

The Icelandic European Debate

Explaining Icelandic attitudes towards EU membership

Gudbergur Ragnar Aegisson

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my instructor, Christian Fernandez, for his good support and constructive comments which guided me through this process. Many thanks go to Gudlaug Stella Jonsdottir, who gave me valuable comments and a great help. I would like to thank Elma Atladottir for allowing me to access the Creditinfo's media database, whom without I could not have done this research. I also want to thank my wonderful wife who has been my rock through this process, who pushed forward when I needed it the most. My two beautiful children, Egill and Heida, gave me an inspiration through their smiles and laughter, which supported me through this process.

Lund, Mai 2011.
Gudbergur Ragnar Aegisson

Abstract

This thesis aims at explaining the Icelandic European debate. It does so by trying to identify the most prominent theme of the debate and to determine if it is characterized by sectoral, national identity or economic arguments. The thesis also aims at determining how the 2008 financial crash and the 2009 decision to apply for EU membership affected the debate. To answer these questions a content analysis was chosen as a research method and 180 news articles were analyzed.

The findings of the study indicate that the EU debate is predominantly characterized by economic arguments, the presence of the fishing sector's interests and national identity being relatively low. The presences of the themes were not affected much by the financial crash or the decision to apply for EU membership.

The findings demonstrate how differently the themes appear in the study compared to existing literature on the attitude of the political elite. National identity is argued as being a key factor in explaining the traditional negative attitude of the Icelandic politicians towards EU membership. Its presence in the findings suggests that it is referred differently in these two communicative spaces.

Key words: Iceland, EU membership, national identity, leading sector, content analysis.

Words: 19.841

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Aim	2
1.2	Research Questions	3
1.3	Structure.....	3
2	Iceland – EU relations	5
2.1	50 years of European debate	5
2.1.1	EU debate 1957-1980s: Careful European steps	6
2.1.2	EU debate in the 1990s: Limited participation in European integration	6
2.1.3	EU debate: 1999-2007: Debating EU membership	7
2.2	EU debate 2008-2010: From economic crash to EU membership application.....	8
2.3	Effects of the EEA agreement.....	9
2.4	Conclusion	10
3	Theoretical Framework.....	11
3.1	European integration and the Nordic Countries.....	11
3.2	The case of Iceland.....	12
3.2.1	Research on Icelandic attitude towards European integration	13
3.3	Explaining Icelandic attitude towards European integration	13
3.3.1	Influence of the leading sector: the fishing industry	14
3.3.2	Icelandic national identity and European integration	16
3.3.3	The special relationship between Iceland and the US	19
3.3.4	Euro-skeptical political elite.....	21
3.4	Why did Iceland apply for EU membership?	23
3.5	Conclusion	24
4	Methodology	26
4.1	Research Method.....	26
4.2	Sample	26
4.2.1	The newspapers	26
4.2.2	Articles of choice and time period.....	27
4.3	Coding	28
4.3.1	Participants	28
4.3.2	Context.....	28
4.3.3	Themes	29
4.4	Reliability and Validity	30
4.4.1	Reliability	30
4.4.2	Validity	30

4.5	Limitations of the research design	31
4.6	Conclusion	31
5	Findings.....	33
5.1	Themes.....	33
5.1.1	Sectoral theme	34
5.1.2	National identity theme	35
5.1.3	Economic theme	35
5.1.4	Strategic theme	36
5.1.5	Attitude towards EU institutions	36
5.1.6	Influence of the economic crash and the Icesave-dispute.....	37
5.2	Linking the themes together.....	38
5.3	Conclusion	40
6	Discussion.....	41
6.1	The economic dimension of the debate	41
6.2	The sectoral and national identity dimension	41
6.3	Attitudes towards the European Union.....	42
6.4	The question of security and defense	43
6.5	Economic crash and EU membership application	44
7	Conclusions	45
7.1	Generalizing the findings.....	46
7.2	Limitations	47
7.3	Future studies	48
8	Executive Summary.....	49
9	References	53
10	Appendix A: The Code Book.....	56
11	Appendix B: List of articles.....	60
12	Appendix C: Table of participants.....	65

1 Introduction

On the 16th of July 2009, the Icelandic parliament agreed to apply for membership to the European Union (EU), an event that marked a fundamental and historical policy change for Iceland's participation in the European integration¹. In the summer of 2008, a prospect of EU membership application seemed to be an unlikely event, but the October 2008 financial crash and the 2009 parliamentary elections changed that reality. From the 1950s, when Iceland was a newly established republic, until the early 1990s, Iceland chose a cautious approach to the European integration. In 1994, Iceland moved closer to Europe with the European Economic Area agreement (EEA) and in 2001 through the Schengen Agreement, but the idea of full membership was never debated seriously. From the 1990s, only one political party has advocated an EU membership, the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA), while other political parties have either taken a clear 'no' position or have adopted a so-called 'wait and see' policy².

The financial crash and the 2009 parliamentary elections changed the political landscape dramatically. However, despite these events, the EU policy preferences of the leading actors in the Icelandic political arena, the political parties and interest groups, did not change. The SDA is still the only pro-EU political party and the Federation of Icelandic Industry (SI) is the only interest group that actively supports EU membership. The Left-Green Party (LGP), which formed a coalition government with the SDA following the 2009 elections, opposes EU membership strongly, but the majority of the party supported the membership application. Individual MPs from the opposition parties supported the membership application as well, but the majority of the opposition voted against it. Iceland has started its EU accession process with a divided government on the issue and without the support of the most important interest groups. Opinion polls have also shown that around 25 per cents of the population opposes EU membership (Capacent 2010), but majority is still in favor of finishing the accession process in order to get a final agreement that will be presented for a vote in a national referendum (Visir 2011).

It has been argued that the Icelandic political elite in Iceland are distinct from the political elite of other Nordic countries as it is more Euro-skeptical than their counterparts. Also, the Icelandic public tends to be more pro-Euro than the political elite (Kristinsson and Thorhallsson 2004:145). Traditionally, the negative attitude of the political elite towards EU membership has been explained with the

¹ The proposition for EU membership application was agreed with 33 votes, 27 voted against the proposition and three abstained. 63 MPs sit on the Icelandic parliament.

² A 'wait and see' policy on the European issue means that a party does not support EU membership at the moment, but does not eliminate the possibility to reconsider its position in the future if circumstances changes.

position of the fishing industry, its importance for the Icelandic economy and how that influences the attitudes of the politicians. As long as the EU has its own Common Fishery Policy (CFP), EU membership is impossible as it would mean giving up Icelandic authority of the fishing right to Brussels. Another explanation of the negative attitude is the idea of how the Icelandic national identity would be affected with EU membership. Iceland's independence, sovereignty, culture and other the special features of the nation would allegedly be negatively affected. Despite the opposition of the fishing interest groups and no seemingly changed attitude regarding the national identity, the Icelandic parliament accepted that Iceland should begin a journey that could possibly bring the country as the 28th member state of the European Union³.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to examine the European debate in Iceland as it appears in the media. The aim is to determine what attitudes are dominant in the debate, try to explain the reasons for it and compare it to existing research on the attitudes of the political elite towards the European integration. Two of the main newspapers in Iceland, Frettabladid and Morgunbladid, have been chosen as the ground where the debate will be studied. These newspapers will be treated as a forum where some aspects of the European debate takes place. It can also be considered as a public sphere or as a communicative network, where in a given society, multiple communicative networks can exist (Eriksen 2005: 344). These newspapers constitute consequently as one of the communicative network of the Icelandic European debate. Other such networks could be as an example the broadcasting media, the internet and the Icelandic parliament.

Four themes have been constructed for the study; a *sectoral theme*, a *national identity theme*, an *economic theme* and a *strategic theme*. A content analysis will be applied to a number of newspaper articles where the themes will be tried to be identified. The aim is to study whether one or more of these themes can be said to be dominant in the debate of the attitudes towards EU membership. Further, it will be studied whether the tone of the attitudes is more negative or more positive towards EU membership, and also if the 'Yes' and 'No' sides refer to different themes. A total of 180 newspaper articles, editorials and submitted articles, from these two newspapers were analyzed from three year period, from 2008-2010. The emphasis will be placed on if and how these themes have changed during this period, whether the economic crisis and the parliament's decision of accepting the EU application has changed the debate.

This communicative network that will be studied can be referred to as an open network; where people from all sides of the society can write an article and submit

³ It would be more realistic to estimate that Iceland would possibly become the 29th member state of the European Union as it seems that Croatia will become the 28th member state in near future.

it to the newspaper (unless the newspaper rejects it). The Icelandic parliament can be thought of as a communicative network where participation is limited to elected MPs, where the rest of the people cannot directly participate, but can observe the debate. The thesis will compare the findings from the study to determine how these two ‘communicative networks’ compare in relations to the themes in the European debate.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the aim of the thesis, the following research questions have been formulated:

- *What is the dominant theme of the Icelandic European debate?*
- *Is the debate characterized with reference to sectoral interest, national identity or economic arguments?*
- *Has the debate changed fundamentally after the financial crash hit Iceland and after the decision to apply for EU membership was made?*
- *How do attitudes towards EU membership differ between different communicative networks?*

This thesis has the opportunity to contribute to the existing research that focus on attitude in Iceland towards the European Union and EU membership. It can contribute to increase the understanding of what form the European debate is taking and what arguments are being used. It will add to the understanding of how the attitudes in the European debate as it is presented in the media relates to the attitudes of the political elite.

1.3 Structure

The second chapter of the thesis gives a short historical overview of the European steps Iceland has taken from the 1950 and until the beginning of the 21st century. It focuses especially on how the EEA agreement affected Iceland’s involvement in the European integration.

The third chapter is the theoretical framework of the thesis. It first focuses on theories that explain the attitudes of the Nordic counties towards the European integration. It covers a short overview of existing research that has been applied on the case of Iceland and how it relates to the European integration. It gives a detailed account of four explanations of the Icelandic political elite’s attitude towards the European integration; the position of the fishing sector, influence of national identity, the special Icelandic – US relations and the Euro skeptical

political elite. At the end of the chapter a focus will be put on explaining why Iceland did apply for EU membership in the summer of 2009.

The fourth chapter is the methodological chapter where the research's design will be presented and how the coding procedure was operationalized for the content analysis.

In the fifth chapter the empirical findings of the study will be presented and the following chapter will be a discussion chapter about the findings. The seventh chapter is the last chapter where the final conclusions of the study will be presented, possible limitations of the study introduced and ideas about future studies of the thesis topic will be given.

Directly following the last chapter an executive summary will be presented, giving a short and detailed overview of the thesis and summary of the findings. After that follows a reference list and then three appendixes. The first appendix is the code book that the content analysis is based on, the second includes a list of all articles that were included in the content analysis and the third has a table of participants of the debate that were included in the content analysis.

2 Iceland – EU relations

Iceland is a European country located in the periphery of the continent. Iceland was settled in the 9th century and for about three hundred years Iceland developed without any central executive power being present. In the years 1260-1262 Iceland became a part of the Norwegian kingdom, and in 1662 it became part of the Danish kingdom. In 1845 Iceland was partially assumed legislative power and in 1874 the country was given a constitution by the Danish King (Halfdanarson 2001:85). In 1904 Iceland got a home rule, with its own minister positioned in Reykjavik. In 1918 Iceland gained sovereignty from Denmark and in 1944 Iceland declared itself to be an independent nation and became a republic (Halfdanarson 2001:135). This history, spanning around 1100 years from the time Iceland was settled, shows that Iceland has been for the major part of that period under foreign rule.

Even as an independent state, being a small country and without having any army of its own or defense capabilities, still had to rely in many ways on foreign relations. In 1941, the United States army took over from the British to guard Iceland from a German attack during the Second World War. Following the war, Iceland and the US government negotiated a defense agreement which permitted the US to have a permanent military base in the southwestern part of Iceland. The US defense agreement and the 1949 decision to join NATO were two controversial decisions that would influence Icelandic domestic politics for the remaining of the Cold War and even longer. Foreign policy issues regarding how Iceland was going to relate to the world, has always been a source of controversy in Icelandic society.

