 (7.9 per cent of European questions), in June 1995 (more than 8 per cent) and September 2000 (more than 6 per cent). The months surrounding the European Parliament elections also see an increase in the number of Europeanised questions: the second highest peak is in June 1999. Conversely, the attention to European problems diminishes at the time of national elections in February 1993 (1.9 per cent), in June 1997 (2.6 per cent) and in June 2002 (0.7 per cent).

Basically, the first set of hypotheses (1a and 1b) about aggregated variations is validated by the empirical evidence. We now turn to more specific explanations of the Europeanisation of parliamentary questions.

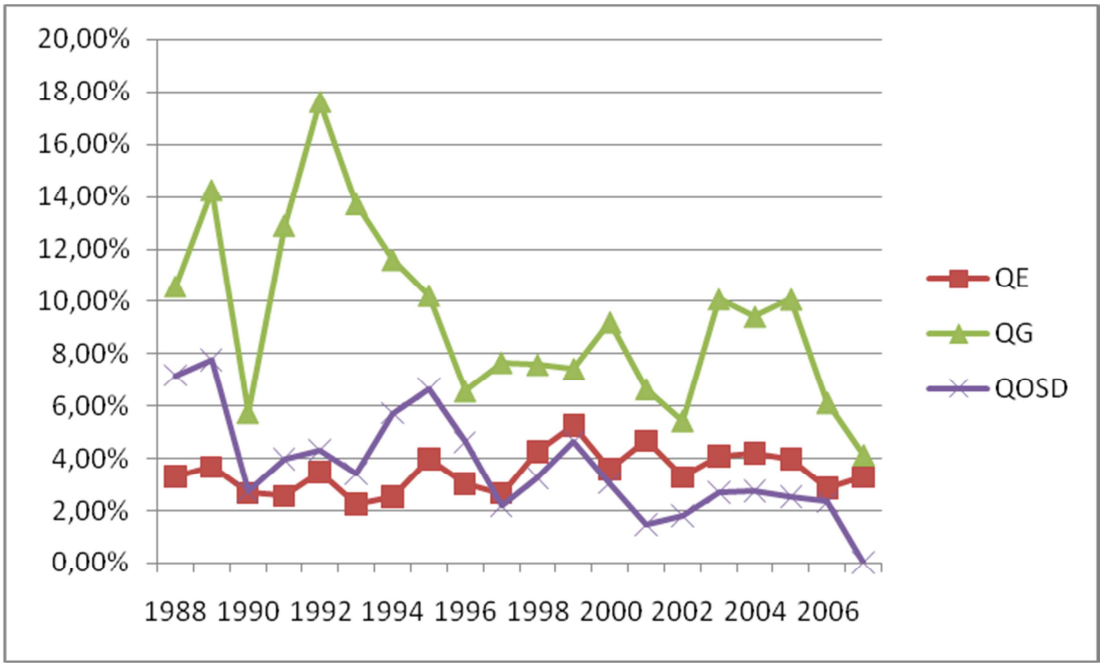
4. Attention to Europe as a result of institutional and political factors

The growing Europeanisation of questions in the National Assembly can be interpreted as a result of a changing institutional environment. As the same time, it remains necessary to explain why individual MPs decide to engage in European affairs.

4.1 A differentiated evolution according to the type of question

Questions to the government are much more Europeanised than written and oral questions: amongst the former, 8.9 percent have a European dimension as compared to 3.5 percent of the written questions and 3.4 percent of the oral questions (Table 1). This confirms Hypothesis 7 which stipulates that the Europeanisation is stronger where the politicisation is also more apparent, as it is the case with questions to government. The peaks are most apparent in 1992 with the Maastricht Treaty, in 2000 with the French presidency of the Council and the Nice Summit and in 2003, 2004 and 2005 with the negotiation and ratification of the European Constitution.

Figure 2: Proportion of EU-related questions by type of question



On the contrary, as anticipated by Hypothesis 6a, MPs have few incentives to address European matters in the oral questions, which are traditionally dedicated to local problems. And, in line with Hypothesis 5a, attention to Europe is weaker but more constant in the written questions. However, it is noteworthy that the proportion of Europeanised questions is declining in the questions to the government, as well as in the oral questions. At the aggregate level the increase in the absolute number of Europeanised questions in the National Assembly results clearly from the great amount of written questions.

