

# Political Parties & Parliamentary EU Oversight



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# Political Parties & Parliamentary EU Oversight

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# Preface

My motivation to study European integration stems from my time in secondary school. Since then, I have been interested in the reasons why people are angry about European unification. Growing up in Austria, a country where people are very sceptical towards the European Union, I was always fascinated by the fact that even people who never talk about or show much interest in politics had strong opinions on the issue. Many people claimed that the EU was responsible for many negative things such as poverty, crime or mass unemployment. Furthermore, they argued that it is deciding too much, spending too much and letting too many foreigners into Europe.

Yet, in school I had learnt, the European Union was created in our best interest, a historical attempt to bring everlasting peace to the European continent. These contrasting and contradictory views led me to want to learn more about what the institutions of the European Union actually do and how decision-making in Europe comes about. During my time as an undergraduate, I focused on the relationship between the national and European levels and the way domestic actors, such as voters, parties and legislatures, deal with the European Union. My interest in the topic remained which is why I decided to spend a bit more time on it and I have been happy to do that at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University. One product of this is the present summary report which, together with four individual papers, build my dissertation 'Political Parties & Parliamentary EU Oversight'. The aim of this summary report is to outline the theoretical foundations and methodological aspects of the individual papers, to describe my key findings and to discuss the wider implications of the dissertation.

The following papers are included in the dissertation:

- Paper A  
Senninger, Roman (forthcoming) 'Issue Expansion and Selective Scrutiny - How Opposition Parties Used Parliamentary Questions about the European Union in the National Arena from 1973 to 2013', Published online before print August 4, 2016 *European Union Politics*
- Paper B  
Senninger, Roman 'When to Bring Europe into Question? - Domestic EU Oversight & Issue-Based Party Strategies', Working Paper
- Paper C  
Senninger, Roman and Daniel Bischof 'Working in Unison - Political Parties and Policy Issue Transfer in the Multi-Level Space', Revise and Resubmit at *European Union Politics*
- Paper D  
Senninger, Roman 'Synergetic Effects of Public and Elite Euroscepticism on EU Oversight Institutions - A Spatial Analysis', Under Review

# Acknowledgments

Many people say that the completion of a dissertation is a long journey. I am not entirely sure about that but one definitely gets to travel a lot. In my case everything started with traveling to Denmark. In addition, I had the opportunity to attend interesting workshops and conferences at many different places in Europe, the USA and Canada (see below). I want to thank all Danish taxpayers for making that possible.



When not being out traveling, I had the wonderful people at the Department of Political Science at Aarhus University around me. I am grateful to many of them. Peter Munk Christiansen, Ph.D coordinator at the time when I started and now Head of Department supported me all along the way and was very influential for my decision to move to Aarhus. Jens Blom-Hansen and Christoffer Green-Pedersen are exemplary scholars and dedicated supervisors. They challenged me, trusted me, and were always available when needed. Thanks to them I felt I had things under control most of the time.

Sara B. Hobolt welcomed me as a visiting research student at the London School of Economics and Political Science.<sup>1</sup> During my time in London, several parts of the dissertation advanced substantially due to Sara's devoted attitude, constructive feedback and faith in my project.

In Aarhus, I had the pleasure to share an office with smart and caring colleagues. Kim Sass Mikkelsen introduced me to the 'ABC' of being a Ph.D. student. Martin Bisgaard, from whom one can learn many things, taught me to be passionate about research. Hallbera West deserves credit for improving my Danish language skills and especially for providing a relaxed atmosphere at the time when I was finishing up my dissertation.

Being a Ph.D. student at the Department of Political Science at Aarhus University was giving because I was lucky to be a part of a group of talented and engaged Ph.D. students and a group of excellent and creative scholars in the section of 'Political Behavior and Institutions'. A special thank you goes to a very warm-hearted guy from Vestjylland, Mathias Osmundsen. Many other people at and far away from the department supported me in some form or another. These include Birgit Kanstrup, Malene Poulsen, Annette Bruun Andersen, Anna Christina Prior, Steffen Armstrong Gjedde,

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I would particularly like to thank Daniel Bischof. Over the last three years I had countless Skype chats with Daniel and he acted many parts: friend, critic, colleague, co-author. Not all conversations were equally productive but they all contributed to making me a better scholar. I hope there will be many to follow.

Moving to Denmark was exciting but also challenging because I left behind friends and family. There have been times where I was tired of seeing much-loved people via computer screens only. But this challenge taught me a lot about real friendship. Thank you Andi, Bella, Frida, Patricia, Matthias, Fabian and Leticia. My family was never too happy to see me moving to Denmark but they showed nothing but love and support. Thank you Mama, Laslo, Michi, Papa, Albine and Tante Elfie. Finally, in Denmark I not only found my love but was also warmly welcomed into her family. Thank you Kristina, Kirsten, Erling, Camilla, Mathias, Birgit, Inger, Frede, Asta and Jørgen.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In 2013, the British Prime Minister David Cameron promised an in-out referendum on Britain's membership in the European Union (EU). In an effort to improve the chances of convincing the British people to vote to remain in the EU, Cameron renegotiated the UK's relationship with the EU. One of his desired changes concerned the role of national parliaments. He demanded to give them more power to stop unwanted EU laws. This would enhance the sovereignty of national parliaments and give them back the control they have lost over the course of the European integration process. In addition, Cameron was hoping that the repatriation of powers would help him to win back the support of Eurosceptic Tory MPs who were flirting with the idea of withdrawing from the EU. Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, agreed and promised to introduce a 'Red Card' procedure, where 55 percent of national parliaments could challenge EU proposals presumably leading to a withdrawal unless amended to meet parliaments' concerns. As we know today, the procedure was not introduced because the British people decided to take back control in a different way and voted to leave the EU.

However, the renegotiation between the UK and the EU regarding the question of national sovereignty was of high symbolic importance as it notified the public that the relationship between national parliaments and the EU is an area needing improvement. For observers of EU politics this was no news because the list of examples indicating that national parliaments might have lost too much power towards EU institutions is long. For instance, at the height of the Eurozone crisis national parliaments have had little role other than to rubber stamp crisis management decisions of national and European executives (Auel and Höing, 2014). Generally, the specialized literature suggests that national parliaments have little say in EU decision-making (Norton, 1996; Katz and

Wessels, 1999; O'Brennan and Raunio, 2007; Heftler et al., 2015). Some academic studies even come to the conclusion that national parliaments are losers of European integration, especially when compared to the national executive which in many ways have gained power because of its involvement in EU policy-making (Maurer and Wessels, 2001). Other studies focus on institutional adaption and show that national parliaments have become formally more influential over time (Winzen, 2012). Especially the implementation and reform of EU oversight institutions within parliaments, so-called European Affairs Committees (EACs), have contributed to a more positive assessment of the power of parliaments. In general, EU oversight, meaning the examination of EU policy proposals and the monitoring of EU-related plans and actions taken by EU institutions and members of the national executive has emerged as the core task of national parliaments in EU affairs, providing a potentially strong role for them.

However, it seems that national parliaments do not take their new function too seriously. Many observers consider them to be inactive because they rarely monitor EU policy-making outside of EACs (Auel, Rozenberg and Tacea, 2015). The passivity of national parliaments is puzzling and has inspired scholars to inquire the role of national parliaments in EU affairs. The number of studies on the issue has considerably increased during the last decade (e.g., Raunio, 2009, 2011; Finke and Danwolf, 2013; Winzen, 2012; Blom-Hansen and Olsen, 2015; Jensen and Martinsen, 2015; Zbiral, 2016; Hörner, N.d.), increasing our knowledge of the reasons for activity and passivity in parliamentary EU oversight. However, the general question about activity only scratches the surface of parliamentary EU oversight.

Firstly, we need to address what parliamentary EU oversight activities are really about. For example, are national parliaments more interested in scrutinizing EU policies about the ban of tobacco advertising or more constitutive issues such as the realization of EU treaty reforms? Moreover, we have little knowledge about the timing of parliamentary EU oversight activities, i.e., do they follow the EU legislative agenda or do they occur proactively?

Furthermore, most scholars treat parliamentary EU oversight in EU member states as isolated from each other. Even though the number of comparative studies about national parliaments in EU affairs has increased, national EU oversight systems are largely considered as independent of each other. This appears as a puzzle because delegations of national parliaments from EU member states regularly meet and exchange information about EU oversight. Yet, the consequences thereof are insufficiently studied. In addition, parliamentary EU oversight does not only take place at the na-

tional level but also at the European level. Surprisingly though, recent research has made little effort to study whether and how the two parliamentary arenas coordinate EU oversight. Finally, one of the most obvious instruments of parliamentary oversight in Western European democracies, namely parliamentary questions, have not been sufficiently incorporated into the study of parliamentary EU oversight.

I believe that a major reason for the lack of attention to these questions is that EU scholars think of national parliaments as unified actors. In fact, the majority of studies treat parliamentary EU oversight in the aggregate and disregard the actors within parliament. To contribute to a greater understanding of parliamentary EU oversight, I focus on the actors who shape the organization and activities of national parliaments in the member states of the EU most crucially; namely, political parties.

Political parties have a crucial role in modern democracy. They recruit candidates, offer policy alternatives, mobilize voters and produce policy output (Dalton, Farrel and McAllister, 2011). In addition, parties structure the organization and behavior within parliament. As a rule, members of parliament (MP) sit together with other MPs who belong to the same political party group. Individual votes in parliament (both in the plenary and in committees) are usually coordinated within political party groups (Sieberer, 2006; Russell, 2014). Furthermore, in many parliamentary democracies speaking and questioning time is allocated to political parties which then decide who will get the chance to occupy the speaker's desk (Proksch and Slapin, 2012). Given this crucial role of political parties within parliament, it seems odd to disregard them when studying parliamentary EU oversight.

To be clear, emphasizing the role of political parties is no devaluation of parliament as an institution. There is no doubt that national parliaments are central institutions in Western democracies. It therefore is important to evaluate and discuss their roles not only in domestic politics but also within the multi-level setting of the EU. However, modern parliamentary democracies are at the same time party democracies because political parties structure and facilitate democratic delegation and accountability (Müller, 2000). A focus on political parties will therefore enable us to get a better understanding of the mechanisms within parliament. This has great potential to provide new insights into the functioning of parliamentary EU oversight.