Iceland formed a close relationship with the US regarding economic, security and cultural matters. Iceland has also sought strong relations with the other Nordic countries and the UK. It positioned itself with the West in the Cold War in terms of security and defense, but was not overly committed in its relations to Europe in other foreign policy areas. The development in the European continent with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, which would later become the European Union, required the Icelandic authorities to decide how it would relate to it in the future.

2.1 50 years of European debate

Thorhallsson (2004b) has identified seven rounds of debates that took place in Iceland regarding the European integration from the 1950s to 2004. These debates have varied greatly in the surrounding of how they have taken place, within a

group of a limited numbers of politicians and interest-group leaders, and from taking the form of a broad public debate. The debates have also been different because the interest at stake and the political circumstances of the country did change during that time (Thorhallsson 2004b: 2). Some of these debates have not resulted in any change of policy, while others have contributed to closer relations with the European integration and have raised a lot of controversy.

2.1.1 EU debate 1957-1980s: Careful European steps

The first round of debate about Iceland's relations to the European integration took place from 1957 to 1959. During that period Icelandic officials were involved in a discussion within the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) on the establishment of a free trade area in Western Europe. Thorhallsson (2004b: 2) argues that due to domestic reasons, Iceland was prevented from participating in the proposed free trade area; mainly because of the policy of the government of restrictive controls of import of goods and currency.

The second round of the European debate that Thorhallsson identifies took place in 1961-1963. During this round of debate, politicians from the leading political parties and the business community seriously considered the question of EU membership. At this time, nearly all sectoral interest groups pressed for membership, and the government gave serious consideration to the question. But the government came to the conclusion that it was not right to apply for membership at the time. On the other hand, associate membership seemed desirable. The French' refusal to admit Britain into the EU, which effectively excluded Denmark, Norway and Ireland as well, meant that these ideas on the part of the Icelandic government came to nothing (Thorhallsson 2004b: 3).

The third round of debate followed at the end of the 1960s when the issue of EFTA membership came on the agenda. Long and heated discussions took place on the question of membership, and accusations of the loss of sovereignty and giving up the independence were frequently made in the parliament. One of the reasons given for EFTA membership was that it would give better access for Iceland's fish exports to the EFTA markets. Also, that it would open the way to making a free trade agreement with the EU. In 1970, ten years after its creation, Iceland joined EFTA (Thorhallsson 2004b: 3). All political parties, except the Social Alliance, supported EFTA membership, and furthermore the major interest groups supported the membership as well.

2.1.2 EU debate in the 1990s: Limited participation in European integration

The fourth round of debate took place following the negotiations between the EFTA states and the EU on the establishment of the European Economic Area

(EEA). The debate reached a highpoint when these negotiations were completed in the early 1990s. Heated debates took place in the Icelandic parliament over the agreement, and the public took an active part in the discussion by writing to the press, joining a movement against EEA membership and organizing petitions. (Thorhallsson 2004b: 3). The question of whether the EEA agreement violated the Icelandic constitution was raised. The EEA agreement was accepted by the parliament without the matter being brought to national referendum, as many had insisted on. The agreement took effect in the beginning of 1994.

The fifth round of the European debate in Iceland took place during the time when the Social Democratic Party⁴ became the first political party in Iceland to include EU membership in its policy statement in 1994. Thorhallsson (2004b: 4) states that the party wanted to use EU membership as a way of gaining support in the 1995 parliamentary elections. The question of EU membership however, was not put on the agenda in those elections. The reason for that may be that Norway had voted ‘No’ in the 1994 EU referendum and also that Iceland’s largest party, the Independence party, did not want to discuss EU membership in the election campaign (Thorhallsson 2004b: 4).

2.1.3 EU debate: 1999-2007: Debating EU membership

The discussion of Schengen membership can be seen as the sixth round of the European debate in Iceland. The issue was discussed in the parliament from 1999-2000, but it was never debated as intensely, neither in the parliament or in the public, as it was debated in Norway (Thorhallsson 2004b: 4). The Schengen membership was agreed without being much in the public debate. This is interesting as Iceland has since 2001, taken an active part in European cooperation in the area of policing and justice within the EU (*ibid.*).

Thorhallsson identifies the general EU debate that took place around between the years 2003 and 2004, as being the seventh round of debate. During that period, the question whether or not Iceland should apply for membership was raised from time to time but it did not change the attitude or policy of the Icelandic government, which was formed by the Independence Party (IP) and the Progressive Party (PP) (Thorhallsson 2004b: 4). In the 2007 parliamentary election the IP and the SDA formed a coalition government. Even though the SDA had an EU membership in its political manifesto, EU membership was not put on the agenda by the new government.

⁴ In 1999 the Social Democratic Party, the People’s Alliance and the Women’s Alliance created a new united center-left party called the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA). A section of the People’s Alliance did not want to follow the rest of the party members and formed a new left party, called the Left-Green Party (LGP), also formed in 1999. The old Social Democratic Party is usually referred to as the Social Democratic Alliance and the old People’s Alliance is usually referred to as the Left-Green Party.

2.2 EU debate 2008-2010: From economic crash to EU membership application

In 2008, the European debate in Iceland continued with a special focus on the currency issues. The Icelandic Krona was considered by many, to be causing problems for the economy and especially the growing financial sector. It was debated whether EU membership with the adoption of the Euro would be a solution to the problem. Ideas about other solutions to the currency problems were also raised; adopting the Euro without joining the EU or unilaterally adopting another currency (Bjarnason 2010: 53). The financial crisis moved the prospects of EU membership to the top of the political agenda and to the public debate. Many argued that EU membership would bring economic stability to the economy and would help Iceland work its way from the crash. But opponents of EU membership pointed out that the Eurozone was facing its own difficulties and it would benefit Iceland more stay out. (Avery et al. 2011: 96).

In the months following the economic crash, growing civil unrest started to take place within the country, and large proportion of the population demanded that the government would step down and call for general elections. After weeks of protests⁵ the government decided to step down and called for general elections. In the 2009 parliamentary elections, the Independence Party, the biggest parliamentary party in Iceland for over a half a century, lost a number of its MPs. The other coalition party, SDA, did not suffer as much in the elections. This might be explained with the reason that the IP was being punished for being in office for the majority of the duration the economic boost from the 1990s to 2008. The SDA however, did not participate in government except from 2007-2009⁶.

Following the elections, LGP and the SDA formed a coalition government, where the chairman of the SDA, Mrs. Johanna Sigurdardottir, became Prime Minister. The new government put EU membership on its agenda despite the fact that the LGP is the political party that is most united on opposing EU membership.

The European Commission, in February 2010, recommended to the European Council that it should open accession negotiations with Iceland. In its opinion regarding the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria, it concluded that Iceland fulfilled the political criteria and that it should be able to take on the obligations of membership, but some institutional and legal alignment was thought to be needed. Iceland was understood to be a functioning market economy, but that the functioning of the economic system had been seriously affected by macro

⁵ The protest that took place in the end of January and beginning of February 2009 were the most intense protest in Icelandic history since 1949, when the Icelandic government decided that Iceland would join NATO. These events are referred to as the “Household revolution” (Búsaþaldabyltingin), referring to that the protesters took position in front of the Icelandic parliament, banging pots and pans and demanded the government to resign.

⁶ The predecessor of the SDA, the Social Democratic Party, had formed a government with the IP from 1991 to 1995.

economical, structural and regulatory weaknesses, which the Commission thought Iceland would implement the necessary changes to in medium terms (Commission 2010).

2.3 Effects of the EEA agreement

With the EEA agreement in 1994, Iceland started to cooperate directly with the EU and participate within the internal market. The EEA agreement has had profound influence on Icelandic business environment and society as a whole. The main objective of the EEA agreement is to promote business and economic relations between the EEA and EU member states and to make them have the same competitive environment and follow same rules in the effort to create one harmonized European economic zone (Einarsson 2009: 99). The EEA agreement has its own institutional framework that is supposed to monitor how EEA member states fulfill its obligations to the agreement. It has its own court, surveillance institution and a standing committee (Einarsson 2009: 111). Iceland succeeded to connect itself to the internal market of the EU, but managed to exclude its fishing industry and agriculture sector from the agreement.

According to the agreement, the EEA member states have to adopt EU's regulations and directives into its own legal system, which fall under the agreement (Einarsson 2003: 89). This aspect of the agreement was one of the most controversial issues of the membership, that it would limit the legislative power of the Icelandic parliament and therefore limit the sovereignty of Iceland. A legal committee was commissioned by the government in 1993 to give opinion whether the EEA agreement did involve a delegation of sovereign power of the parliament and whether that would conflict with the Icelandic constitution⁷. It was the unanimous opinion of the committee that the EEA agreement did not conflict with the Icelandic constitution (Committee on Europe 2007: 113).

Since the adoption of the EEA agreement, the issue of sovereignty has been debated. In the current EU debate, the supporters of EU membership argue that the EEA agreement does indeed limit Icelandic sovereignty since Iceland does not have any formal approach to the EU legislation process. Full membership would give Iceland access to the decision-making process, while the current agreement gives limited opportunity for influence. Opponents of EU membership often claim that this is not the case, the EEA agreement does better reconcile with the sovereignty than full membership to the EU.

The opinion on the extent of the impact of the EEA agreement to Icelandic legal system is divided. Many argue that approximately 80 per cent of all EU legislation has been adopted by Iceland through the EEA agreement (Bergmann

⁷ According to the 21st article of the Icelandic constitution from 1944, it is prohibited to delegate legislative power from the Icelandic parliament to foreign actor. If Iceland would become a member of the EU, then prior to membership, a constitutional change will have to be made.

2009: 155). Others have criticized those numbers and claimed them to be much lower, some arguing that the number is closer to 6.5 per cent (Spano: 2007: 33). During the economic boom, many thanked the EEA agreement that Iceland could participate in the global financial market where they enjoyed a (temporary) success. After the financial crash many have claimed that it is indeed the EEA agreement that contributed to the crash. That the banks and investors could operate in Europe in the shelter of the EEA agreement, without Icelandic authority being able to restrict their foreign activities.

It is clear that the EEA agreement has had profound influence on Icelandic society. Einarsson (2009: 179), and others, claim that through the EEA agreement (and the Schengen agreement), that Iceland is *de facto* associated member of the European Union.

2.4 Conclusion

Iceland's relations to the EU have been characterized by incremental and cautious steps. From the 1970s, when Iceland joined EFTA, Iceland moved closer to Europe in an effort to secure its economic interests. With the adoption of the EEA agreement in 1994, Iceland took its biggest step in bringing it closer to the EU. During that time the other Nordic countries, which were also members of EFTA, were taking decisions regarding whether or not to join the EU. That question was never raised in Iceland. With the adoption of the Schengen agreement, Iceland moved even closer to the EU, but in a surprisingly silent and uncontroversial way. The period between 2004 and 2007 marked an unprecedented economic growth in Iceland, which made it one of the wealthiest and most prosperous countries in the world. In the environment of economic growth and a general feeling of content in the society, the question of EU membership never came on the agenda. Following the 2008 economic crash and the 2009 parliamentary elections, the EU question came on the agenda and Iceland began its accession process that could lead to a full membership in the future.

3 Theoretical Framework

The traditional integration theories of neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism are thought by many not to be able to explain the attitude of the Nordic countries towards the European integration and why they have chosen different paths in their process. (Einarsson 2009: 41). In this chapter, theories and studies that aim at explaining the European policies of the Nordic countries will be presented but the main focus will be put on the case of Iceland.

3.1 European integration and the Nordic Countries

The classical integration theories focus primarily on the deepening of the integration but not on how integration policy is conducted. In that respect, they cannot explain why countries, that have joined the EU, behave reluctantly within the integration process; this is especially the case of the Nordic countries (Gstöhl 2002: 4). In his analysis on the behavior of small states in Europe, Katzenstein (1985) argues that they behave differently than the larger ones in an important respect. The small size of these states affects their economic openness and the characteristics of the political systems. Small states are more open and therefore more vulnerable than the larger states in economic, political and military terms. The small states tend to be more politically centralized that produces democratic corporatism (Katzenstein 1985: 80. Katzenstein argues that the economic openness reinforces the corporatist system and that is what distinguishes the small European states from the larger ones (*ibid*). Katzenstein's theory creates the expectations that small and highly industrialized states are more likely to integrate than the larger countries or the less advanced countries (Gstöhl 2002:3). According to Katzenstein's theory, small European states want to be part of the EU, because it would limit the constraints that the world economy has on their open economic systems. In the early 1990s, Finland, Norway and Sweden all applied for EU membership, but Iceland did not. According to Katzenstein's small state theory, Iceland should have applied to the EU with the other Nordic countries.