Our data also provides strong evidence regarding the impact of the constituency characteristics (Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 6b). We test the hypothesis that MPs from

constituencies with specific local European interests should submit many more questions with a European dimension by focusing on the questions of MPs from Alsace. Alsace is in direct geographical contact with and has strong historical ties to Germany; moreover the regional capital (Strasbourg) is host to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe. Between 1988 and 2007, MPs from Alsace submitted 483 written questions (4.16 percent), 24 questions to the government (8.70 percent) and 16 oral questions (4.75 percent) with a European dimension.

As expected, this is proportionally more than for the other MPs in the case of written and oral questions. The difference is particularly striking for oral questions, but it simply demonstrates that in Alsace, Europe is perceived as a local issue (many questions relate to the problem of the seat of the European Parliament in Strasbourg). The special interest for Europe of MPs from Alsace is also evident from the proportion of written questions. In addition, MPs from this region are also more likely than their colleagues to put forward European issues in the more politicised questions to the government. This is clearly where the impact of party membership is the strongest.

4.2 Partisanship and Europeanisation

As expected, the impact of this European cleavage is the most visible in the questions to the government, where politicisation is at its upmost. The *Mouvement des Citoyens* (MDC), which is a small leftist anti-European (*souverainiste*) party, asked most EU-related questions (14.75 per cent); it is followed by the non-attached MPs who included right-wing Eurosceptics such as Philippe de Villiers during some legislative terms (13.79 per cent). Amongst left-wing parties the PS (Socialist Party) is the one with the smallest proportion of Europeanised questions (but the case of the Greens is difficult to interpret since they are quite divided on European matters). On the centre and right, attention to the EU is higher amongst the Gaullists (RPR) than the pro-European Centrists and the Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF). The numbers for the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) is lower but it exists only since 2002, when the overall trend was already on the decline.

Table 1: Proportion of Europeanised questions by party

	QE		QG		QOSD	
	% Europeanised questions	**Total number of questions**	**% Europeanised questions**	**Total number of questions**	**% Europeanised questions**	**Total number of questions**
PCF	2,44%	17281	8,77%	1152	3,35%	508
MDC	6,59%	1913	14,75%	183	2,27%	88
PS	3,40%	68530	8,35%	2826	2,98%	1613
DVG	3,64%	2338	9,54%	283	2,54%	118
Greens	3,79%	2903	10,43%	115	3,57%	28
Centre	3,87%	1707	7,53%	93	0,00%	42
UDF	3,43%	73166	9,10%	2087	5,11%	1116
RPR	3,56%	63896	9,45%	1883	3,04%	1186
UMP	3,77%	84355	8,43%	1897	3,01%	1131
FN	4,88%	410	0,00%	7		
NI	3,90%	1333	13,79%	29	4,76%	21
Total	3,52%	317832	8,92%	10555	3,40%	5851

The relationship between partisanship and Europeanisation is not so clear for the less political oral and written questions. If the MDC parliamentarians are – as already observed – proportionally the most attentive to Europe in their written questions, Socialist parliamentarians tend to ask more Europeanised written questions than the Eurosceptic members of the Communist Party (PCF). Similarly, Centrist MPs asked more Europeanised written questions than the other right-wing MPs, and the UDF MPs asked more Europeanised oral questions than the RPR and UMP MPs. To sum up, it seems that pro-European parties have an interest to raise European issues in the case of more technical questions whereas parties which are critical of the EU address this issue when politicisation is the strongest. These aggregated observations find some support in the detailed analysis of Europeanised questions by legislature.

Table 2: Written questions with a European dimension

	9th legislature (1988-1993)		**10th legislature (1993-1997)**		**11th legislature (1997-2002)**		**12th legislature (2002-2007)**	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
PCF	1,64%	5311	2,71%	3684	2,52%	3975	3,13%	4311
MDC	-	-	4,07%	762	8,25%	1151	-	-
PS	2,80%	16686	2,43%	5760	4,41%	20808	3,19%	25276
DVG	0,00%	135	3,55%	451	4,59%	959	3,15%	793
Vert	-	-	-	-	3,79%	2743	3,75%	160
Centre	3,97%	731	3,79%	976	-	-	-	-
UDF	3,65%	23493	2,87%	19661	3,61%	22441	3,67%	7571
RPR	2,96%	20609	3,02%	19709	4,53%	23578	-	-
UMP	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,77%	84355
FN	4,88%	410	-	-	-	-	-	-
NI	2,37%	379	9,55%	157	3,71%	458	3,24%	339
Total	3,07%	67754	2,93%	51160	4,15%	76113	3,62%	122805
Khi2	79.23*** (df=7)		37.37*** (df=7)		106.15*** (df=7)		22.64*** (df=6)	