Taking the role of political parties in parliamentary EU oversight seriously can be meaningful for another reason. An impressive body of literature has investigated how national political parties deal with the EU and how the issue impacts on party competition at the domestic level (Marks and Wilson,

2000; Ladrech, 2002; Steenbergen and Scott, 2004; Poguntke et al., 2007; Vries and Edwards, 2009; Hooghe and Marks, 2009a; Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest, 2010; De Vries and Hobolt, 2012; Kriesi et al., 2012; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013; Hoeglinger, 2016). One of the key findings in the literature is that attitudes towards the EU and incentives to address the EU in the national political arena differ across parties. While most mainstream political parties prefer to de-emphasize the issue, Eurosceptic parties wish to politicize it. I believe that these insights can help us to understand unresolved issues discussed above, because it might be the case that parties that wish to emphasize the EU in national politics also actively address the issue in oversight activities within parliament. In sum, I propose that the consideration of political parties and their incentives to address the EU in the national political arena will lead to a greater understanding of parliamentary EU oversight.

In four individual papers, I therefore study possible ways of how political parties influence parliamentary EU oversight activities. The individual papers each contribute to answering the following overall research question: How does competition between political parties shape parliamentary EU oversight? The possible ways in which party competition influence parliamentary EU oversight are diverse, which is why the individual papers approach the overall research question from different angles. Most obviously, competing political parties can impact on parliamentary EU oversight with their behavior in the national parliament. For example, the number, content and timing of parties' oversight activities about the EU have the potential to determine the status of national parliamentary EU oversight. Two of my dissertation papers (Paper A and Paper B) are devoted to these aspects. In addition, parties' influence on parliamentary EU oversight can go beyond the own national parliament. Paper C studies whether and how a party's oversight activities at the national level are coordinated with the activities of that same party's members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Thus, it extends the focus of national party influence on parliamentary EU oversight to the European level. Paper D studies dependences between EU member states based on party positions on the EU and their relevance for the design of parliamentary EU oversight institutions. It investigates processes of institutional learning and emulation by focusing on national parties' possible impact on the reform of EACs in the parliaments of other EU member states. Hence, Paper C and Paper D emphasize the potential of party competition to link parliamentary EU oversight between the national and European levels as well as across EU member states.

What are the main results of my dissertation? I provide evidence that party competition has a defining influence on parliamentary EU oversight. EU issue-based incentives of political parties affect

the content and timing of parliamentary oversight activities about the EU at the national level. In addition, I point out that parties coordinate the transfer of policy issue attention between the national and European levels. Finally, I show that similarities in EU position of government parties in different countries provide a mechanism that makes the design of EU oversight institutions diffuse across EU member states. Taken together, I contribute to the literature by addressing both activities and institutions of parliamentary EU oversight. With regard to activities, I especially consider the use of parliamentary questions. In this way, I shed light on traditional instruments of parliamentary oversight that have been insufficiently studied in the area of parliamentary EU oversight until now. The remainder of this summary report is organized as follows. Chapter 2 reviews previous work on national parliamentary EU oversight. Chapter 3 elaborates on the theoretical foundations of the dissertation and introduces the individual papers in more detail. Chapter 4 gives a brief overview of the data and research designs applied in the dissertation. Chapter 5 presents the key results of the dissertation, and Chapter 6 discusses their implications in the light of the current political debate about parliamentary involvement in the EU.

## Chapter 2

# Parliamentary EU Oversight - A Review

What are the central tasks of national parliaments in EU affairs? One of the first things that probably come to mind is the implementation of EU laws. In contrast to other EU legal acts, directives need to be transposed by national legislation to become effective. Figure 2.1 shows the annual number of EU directives during the period from 1967 to 2012.

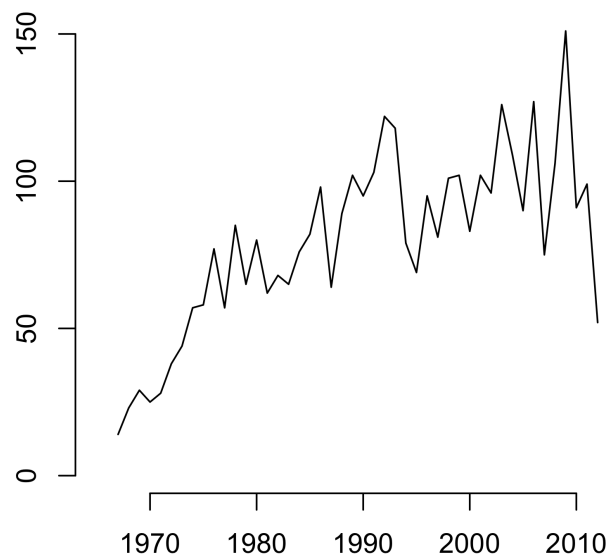


Figure 2.1: Annual number of EU directives, 1967-2012

Note: The data for this plot is from Toshkov (N.d.).

One can see that national parliaments have to deal with a substantial number of EU legal acts. However, the majority of directives passes parliament rather quickly and without any controversies. If problems during the transposition process occur, they are often created by factors that are not directly related to the parliamentary implementation process such as extra-parliamentary veto players (e.g., state-level actors) or conflict within coalition governments (Steunenberg, 2006). One of the reasons why parliamentary implementation of EU directives is sometimes not more than a routine process is that national parliaments have already dealt with the legal acts before they are decided at the European level (Finke and Dannwolf, 2015). The European Commission, the institution responsible for initiating and drawing up new EU legislation, sends proposals to all national parliaments of the EU for consideration. The proposals are subject to parliamentary scrutiny activities that usually include deliberations, debates, questions and hearings to monitor the national executive, which is involved in negotiations and votes on the proposal at the European level. These so-called ex-ante scrutiny procedures allow national parliaments to have a say in EU policy-making. Admittedly, the influence of national parliaments on EU law-making is indirect and in most instances there is no guarantee that parliaments get their will. Nevertheless, the specialized literature identifies EU oversight as the central function of national parliaments in EU affairs (O'Brennan and Raunio, 2007; Heffler et al., 2015). The function also includes ex-post instruments, meaning monitoring activities in parliament that occur after a legislative act is decided at the European level. These activities are not only cheap talk but are seen as a way to make the EU policy-making process more open to the public because they have the potential to initiate debates about the EU, which in turn may increase the legitimacy of EU policy making in the long run (Crum and Fossum, 2009; Bellamy and Kröger, 2014).

However, the substance of parliamentary EU oversight goes beyond monitoring EU legislation. In fact, EU oversight activities can address many other aspects of the EU than specific legislative acts and proposals, including deliberations about the future of the EU in the European Council, resolutions of the Committee of Regions and topics that are debated in the European Parliament. Taken together, parliamentary EU oversight concerns topics related to EU actors, events and legislation. It functions as a way to scrutinize the national executives' plans and actions in EU affairs but also has the potential to initiate public debates about the policies and institutions of the EU more generally. In the following, I briefly portray the development of national parliamentary involvement in EU affairs.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>For excellent in-depth reviews of the topic please consider Goetz and Sahling (2008) and Winzen (2010).

## 2.1 From formal rules to activities

When we look back in time and consider the early days of European integration, we notice that national parliaments had no particular role in EU decision-making. The EU was generally considered a specialized topic of foreign affairs which had little direct influence on the legislative work in parliament and the daily lives of citizens (O'Brennan and Raunio, 2007). In short, the issue was dominated by the national executive and it was widely absent in political debates. Only in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the role of national parliaments in the political architecture of the EU was brought up as a topic for discussion. This was mainly because of the changing influence of the EU on domestic law-making. National parliaments were losing authority because policy-making powers were increasingly transferred to the European level (König, Dannwolf and Luetgert, 2012). At the same, the national executive gained influence because of its participation in supranational decision-making.

In sum, the increasing importance of the EU for domestic politics and the changing roles of parliaments and executives brought modifications to traditional relationships of delegation and accountability (Bergman, 2000). In EU affairs, national parliaments suffer much more from disadvantages towards the national executive than in domestic politics. National parliaments often miss relevant information and the non-transparent decision-making procedures at the EU level make it difficult for them to attribute responsibility to the national executive (Bergman et al., 2003). The first studies about national parliaments in the EU were mainly concerned with an outline of the new challenges that parliaments were facing (Norton, 1996; Schmidt, 1997; Wiberg, 1997).

The increasing awareness of the decline of national parliaments' powers, often referred to as 'de-parliamentarization', lead to responses. First, the European level reacted and pointed to the importance of national parliaments in the EU treaties. For the first time, national parliaments were addressed in the declarations to the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). The objective was to involve national parliaments more in the EU legislation process by providing them with relevant information. Subsequent EU treaties strengthened the formal role of national parliaments further. Recently, the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) introduced the 'Early Warning System', which gives national parliaments a role as safeguards of the principle of subsidiarity<sup>3</sup> and allows them to directly engage in EU policy-making (Kiiver, 2011; Cooper, 2012).

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<sup>3</sup>The principle of subsidiarity was formally introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht. It safeguards the ability of EU member states to take actions and decisions in areas in which the EU does not have exclusive competence.



Second, national parliaments themselves reacted to the challenges they were facing. Before the 1990's, national parliaments' responses did not attract much attention. Parliamentary committees that were set up when a new country joined the EU only mattered to parliamentarians. This changed after the role of national parliaments in the EU became a debated topic, for example as a function of the transfer of authority. From the 1990's onwards, institutional responses of parliaments had much greater importance and were thoroughly researched. The literature first focused on single-country reports. Subsequent studies focus on explaining differences in the power of European Affairs Committees (EACs) between EU member states (Bergman, 1997; Raunio, 2005; Karlas, 2012; Winzen, 2013). Robust findings are that the general strength of parliaments in the national political system and public opinion towards the EU are associated with EAC strength.

The functioning of EACs and the challenges that national parliaments are facing because of European integration are also issues that parliaments discuss among themselves. Since the early 1990's, delegations from national parliaments come together every six months to exchange information and experiences on how to deal with the EU (Bengtson, 2007). These meetings do not only cover processes within EACs, but address challenges that go beyond the work of parliamentary committees. Similarly, more and more voices in the academic literature raised the concern that scientific studies overly address institutional adaption of national parliaments and disregard actual oversight activities. The main point of criticism is that formal parliamentary powers tell very little about behavior within parliament. For example, Auel and Benz (2005) note that

'the institutionalized Europeanization of national parliaments covers only part of the overall changes in parliamentary systems. In order to assess the true Europeanization of parliamentary democracies, one has to look beyond the formal institutions and take the strategies into account, which parliamentary actors develop to deal with their power or lack thereof'.<sup>4</sup>

As a response, scholars started to investigate the EU oversight activities that actually take place. This development can be considered a 'behavioral turn' in EU research. Several collaborative research projects were established to collect comparative data about the activities within parliament.<sup>5</sup> In light

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<sup>4</sup>Following a similar line of thought, Auel (2007) states that '(...) the effectiveness of parliamentary influence cannot simply be measured by looking at formal parliamentary participation rights, but needs to take into account whether and how these formal capabilities translate into parliamentary behavior'.