Christine Ingebritsen's sectoral theory (1998) tries to explain why the Nordic countries adopted different approaches to the European integration process. She argues that the reason why the Nordic countries did choose different paths can be explained by how EU membership would have benefitted the leading sector of each country. Ingebritsen's theory assumes that the leading sectors of a country can have a political influence which will determine what integration policy will be adopted (Ingebritsen 1998: 32). When explaining why Sweden and Finland joined

the EU in 1995, while Norway and Iceland did not, can be explained with the different interests of the leading industries in those countries. The manufacturing industries of Finland and Sweden benefitted from EU membership, but for Norway and Iceland, where the leading sectors are agriculture and fishery, membership would mean worse conditions than staying outside the EU.

Gstöhl (2002) criticizes theoretical approaches that predominantly focus on economic reasons for, or against, EU membership. She argues that the rationalist approaches are the most useful when explaining economic reasons, but they tend to neglect the “hidden” influence of national identities on the integration policy, as she puts it (Gstöhl: 2002: 6). She argues that the constructivist approach, that claims that the construction of nation and statehood, shape interest and therefore also policies, is a valuable explanatory approach. Gstöhl maintains that neither economic interest nor national identities alone are sufficient to explain integration policies, but that both material and constructivists factors have to be taken into consideration. She argues that economic interests alone do not sufficiently explain integration preferences but rather coexist with, and are often dominated by domestic constraints (Gstöhl 2002: 211). In her analysis, she concludes that Sweden joined the EU while Norway and Switzerland did not, because they had to deal with stronger domestic constraints and more issues of national identity than Sweden did (Gstöhl 2002: 214).

Hansen (2002) and Neumann (2002) apply a post-structuralist approach in their study on the different attitudes of the Nordic countries. Hansen (2002: 2) argues that one must see how the idea of ‘Europe’ is being presented in the national discourse, and how it fits domestic ideas about the nation and the state. In his analysis of the 1994 Norwegian ‘No’, Neumann (2002: 89), criticized Ingebritsen’s sectoral approach, and doubts that it was because of the influential oil sector that the Norwegians said no. Because of the revenues created by the oil sector, the agriculture sector and the fishery industry did not need EU membership. He points out that in 1972, when there was no oil industry, the Norwegians still said ‘No’ (Neumann 2002: 89). He believes that to be able to find the real explanation, one must look past Ingebritsen’s rational approach, that it was not the fishing and agricultural sectors that “captured the heart of the nation” (*ibid.*). The real explanation lies in the national discourse and how history has shaped the national identity.

3.2 The case of Iceland

The literature field regarding the attitude in Iceland towards the European integration is not very extensive. This research field was mostly neglected until the mid-1990s, when Iceland started to participate deeper in European cooperation. A possible explanation of why academics and research did not focus on the European relations can be the position that the fishing sector had in Icelandic society. Its meaning for the Icelandic economy could have meant that it was not thought necessary to research the matter further. Also, its dominant

position could have been used as an excuse not to talk about future Icelandic EU membership. Hauksson (2002: 28) argues that whenever the question of EU membership has popped up, the issue has been thrown off the table because of the Common Fishery Policy.

3.2.1 Research on Icelandic attitude towards European integration

In the 1990s and early 2000, the academic field has approached the question of Iceland's attitude towards the European integration from a wider perspective. Academics started to look at Iceland's special characteristics that in many ways are different from the other Nordic countries, as a way to explain the Icelandic attitude. Kristinsson (1996) approaches this question with emphasis on domestic politics in Iceland, Stephensen (1996) studied the attitude of the Icelandic governments from an economic perspective and Ingebritsen (1998) explains the Icelandic attitude on the basis of the interests of the fishing sector. Icelandic academics have also looked into how nationalist's elements and national identity have shaped the political discourse in Iceland and contributed to the Icelandic attitude (Hálfðánarson 2001, Hermannsson 2005). Further, Einarsson (2009) approaches the question how ideas about the Icelandic sovereignty has influenced the Icelandic European policy. Academics have also looked into how possible EU membership would affect Icelandic interests. Hauksson (2002) studied what the Common Fishery Policy would mean for the Icelandic fishing industry if Iceland would become a member of the EU and Bjarnason (2010) applies cost/beneficial analysis on the macro economic impact of EU membership for Iceland.

3.3 Explaining Icelandic attitude towards European integration

As has been previously stated, the influence of the fishing industry and ideas about the national identity, have been seen as the most prominent explanations on the attitude in Iceland towards European integration. But other explanatory variables have also been applied to explain why Iceland has chosen to stay outside EU membership. The question of security and defense has been raised, and it has been argued that Iceland has not sought for EU membership because of the special relationship Iceland has had with the US. The composition of the Euro-skeptical Icelandic political elite has also been used as an explanatory factor. In the following sub-sections four explanations will be analyzed.

3.3.1 Influence of the leading sector: the fishing industry

The influence of the leading sector in Iceland, the fishing industry, has been used for a long time as the ‘default’ explanation of why Iceland has chosen to stay out of the European Union, often without examining the claim any further. In an effort to study the influence of the sector, Thorhallsson and Vignisson (2004a) apply Ingebritsen’s sectoral theory to see how the Icelandic political elite has approached the European question. They study how the fishing industry in Iceland has influenced the attitude of the Icelandic government towards the European integration and look into whether the priorities of the fishing industry interest groups has been the controlling factor in explaining the reluctance of Iceland to participate in the European integration (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004a: 67). The argument is that the Common Fishery Policy excludes the possibility of EU membership for Iceland. The fishing industry is very important for the Icelandic economy, fishing products as a proportion of export goods in 2009 were 42.4⁸ per cent and the proportion of fishing products of the GDP in 2009 was 13.8⁹ per cent (LIU 2011)¹⁰.

Every step Iceland taken and moved closer to Europe can at least partly be explained in relations to the fishing sector – as the European steps have been made to secure the ‘vital interest’ of the sector. In the 1960s, when the government was considering joining the EU, it withdrew its proposals, partly because the UK membership was blocked by France. UK being the most important fish market for Icelandic fish products, EU membership was not beneficial (Thorhallsson 2004b: 2). Iceland joined EFTA as it would make fish export to EFTA countries easier, and it would open the way of making a free trade agreement with the EU (*ibid*). Among other reasons, the EEA agreement was negotiated to secure better access for Icelandic fishing products to European markets. Through the EEA agreement, Iceland participated within the single market, but without having to grant EU member states fishing rights in Icelandic waters and also they were restricted to invest in the Icelandic fishing industry (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004d: 47).

Ingebritsen argues that the preferences of the leading sectors are well represented in the national politics through the political party system, through interest groups and through social movement (Ingebretsen 1998: 36). Through those relations, the leading sectors can influence the policy making of the government. In their research, Thorhallsson and Vignisson (2004a) argue that the fishing industry has had a good opportunity to influence the European policy of the government, but the Icelandic case differs from the other Nordic states in some respects. They first look into how the fishing industry has exercised influence through their connections with government committees that address

⁸ In 1994 it was 77.1 per cent and 64.1 per cent in 2000.

⁹ In 1994 it was 19.9 per cent and 14.1 percent in 2000.

¹⁰ In the years between 2004 and 2008 the overall importance of fishing declined proportionally compared to other sectors. After the financial crash in 2008, with the collapse of the three major Icelandic banks, the relative importance of fishing has increased.

European issues and claim that the fishery interest groups have never been invited to participate in such committees (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004a: 75). Ingebretsen assumes that the economic interest organizations are the insiders in the formation of governmental policy, and she maintains that these groups in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have worked closely with the governments on European issues (Ingebretsen 1998: 37-38). The second relation that Thorhallsson and Vignisson look into is the influence that interest groups can have on political parties through their close relations. They argue that the fishing industry and the leading political party in Iceland for over half the century, the Independence Party, have had long and close relations over the time. The agricultural sector and other industries have also had relations with political parties, but not as much as the fishing industry (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004a: 80). They measure these relations by analyzing the connections of individual MPs to sectoral interest groups. They conclude that there has existed a strong relationship between the parliament and the fishing industry (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004a: 86). The third relation that was analyzed was the relationship between social movements and the sectoral groups. In Norway and Sweden the leading industries contributed to the formation of the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ movements and that the sectors and the political parties participated greatly within these social movements (Ingebretsen 1998: 38). In Iceland, however, there have not been demonstrated any relations between the sectoral interest groups and the ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ movements (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004a: 87).

Ingebretsen’s sectoral theory offers a valuable approach in trying to explain the attitude of a country towards the European integration. But it focuses too narrowly on economic preferences, which makes a too limited perspective. Thorhallsson and Vignisson (2004a: 97) conclude that Ingebretsen’s sectoral theory as it is applied to the case of Iceland is not found to be supported. They argue that there exist strong relations between the fishing industry and the political system and that the industry can influence the political system. All political parties in the Icelandic parliament have stated that the CFP is an obstacle to Iceland’s membership to the EU, which indicates that they all take the interest of the fishing sector into consideration. It is their opinion that the fishing sector is far from being the controlling variable, but that it is often used as an excuse to throw the debate off the table (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004a: 98).

Thorhallsson and Vignisson’s conclusions are convincing, and show certain limitations of Ingebretsen’s sectoral approach to the case of Iceland. Perhaps, their approach may underestimate the importance of the fishing sector on the attitude of the political elite. They look at the formal relationship between the fishery interest groups and the politicians, but ignore the informal one, like campaign contribution and personal relationships. The fishing industry may have had more influence than appears formally. They do not look into how the electorate system has given the fishing industry more influence because it has traditionally favored the rural regions (where the fishing industry has been located), compared to the urban Reykjavik region, in parliamentary representation. Also, they do not mention how ideas about independence and sovereignty relate to the control over the Icelandic fishery grounds and how MPs and interest groups representatives have related

these things with each other. But they conclude that the fishing sector does have influence on the European policy making of the government, but that it has to been studied and explained with other explanations.

In 2009, the Icelandic parliament accepted to apply for EU membership, despite the fact that the Common Fishery Policy was still unchanged and that the position of the fishery sector was also unchanged. This decision indicates that the fishing industry is not the controlling variable in the European debate. However, it is to be expected that the fishing sector will campaign fiercely against EU membership and communicate its opposition to EU membership based on their interest and that they will try to “capture the heart of the nation”.

3.3.2 Icelandic national identity and European integration

Recently, academics have started to study how ideas about Icelandic national identity; sovereignty and independence, has influenced the attitude of the Icelandic political elite towards the European integration. Iceland and Norway are the only two Nordic countries that stand outside the EU, but these two countries differ in an important way: Norwegian politicians have twice applied for an EU membership, but the voters said ‘No’, while the Icelandic political elite did not apply for EU membership until 2009. If there had not been any financial crisis followed by a parliamentary election, EU membership would have been almost unthinkable. Although academics have explained the Norwegian ‘No’ with references to national identity explanations (Neumann 2002, Easton 2009), those studies are different from the studies that have been applied on the Icelandic case. In the case of Norway, academics have applied national identity approaches to explain how the voters voted ‘No’, while studies in Iceland have focused on how ideas about national identity has influenced the political elite’s attitude towards EU membership.