*** p<0.01

Three patterns can be discerned following the category of questions. As already noted, written questions of pro-European MPs are more Europeanised than those of Euro-sceptic ones. However, with the overall growing salience of Europe in the written questions, these differences tend to be reduced: during the twelfth legislature, the PCF and RPR parliamentarians were putting forward a proportion of Europeanised written questions similar to that of the Socialists and UDF respectively. Therefore, belonging to the majority or the opposition does not impact the level of attention to the EU.

Table 3: Oral questions with a European dimension

	9th legislature (1988-1993)		10th legislature (1993-1997)		11th legislature (1997-2002)		12th legislature (2002-2007)	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
PCF	6,85%	73	3,85%	156	2,90%	138	1,42%	141
MDC			6,67%	30	0,00%	58		
PS	7,61%	197	3,36%	268	2,75%	692	1,10%	456
DVG			3,45%	29	3,23%	62	0,00%	25
Vert					3,57%	28		
Centre			0,00%	40				
UDF	3,45%	145	7,14%	434	4,52%	376	2,48%	161
UMP							3,01%	1131
RPR	2,88%	243	3,37%	534	2,69%	409		
Total	4,86%	658	4,49%	1491	3,06%	1765	2,34%	1919
Khi2	6.54 (df=3)		11.91 (df=6)		5 (df=6)		6.41 (df=4)	

A different trend is apparent in the case of oral questions. The overall decline in the proportion of Europeanised questions is mostly attributable to the declining attention towards Europe by left-wing parliamentarians, who – from twice as many Europeanised questions during the ninth legislature – got to the same level than right-wing parliamentarians in the eleventh legislature and fell below them during the twelfth one. It should be noted, for the sake of precision, that the steady decline in the share of Europeanised questions from Socialist MPs from the ninth to the tenth legislature, is partially explained by the fact that the most Euro-sceptic members left the PS and created the MDC. However, the relationship between party membership and the Europeanisation of parliamentary questions is never statistically significant. Contrary to Hypothesis 2 and to Hypothesis 3, neither Euro-sceptic nor opposition MPs pay more attention to Europe in their parliamentary questions.

Table 4: Questions to the government with a European dimension

	9th legislature (1988-1993)		**10th legislature (1993-1997)**		**11th legislature (1997-2002)**		**12th legislature (2002-2007)**	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
PCF	12,87%	202	6,14%	277	5,56%	414	13,51%	259
MDC	-	-	13,79%	58	15,20%	125	-	-
PS	14,14%	488	6,50%	446	9,79%	1072	4,02%	820
DVG	-	-	7,41%	81	8,98%	167	17,14%	35
Vert	-	-	-	-	9,82%	112	-	-
Centre	-	-	7,95%	88	-	-	-	-
UDF	11,65%	455	9,01%	677	5,01%	679	15,22%	276
RPR	10,10%	307	12,39%	783	6,31%	793	-	-
UMP	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,43%	1897
Total	12,33%	1452	9,34%	2410	7,64%	3362	8,40%	3287
Khi2	3.14 (df=3)		18.29*** (df=6)		29.57 (df=6)		49.37*** (df=4)	

*** p<0.01

Focusing on questions to the government, it seems that, contrary to our expectations, majority – not opposition – parliamentarians are the most attentive to European issues. In the ninth and eleventh legislatures, when the left was in government, socialist parliamentarians asked proportionally more Europeanised questions than the UDF and RPR parliamentarians. In turn, centrist and conservative MPs were more attentive to EU-related problems than their political rivals when they were in the majority, namely during the tenth and twelfth legislatures. Overall, the majority/opposition cleavage has an opposite impact on the Europeanisation of parliamentary questions than the one hypothesised.