<sup>5</sup>Many of the related studies exploit the time around the Euro-crisis assuming that the high salience of the EU issue creates a most-likely scenario to identify active parliaments.

of this new research perspective in the study of parliamentary EU scrutiny, one would assume greater prioritization to examining the role of political parties. Whether this was the case is the topic of the next section.

## **2.2 What role for political parties in parliamentary EU oversight?**

It would seem natural that the ‘behavioral turn’ in EU oversight research would involve a strong focus on MPs and political parties. In fact, a review of the literature shows that more studies consider political parties as a relevant part of parliamentary EU oversight in comparison with previous research (e.g., Finke and Dannwolf, 2013; Winzen, 2013; Auel and Raunio, 2014*b*; Closa and Maatsch, 2014; Finke and Herbel, 2015; Hörner, 2015; Rauh, 2015; Strelkov, 2015). For example, Hörner (2015) argues that incentives of political parties are critical for the observation of EU scrutiny activities within parliament. His findings show that the presence of parties with strong incentives to address the EU tends to increase actual activity in parliament. An early and very influential attempt to treat incentives and strategies of political parties with seriousness comes from Holzacker (2002, 2005), who outlines the goals and methods of party groups in parliament to become active in parliamentary EU oversight. Relying on expert interviews with members of EACs in Germany and the Netherlands he shows that strategic and ideological party competition plays an important role for activities in EU affairs. Only rarely, parliamentary EU scrutiny activities follow a non-party mode, where parliament acts as an unified actor in the scrutiny of members of government. Thus, parliamentary EU oversight is increasingly similar to domestic political issues in which political parties engage in various forms of interaction.

However, such consideration of political parties is the exception rather than the rule. Most often, scholars still treat parliamentary EU scrutiny in the aggregate.<sup>6</sup> This means that activities of individual parties are not considered, but pooled together. Information about political parties is merely used to explain cross-country variation in EU oversight activity at the aggregated level, being just one out of many domestic explanations. Let me give an example. As will be discussed in the following chapter,

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<sup>6</sup>Some authors consider other functions of national parliaments than to oversee government in EU affairs such as parliaments’ communication function (Auel and Raunio, 2014*b*; Wendler, 2014). However, the treatment of political parties does not differ across functions. In addition, it is often difficult to identify clear-cut boundaries between control and communication functions, which is why I do not discuss them separately.

Eurosceptic parties have strong incentives to address the EU in national parliament. While seeking to take this party-level aspect into account, many scholars do not consider the behavior of Eurosceptic parties directly, but instead look at the number of Eurosceptic parties in parliament, assuming that a larger count of Eurosceptic parties is associated with more oversight activities in parliament (Auel and Raunio, 2014a; Auel, Rozenberg and Tacea, 2015; Auel, Eisele and Kinski, 2016; Hörner, 2015; Gattermann and Hefftler, 2015). Thus, the role of political parties is treated only in passing, because activities and positions of individual parties are not measured and incorporated in the study design. This means that we miss out on important information about the manner in which the behavior of individual parties influences parliamentary EU scrutiny. It might be the case that political parties with special incentives to address the EU are not only more active than other parties but differ substantially in the way they scrutinize. However, such differences are unobservable if we do not consider parties with the seriousness they deserve, i.e., looking at their positions and associated behavior in detail. In my dissertation, I give political parties a more nuanced role with the aim of learning more about EU oversight.

# Chapter 3

## How Parties Shape Parliamentary EU Oversight

In the following chapter, I develop my expectations with regard to the question of how party competition shapes parliamentary EU oversight. Furthermore, I situate the individual papers of the dissertation.

### 3.1 The role of parties in parliamentary democracies

Political parties occupy an important place in modern politics. Parties are considered as being at the heart of the political system, as endemic to democracy and even as the creators of democracy (Schattschneider, 1942; Aldrich, 1995; Przeworski, Stokes and Manin, 1999; Dalton, Farrel and McAllister, 2011).<sup>7</sup> The reason why political parties are seen as an unavoidable part of democracy, is that they fulfill many functions that make democratic processes work. The spectrum of functions concerns the political involvement of the mass population, the professional organization of politics, and policy-making. Political parties inform citizens about the different policy offers that are up for election. They recruit and qualify politicians who compete for office and create government majorities that seek to implement policies and organize administration. In addition, political parties respond to public opinion and articulate the interests of citizens (Adams et al., 2004; Ezrow and Hellwig, 2014). In short, there is hardly any part of political decision-making that is not crucially affected by political parties.

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<sup>7</sup>For an excellent review, also including more critical voices on the role of political parties, see Stokes (1999).

However, the extent to which political parties matter depends on the system of government. In personalized, presidential systems the role of parties is possibly smaller than in Western European parliamentary democracies, in which political parties are central because of their contribution to the functioning of the chain of political delegation and accountability (Müller, 2000). In the first step of delegation, from citizens to MPs, party competition for votes offers citizens a meaningful sample of party platforms to choose from. In the second step of delegation, from MPs to government, parties organize the behavior of MPs and thereby help citizens to observe MPs' work in order to hold them accountable. In the third and fourth step of delegation and accountability, from government to ministers and from ministers to civil servants, party intervention is less pronounced because it is more controversial or even seen as illegitimate. Yet, in the first two steps, political parties are essential because they decrease transaction costs for both voters and candidates. For voters, parties constitute coherent ideological platforms which are easier to distinguish than individual candidates. Furthermore, a party label gives voters an idea about future behavior of the party. Individual candidates are much more unpredictable than political parties. For candidates, the party label (or the party brand) is useful because it provides them with resources and information.

However, political parties do not only constitute a form of cost minimization for voters and candidates. They also affect the organization of political processes, especially in parliament. On the one hand, this is accomplished through internal party organization. Political parties establish institutional arrangements, meaning rules that shape the behavior of individuals, which make the party a collective that is pursuing a common objective. Internal party organization is usually monitored by the party leadership, which internalizes the collective interest and oversees the behavior of fellow partisans (Cox and McCubbins, 1993). Collective interests are often institutionalized themselves, which means that a party has formalized rules that must be satisfied in order to be a part of the parliamentary party group. In other words, MPs need to follow party discipline (Müller, 2000).<sup>8</sup> This has consequences for the activities (i.e., votes, debates, questions) within parliament because they follow the rules, objectives and interests of parties rather than individual MPs.

In fact, we observe that members of parliamentary party groups usually vote together, they hold similar views in parliamentary debates and do not confront each other with critical questions (Wiberg,

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<sup>8</sup>Admittedly, individual MPs are often also obliged to follow their constituency and local party organization. Therefore, we are likely to see variation in party discipline conditional on incentives for a personal vote or a local list. However, if MPs consider further terms in national parliament or want to have a future career within the national or European party organization, they are highly obliged to follow party discipline in the national parliament.

1995; Bowler, Farrel and Katz, 1999; Jensen, Proksch and Slapin, 2013; Proksch and Slapin, 2015). Thus, internal party organization crucially determines what is happening in national parliaments. On the other hand, political parties shape parliament through party competition. Just as with internal party organization, this has direct consequences for the parliamentary activities we observe. Party competition exists in many different ways. For a very long time, the specialized literature has put its focus exclusively on positional differences between parties (Downs, 1957; Stokes, 1963; Adams, 2001). Hence, attention was given to varying viewpoints of political parties regarding the traditional left-right dimension and their distance to the median voter. However, this changed substantially with the growing importance of issue competition (Budge and Farlie, 1983):

'Issue competition means that political parties will emphasise issues which they would like to see dominate electoral competition. Some parties will, for instance, focus on economic issues, other parties will focus on the environment, whereas yet others will focus on law and order or refugees and immigrants.' (Green-Pedersen, 2007)

An increasing body of literature studies the dynamics of issue competition between parties, including the issues parties wish to be salient on the political agenda and party strategies to make other parties talk about the same issues (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010; Hobolt and de Vries, 2015; Toubeau and Wagner, 2016; Wagner and Meyer, 2014). A possible manner to engage in issue competition and to make other parties respond to the party's own issue agenda is to use parliamentary instruments, such as debates and questions. Green-Pedersen (2009) shows that the increase in the use of non-legislative activities, i.e. activities which do not directly impact on law-making, can be explained by political parties' engagement in issue competition.

In sum, the literature gives theoretical foundation to my argument that political parties deserve a serious consideration in the study of parliaments. Parties affect parliament through their internal organization and their engagement in issue competition. Obviously, the study of parliamentary EU oversight involves certain adaptations. As mentioned, delegation and accountability processes in EU affairs are different than in domestic politics (Bergman, 2000). In addition, the EU constitutes a policy issue which introduces new lines of conflict that do not match traditional patterns of party competition. This has important implications for parliamentary processes in connection to the EU issue. In the following section, I outline some of the characteristics that define party conflict over the EU.

## 3.2 Party conflict over the EU

As mentioned, European integration has for a long time been absent in political debates. This period is often defined by the term 'permissive consensus' (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970), meaning broad agreement about European integration that gives governments authority to strengthen the relationship with other member states. In short, European integration was no part of political conflict within member states. This changed after the signing of the Single European Act (1986) and the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), when the EU issue became more important for domestic politics and at the same time more contested. This new period of EU contestation is often described by the term 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks, 2009a). The crucial question that derives from this development is how contestation over the EU fits into existing lines of party political conflict, in particular the dominating traditional left-right ideological dimension.

Several scholars developed models that seek to explain how the European integration dimension relates to the left-right dimension (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002). We can differentiate between models that regard the two dimensions as irrelevant for each other (Haas, 1958), unrelated to each other (Hix and Lord, 1997), fused in a single dimension (Tsebelis and Garrett, 2000) and oblique to each other (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). Not all of these models are necessarily meaningful for the understanding of party competition because they address conflict over the EU more generally and include many different actors.

Models that are very explicit about political parties are the Hix-Lord model and Hooghe-Marks model (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002; Steenbergen and Marks, 2004). The former regards European integration as unrelated to the left-right dimension. European integration is a question of national sovereignty and authority attribution, whereas the left-right dimension concerns diverse economic and socio-political issues. The latter states that certain aspects of the question about more or less European integration are likely to be absorbed in the left-right dimension. This creates pro-EU incentives for center-left parties considerate of regulation and anti-EU incentives for center-right parties that favor the politics of neoliberalism.