Hálfðánarson (2004) approaches the question how the current political discourse, with its relation to the political discourse of the 18th and 19th centuries, when Iceland was fighting for independence, has influenced the attitude of Icelandic politicians to European integration. He looks at how in 1944, when Icelanders were celebrating their new independence, ideas about the independence and sovereignty were connected to the uniqueness of the Icelandic national identity, its history, culture and language. In the celebrations the foundation of the republic was compared to a long journey, where the independent Iceland was the Promised Land, and therefore Icelanders were at last home (Hálfðánarsson 2004: 131). Consequently, the Icelandic political discourse tends to polarize around nationalistic themes, making it difficult for politicians to promote anything that seems to compromise Icelandic sovereignty and independence. As such, Icelandic politicians are reluctant to advocate formal participation in the process of European integration (Hálfðánarson 2004: 130). The independence was also said

to be a restoration of the old Commonwealth¹¹, which came to an end in the 13th century when Iceland agreed to become part of the Norwegian kingdom. The period of the Commonwealth is considered to be the ‘golden age’ of Iceland, a period where the Icelandic sagas were written, the most important cultural achievement in Iceland history. The foundation of the republic in 1944, and the idea that the Icelandic nation was now ‘home’, made people think that the institution of sovereign Iceland was an Icelandic invention, rather than Icelanders had been influenced by European events where nations were acquiring their sovereignty (*ibid.*). On the first Icelandic independence day, 17th of June 1944, politicians from all political parties declared it the most sacred duty of the politicians themselves to guard the independence and sovereignty of the nation (Hálfdánarsson 2004: 132).

Hálfdánarson (2001, 2004) and other academics (Hermannsson 2005 and Einarsson 2009), claim that this historical understanding of the Icelandic political elite is still very much alive and contributes to the political discourse. It is especially the case when matters of foreign policy are being discussed. NATO membership (1949), US defense agreement (1951), EFTA membership (1970), Cod wars with UK (1958, 1972, 1975), EEA agreement (1994) and the current EU debate have all been discussed to a large extent on nationalistic terms where ideas about independence, sovereignty and the national identity have been highlighted.

Hálfdánarson (2001: 246) argues that the lack of interest on the behalf of the Icelandic political elite towards the European integration is perfectly understandable when looking at Icelandic political history and the fundamental essence of the nationalistic discourse in Icelandic political debate. The fear of ‘losing the sovereignty’ has marked the political discourse (*ibid.*) However, despite emphasizing the importance of the undivided Icelandic sovereignty which the political elite has stressed so often, it has not restrained them from delegating part of the legislative power of the Icelandic parliament through international agreements. But to admit that these agreements have meant delegation of sovereign powers is impossible to acknowledge publicly (Hálfdánarson 2001: 247).

Einarsson (2009), in his PhD. dissertation, asks the question why Iceland has chosen to participate in the European integration through the EEA agreement and the Schengen agreement but not with a full membership to the European Union (Einarsson 2009: 319). He argues that the idea about the Icelandic nationality and sovereignty of the country has had formative effect on the attitude of Icelandic politicians towards the European integration. The nationalism that was developed in the independence struggle still influences the political discourse, especially when European issues are being debated and Iceland’s relations are being discussed (*ibid.*). The supranational element of the European project

¹¹ The period of the Commonwealth is a time when Iceland is considered to have been free and independent. There were no formal institutions or central executive authority. The county was split between different tribes over the country. These tribes could fight with each other or make alliances. In the mid-13th centuries, a constant war between tribes is considered to have influenced the decision that let Icelanders agree to be part of the Norwegian kingdom.

fundamentally contradicts the conservative Icelandic's ideas about its conceptions of the terms nation and sovereignty and the idea about the independent Icelandic nation (*ibid.*). Hermannsson (2005) also considers the legacy of the nationalism and how it has influenced the attitude of Icelandic politicians towards the question of European integration. He argues that at the time when the other Nordic countries, were in the early 1990s debating if they should join the EU, no such debate occurred in Iceland at that time. For Hermannsson (2005: 8), this lack of public discourse about these issues did not come as a surprise. For him, it seemed to say a great deal about the Icelandic political culture and the strong existence of nationalism in formulating the terms of the debate.

But this nationalistic political discourse has not prevented Icelandic authorities from participating in international affairs or European integration. Icelandic politicians could agree to the EEA agreement, which at that time, was not considered to involve the delegation of legislative power to the European Union. Therefore, full EU membership was out of the question but the EEA agreement was acceptable (2004: 246.). Hálfdánarson (2004: 140) states that the nationalistic political discourse that originates from the past has affected the attitude of Icelandic politicians, and kept them out of the EU. Hálfdánarson (2004: 140) further states:

“It is clear, therefore, that although Icelanders have cultivated their economic, cultural, and, to a certain extent, political ties with Europe, they have considered Iceland to be immune from the logic that has driven European integration in the past decades.”

The reasons for this attitude is the believe that the Icelandic nation forms an organic unity and that the unified nation cannot give up its sovereignty and independence, as Hálfdánarson puts it (*ibid.*). According to Hálfdánarson, the geographical isolation of the country, the relative homogeneity of the population and the general economic prosperity that have characterized Iceland for the most part of the later 20th century, can be seen as strengthening the nationalistic discourse in Iceland (*ibid.*).

In 2009, despite all nationalistic sentiments, Iceland applied for EU membership. It cannot be argued that the national identity feelings had changed at all, which undermines the explanatory values of this approach. However, the EU application is only one stepping stone in the European journey of the accession process, where the feelings of national identity towards EU membership will in no doubt be put into the spotlight when and if an accession agreement will be concluded and put for the Icelandic voters in a referendum.

3.3.3 The special relationship between Iceland and the US

When the US army replaced the British occupation force in 1941, during the Second World War, a special relationship between Iceland and the US was formed. After the Second World War, the Icelandic government negotiated a defense agreement with the US government, where it was stated that the US army would have a permanent military base in Iceland. Through the Marshall aid and the business that was created around the military base, along with trade agreements with the US, this was a beneficial economic agreement for Iceland (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 122). Iceland also became influenced by the US in cultural terms. This special relationship had a profound influence on the Icelandic domestic politics, economic and society.

Thorhallsson and Vignisson (2004b) have studied how this special relationship between Iceland and the United States affected the attitude of Icelandic authorities towards the European integration. They looked into whether the close relationship between Iceland and the US in terms of security, economic and trade relations has had deep influence on Icelandic response to the European integration (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 104).

During the Cold War, Iceland aligned itself with the West. Three of the four main political parties in Iceland supported or did not oppose NATO membership or the defense agreement with the US (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 105). The party furthest to the left, the People's Alliance, opposed strongly this policy of the government and did so on the basis on the threat to Iceland's independence and national identity (*ibid.*) Foreign policy issues like NATO membership and the presence of a US army on Icelandic soil have traditionally been heavily debated in parliament and through public debate. The debate has mainly been about the bad influence that an foreign army has on Iceland's national identity and independence, while the supporters of the military base saw it as a fundamental element in protecting Iceland's security interests (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 107).

When Iceland became an independent republic in 1944, it declared itself a neutral state and after the end of the Second World War, the US army left Iceland. But as the Cold War intensified, Iceland had to abandon its policy of neutrality and joined with other Western states in the creation of NATO. The US strengthened the military base at Keflavik and formed the Iceland Defense Force¹². Iceland became strategically very important for the US and NATO defense planning (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 110-110). With the escalation of the Cold War, Iceland kept its strategic importance, as well as its preferential position with US authorities. This close relationship was not only in terms of security and defense. Unlike other European countries, Iceland became richer after the Second World War than it had been before it. Iceland got proportionately the highest Marshall aid from the US of all the European countries

¹² The Icelandic Defence Force was the name of the US military personnel and activities on the US airbase in Keflavik.

and between 1948 and 1960 Iceland got even financed directly by the US in the form of credit and grants. (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 119). Trade relations between Iceland and US were strong, where Iceland gained favored market access for its fishing products¹³ (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 120-21).

Thorhallsson and Vignisson argue that the economic and trade aspects of the US relations of Iceland cannot be seen as a contributing to the Icelandic attitude towards the European integration. It might have been true until the 1960s, but since then the economic importance of the defense agreement diminished, even though the authors do not undermine its economic meaning for Iceland (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 123). But they find the part of their hypotheses that refers to security relations to apply (*ibid.*).

When the Cold War ended, the strategic importance of Iceland declined. The US reduced its scope of operations of the air base at Keflavik, but the Icelandic response was to pressure the US to keep things unchanged (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 111). The Icelandic government succeeded in pressurizing the US to not go as far as they had originally wanted in downsizing the US activity at the airbase. Thorhallsson and Vignisson (2004b: 117) point out that during the time when the EU was developing its own foreign and security policy, it was very much depended on NATO in many important ways. Through its NATO membership, Iceland was therefore able to participate in the decision-making process of security and defense policy in Europe.

With 9/11 in 2001, everything changed. The Icelandic government supported US actions following these events, first by supporting invasion in Afghanistan in 2001, and later as a part of the ‘coalition of the willing’ (Ingimundarson 2008: 20). The North Atlantic region was very much marginalized in the US war on terror which meant new development in Iceland-US defense relations. The US gradually took steps to close the airbase, and in 2006, despite heavy pressure and protest of the behalf of the Icelandic government, the airbase was closed down for good. The defense agreement is however still in force, but the Icelandic government did threaten to terminate it, but did not follow on its threats.

In the view of Thorhallsson and Vignisson, the special relationship between Iceland and the US was clearly a key variable in explaining why Iceland had not sought EU membership for security and defense reasons (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004b: 123). Since the publication of their findings, the defense agreement between Iceland and the US has fundamentally changed. The Icelandic defense force is no longer present, the airbase has been closed but the defense agreement is still in force, but without any visible defenses. Still, Icelandic government has not made any effort to join the EU for security and defense reasons (Ingimundarson 2008: 56). NATO membership is still the cornerstone of the security and defense policy of Iceland. In a report from the Foreign Minister given to the parliament in 2010 on foreign affairs, no indication is given that the

¹³ In the early 50s, 25 per cent of all Icelandic export was to the US. In 2000 this numbers were down to approximately 10 per cent.

Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU will serve as a new cornerstone of Iceland's foreign and defense policy, if it will become a member. Instead, it is stated that during the accession talks with the EU, Iceland will continue to keep its sovereign rights over its security and defense matters and it is stated that Iceland will not participate in the European Defense Agency (Foreign Ministry 2010: 31).

The 2009 EU application seems therefore not to have been made on the grounds of security and defense considerations, as a response to the changes in its security and defense reality.

3.3.4 Euro-skeptical political elite

Many have argued that to fully explain why the Nordic countries have chosen different paths in their relations into the European integration, despite all their apparent similarities, one has to look into the specific domestic political characteristics. Kristinsson and Thorhallsson (2004) apply that approach in their study of the Icelandic political elite¹⁴ attitude towards the European integration. They argue that the Icelandic political elite fundamentally differs from the political elite of the other Nordic countries, namely in their skeptical attitude towards the European integration. Also, the Icelandic political elite, they argue, has been more Euro-skeptical than the Icelandic public (Kristinsson and Thorhallsson 2004: 145). Public opinion polls in Iceland have shown that in the 1990s between 30-50 per cent of the public has favored EU membership. This has been the case during a time when no Icelandic political party advocated officially for EU membership (*ibid.*). All political parties in Iceland have either taken a firm position against EU membership or they have adopted a so-called 'wait and see' approach. The Social Democratic Party and later the Social Democratic Alliance, are the only exceptions as they adopted a pro-EU position (Kristinsson and Thorhallsson 2004: 146).

Kristinsson and Thorhallsson (2004: 147) argue that the Icelandic political elite differs from the rest of Europe in their 'realist' concept of foreign policy, that they are influenced by the peripheral position of the country in Europe and the rural power base of the political elite. These factors contribute to the skeptical attitude towards the European integration.

Iceland did not establish its own Foreign Ministry until 1940. Even though Iceland formally obtained the right to formulate its own foreign policy, along with sovereignty, in 1918, Denmark did administrate its foreign policy (Kristinsson and Thorhallsson 2004: 150). The Foreign Ministry was established relatively late and did not have many resources to begin with to form a strong foreign policy. One reason why Icelandic authority acted in a cautious way in its foreign policy activity was because of the political discourse of nationalism. Further, history of isolation and the security of distance may also explain the policy approach (*ibid.*). There was no domestic army and no strategic research institutes, which meant that

¹⁴ They define the political elite to be the Members of Parliament.

there was no counterweight against the nationalist heritage (Kristinsson and Thorhallsson 2004: 152). From that perspective, the Icelandic elite looked at the EU from an economical and legal perspective, and do not see it as a political entity. As such, it evaluates EU membership on economic terms rather than political (*ibid*). But in the late 1990s, the authors argue, had developed a different tone in the debate on EU membership, which could be contributed by a stronger foreign service and with some more pro-EU Foreign Ministers. Also, the business and political community did get affected by a growing pressure from globalization forces, and therefore seemed to be more willing to discuss EU membership (*ibid*.).