This counter-intuitive observation can be interpreted as follows: questions to the government are not only used in a predictable ‘role game’ where opposition parties systematically denigrate the deeds of the executive while the majority indistinctively praises the government’s actions. On the contrary, questions to the government seem to have a real political function: they are used by MPs from the majority to control the government’s European policy. This has become important in the last decades where French governments have, for the most part, been supported by a coalition of parties. In this conjuncture, coalition

partners are particularly eager to scrutinize the executive in order to be sure the compromise in the cabinet sufficiently reflects their partisan preferences (Holzhacker 2002). As a matter of fact, French MPs have been more attentive to European issues when they do not belong to the same party than the minister in charge of European affairs[2].

5. Concluding remarks

The study of parliamentary questions brings some nuances to the common understanding of the Europeanisation of national institutions. First of all, we have highlighted that Europeanisation is not simply about the design of new institutional instruments but also about the attention being paid to European problems when using existing institutional tools. Second of all, the pattern of Europeanisation is less clear than expected in the sense that the attention to European issues is not growing quickly and is even declining if we consider the proportion of Europeanised questions to the government. Another finding is that, contrary to what is often assumed, Eurosceptic and opposition MPs do not automatically ask more questions regarding Europe than pro-European and government MPs.

In fact, the Europeanisation depends mostly of the type of questions under consideration: this confirms that parliamentary questions have different functions. Europeanised written questions, which are deemed technical, are the most closely related to a genuine interest in European politics and politicians with strong pro- or anti-European views tend to ask more such questions than their colleagues. Oral questions, the most visible to the voters, are submitted in relation to local district concerns, even in the case of questions dealing with European issues: they serve direct electoral purposes. And questions to the government are used by majority parliamentarians to scrutinise their government, especially when the minister in charge comes from a different party within the coalition. From this we can conclude that the logic of parliamentary questioning in European affairs does not differ from the one that applies in other policy fields.

[2] Such was the attitude of the Gaullist RPR MPs during the 10th legislature towards Alain Juppé (RPR, in charge of Foreign Affairs) and Alain Lamassoure (UDF, in charge of European Affairs) between 1993 and 1995, as well as towards Hervé de Charette (UDF, in charge of European Affairs) and Michel Barnier (RPR, in charge of European Affairs), because Juppé and Barnier represented the most pro-European fringe of the RPR. During the Jospin government, the MDC parliamentarians were the most active in supervising the action of Hubert Védrine (Socialist, in charge of Foreign Affairs) and Pierre Moscovici (Socialist, in charge of European Affairs), the latter being an assumed pro-European. The configuration of the 12th legislature was symmetrical to that of the 10th with the UDF parliamentarians submitting a great number of Europeanised questions to UMP ministers of Foreign Affairs (successively Dominique de Villepin, Michel Barnier and Philippe Douste-Blazy); the fact that the first two secretary of states for European Affairs (Noelle Lenoir and Claudie Haigneré) had no official party affiliation and the third one was from the UMP (Catherine Colonna) probably strengthened the will of the UDF pro-European parliamentarians to scrutinise their actions.

6. Appendix: the coding protocol

Data on parliamentary questions was downloaded from the webpage of the National Assembly. For each question this included: an identification number, the type of question (written, oral, to the government), the ministry to whom the question was asked and the one who gave an answer, the date when the question was put (day, month, year), the author of the question, the author's political group, and the department where he was elected. The National Assembly also attributes a set of three keywords (sometimes a keyword comprises more than one word) indicating the theme of the question. There are however two major difficulties when using this indexation system to identify the European content of the questions. First, there is no clear hierarchy between the three keywords, which makes it difficult to use. Second, there is no consistency across time in the use of keywords. It would therefore be extremely difficult to rely directly on these keywords to analyse the evolution of attention to the EU in the National Assembly. However, the National Assembly indexation system can be of use to create a new dummy variable which takes a different value depending on whether or not the question has a European dimension. We define this European dimension as anything in relation to the European Communities and later the European Union[3]. Parliamentary questions dealing with EU policies, the transposition of directives, treaty reforms, European symbols, French European policies, the Euro, etc. are therefore classified as Europeanised[4]. In other words, we are interested in measuring to what extent Europe, broadly defined, receives more attention than previously and not whether the attitude of French MPs has become more pro-European.

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[3] The Council of Europe and the European Convention on Human Rights do not belong to this category. We were also careful to exclude anything relating to domestic politics in European countries and such keywords as Scouts of Europe or Eurovision song contest.

[4] The data was classified automatically relying both on the search function of Excel software and on machine coding (TextTools software). A manual random recoding of the questions has resulted in a 100 percent match.

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