However, the most crucial distinctions between parties that emerge from models of EU contestation are not between mainstream parties but concern differences between mainstream parties and challenger parties located at the fringes of the political spectrum (Hobolt and de Vries, 2015). Mainstream parties are profiteers of left-right contestation because they are often part of government.

Thus, mainstream competitors have strong interests to absorb new conflicts within the left-right dimension to protect the status quo (Marks and Wilson, 2000). However, this comes with difficulties in the case of conflict over European integration because of the multi-dimensionality of the issue. In addition, the EU issue often constitutes a 'wedge issue' that creates disagreement within mainstream parties. Therefore, the most likely strategy of mainstream parties is to downplay the issue in favor of other issues that are suitable to the left-right dimension. The positions of mainstream parties on European integration are moderately positive because they get something out of economic or political integration and occupy important positions for example in the central institutions of the EU (Marks and Wilson, 2000; Marks, Wilson and Ray, 2002).

In contrast, extreme parties at the fringes of the left-right dimension have a strong incentive to take extreme positions on new issues that cut across existing lines of conflict (Van de Wardt, De Vries and Hobolt, 2014). In fact, parties both on the very left and right of the political spectrum position themselves against European integration and attempt to make the issue salient at the domestic level. Especially parties on the extreme right have very negative positions on European integration. This has led authors to consider the correlation between European integration and the new politics (GAL/TAN)<sup>9</sup> dimension. It shows that parties near the TAN pole which are concerned about national sovereignty are especially motivated to act against European integration as they perceive many threats that diminish the authority of national states. Parties near the GAL pole are usually more open to immigration, international cooperation and also European integration. This is evidence that the EU issue combines economic and post-material aspects and that mainstream and extreme parties address these aspects differently (Tzelgov, 2014).

However, the positioning of political parties and their motivations to address the EU needs to be seen in the light of mass contestation over European integration. If we compare the 1980's and 1990's we see that public support for EU membership has declined. Levels of support are most often explained by individual economic well-being and questions of identity and belonging. Hence, the dimension of new politics also matters for the masses. Individuals often find it difficult to observe direct consequences of a country's EU membership. Rather, they rely on cues to define their position on the EU. There is evidence that these cues stem from several sources, including ideological perceptions, identitarian attitudes, the media and political parties (Hooghe and Marks, 2009b). In sum, the fact that the public has become increasingly sceptical towards the EU and uses non-economic aspects to

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<sup>9</sup>GAL stands for green, alternative and libertarian. TAN means traditional, authoritarian and nationalist.



define its position on European integration sows the seeds for EU issue mobilization of Eurosceptic parties.

Thus, Eurosceptic parties are closer to public opinion about the EU and benefit from EU politicization, meaning public contestation of varying standpoints that are intensely debated in public (Steenbergen and Scott, 2004; Kriesi et al., 2012; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016) . Eurosceptic parties therefore wish to make the EU issue a salient topic in domestic politics. In particular, they wish to address general aspects about the EU, such as the questions about more or less integration, that are not easily incorporated in the traditional left-right cleavage (Braun, Hutter and Kersch, 2016). In addition, Eurosceptic parties on the right seek to connect the EU issue with the new politics dimension and focus on the divide between libertarian and authoritarian attitudes (Senninger and Wagner, 2015). This behavior of Eurosceptic parties constitutes a serious challenge to mainstream competitors, who rather want to keep silent about the EU because of their pro-integration attitudes and possible within-party conflict. They prefer to de-emphasize the issue or, if possible, they try to address those aspects of European integration which are easily integrable into the left-right dimension.

Taken together, the growing importance of EU politics for the domestic level and increasing public Euroscepticism give political parties strategic instructions for how to deal with EU issues. In my dissertation, I look at these general incentives for (de)-emphasizing the EU and show that they have important implications for how parties address the EU in parliamentary oversight.

### **3.3 Domestic EU oversight**

How exactly do the theoretical foundations enter the individual studies? Paper A and Paper B look at consequences of party conflict over European integration for parliamentary EU oversight activities in the national parliament. Thus, they study the immediate relation between party competition and parliamentary EU oversight activities of political parties at the domestic level. In both Paper A and Paper B, I focus on the different incentives of pro-EU mainstream and anti-EU extreme parties to deal with the EU.

Paper A is especially interested in the resulting consequences of party conflict over the EU on the issues that parties address in EU oversight activities. As mentioned, Eurosceptic parties have incentives to emphasize general aspects of the EU and questions that relate to the loss of national

sovereignty and identity. In the paper, I test the hypothesis that this also applies to their EU oversight activities in national parliament. In addition, the paper addresses whether the growing importance of the EU is reflected in the number of issues that are represented in parliamentary EU oversight activities of political parties. In sum, Paper A has the content of parliamentary EU oversight activities of political parties as its main topic.

In Paper B, I address possible implications of party conflict over the EU for the timing of EU oversight in national parliament. Eurosceptic parties wish to politicize the EU in national politics. However, they often face a difficulties doing this on their own because other parties and the media do not pay much attention to the EU (Green-Pedersen, 2012). I argue that Eurosceptic parties use parliamentary EU oversight instruments strategically to emphasize the EU issue at times in which they perceive better chances to make the EU salient because of important EU key events. Hence, this paper seeks to identify periods in which issue-based incentives of political parties to address the EU translate into changes in parties' parliamentary EU oversight activities. Theoretically, this part of my dissertation brings together the literature on party conflict over Europe and the literature on parliamentary EU oversight.

### **3.4 Multi-level links and cross-national relationships**

In the remaining two articles of my dissertation, I demonstrate that theoretical insights from research on the domestic level can also be used to address issues of parliamentary EU oversight that go beyond the national arena. In Paper C, I expand the object of study to the European level by including parliamentary oversight activities of MEPs.

According to anecdotal evidence, national and European parliamentarians of the same political party exchange information and work together. For example, a reply of Pierre Moscovici (European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs) to a parliamentary question from an MEP of the Danish Social Democrats about modifications in tax reductions for Danish postal services recently led to further parliamentary investigations at the national level (Altinget, 2017). This implies that EU oversight activities at one level might have consequences for the other level and that parties might tackle issues that they want to scrutinize at both parliamentary levels. In the paper, I combine EU oversight activities of MPs and MEPs at the national and European level and test the theoretical argument that party affiliation connects the two levels. In sum, this paper advances recent attempts

to analyze the role of political parties in the EU multi-level space and at the same time expands the scope of national parties in parliamentary EU oversight.

Finally, Paper D investigates the influence of party conflict over the EU on a different aspect of parliamentary EU scrutiny. While the first three papers focus on actual parliamentary EU oversight behavior of political parties, this contribution studies how party positions on the EU are incorporated into the design and strength of EU oversight institutions, i.e., European Affairs Committees. Similar to Paper C, I assume that the influence of political parties goes beyond the national level. In fact, the literature shows that domestic party conflict over the EU has limited impact on the installation and reform of EACs at the national level (Winzen, 2013). The decision of how EACs are organized is not debated in public and essentially left to parties that belong to the government majority. However, when government parties take decisions about EAC organization, they consider not only issues at the domestic level but also information about EACs from other EU member states. This implies that EAC organization is in part a result of learning from and emulation of existing EAC designs from other countries. The question arises of which information and short-cuts government parties use to arrive at a decision about their own EU oversight institution. In the paper, I develop the argument that government parties learn from other EU member states whose government parties have similar attitudes towards the EU. Hence, the study focuses on how political parties shape the diffusion of EU oversight institutions. In the next chapter, I give an overview of the data and research designs used in my dissertation.

# Chapter 4

## Data and Design

As the brief description of my individual studies indicates, I am interested in the relationship between features of competing political parties, i.e., parties' positions on European integration and parliamentary EU oversight outcomes. The outcomes include EU oversight activities or the strength of EU oversight institutions. Neither party positions nor parliamentary EU oversight outcomes occur at random but originate from political processes. The results thereof are directly observable and measurable. This has consequences for the research questions I pose as well as the designs and methods I make use of.

Table 4.1 gives an overview of the four individual papers. In short, I ask research questions that aim at revealing relationships between independent and dependent variables. To identify robust relationships between the variables of interest, I use regression analysis, exploit longitudinal data sources and spend great effort to control for important extraneous variables. I believe that this approach has potential to contribute to the specialized literature because the large bulk of studies on parliamentary EU oversight relies on cross-sectional data or rather short time periods.<sup>10</sup> In addition, my dissertation adds to existing research by making use of data structures that associate units of observation in inventive ways. These include dyadic data that connect the national and European levels and spatial data that link EU member states with each other. However, regression analysis of longitudinal, dyadic and spatial data introduces methodological challenges, for example because units of observation are not independent of each other. In the following subsections, I address how these challenges are met in my dissertation. Prior to this, I introduce the main data sources that are used in the individual papers.

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<sup>10</sup>Notable exceptions are Winzen (2012) and Blom-Hansen and Olsen (2015).

Paper	Research Question	Data Sources	Method	Models
A	Do Eurosceptic parties emphasize different aspects of the EU in their EU oversight activities?	CAP, MARPOR	Panel data analysis	Population-averaged fractional logit and negative binomial (GEE)
B	When do Eurosceptic parties address the EU in oversight activities?	CAP, EU treaties	Panel data analysis	Random effects GLS
C	Do MPs and MEPs affiliated to the same political party address similar policy issues?	CAP, MARPOR	Dyadic panel data analysis	Non-nested multi-level negative binomial and logit
D	Do cross-country distances between parties' EU positions shape the diffusion of EAC organization?	EAC, MARPOR	Spatial panel data analysis	Spatio-temporal autoregressive lag (S-ML, S-OLS)

Note: GEE: generalized estimating equations; GLS: generalized least squares; S-ML: Spatial maximum likelihood; S-OLS: Spatial ordinary least squares

Table 4.1: Overview of data, method and models by paper

## 4.1 Data sources

The most central data in my dissertation are parliamentary questions from political parties, party positions on the EU and information about EU oversight institutions measured at the parliamentary level. Parliamentary questions are used in Papers A, B and C and allow me to address my research questions about the content, timing and multi-level coordination of parliamentary EU oversight activities. Parliamentary questions are first and foremost instruments to oversee government because they enable parties and their MPs to directly ask members of government about their plans and actions. This indicates that they are mainly used to receive information about governmental procedures. As a result, parliamentary questions are often regarded as a tool that is especially used by the opposition that lacks access to government information. However, the specialized literature quotes several other reasons why parliamentary questions are used. These include the potential to influence the parliamentary agenda, represent constituency interests, gain publicity, press for action and build up policy issue reputation (Russo and Wiberg, 2010). Many of these motivations relate to individual-level usage of parliamentary questions and suggest that MPs from government parties should also have incentives to table questions.