The political elite of other European countries have for geographical reasons, had more opportunities to socialize and the diffusion of the idea of a European Union has been much easier. But the Icelandic elite did not “participate” in that socialization process. The Cold War contributed to close relations of the Icelandic elite to the US, on a bilateral basis. Kristinsson and Thorhallsson also demonstrate that from the 1960s, the majority of Icelandic administrative officials got their education in the US, compared to mainland Europe, which further contributed to their ‘lack of understanding’ to the integration process (Kristinsson and Thorhallsson 2004: 153).

Kristinsson and Thorhallsson also looked at how the electorate system in Iceland has always favored the rural areas compared to the urban Reykjavik area, in parliamentarian representation. The fishing industry is mainly situated in the rural areas and has opposed EU membership and has influenced the MPs in the rural areas. As the rural economy is much more dependent on fishing than the urban Reykjavik area, which means that fishing interest can influence the policy making (Kristinsson and Thorhallsson 2004: 155). It is not only the fishing sector that has benefitted from the electoral system, but also the agriculture. In 1959, 46 percent of the rural electorate had 71 per cent of the MPs. In 1999, 31 per cent of the rural electorate was represented by 51 per cent of the MPs. Since then there have been made further changes to the electorate system and in 2003 for the first time, the majority of the electorate, situated in the urban Reykjavik area, are represented by majority of MPs (Kristinsson and Thorhallsson 2004: 157). Through the electorate system the more skeptical attitudes have been represented in the parliament.

Despite the seemingly Euro-skeptical MPs, the Icelandic parliament accepted to apply for an EU membership in 2009. It can well be that the composition of the MPs did change enough following the parliamentary elections, where more Pro-EU MPs replaced others with more negative attitudes. Iceland is still located in the periphery of Europe but the technological innovations over the last years have made distances more relative and made it easier for isolated areas to relate to other parts of the world. Participation with the EEA and the Schengen agreement and other relations that the Icelandic political elite has formed with EU’s representatives has probably resulted in some process of ‘Europeanization’, which could have made them be more positive towards the EU. The focus on the political elite is clearly an important factor in explain the attitude in Iceland towards the European integration.

3.4 Why did Iceland apply for EU membership?

The explanations that have been covered in previous sections have all been applied to explain why the Icelandic political elite has been reluctant to participate in the European integration and why Iceland has never applied for EU membership. Einarsson (2009) argues that the explanation must focus on how the nationalistic ideas that are related to the sovereignty and independence of the Icelandic nation influence the negative attitude. Thorhallsson (2004a) argues that one must look at the Euro-skeptical political elite, the special relationship with the US and how this relates to ideas about the national identity and influence of the fishing sector, to fully understand the attitude. But these explanations do have in common that they all focus on the negative attitude of the political elite and neglect to explain why there has been, despite all, a political party that has had positive attitudes towards EU membership. Also, they do not explain why the Icelandic public is more pro-Euro than the political elite, which has not been the case in the other Nordic countries.

In 2009 the unlikely event happened, when the Icelandic parliament accepted to apply for an EU membership. The existing literature in Iceland could not explain this change of policy, since it was not the case that the ideas about Icelandic national identity had changed and the fishing sector was as against EU membership as it had been before. In the 2009 parliamentary elections, the composition of the MPs changed somewhat, but the question remains if that change was dramatic enough to explain this change of policy. It is however clear that with the financial crash in October 2008, something changed and more actors on the political level and parties within leading interest groups were prepared to consider a new policy towards EU membership. Perhaps the most obvious explanation to this change was that these actors were prepared to consider EU membership seriously because Iceland needed to protect itself from its economic vulnerability caused by the openness of the economy and EU membership could be used as a tool for economic rebuilding. In an effort to see if the decision to apply for EU membership originated from a change in the European policies of the Icelandic political parties, Thorhallsson and Rehban (2011) apply the liberal intergovernmentalism theory on the case. They argue that the theory may be applied to see if the political parties did change their policy preferences regarding their attitude towards EU membership. According to the theory, the economic crash resulted in a change in the macro-economic preferences within the government, which should have been visible through the election of a new pro-EU government or through change in the European policy of the major political parties (Thorhallsson and Rehban 2011: 56). The change of the policy preferences of the political parties should have taken place within the political party system after the financial crisis occurred, which would explain Iceland's application for EU membership (Thorhallsson and Rehban 2011: 69).

It is the author's conclusion that the economic preference of the Icelandic political parties remained relatively stable despite the economic crash. The SDA was the only party that supported EU membership before and after the crisis.

Further, the most influential interest groups, the fishing sector and agriculture, maintained their anti-EU position (*ibid.*). They argue that the liberal intergovernmentalism cannot explain the decision of the Icelandic government to apply for EU membership, as it overlooks how the domestic political institutions and the distribution of domestic political power influenced the process and that it was a government that was divided over the European issue that changed the Icelandic European policy (Thorhallsson and Rehban 2011: 69-70).

Even though the financial crisis did not change the economic preferences of the most important political actors, it still created a ‘window of opportunity’ for the Social Democratic Alliance. Thorhallsson and Rehban (2011: 70) argue that the SDA was able to convince the LGP to form a coalition government with EU membership on the agenda, despite the clear anti-EU position of the Left Greens. The LGP had the opportunity to form a left-government, an opportunity they would not like to miss, therefore accepted the terms put forward by the SDA.

The fact that Iceland did apply for EU membership is, according to Thorhallsson and Rehban (*ibid.*), a demonstration that individual domestic circumstances can lead to significant changes in a European policy of a country, despite that the macro-economic preferences remain stable. This gives the indication that the domestic politics needs to be examined closely in order to fully understand countries’ approach to the European integration (*ibid.*).

3.5 Conclusion

Iceland and the other Nordic countries share similar characteristics regarding their political and welfare systems, culture and social values. Despite these similarities, they have chosen different ways to how they relate to the European integration. The case of Iceland differs from the other Nordic countries in the respect that it was not until in July 2009 that the political elite agreed to apply for EU membership, 15 years after Finland, Norway and Sweden addressed the question.

The studies that focus on the case of Iceland emphasize the importance of the special domestic characteristics of the political elite, the political system and how they relate to their perception of the national identity, as an explanation why Iceland differs from the other Nordic countries.

The focus has been primarily on the political elite and the negative attitude it has had towards EU membership. These explanations cannot therefore be applied to explain why Iceland chose to apply for EU membership in 2009. The position of the fishing industry has not changed and the CFP of the EU is still in place and there is nothing that indicates that the idea about the Icelandic national identity has changed as well. NATO membership is still the cornerstone of the security and defense policy of the Icelandic government, so the application cannot be explained with reference to those issues.

The most likely explanation is that the crash and the outcome of the 2009 elections created a ‘window of opportunity’ for the pro-European Social Democratic Alliance, which they took advantage from.

Despite the reason that the SDA managed to use the ‘window of opportunity’ to put EU membership on the agenda, which the literature about the Icelandic attitude cannot easily explain, does not exclude those studies as obsolete. The fact is that EU membership application is only one of the milestones that a country must take on its journey towards EU membership. It is highly unlikely if an accession agreement will be concluded, that the ‘Yes’ side can take advantage of another ‘window of opportunity’. When and if, an election campaign will be undertaken prior to a national referendum, the position of the fishing sector and the ideas about Icelandic national identity, sovereignty and independence, will undoubtedly be in the foreground.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research Method

As a research method for the thesis a content analysis was chosen as a method. It is a method which involves a systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matters, not necessarily from author's or user's perspective (Krippendorff 2004: 3). A central idea in content analysis is that the many words of the text is classified into much fewer categories, where one category can include one, several or many words. The words or phrases that are presumed to have same or similar meaning are classified in the same category (Webber 1990: 12). For the content analysis, certain keywords (words and phrases) have been identified and will guide the content analysis. Each keyword (and phrase) will then belong to a certain category.

This content analysis will focus on two of the most leading newspapers in Iceland. Many studies focus on how the media influences public opinion (Maier and Rittberger 2008, de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006, Sanches-Cuenca 2000) and other studies show how the media frames certain issues (McLaren 2004, McLaren 2002). In this study, the attitude of media (the newspapers) is not the focus point; instead they are treated as a public sphere. Eriksen (2005: 344) refers to the public sphere also as a communicative network. In this study, these two newspapers are treated as one of the many communicative networks that can be found in Icelandic society. The content analysis focuses only on articles that can be identified as editorial articles and submitted articles, but other types were excluded. The editorial articles are treated in the same way as the submitted articles, there is to say, they are participating in the debate as the individuals that have submitted their articles.

4.2 Sample

4.2.1 The newspapers

The two newspapers that were chosen to be included in the content analysis are Frettabladid (The Newspaper) and Morgunbladid (The Morning Paper). These are the two largest newspapers in Iceland and cover the whole country and are

distributed all over the country. Frettabladid has a reading numbers up to 61 per cent¹⁵ and Morgunbladid has a reading of about 32 percent (Capacent 2010).

Frettabladid is owned by a media company that also owns television and radio stations, and is called 365-Media. Frettabladid was established in 2001 and has been considered to have a pro-EU stance. The current editor of Frettabladid is Olafur Stephensen which was the editor of Morgunbladid from 2008-2009.

Morgunbladid was originally established in 1913, and is the oldest running newspaper in Iceland. It has traditionally supported the conservative Independence party. The current editor of Morgunbladid is David Oddsson, former Prime Minister of Iceland (from 1991- 2004). The paper is thought to have anti EU-stance.

4.2.2 Articles of choice and time period

180 articles were chosen in the sample from a three year period, 2008-2010. A database containing all newspaper articles from the Icelandic newspapers owned by a company called Creditinfo¹⁶ was used. Two keywords were used to find the population of EU related articles; ‘European Union’ (Evrópusambandið) and ‘EU’ (ESB). For practical reasons¹⁷ the sample size was not larger. Five articles from every month was randomly selected, 60 articles from each year. Articles from fixed dates were chosen; from the 1st, 10th, 15th, 20th and the 25th from every month. For the first month of the research period, articles from Frettabladid were chosen from the 1st, 15th, and 25th and from 10th and the 20th from Morgunbladid. The following month there would be three from Morgunbladid and two from Frettabladid. The process was repeated for the whole period. Only articles that were identified as ‘editorial’ or ‘submitted articles’ were included in the sample. Because of the reason that the fixed dates could fall on dates that these newspapers were not issued also because some of these dates did not include any submitted or editorial articles, made it difficult to match articles to all the fixed dates. The variation between the dates of the sample articles and the fixed dates vary considerable. The main emphasis was on that five articles from each month were chosen, and the total amount of articles per year was equally divided between the two papers.

¹⁵ Average reading from 12-80 years old. Measured from August-October 2010. Source Capacent 2010.

¹⁶ Creditinfo is a credit information and a media monitoring company.

¹⁷ Because of limited time it was not possible to have a sample larger than 180 articles.

4.3 Coding

4.3.1 Participants

The types of articles in the sample can be divided into two categories; editorial and submitted actors. The submitted articles were subdivided into categories based in the author's field of work or occupation (See appendix A for details on the type of actors). The types of actors that were considered most relevant got a special classification, while other types of actors were included in a category referred as 'others'. The category 'others' can include people that do not belong to any political parties, interest groups or NGOs, but also former politicians, students, teachers, etc. Also, individuals that did not identify themselves with any organization were included in the 'others' category.

4.3.2 Context

Four contexts for the EU debate were constructed. Not all articles that belong to the EU debate refer to attitudes regarding EU membership, so other contexts were included. According to Krippendorf (2000: 24), it is necessary for every content analysis to identify the context that the text is being examined within. These were the contexts:

- *Iceland and EU membership*: Attitudes given for (+1) or against (-1) EU membership or no attitude (0). No attitude means that the possibility of membership was mentioned, without giving either positive or negative attitude. Where this context was not present in an article, a missing value was given.
- *Iceland's accession process/application to the EU*: Attitude given to the accession process or the membership application. Attitudes being either negative (-1) or positive (+1) or no attitude given (0). No attitude means that the accession process or the application was mentioned, without giving either positive or negative attitude. Where this context was not present in an article, a missing value was given.
- *Attitude towards EU institutions*: Positive (+1), negative (-1) or no attitude (0) given towards Europe, EU institutions or individual member states. No attitude means that the EU institutions were mentioned without giving either positive or negative attitude. Where this context was not present in an article, a missing value was given.
- *Iceland-EU relations*: Positive (+1), negative (-1) or no attitude (0) given to past, present or future Iceland-EU relations. No attitude means that the Iceland – EU relations were mentioned, without giving either positive or negative attitude. Where this context was not present in an article, a missing value was given.

These contexts were intended to distinguish between articles that focus on EU membership and the accession process and on other aspect in the EU debate. It was thought necessary to distinguish between attitudes towards EU membership and attitude that refers to the accession process because individuals that do not necessarily support both EU membership and EU membership application. At least one context had to be identified in every article for it to be included in the sample. All four contexts could also be included in one article.

4.3.3 Themes

One of the aims of the thesis is to determine what the dominant theme in the Icelandic European debate is. From the literature and research on Icelandic attitudes towards the European integration, four different themes were constructed; *sectoral theme*, *national identity theme*, *economic theme* and *strategic theme*.

The *sectoral theme* is based on the leading sector theory of Ingebretsen (1998) and Thorhallsson's and Vignisson's (2004a) approach on the influence of the fishery sector. Despite the fact that most research focus on the attitude of the fishing industry as the leading sector in Iceland and how it has influenced the attitude of the Icelandic political elite, it was decided to keep the agriculture sector within the same sector-variable as the fishing industry. The sector-variable is subdivided between the fishery sector, agriculture sector and other sector¹⁸. The sector variable was coded as positive (+1) if EU membership was considered to have good effect on Icelandic sector, no attitude (0) if the issue was raised without making a stance and negative (-1) if it was thought that EU membership would have bad effect on the industry sector. If this theme was not identified in an article it was coded as a missing value.

The *national identity theme* is based on studies by Hálfdánarsson (2001, 2004) and Einarsson (2009) on how ideas about the Icelandic national identity, independence and sovereignty influence the attitude on the political elite towards the European integration. The national identity-variable is made out of three sub-variables; independence, sovereignty and other national identity¹⁹. The national identity variable was coded positive (+1) if EU membership was considered to have good influence on the Icelandic national identity, no attitude (0) if the issue was raised but no stance taken and negative (-1) if EU membership was considered to have bad influence on national identity. If this theme was not identified in an article it was coded as a missing value.

The *economic theme* is supposed to capture attitudes raised about if EU membership is thought to have economic benefits for Iceland or not. If EU membership was thought to mean more economic benefits for Iceland it was coded positive (+1), no attitude (0) meaning that no stance was taken and

¹⁸ ‘Other’ can refer to the Icelandic industry as a whole or certain industry trade.

¹⁹ ‘Other national identity’ can refer to Icelandic culture, the Icelandic nation or the Icelandic language.

economic loss for Iceland was coded as negative (-1). This variable was subdivided between attitudes about macroeconomic benefits or loss for Icelandic society because of EU membership and the debate about the currency situation²⁰. If this theme was not identified in an article it was coded as a missing value.

The *strategic theme* is partly based on the research conducted by Thorhallsson and Vignission (2004b) on the special relationship between Iceland and the US. The variable includes two sub-variables, whether Iceland should apply for EU membership because of security and defense issues (+1) or not (-1). The other sub-variable is whether Iceland should try to make its relation stronger with the EU (+1) or not (-1). When these issues were raised without giving any attitude, it was coded as no attitude (0). If this theme was not identified in an article it was coded as a missing value.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

4.4.1 Reliability

In content analysis literature, three types of reliability are identified: stability, reproducibility and accuracy. Reproducibility refers to when a content analysis is being conducted by more than one coder, and if the coding between them is consistent. Accuracy refers to when a classification of a text corresponds to some standard or norm in the context of what is being analyzed. The third type of reliability, stability, was applied in this study. It refers to when the same content is coded more than once by the same coder. If the coding is consistent between occasions when the same texts are coded, it is considered to have a high reliability (Webber 1990: 17).

In order to test the reliability stability of the content analysis, 20 articles from the sample were randomly selected one week after the original coding was done. These 20 articles were coded according to the coding book and the results were compared to the coding of the same articles. The results of the comparison were that the articles were consistent in 91.5 per cent of the times. Those results should give indications that the code book is relatively stable, clear and precise.

4.4.2 Validity

An important aspect of every social science research relates to the question of validity. Validity of a research involves to what extent the findings can be generalized to other cases. It depends what the purpose of the research is, whether

²⁰ The currency debate refers to attitude about whether Iceland should adopt the Euro, adopt the Euro without EU membership, adopt some other currency unilaterally or the benefits of the Icelandic krona.

the question of validity becomes a problem or not. In some cases, a research is not supposed to generalize about other cases, and then it is not a problem. One of the limitations of content analysis as a research method is that it is difficult to generalize the findings beyond the specific data, methods, or measurements of the particular study (Webber 1990: 18). One way of overcoming this limitation is to have some sort of construct validity. A measure has construct validity when it is correlated to some other measure of the same construct (Webber 1990: 19). In the conclusion chapter the question of the validity of this study will be addressed.

4.5 Limitations of the research design

The most obvious limitation of applying content analysis as a research method is that it is based on the interpretation of the coder on a text written by some other individual. The findings are always dependant on how the coder interprets the text. A written text can have several meanings and also some hidden features, which the coder can overlook. A text is usually written in reference to a specific time and place, which can influence how the text should be interpreted. A clear and detailed coding scheme is a way to overcome those limitations. A reliability test can help to ensure that the coding scheme does indeed measure what it is supposed to measure.

Other limitations to the content analysis as a research method relate to the type of data that is being worked with. Text is a qualitative form of data, and applying content analysis and categorizations to that data, transforms it into a quantitative type of data. In that process, some important attributes of the text can be lost. A statistical analysis on a large amount of text may be useful in many ways, but the content of the text can be lost. Therefore an important part of every research that applies content analysis is to evaluate the statistical findings in qualitative terms and place them in an appropriate context.

Sample bias can also be a problem in a content analysis as in other research methods. In this study, the selection of the articles was based on a specific dates, but it was in some cases difficult to find the articles that matched the sample criteria. No article that fulfilled the sample requirements was rejected, but a sample bias cannot be ruled out, as the sampling was not completely random.

4.6 Conclusion

For this thesis, content analysis was chosen as a research method. It is an appropriate research method when working with a large quantity of texts. The coding scheme has been constructed in the best manner possible as it may be used in a meaningful way and produces reliable and accurate findings. This research

design may have some possible limitations which could influence the outcome of the study and the validity of the research. Many arrangements have been applied to minimize these limitations. An important element for every research is to be aware of the possible limitations of the research design and acknowledge the possible impact, as that may help to overcome the limitations.

5 Findings

A total of 180 newspaper articles were coded in the content analysis. Of those articles, 55 were editorial articles and 125 were submitted articles. All these articles included at least one context regarding the European debate. In 156 articles the context of *EU membership* was present and in 58 articles the context of the *accession process*²¹ was present. In 79 articles was the *EU institutions* context present and in only 13 articles was the *Iceland – EU relation* context present.

Table 1. The contexts of the EU debate

Context	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Positive	No attitude	Negative
EU membership	156	-.15	.794	39	55	62
Accession	58	-.10	.810	16	20	22
EU institutions	79	-.30	.897	23	9	47
Ice-EU rel.	13	.15	.689	4	7	2

In table 1 it can be seen that the overall tone of the EU debate was rather negative. The mean value²² of attitude towards EU membership was -.15 while the attitude towards EU institutions was even more negative, -.30.

5.1 Themes

The themes that were identified in the content analysis were only aimed at the context of *EU membership* and the *accession process*. In those cases²³ where the only context present was *EU institutions* or/and *Iceland – EU relations*, no theme was identified. Also, even in articles where the context was *EU membership* or/and *accession process*, the themes were not always present. Of the 180 articles, the themes were not present in 62 of the cases. Of those cases, 33 articles referred only to *EU institutions* and/or *Iceland – EU relations*. In 29 articles, when the context was *EU membership* or/and the *accession process*, no theme was present. However, in 15 of those 29 articles, where none of the themes were present, the

²¹ From this point, all references to the accession process can also mean references to the EU membership application, without that being mentioned specifically.

²² The mean value is calculated as the sum of all values divided by the total number of cases.

²³ In the following chapter the terms ‘cases’ and ‘articles’ refers both to the same term; editorial and submitted articles. These terms are used interchangeably and should be considered to have the same meaning.

context of *EU institutions* was identified. In fact, the context of *EU institutions* was frequently used as an attitude for or against EU membership, something that not was anticipated when the research design was constructed.

Table 2. Frequency of the themes

Themes	N	Positive	No attitude	Negative	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sector theme	43	12	10	21	-.21	.861
National identity	44	11	11	22	-.25	.839
Economic	87	29	36	22	.08	.766
Strategic	17	4	5	8	-.24	.831

The economic theme was the most frequently referred theme identified in the study, being referred twice as much the sector theme or the national identity theme. The strategic theme was only referred to in 17 articles. Both sector and national identity theme have a negative tone when they are being referred to as an attitude towards EU membership, while the economic theme has a little more positive tone. The ‘no attitude’ attitude is more frequently present within the economy theme than in the other three.

5.1.1 Sectoral theme

Total of 43 attitudes were given to the EU membership context with references to the sectoral theme. The variable ‘sector theme’ was combined from three sub-variables; fishing industry, agriculture sector and other industries. When the sector theme is disaggregated, it shows that in 34 articles are references to the fishery industry and in 21 to the agriculture sector. In only three articles are made references to ‘other sectors’. In six articles is the sector the only theme which occurs. In only one case was the fishing sector the only theme to be mentioned.

Table 3. Sectoral Theme

Theme	N	Positive	No attitude	Negative	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sector theme*	43	12	10	21	-.21	.861
Agriculture	21	7	4	10	-.14	.910
Fishing	34	8	8	18	-.29	.836
Other sector	3	1	2	0	.33	.577

The overall tone of the sector theme regarding EU membership is negative, with a mean value of -.21. The tone of the fishery sector is even more negative if it is looked at separately, with a mean value of -.29. The agriculture is also negative with mean value of -.14. The ‘No’ side refer to the fishing sector twice as often as the ‘Yes’ side, but the difference between the sides regarding the agriculture is much smaller.

The largest group of participants that referred to the sector theme were MPs in 11 cases; 6 against membership and three supporting membership (see table in

appendix C). Other groups referred to the sector theme in fewer cases. Only one interest group referred to the sector theme, chairman of the Federation of Icelandic Industry. No article submitted by representatives from the Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners (LIU) or the Farmers Association (BI) were found in the sample.

5.1.2 National identity theme

The national identity theme occurred in 44 articles. Of those articles, 19 referred to the independence of Iceland and 28 to sovereignty. In eight articles were made references to ‘other national identity’. In four cases was the national identity the only theme to be mentioned.

Table 4. National identity theme

Theme	N	Positive	No attitude	Negative	Mean	Std. Deviation
National identity	44	11	11	22	-.25	.839
Independence	19	2	7	10	-.42	.692
Sovereignty	28	8	3	17	-.32	.906
Other national id.	8	3	4	1	.25	.707

The national identity theme got mean value of -.25 which is considerably negative. The attitudes referring to EU membership with independence or sovereignty were more negative than in the cases where the ‘other national identity’ was mentioned. The category containing ‘other national identities’, has only eight values, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions based on the findings.

The largest group of participants referring to national identity is the one labeled as ‘others’, in 15 articles and MPs refer to it in nine articles (see table in appendix C).