However, as described earlier there are restrictions to the individual use of debates and parliamentary questions because of parties' power to constrain their parliamentarians. The literature provides examples that show that MPs need to consult with their party and ask for approval when they want to table a parliamentary question (Heidar and Koole, 2000). In addition, there is evidence that the content of parliamentary questions strongly follows partisan patterns because parties use them to gain issue ownership (Walgrave and Swert, 2007; Green-Pedersen, 2009). In sum, I hold the view that parliamentary questions are party instruments and that their content mainly represents issue incentives of political parties. In the conclusion, I discuss the function of parliamentary questions in the light of my findings in the field of parliamentary EU oversight.

I use parliamentary questions at the national and European levels. The questions at the national level are secondary data that have been collected by the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP).<sup>11</sup> Questions are one of many parliamentary instruments that are collected to investigate agenda setting and policy issue attention in a longitudinal and comparative manner. The manually coded data are

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<sup>11</sup>For more information about the project please visit <http://www.comparativeagendas.net>

assigned policy issues at two levels, the main level that differentiates between 21 broad issue categories and the sub-level that is divided into more than 230 specific issues categories. For example, the main issue category 'Agriculture' is divided into several sub-issue categories, including 'Agricultural Marketing and Promotion', 'Food Inspection and Safety' or 'Fisheries and Fishing'. Each parliamentary question is assigned one issue code at each level. Most importantly, the detailed coding allows me to identify policy-related and polity-related questions about the EU as well as EU issue emphasis relative to other issues. A more detailed description of EU issue identification is presented in the individual papers. In sum, I consider parliamentary questions from more than 35 political parties from three different EU member states. In addition to parliamentary questions at the national level, I collected primary data about more than 1000 parliamentary questions from Danish MEPs during the 5th and 6th European Parliament. In consultation with the Danish and EU CAP teams, I familiarized myself with the CAP coding schemes and developed a codebook for the EP that is comparable to the Danish CAP data but also deals with characteristics of the EU level. The data were collected from the EP online archive and coded in the spring of 2015.

To broaden the scope of parliamentary EU oversight, I also make use of secondary data about EU oversight institutions (Winzen, 2012, 2013). The data consider committees' information access to EU documents and the processing thereof. Moreover, the data incorporate the power of EACs to constrain government in EU affairs. The resulting outcome variable measures strength of EACs and is available for a period of more than 20 years and a large number of old and new EU member states. The data on behavior and institutions in parliamentary EU oversight is merged with other party data. These include data from the Manifesto Research on Political Representation (MAPOR) project that provides information about parties' issue positions and issue priorities as well as the Parliaments and Governments Database (ParlGov) that contains information about parties' status in parliament, vote share and many other relevant party characteristic.

## **4.2 Modeling time**

In all of my studies, I make use of time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) data that consist of comparable longitudinal data observed on a number of different units, i.e., political parties or countries. In some of the papers, I use the term 'panel data' to describe my longitudinal data structure. To avoid confusion, TSCS and panel data have many things in common however the number of units and the

length of the time period is usually different. Traditionally, TSCS means a small number of units observed over a long time period, whereas panel data consists of a large number of units (typically survey respondents) followed over a small number of points in time. Thus, panel data observes the same units of observation repeatedly, whereas the units in a TSCS design, for example a study about top-fifty companies by revenue over the last 100 years, are likely to include different units over time. In sum, the data in my dissertation share characteristics with TSCS data and panel data. I follow the same parties and countries over time however the length of time periods (almost) always exceeds the number of units of analysis. Such a longitudinal data structure can best be described by the term 'long panel' (Cameron and Trivedi, 2009).

The analysis of long panel data comes with several methodological challenges (Beck, Katz and Tucker, 1998; Plümper, Troeger and Manow, 2005; Beck, 2007; Beck and Katz, 2011; Wooldridge, 2010). These concern dynamic autoregressive processes, meaning that units of observation at times  $t$  are related to previous units of observation at  $t - 1$ , but also challenges related to cross-sectional and heterogeneous issues, i.e., that errors for different units have differing variances or contemporaneous correlation of errors. Researchers who face such problems have the possibility to treat them as nuisance or substance. While the decision highly depends on both methodological and theoretical considerations, it should be based on rigorous statistical testing. Therefore, the data analysis process for all of my papers starts with a careful examination of the overall distribution, differences between cross-sections and variation over time. This step is supported by graphical means of data inspection using plots or correlograms. In addition, I make use of statistical testing (Durbin-Watson test, Durbin h-statistic, Wooldridge test) to uncover for example serial correlation of the error component (Drukker, 2003). While I find that serial correlation is less of a problem when studying monthly questioning behavior in parliament, the units of analysis in Paper D, i.e., EU oversight institutions, are serially correlated. This does not come as a surprise and indeed makes sense from a theoretical point of view because institutional change happens rather slowly. Methodologically, maximum likelihood estimation or feasible generalized least squares would offer options to deal with this issue. However, the non-consideration of past values of the dependent variable would almost certainly lead to omitted variable bias. To deal with the issue, I run lagged response models (also called autoregressive models or dynamic models) where responses at previous occasions are treated as covariates. This procedure widely eliminates serial correlation of the errors because the lagged dependent variable implicitly includes lagged error terms into the model specification (Beck, 2008; Rabe-Hesketh and



Skrondal, 2012). However, such an approach changes the interpretation and most likely the effect size of other covariates as they diminish in the presence of a lagged dependent variable (Achen, 2001; Plümper, Troeger and Manow, 2005; Keele and Kelly, 2006). In sum, I scrutinize the challenges and consequences that come with dynamic modeling carefully and seek respond appropriately.

Another example that illustrates that I try to treat time seriously, is the consideration of time trends in parties' emphasis of issues related to the EU in Paper A. Developments and relationships over time can often be approximated using simple linear predictors. However, the downside of linear predictor variables is that time series trends are often not static but change more flexibly. Linear predictors are not able to capture these dynamic processes. To account for this, I use a more dynamic cubic spline estimate to analyze how the series move over time. More precisely, I make use of restricted cubic splines that estimate the development of the dependent variable as a piecewise function (Harrel, 2015). To split the function, one defines knots that mark points where the cubic polynomial function is changing. Before the first and after the last point the function is constrained to be linear.

### 4.3 Modeling space

In addition to attending to time issues, I also deal with methodological issues that are related to spatial dependences. These include the consideration of dependence within and across dyads. Dyads are units of observation that connect two sub-units ( $unit_i - unit_j$ ). Most often, dyads are used to assign a relationship between two individuals, e.g., a parent-child relationship. In my dissertation, I use dyads to link political parties at the national and European levels. In the analysis, I carefully examine different procedures to deal with the resulting dependence structures between units of observation, including the usage of dyad-clustered standard errors and the utilization of separate intercepts for within-dyad units.

Another relevant topic that I believe is important to address is the challenge to identify true interdependence of units of observation. In Paper D, I develop the argument that political parties shape the diffusion of EU oversight institutions and empirically examine the dependences between EU member states based on parties' positions on European integration. My argument builds on Beck, Gleditsch and Beardsley (2006) and supports the conception that space is more than geography. This means that spatial dependences do not only arise from geographical proximity of countries but

also from political, economic and cultural 'closeness'. The precise mechanism that connects units of analysis is defined by a spatial weighting matrix  $\mathbf{W}$  (Neumayer and Plümer, 2016).

However, spatial diffusion mechanisms are certainly not the only factors that influence outcomes of units of observation. In fact, one has to distinguish spatial interdependence from spatially correlated unit-level/domestic factors, spatially correlated exogenous-external/contextual factors and context-conditional factors (Franzese and Hayes, 2008). The latter is best understood as interaction between the the first two spatially correlated factors and is often referred to as common shock that affects the entire sample of units of observation. For example, a common shock that concerns all countries would be one that is related to EU membership because all countries share the feature of being a part of the EU. However, the actual effect for each individual EU member state is contingent on unit-level/domestic factors. In my study, I try to unfold spatial effects by including several important domestic factors. To identify these factors, I rely on investigations in recent studies that demonstrate associations between domestic explanatory variables and EAC strength. In addition, I account for common exposure by including regional and period fixed effects.

# Chapter 5

## Key Findings

Well, all right! What do my studies tell about the relationship between political party competition and parliamentary EU oversight? In sum, competing parties shape parliamentary EU oversight outcomes in many different ways. They affect the content and timing of EU oversight behavior in the national and European parliament, and also the organization of parliamentary EU oversight institutions in other EU member states. In the following, I present the main finding of each individual paper.

### 5.1 Paper A

The aim of the study in Paper A is to learn about the consequences of party competition on EU oversight activities in the national parliament. The central theoretical argument builds on differences between Eurosceptic and mainstream parties. Eurosceptics have vote-maximizing incentives to address the EU issue differently than mainstream competitors. The specialized literature argues that this does not only concern issue emphasis, i.e., the extent to which Eurosceptic parties address the EU issue, but also the specific aspects of the EU. As described in Chapter 3, Eurosceptics have no interest to incorporate the EU issue into the left-right dimension of political conflict. Instead, they wish to discuss general aspects of the EU that concern questions about more or less integration. In other words, they wish to talk about polity-related issues rather than specific policy-related issues. In the paper, I examine the implications of EU issue-based incentives of Eurosceptic parties for the content of EU oversight activities. More precisely, I study whether Eurosceptic parties in Denmark are more likely to address general aspects in their EU-related parliamentary questions than mainstream

parties. Figure 5.1 gives some indication of my results. The blue dots and red triangles show the average annual fraction of EU-related questions that address general aspects of the EU for Eurosceptic parties (blue dots) and Europhile parties (red triangles). The blue and red lines indicate local regression scatterplot smoothing curves that summarize the development of the emphasis of general EU aspects for the two groups of parties over time (Jacoby, 2000).