5.1.3 Economic theme

The most frequently referred theme in the study was the economic theme, identified in 87 cases. The overall mean value of the tone of the attitude was .08, slightly more positive than negative towards EU membership. It occurred as the only theme in an article in 32 cases.

Table 5. Economic theme

Theme	N	Positive	No attitude	Negative	Mean	Std. Deviation
Economic	87	29	36	22	.08	.766
Economic benefits/loss	68	28	18	22	-	-
Currency debate	19	1	18	0	-	-

The economic theme was divided into two variables; attitudes referring to economic benefits or loss of EU membership and attitudes regarding the currency issue. The sub-variable referring to economic benefits or loss occurred in 68 articles, where the currency debate occurred in 19 articles. All but one of those articles gave neither positive nor negative attitudes. Of all the articles referring to the economic theme, in 41 per cent of the articles, no attitude was given either for or against EU membership.

The largest group of participants that referred to economic attitudes was the ‘other group’, in 22 articles. The MPs referred to it in 13 cases as did the members of the academic society (see table in appendix C).

5.1.4 Strategic theme

The strategic theme was referred to in the lowest number of the articles, or in 17. The mean value was -.24, giving it a rather negative attitude towards EU membership. The strategic theme was in only one article the only theme present.

Table 6. Strategic theme

Theme	N	Positive	No attitude	Negative	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strategic	17	4	5	8	-.24	.831
EU membership and security/defense	5	1	3	1	-	-
Iceland form stronger relations with EU	12	3	2	7	-	-

In five cases were made references whether Iceland should apply for EU membership due to security and defense interests. In 12 cases were made arguments whether Iceland should form stronger relations with the EU or form stronger relations with other regions. No single group of participants referred to the strategic theme in more numbers than other participants (see appendix C).

5.1.5 Attitude towards EU institutions

In the original coding scheme for the content analysis, the variable ‘attitude towards EU institutions’, was used as a context in the European debate. The findings of the study reveal that the attitude given towards *EU institutions* was

used more frequently with the context of *EU membership* rather than applied on its own. The context *EU institutions* is documented in 79 cases, but in 63 articles it was used along with the context of *EU membership*. As such, the variable '*Attitude towards EU institutions*' should perhaps have been treated as a theme in the debate as well as context.

5.1.6 Influence of the economic crash and the Icesave-dispute

Apart from the contexts and the themes, two additional variables were included in the content analysis, as a sort of sub-variables. In an effort to study how frequently direct references were made to the economic crash and connect that to attitude towards EU membership, it was decided to include a variable that captured those attitudes. If EU membership was believed to help Iceland work its way from the effect of the crisis or that an EU membership would have prevented the crisis, then it would have been coded 'positive'. In those cases where it was believed that EU membership would not contribute to more economic recovery because of the economic crash, or where it was believed that a EU membership would not have prevent the crash, then it was coded 'negative'.

To capture the influence of the Icesave²⁴-dispute on the EU debate, all directly referred attitudes where the European Union was blamed for causing the Icesave-dispute or the EU was accused of taking the side of the British and Dutch authorities in the dispute, was coded negative.

Table 7. EU membership, Economic crash and Icesave.

Themes	N	Positive	No attitude	Negative
Economic crash	25	12	4	9
Icesave and EU	17	0	4	13

In 25 articles were made direct references to the effects of the economic crash and relating that to the attitude towards EU membership. Not much difference was made between the 'Yes' and 'No' sides in the references to the economic crash. In 13 of the 17 articles were the EU blamed for the Icesave-dispute or they accused of taking the side of the British and Dutch authorities.

²⁴ The Icesave-dispute is a dispute between the Icelandic government and the Dutch and British governments on the repayments from Icelandic authorities to the Dutch and British depositors and investors guarantee fund. With the economic crash, the Icelandic bank Landsbankinn went bankrupt which several thousand of deposits owners in Britain and the Netherlands lost their savings on the Icesave accounts. The Icesave-dispute is still unresolved.

5.2 Linking the themes together

It was more an exception than a rule, that a single theme was the only argument presented in an article. The themes occur with other themes, sometimes two together, sometimes more. The economic theme is the most frequently referred theme in the study. In table 7 it shows that the economic theme occurred more frequently together with both the sector (24) and the national identity (29) theme, than the sector and national identity theme together (21).

Table 8. Theme matrix

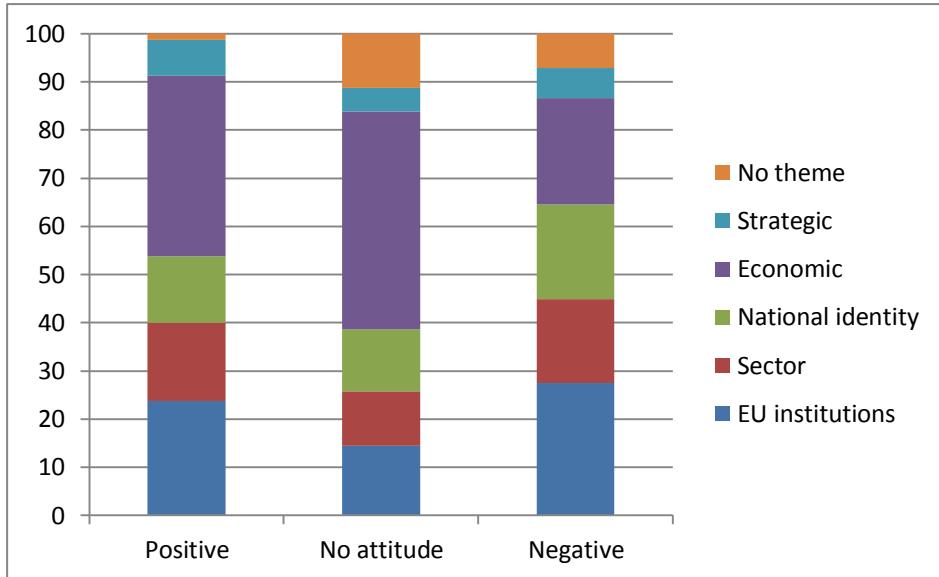
	EU membership	EU institutions	Sector	National id.	Economic	Strategic
EU membership	-	63	44*	44	86*	17
EU institutions	63	-	23	26	35	11
Sector	42*	23	-	21	24	6
National id.	44	26	21	-	29	8
Economic	86*	35	24	29	-	6
Strategic	17	11	6	8	6	-

*One counts less than in table 2 because there it included both attitudes to the accession process and EU membership. In this table are only themes included that give attitude to EU membership.

The 125 submitted articles were written by various types of participants. Each category of participants therefore includes few articles. It was thought to be meaningless to outline in this section how the themes were divided between participants. In appendix C is a table of the participants and how they referred to the themes. It is however interesting to note that only 14 of the 125 submitted articles were written by females.

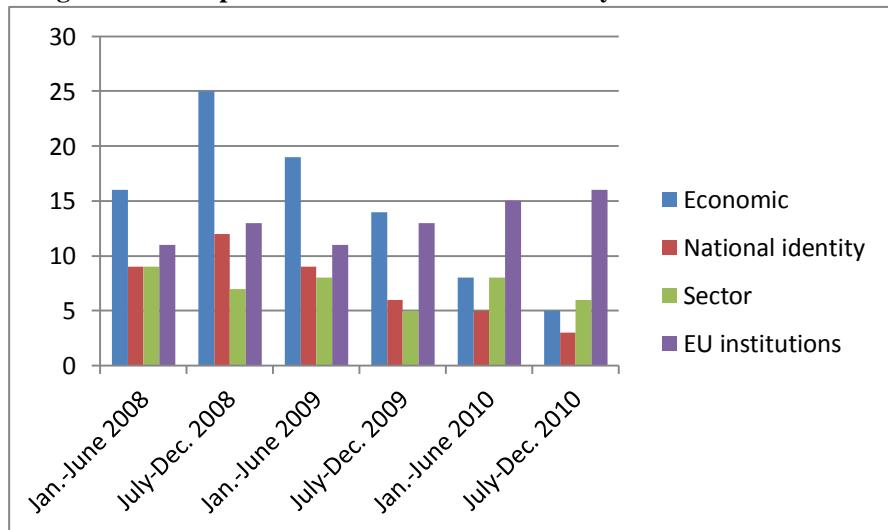
If we look at how differently the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ side refer to different themes, we see that the ‘Yes’ side refers proportionately most frequently to the economic theme, or in 38 per cent of the cases, while it is referred in 22 per cent of the cases for the ‘No’ side (see Figure 1). The proportionately most frequently referred arguments for the ‘No’ side is the EU institutions, or in 28 per cent of the cases. In 37 per cent of the cases the ‘No’ side referred to national identity and sector, but the ‘Yes’ side referred to those themes in 30 per cent of the cases. In those articles where no attitude was given for EU membership, 45 per cent of the articles made reference to the economic theme.

Figure 1. The composition of attitude towards EU membership



The occurrence of the themes has changed over the course of the three year period. In figure 2²⁵, these three years are divided into six, six-month periods. The frequency for the economic theme drops dramatically from the first three periods compared to the later three periods. Reference to the EU institutions does increase a bit but the national identity and sector themes fluctuate between the periods, but remain relatively stable.

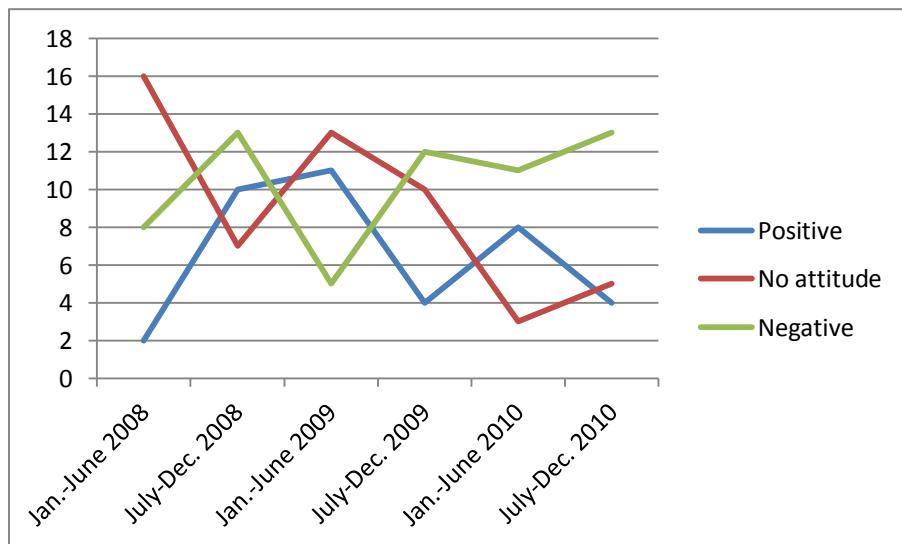
Figure 2. Development of the themes from January 2008 to December 2010



On the whole, the attitude towards the EU membership was negative, but in the period July to December 2008, more positive attitudes than negative were documented.

²⁵ The strategic theme was excluded from this figure as it had only on average 2.8 articles per period.

Figure 3. Development of attitude towards EU membership from January 2008 – December 2010



5.3 Conclusion

The findings of the contents analysis reveal that the most frequently referred theme regarding the attitude towards Iceland's membership to the EU, is the economic theme. The economic theme occurs twice as often compared to both the sector and the national identity theme. The strategic theme did not appear frequently in the study. The attitude towards EU institutions, originally intended as a context for the research, appeared more frequently when given with the EU membership context than independently.

The overall tone of the European debate was negative. The mean value of attitude towards EU membership was -.15 and the attitude towards EU institutions was even more negative, with a mean value of -.30.

The development of the debate has changed over the course of the three years that the study focuses on, where the prominence of the economic theme dropped considerably. Other themes have remained relatively stable. In one period, the latter half of the 2008, the overall tone of the debate was positive towards EU membership.