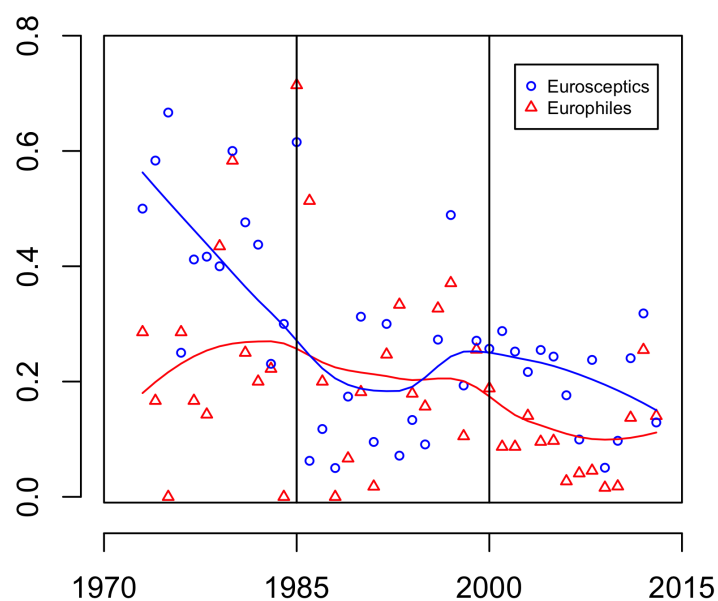


Figure 5.1: Local regression scatterplot smoothing (LOESS) curves

Note: The LOESS curves are fitted with  $\alpha = 0.75$ .

There are clear differences between Europhile and Eurosceptic parties. Before the signing of the Single European Act (observations in the left-hand rectangle), Eurosceptic parties strongly focused on general EU aspects, whereas Europhiles did not. Thereafter, the two groups of parties become more similar (observations in the middle rectangle), which is most likely associated with the increase in the EU's policy authority. However, this development did not last for too long. Around the turn of the millennium, the differences between the two groups of parties again become clear, because Eurosceptic parties spend more emphasis on polity-related aspects than mainstream parties. Yet, they do not reach as high levels as observed in the time from 1973 to 1985. Further analyses based

on fractional logit regressions that consider data about Euroscepticism on the party-level support the indication. In sum, Eurosceptic parties are more likely to address general aspects in their parliamentary questions than mainstream parties. Moreover, Eurosceptics in Denmark are clearly more active in using parliamentary EU oversight activities than mainstream competitors. Taken together, the broader implications for the functioning of parliamentary EU oversight are rather gloomy because the parties that oversee the government in EU affairs the most, tend to spend a good deal of their scrutiny activities on issues that are remote from EU policy-making.

## 5.2 Paper B

Paper B is related to Paper A in two ways. First, they have similar starting points because in both studies I expect EU issue-based incentives to lead to differences in EU oversight activities of Eurosceptic and mainstream parties. Second, Paper B directly builds on the findings of Paper A because I take a closer look at the questions that consider general aspects of the EU, this time examining the timing thereof. The research question is: When do Eurosceptic parties address the EU in oversight activities? As we know by now, Eurosceptics want the EU to be a salient issue. However, these parties are usually challengers at the fringes of the political spectrum that are rather small and have very limited resources. Thus, they have a hard time politicizing the EU on their own. I argue that Eurosceptic parties choose the point in time when they address the EU in parliament strategically, so that attention is as large as possible. Theoretically, this would be the case around specific 'focusing events', e.g., around the signing of important EU treaty reforms. In sum, I test the argument that Eurosceptic parties in Belgium, Denmark and Italy increase attention to the EU in their parliamentary questions around the signing of EU treaties.

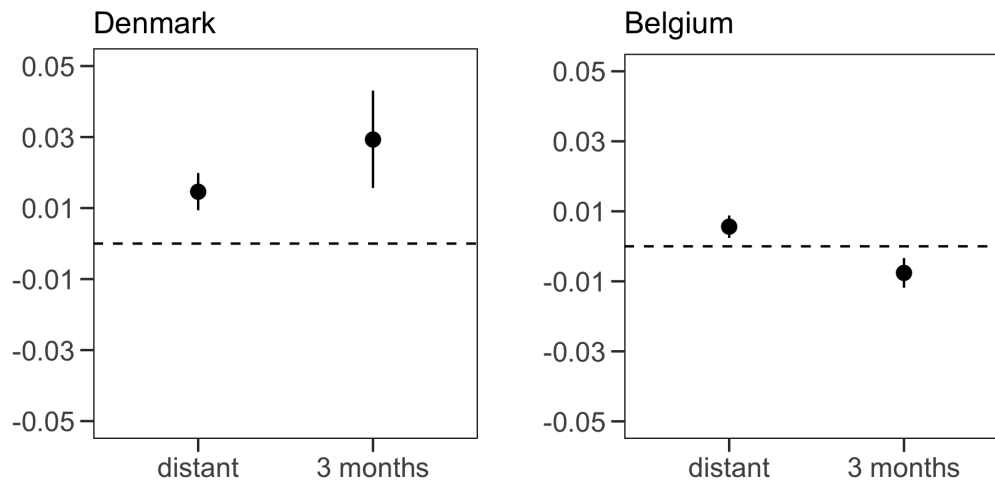


Figure 5.2: Average marginal effects plots

Note: The figure plots the marginal effect of 'Eurosceptic Party' (i.e., discrete change compared to the base level that includes all other non-Eurosceptic parties) on the fraction of EU-related parliamentary questions conditional on the distance to EU treaty reforms. Distance to treaty signings is a binary response differentiating between a three-month period around the treaty signing (one month before and after the treaty plus the month where the treaty is signed) and all other months (distant). Marginal effects are depicted with a 95% confidence band.

The study period includes all major EU treaties since the Treaty of Maastricht until the Treaty of Lisbon and I find support for my hypothesis. However, the study also clearly shows that Eurosceptic parties need to be located in a beneficial context in order to follow the proposed pattern. This means that Eurosceptic parties only mobilize on the EU issue if there is potential for pay-off and for actually leading to a more politicized discussion. Such a situation is an illusion in a country like Belgium that never experienced any kind of EU politicization. As a result, the only Belgian Eurosceptic party that would have reasons to mobilize on the issue, the Flemish Block/Interest, abstains from addressing the issue in national parliament around treaty signings. In fact, the average marginal effect plot for Belgium (right panel) shows that the fraction of EU-related questions in the three months around a EU treaty signing is significantly lower than the fraction of all other parties. Further away from these focusing events, the Eurosceptic party is slightly more active than mainstream competitors. In Denmark, where the EU issue is traditionally contested among parties and constitutes a political cleavage, we see a different picture. The three Eurosceptic parties included in the study significantly increase attention to the EU in parliamentary questions around the signing of EU treaties in comparison to other times. This result speaks nicely to the key finding in Paper A. In fact, it brightens the dark prospect from the previous result, because Eurosceptic parties (in Denmark) tend to use questions

about general aspects of the EU around points in time when important focusing events occur. In those times, active EU mobilization in parliament has the potential to initiate debates about the future of the EU which in further consequence is important for the democratic legitimacy of the EU.

### 5.3 Paper C

In Paper C, co-authored with Daniel Bischof, the focus on the relation between party competition and parliamentary EU oversight is extended to the European level. The general consideration is that parliamentary oversight activities occur not only in national parliament but also in the EP. This means that national parties can potentially affect parliamentary oversight at more than one parliamentary level. The study exploits data on parliamentary questions from Danish MPs and MEPs to answer the question of whether representatives that belong to the same party coordinate the issues they address in oversight activities across parliamentary levels. The theoretical expectation is that parties make strategic use of multi-level representation and shift policy issues over short periods of time from one level to the other in order to expand policy influence. We call this process 'policy issue transfer'. I therefore use plural form to describe the key finding of the paper. In the paper, we discuss several reasons why it is likely that policy issue transfer across levels occurs within the same party. These include, exchange of information between the national party and its MEPs, national parties' wish to influence policy in the EP, and career incentives of MEPs. In addition, we reason about the direction of policy issue transfer and conclude that issues will be more often transferred from the national to the European level than the other way around. We compile a dyadic data set that includes all possible combinations of party linkages across levels from 1999-2009 on a one-month basis ( $N \approx 13000$ ). To test our conjecture, we compare dyads whose sub-units belong to the same party with dyads whose sub-units have different party affiliations. Policy transfer occurs if a sub-unit of the dyad ( $party_j$ ) addresses the same issue as the other sub-unit ( $party_i$ ) has addressed in the previous month. In sum, we find robust support for within-party policy transfer. Across different model specifications, same party dyads transfer policy issues around one and a half times more often than different party dyads. This conclusion is based on non-nested multi-level count regression analysis. Figure 5.3 illustrates the incident rate ratio of the binary same party dyad variable controlling for the full set of other covariates.

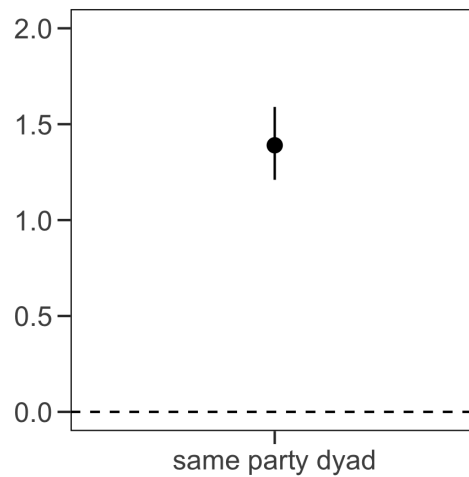


Figure 5.3: Exponentiated coefficient plot (Incident Rate Ratio)

Similar to the challenges described in the context of Paper D, common exposure might be a reason why emphasis is on the same issues at both levels in close time proximity. We therefore spend great effort to control for external sources and include public opinion data as well as the parliamentary questioning agenda of another European legislature in our study. With these controls, we find that policy issues addressed in parliamentary questions at the national and European levels become frequently shifted to the other level within short time spans and that political parties constitute an important connecting line between levels. However, we also find differences between policy issue areas.

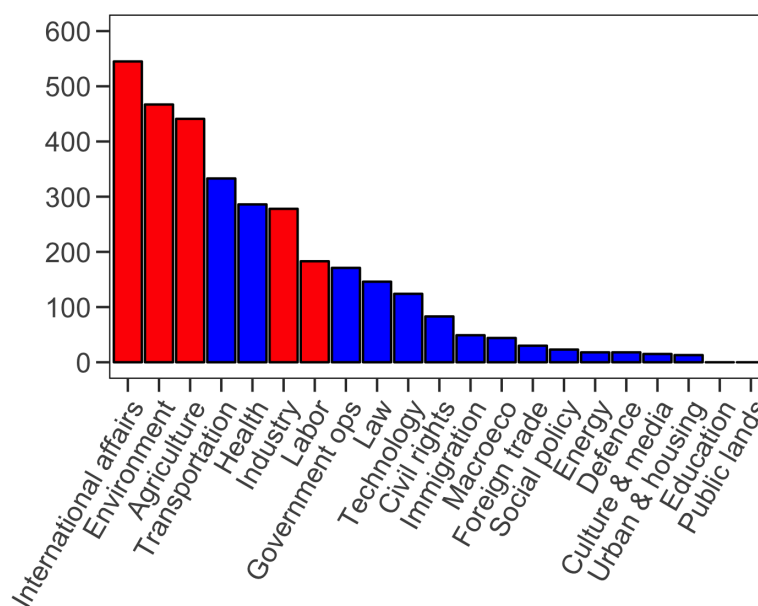


Figure 5.4: Absolute number of issue transfer by policy issue category



Figure 5.4 illustrates the absolute number of dyads that indicate policy issue transfer by policy issue category. One can see that policy issues that are predominantly decided at the European level, e.g., environment and agriculture and policy issues where the EU is expected to communicate a common policy strategy, e.g., international affairs are more often transferred between the two parliamentary levels. Other policy issues categories such as social policy, defense and education are hardly transferred at all. The red bars show issue categories where we find a statistically significant difference in issue transfer because of a change in the binary same party dyad.

## 5.4 Paper D

Finally, Paper D studies the possible influence of party competition over the EU on parliamentary EU oversight institutions. The focus again goes beyond the national level. The central question is: Do cross-country distances between parties' EU positions shape the diffusion of European Affairs Committee (EAC) organization? The question about distances indicates that I expect some kind of spatial dependence related to party positions to matter for EAC strength. Theoretically, I build on literature that is concerned with the installation and reform of EU oversight institutions and policy diffusion. Considering the fact that EU member states tend to observe other countries' EACs to learn from when they install or reform their own EU oversight institution, I argue that cross-country party relations provide an important mechanism that has potential to shape the diffusion of EAC organization. Results from spatio-temporal autoregressive regression analysis show support for my conjecture. If the absolute difference between government parties' positions on the EU increases, EU member states are more different in their EU oversight institutions. How can we make sense of this result? In a spatial lag model a change in one place brings consequences for the entire sample of connected units (Hays, Kachi and Franzese, 2010). Figure 5.5 shows so-called short-term equilibrium effects that indicate how a shock in an unit-level variable in one country (here Denmark) spatially affects the values of other EU member states.

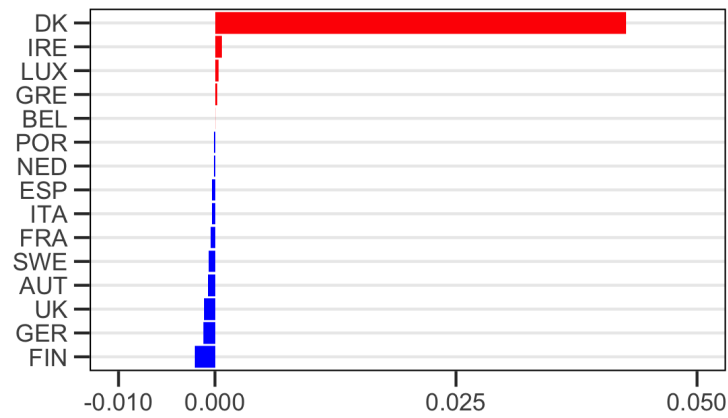


Figure 5.5: Equilibrium effects

Note: The figure plots instantaneous changes in predicted values of EAC strength between the original model and a manipulated model in which Denmark experiences a shock in public Euroscepticism in 1996.

The variable that is manipulated is public Euroscepticism in 1996 and EU member states are connected through distances in their government parties' positions on the EU. The figure illustrates changes in the predicted values of the dependent variable (EAC strength) between the original model and the manipulated model. It shows that a sudden increase in public Euroscepticism (from the observed value in Denmark to the empirically observed maximum) would bring a positive change in EAC strength in Denmark and thus strengthen the Danish EU oversight institution. For other countries, one can observe positive (red) and negative (blue) changes in the predicted values of EAC strength. For most of them, the shock in Denmark would decrease the value of EAC strength because they do not consider Denmark as a role model because of their differences in EU positions. In sum, the paper demonstrates that the combination of domestic/unit-level explanations and thoroughly defined spatial dependences are very useful in capturing the development of EAC strength.

# Chapter 6

## Discussion

I started this report with a description of the role of national parliaments in EU affairs. National parliaments have limited influence on EU policy-making processes and politicians, citizens and experts alike are concerned that their parliaments have lost too much power. While it is difficult to assess this concern, it is safe to say that the understanding of national parliaments' roles has changed because of European integration. Today, they are regarded as potential watchdogs of the EU, meaning that national parliaments have the task to scrutinize the actions and plans of EU institutions and especially the EU involvement of their own national government. As a result, an impressive body of literature is studying the functioning of parliamentary EU oversight.

However, I also presented gaps in our knowledge and outlined that party politics is seriously missing in the study of parliamentary EU oversight. In my dissertation, I demonstrate that we can learn a lot about parliamentary EU oversight by considering the role of party competition. Overall, the dissertation contributes to a greater understanding of the EU-related control activities and institutions at the national and European levels. In the following sub-sections, I want to elaborate on the contribution but also address shortcomings. In addition, I present new ways for how the study of parliamentary EU oversight can be brought forward and discuss my findings in light of ongoing debates about future models of parliamentary involvement in EU affairs.

### 6.1 The different faces of EU oversight

First, I have demonstrated that party competition plays a much more crucial role in parliamentary EU oversight than has been shown in previous work. As described, the 'behavioral turn' in the field

of parliamentary EU oversight has led to stronger consideration of parliamentary actors. Yet, many studies only deal superficially with parties. For example, to account for anti-EU challengers scholars count the number of Eurosceptic parties in parliament without studying the behavior of individual parties. In Paper A and Paper B, I show that the consideration of individual party behavior is crucial to understand parliamentary EU oversight at the national level. Parties differ with regard to content and timing of EU oversight. This means that the EU control activities that we observe at the aggregated level are highly dependent on the behavior of the actors inside parliament. Thus, if we want to understand EU oversight at the parliamentary level, information about the incentives and activities of parties is essential.

The findings from the two papers based on questions in national parliament also give information about what domestic parliamentary EU oversight is about. We already know that an important part of domestic EU oversight is the work that happens in EU committees where parties and their MPs scrutinize legislative proposals of the EU (Finke and Dannwolf, 2013). Yet, we also know that the actions that are taking place in these committees strictly follow the legislative agenda of the EU. In fact, there is evidence that MPs complain about not having time to scrutinize the issues that are important to them and their party (Sousa, 2008). In light of this, the consideration of parliamentary questions has great potential to complement findings about EU oversight based on the work in EU committees because it gives indication about the EU-related topics that parties really want to address and scrutinize. For example, I have shown that Eurosceptic parties spend a good deal of their questions on general aspects of the EU that are not related to policy-making. Thus, Eurosceptics are concerned with constitutive issues of the EU, including its institutions and treaties, that go beyond the steady production of specific legislation.

This raises important questions about the nature of domestic parliamentary EU oversight. Is it desirable to influence specific policies behind the closed doors of EACs or to raise fundamental concerns in the plenary? The chances to change things in the near term are higher if one focuses on specific pieces of legislation in committee work. However, the drawback is that this scrutiny approach most likely goes unnoticed in the electorate because it does not lead to a broader debate in parliament, far less in public. In addition, one cannot be sure that the requested changes will be heard because EU legislation needs agreement from other EU member states and usually also the EP. Therefore, it seems necessary that there is another way of EU oversight that allows to address other aspects than EU policy. Parliamentary questions are instruments that offer such a way because

they allow for direct contention about many aspects of the EU between national parliamentary actors and the executive that is involved in EU decision-making. Thus, EU oversight is not always and necessarily about immediate influence on policy, but also about the initiation of general debates and the communication of viewpoints. This does not mean that every critical statement about the EU is to be equated with EU oversight. However, if the government is frequently confronted with questions about its EU-related actions and positions, awareness of EU decision-making from politicians and the electorate is likely to increase. In sum, party activities outside of committees show that parliamentary EU oversight is more than scrutiny of EU policy processes. In fact, they have potential to initiate dialog about the EU in national parliament. If all parties and not only the Eurosceptic challengers would engage in more EU oversight in the plenary, I believe that we would observe a more visible and informed debate about the EU - also in public.

As a second contribution, my dissertation provides evidence that parliamentary EU scrutiny by national political parties goes beyond the domestic level. The findings presented in Paper B and Paper D show that national parties affect parliamentary oversight at the European level but also in other EU member states. This has important implications for scholars that examine inter-parliamentary cooperation. An increasing body of literature seeks to make sense of the numerous meetings between delegations of national and European parliamentarians (Crum and Fossum, 2013). While the direct consequences resulting from personal exchange of information are difficult to disentangle, my work shows that shared political positions, both between parties at different levels and from different countries, are a strong explanation for outcome similarities with regard to activities as well as institutional organization. As I demonstrate, alignment between actors can result from belonging to the same party groups or from similar viewpoints regarding the EU. Future research should investigate this pattern further because it has potential to explain how members of different (foreign) institutions learn and act. In sum, my findings indicate that parliamentary EU oversight is a phenomenon that spans the entire multi-level space of the EU and that parties provide linkages across levels. The relationships across levels have great potential to make parliamentary oversight stronger and more efficient. In the future, greater collaboration between MPs and MEPs of the same party (family) and public joint initiatives of parliamentarians with similar EU attitudes might help to counterbalance the influence of legislative and executive bodies in EU decision-making.

Finally, I want to address the fact that much of the work in this dissertation is based on EU oversight in Denmark. For one, the Danish case brings in certain characteristics. These include,

the frequency of minority governments, the Danish opt-outs from portions of the EU community law and the relatively high salience of EU contestation among political parties. These characteristics constitute a limitation for the generalizability of the implications that can be drawn from Paper A and Paper C. I actively address the limitations and consequences in the individual papers. However, studying political parties and parliamentary EU oversight based on data from Denmark is also very informative because the Danish party system provides a case of many different parties that vary with regard to the left-right and European integration dimensions. This allows for comparison with the party landscape of many other EU member states. In addition, Paper B constitutes an active attempt to make sense of the results of country-specific context for parliamentary EU oversight.

## **6.2 Work in progress and future studies**

Having discussed the contributions of the dissertation, I also want to briefly point out directions for this research agenda. In particular, I believe there are ways to expand on Paper B and Paper D. Paper B finds that Eurosceptic parties increase attention to the EU around the signing of important EU treaties. To elaborate on that finding, I want to investigate questioning behavior around EU treaties in more detail and study it at shorter time-intervals, including weeks and days. In addition, my plan is to go back to the text of questions to identify which general aspects of the EU are actually addressed around EU treaty signings. In sum, extending the paper will give a more dynamic and more nuanced picture of how Eurosceptic parties try to politicize the EU in national parliament around focusing events.

With regard to Paper D, an extension of that work is to take full advantage of the substantive inferences that can be drawn from the data. The output of spatio-temporal autoregressive lag analysis represents complex connections between units of observation. My future work will, in addition to the short-term effects of the spatial lag and domestic covariates discussed in the paper, show long-term effects, i.e., a description of how covariates influence the dependent variable over time. I therefore combine the coefficient of the temporally lagged dependent variable with the spatial lag (Plümper, Troeger and Manow, 2005). In addition, I follow Williams and Whitten (2012) who convincingly show that dynamic simulation techniques (similar to the ones applied in the paper with regard to public Euroscepticism) allow researchers to make more nuanced inferences about autoregressive relationships. Postestimation interpretations help to compare two scenarios (e.g., low

and high public Euroscepticism) at any point in time and provide information about predicted values of the dependent variable over time. This will not only enlighten the interpretation of the spatial lag variable but also contribute to the presentation of predicted levels of EAC strength after shocks in other covariates.

However, my effort to contribute to the study of parliamentary EU oversight goes beyond the papers of this dissertation. As an extension to my focus on parties, I have been reflecting on whether parliamentary EU oversight is something that citizens care about. This is an important question, especially because involvement of national parliaments in EU affairs is often seen as a way to make the EU more democratic and more legitimate (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2007). However, whether voters actually appreciate this involvement is unknown. In general, the specialized literature on parliamentary EU oversight makes little effort to bridge elites and masses. To combine public opinion and parliamentary EU oversight, I conduct a study that investigates citizens' preferences for EU oversight activities of political parties and MPs using choice-based conjoint analysis survey experiments in the UK and Germany. Participants are asked to choose between parties and MPs that randomly vary with regard to several oversight dimensions, including the time spent on EU policies, the extent of activity in EU committees or the frequency of parliamentary questions about the EU.

### **6.3 Red cards, green cards and party competition**

To put perspective on the dissertation I want to come back to the opening of this summary report. In the first paragraph, I used the renegotiation between the UK and the EU to raise awareness of the weak role of national parliaments in EU affairs. As described, the proposed 'Red card' procedure that would allow national parliaments to stop unwanted EU law was never introduced. At the moment, national parliaments have the possibility to submit reasoned opinions on draft legislative acts to scrutinize EU law compliance with the principle of subsidiarity. If a certain number of parliaments become active and submit reasoned opinions they can show the European Commission a 'Yellow card' or 'Orange card', the consequence being that the Commission reconsiders its proposal. Another idea to involve national parliaments is to introduce a 'Green card' procedure where parliaments would be allowed to make an approach to the Commission about new legislation. Thus, parliaments would be involved in EU law initiation. While I do not want to go into the details of the ways in which parliaments can get involved in EU affairs, I want to emphasize that future models of parliamentary

involvement need to consider party political patterns within parliament.

If we take a look at the current use of reasoned opinions, we see that national parliaments are inactive. However, there is evidence that activity increases if the public is more Eurosceptic and party competition over the EU is more pronounced (Gattermann and Heffler, 2015; Williams, 2016). These studies could benefit from addressing the role of parties more up-front, but nevertheless they provide evidence that my argument about the importance of parties in EU oversight also holds true for reasoned opinions which constitute the most recently introduced instrument of parliamentary EU scrutiny. At the end of the day incentives of political parties, e.g., to represent their core voters or to respond to public opinion in general, crucially determine the outputs of parliamentary EU oversight. Politicians and experts who decide about future models of how to integrate national parliaments in EU affairs would be wise to take into consideration how competing political parties might affect the use and functioning thereof - not only at the national level but also beyond.



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# English/Dansk resumé

## English resumé

European integration has affected the national political order. One of the most important changes concerns the fact that national parliaments have lost power due to transfers of legislative authority from the national level to the European level. At the same time, European integration has also redefined the roles and functions of political actors. National parliaments are regarded as potential watchdogs of the EU, meaning that they have the task to scrutinize the actions and plans of EU institutions and especially the EU involvement of their own national government. An impressive body of literature is studying how parliaments live up to their new role description.

Yet it becomes apparent that the bulk of the literature is merely scratching the surface of EU scrutiny because parliamentary EU oversight is treated in the aggregate. This means that individual actors within parliament (i.e., parties and their MPs) are glanced over. As a result, our knowledge about substantial questions of parliamentary EU oversight is incomplete. To contribute to a greater understanding of parliamentary EU oversight, I focus on the actors who shape the organization and activities of national parliaments in the member states of the EU most crucially; namely, political parties.

Parties shape the behavior of individual members of parliament. In addition, parties are in competition with each other and organize their own behavior in parliament accordingly. Party competition over the EU is especially relevant because it gives parties strategic incentives for whether and how to address the EU in parliament. In the dissertation, I demonstrate that party competition and resulting issue-based party incentives are important factors explaining the substance of parliamentary EU oversight. Inside the national parliament, I show that Eurosceptic parties use parliamentary EU oversight activities in a different way than mainstream competitors, both with respect to content and timing. Eurosceptic parties scrutinize general aspects of the EU (e.g., institutions and treaties) rather than specific EU policies. Moreover, they tend to time the use of parliamentary EU oversight and increase

EU oversight activity around the occurrence of focusing events (e.g., treaty signings). The broader contribution of this part of the dissertation is to show that parliamentary EU oversight is not always and necessarily about immediate influence on policy, but also about the initiation of more general debates and the communication of viewpoints.

In addition, I demonstrate that party competition affects parliamentary EU oversight beyond the national level. First, political parties link oversight activities between the national and European levels. Using dyadic data about parliamentary questions in the national and European Parliament, I show that parliamentarians at the different levels who belong to the same party affiliation take up policy issues that have been addressed at the other level shortly before. Second, I provide evidence that competing political parties also affect EU oversight institutions. When government parties of EU member states decide about the implementation or reform of European Affairs Committees, they consider both domestic circumstances and information about EU oversight institutions from other EU member states. Based on spatial regression analysis, I show that this mechanism of learning and emulation is affected by the EU position of government parties from other EU member states. This second part of the dissertation advances existing knowledge about inter-parliamentary cooperation in parliamentary EU oversight and shows that links between parties are important in explaining how members of different (foreign) institutions learn and act.

## **Dansk resumé**

Europæisk integration har påvirket den nationale politiske orden. Én af de vigtigste ændringer handler om det magttab, nationale parlamenter har lidt på grund af overdragelsen af dele af den lovgivende myndighed fra det nationale til det europæiske niveau. På samme tid har europæisk integration også ført til en redefinition af politiske aktørers roller og opgaver. Nationale parlamenter ses som mulige vagthunde overfor EU, forstået således at de har til opgave at kontrollere EU-institutionernes handlinger og planer, herunder særligt indflydelsen fra EU på deres egen nationale regering.

Det er dog tydeligt, at størstedelen af forskningen på området kun formår at kradse i overfladen af kontrollen af EU, fordi parlamentarisk EU-kontrol behandles som et samlet hele. Det betyder, at individuelle aktører i parlamentet (dvs. partier og deres medlemmer) overses. Resultatet er, at vi mangler viden om mere substantielle spørgsmål relateret til parlamentarisk EU-kontrol. Med henblik på at bidrage til en større forståelse af parlamentarisk EU-kontrol, fokuserer jeg på de aktører, som er

mest centrale for indretningen af kontrolaktiviteter i de nationale parlamenter i EU's medlemsstater; nemlig de politiske partier.

Politiske partier påvirker individuelle parlamentsmedlemmers adfærd. I tillæg hertil konkurrerer partier med hinanden og indretter deres parlamentariske adfærd derefter. Partikonkurrence på EU-området er særligt relevant, fordi det giver partierne strategiske incitamenter i forhold til om og hvordan, de vil adressere EU i parlamentet. I afhandlingen viser jeg, at partikonkurrence og de medfølgende incitamenter til at markere sig på forskellige emner er vigtige faktorer, der forklarer indholdet af den parlamentariske EU-kontrol. Inde i parlamentet bruger EU-skeptiske partier parlamentariske kontrolaktiviteter på en anden måde end *mainstream* partier, både med hensyn til indholdet og timingen af kontrollen. EU-skeptiske partier kontrollerer generelle forhold omkring EU (fx institutioner og traktater) snarere end specifik EU-lovgivning. Derudover har de en tendens til at time deres parlamentariske EU-kontrol og øge kontrolaktiviteterne omkring fokuserende begivenheder (fx traktatunderskrivelse). Det bredere bidrag fra denne del af afhandlingen er påvisningen af, at parlamentarisk EU-kontrol ikke altid og ikke nødvendigvis handler om at få umiddelbar indflydelse på lovgivning men også om at igangsætte mere generelle diskussioner og udveksling af synspunkter.

I tillæg til dette bidrag, viser jeg, at partikonkurrence påvirker parlamentarisk EU-kontrol udover det nationale niveau. For det første forbinder politiske partier kontrolaktiviteterne mellem det nationale og det europæiske niveau. Ved brug af dyade-data angående parlamentariske spørgsmål i de nationale parlamenter og i Det Europæiske Parlament, viser jeg, at parlamentarikere på de forskellige niveauer, som har samme partitilhørsforhold, adresserer de samme politikområder inden for korte tidsrum. For det andet demonstrerer jeg, at konkurrerende partier også påvirker EU-kontrolinstitutionerne. Når regeringspartier i medlemsstaterne tager beslutning om implementering eller ændring af Europaudvalg, tager de både hensyn til nationale forhold og information om, hvordan disse institutioner ser ud i andre medlemslande. Ved brug af spatial regressionsanalyse viser jeg, at denne lærings- og efterligningsmekanisme er betinget af holdningen til EU hos regeringspartierne i andre EU-medlemslande. Denne anden del af afhandlingen bidrager til den eksisterende viden om inter-parlamentarisk samarbejde i forbindelse med parlamentarisk EU-kontrol og viser, at forbindelser mellem partier er vigtige i forklaringen af hvordan medlemmer af forskellige (udenlandske) institutioner lærer og agerer.