6 Discussion

6.1 The economic dimension of the debate

The main findings of the study reveal that the dominant theme of the European debate is the economic theme, where attitude towards EU membership (or accession process) are based on the ground of whether membership would mean more or less economic benefits for Iceland. Also, the economic dimension evolved around attitudes related to the currency issue. That debate is characterized by the arguments that Iceland cannot wait for EU membership to solve its currency problems, and needs other solutions. The financial crash in October 2008 revealed the vulnerability of the open economic system in Iceland. The study reveals that prior to the crash the economic theme was also the most frequently referred theme in the debate. The Icelandic economy had been showing some sign of weaknesses from 2007 until the financial crash hit the economy, which may have been reflected in European debate during that time. Both Bjarnason (2010) and Einarsson (2009) refer to the economic nature of the European debate prior to the crash. The prominence of the economic theme can also indicate how attitudes in Iceland towards the European Union are originated. Kristinsson and Thorhallsson (2004: 152) argue that the political elite have approached the EU from an economical and a legal perspective, but not from a political point of view. It could be that the EU is being presented more as an economic project, above everything else. Therefore it is approached as first and foremost as an economic cooperation between European states, as was one of the original purpose of the European cooperation, but other elements of the European Union are not in focus. Therefore it could be that people more or less evaluate the prospects of EU membership from an economic point of view, without considering much other aspects of what EU membership would entitle.

6.2 The sectoral and national identity dimension

The other main findings of the study demonstrate how the sectoral theme and the national identity theme are not very prominent in the European debate. If we look at the literature about the attitude in Iceland towards the European integration and how it emphasizes, especially the influence of the national identity, then the findings come as a surprise. Further, if the fishing industry is separated from the rest of the sector theme, it reveals that the prominence of that sector is rather low, compared to other themes.

The financial crash is a fundamental event in influencing the sequence of events that led to the EU membership application. Some have compared the financial crash to a natural disaster, caused by human beings. As such, it is possible that it may have influenced how people prioritized their values and which made people to be more willing to consider EU membership as an option, which some had not been willing to do prior to the financial crash.

It can be said that the different sides, the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ sides, are different in the way they refer to the themes. As was expected, the economic theme is the most frequently referred theme for the ‘Yes’ side, but the ‘No’ side has a more balanced composition of the themes. But it is interesting that the ‘No’ side refers more often to both EU institutions and the economic theme, than it does refer to the sectoral interest or national identity.

The findings of the research indicates that both the sectoral theme as well as the national identity theme remained rather stable both in the pre- and post-financial crash period as well as the period before and after the parliament accepted to apply for EU membership. This indicates that the prominence of the sectoral and national identity attitudes is considerably lower than the economic attitudes in the European debate, as these events did influence how people referred to those arguments. However, as is demonstrated by Thorhallsson and Rehban (2011), the decision to apply for EU membership was not made on the premise that the major political parties had changed their policy towards EU membership following the financial crisis or that the government was unified in its EU position. Instead, the SDA used the results of the elections as a ‘window of opportunity’ (Avery et al. 2011) to push EU membership application to the top of the political agenda, and the LGP agreed to those terms. Even though the sectoral and the national identity themes do not seem to be as salient as the economic themes in the European debate, that might change considerably if and when a accession agreement will be finalized and put for a national referendum.

6.3 Attitudes towards the European Union

The context of *EU institutions* was frequently referred to when attitudes were given towards EU membership. It was for an example considerable more prominent ‘theme’ than the sectoral or the national identity theme. It clearly demonstrates that the European debate in Iceland is not solely focusing on how EU membership affects the economy of Iceland, independence, the fishing industry, or the sovereignty. Attitudes and feelings about how the European Union is perceived to operate as an institution or a political organization were frequently made. Those attitudes were based on how individuals did see Iceland fit into the EU system, if they perceive it to be an institutional framework characterized by a democratic deficit or where the larger member states bully the smaller ones. Also, the EU was perceived to be an organization which was seen desirable for Iceland to be a part of, which promoted peace and prosperity around the European

continent and around the world. But the Euro-crisis was also present in the attitudes given to the EU institutions, prominently for those opposing EU membership. Attitudes towards the EU institutions were also based on how it was perceived to be either responsible in relation to the Icesave-dispute or that the EU was supporting the British and Dutch authorities in the dispute. This shows that many people link these issues together, where some of those who deeply opposed the Icesave agreement, also oppose EU membership.

6.4 The question of security and defense

The strategic theme was not prominent in the findings of the study, as was perhaps to be expected. Foreign policy matters have traditionally been a focus of heavy public debate. Apart from the debate about Iceland's relations to the European integration; NATO membership, the US defense agreement and the participation in the coalition of the willing in 2003²⁶ have been controversial decisions. Following the decision of the US government that it would end its military activity in 2006, raised concerns in Iceland about security and defense matters of the country. Despite this decision on the behalf of the US government, the defense agreement from 1951 is still in force, but its meaning has changed dramatically. Many called for the need for Iceland to evaluate its position and consider EU membership and participation in the CFSP, rather than continuing the relations to the US. In relation to the strategic theme, the question of the security and defense are not only being raised. The question is also asked whether Iceland should form closer relations to Europe, in terms of security and defense, economy, and culture. In many cases, it was argued that it was not desirable to form stronger relations to the EU, and that Iceland should instead focus on other regions, most notably the other Nordic countries and the US. But the issue is far from being at the top of the agenda in the European debate.

The relationship Iceland has formed with the US for the last sixty years, especially during the Cold War era, has influenced attitudes of the politicians and the public, when it comes to how Iceland should relate to the outside world and how it should relate to the EU. During the Cold War, Iceland enjoyed a preferential position with the Washington power because of the strategic importance of the country. It enjoyed benefits and access to Washington that many bigger countries did not enjoy. This relationship was bilateral, with two equal partners. As such, this kind of relation between countries conflict with the idea of the European cooperation of supranational power of EU institutions and 'pooling of resources'. It might be that this 'new kind' of international relation are seen with suspicion.

²⁶ The government of Iceland supported US military action against Iraq in 2003 and formed the 'coalition of the willing'.

6.5 Economic crash and EU membership application

Over the course of the three years that the study focused on, dramatic events took place. One aspect of the study was aimed to see if these events, the financial crash in October 2008 and the 2009 decision to apply for EU membership had changed how the themes were referred to. Apart from the economic theme, they remained relatively stable. The frequency of the economic theme dropped dramatically from the second period in 2008 and to the last period of 2010. It was not only that the economic theme did drop, but none of the other themes increased to balance the drop. Even though that the findings demonstrate that the economic theme was the most dominant one over the course of the three years, the findings may have exaggerated how the EU debate developed in the year 2010²⁷.

As public opinion polls have demonstrated, the only period where the number of people that has supported membership was larger compared to those who opposed membership, was in 2008, when 43 per cent favored membership but 35 per cent opposed it. The finding of this research indicates that the attitudes of those being favorable for EU membership are on the rise in 2008, and in the first part in 2009, the positive attitudes are more than the negative attitudes. But on the latter half in 2009 and in 2010 the negative attitudes are much more prominent in the debate. The public opinion polls have showed the same trend, the number of negative attitudes has risen and number of positive attitudes has decreased dramatically. In 2010, only 25 per cent of the voters did support EU membership (Capacent 2010). It can be argued that the findings of this study show the similar trends as the public opinion polls. It seems that in the aftermath of the financial crash, more people were open to the possibilities of EU membership than before. But since then, the support has declined and opposition to membership has risen. Thorhallsson and Rehban (2011: 58), state that in 2009 and onwards, that the question of EU membership was soon sidelined by the Icesave-dispute. In the findings of the study, it shows that some references were made to the Icesave-dispute where negative attitude towards EU membership were present. Some have argued that the negative attitude towards EU membership can be blamed on the Icesave-dispute. It is clear the Icesave-dispute has influenced the EU debate, and probably left it sidelined. But whether the dispute is the main explanation of the negative attitude towards EU membership is not easy to answer.

²⁷ In the sample, five articles were chosen per month, so each period had 30 articles. The sample from the two periods in 2010, reveal that the economic theme decreases rapidly and the attitude towards EU institutions increases. The editorial articles from Morgunbladid from 2010 focus more on the EU institutions than in other periods. In all of those articles, negative attitudes are given as well as negative attitude towards EU membership or/and the accession process. While most articles that are included in the sample, include more than one type of themes, these 11 editorial articles from 2010 focus mainly on this one topic, with few exceptions. If other submitted articles would have been included in the sample instead of these editorials, the dramatic decline of attitudes would perhaps not have occurred.

7 Conclusions

The European debate in the Icelandic print media has been the focus of this thesis. The question of how Iceland should relate to the European integration has always been a prominent issue in the Icelandic political debate. Until the 1990s, Icelandic politicians and officials did approach this question with a level of caution. In the 1990s, when the other Nordic countries were deciding whether they should join the EU or not, Iceland chose to relate to Europe through the EEA agreement; the idea of full membership never coming on the agenda. Iceland was by then the only Nordic country never to have addressed the question of full membership. The two main explanations of the reason why Iceland has not wanted to join the EU before the 2009 decision, has been the position of the fishing sector and how ideas about the Icelandic national identity has influenced the negative attitude. In the introduction chapter the following research questions were raised:

- *What is the dominant theme of the Icelandic European debate?*
- *Is the debate characterized with reference to sectoral interest, national identity or economic arguments?*
- *Has the debate fundamentally changed after the financial crash hit Iceland and after the decision to apply for EU membership was taken?*
- *Is the question of EU membership being debated in the same way in all communicative networks?*

The findings of the study indicate that the prominent theme of the Icelandic European debate is the economic theme. It was expected that the economic theme would be a salient theme in the debate, but it seems to overshadow quite the sectoral and national identity themes. It might be explained by the nature of the financial crash, which had profound effect on the Icelandic economy and the economy of the regular families in Iceland. It could be that people were more willing to consider an EU membership following the crash, than it had been prior to the crash. This brings us to the question of how the EU is perceived in Iceland, and it is not unlikely that the public, as the political elite, experience it first and foremost as an economic cooperation, rather than a political system. As such, the economic nature of the EU is more in the debate, than other aspects of it. The ‘Yes’ side refer to it more frequently than any other theme, but it comes as a surprise that the ‘No’ side refers to the economy theme almost as often as it refers to the national identity and sectoral theme.

The third part of the research question asks the question whether the debate has changed after the financial crisis and after a decision was made to join the EU. As has been demonstrated how the policy preferences of the political parties

remained relatively unchanged after the financial crisis, the themes also remained relatively stable, apart from the economic theme, which might be explained partly by how the research design was constructed. It is interesting to see that these dramatic events seem not to have led to any dramatic changes on the debate. Both prior to the crash and after it, the debate was characterized by the economic theme. The sectoral theme and the national identity theme seem not to be affected by these events. As the findings indicate, attitudes towards EU institutions do affect attitudes towards EU membership. Those who believe that the EU is an undemocratic bureaucracy, where interests of small states are not taken into considerations, do not wish Iceland to be part of such an organization. Others that believe that the EU is a different kind of a organizations, as a normative power, contributing democracy and economic development, may want Iceland to join the EU just for those reasons. The concept ‘national identity’ is a vague concept and does not only refer to ‘exclusive’ interpretation of it; meaning that national identity does not only prevent EU support, it can also be used as a way to encourage EU membership as the findings of the content analysis demonstrates.

It might be necessary to go further back in time to determine whether the debate has always been characterized by emphasis on economic attitudes or whether the economic problems that started in 2007 turned on those aspects of the debate.

7.1 Generalizing the findings

What do these findings mean? Can they be generalized to the whole EU debate in Iceland? This question relates to the fourth research question; *how the findings of this study compares to other communicative networks?* The question also relates to the question of external validity, which is an important element in many research. Some studies are very case specific and not intended to draw general conclusions to other cases. In other studies the aim is to draw general conclusion based on the findings of a research. The aim of this research has been to identify what are the dominant themes in the EU debate and how the development has been. Frettabladid and Morgunbladid, the two most leading newspapers in Iceland, were chosen as the communicative network of the debate. It must be kept in mind that any conclusions and generalizations drawn from any research must keep itself within the appropriate context to be able to draw the right conclusions.

The findings of this research are obviously quite different from findings of the existing literature on the attitude of the Icelandic political elite towards EU membership. The literature emphasizes the relations between the composition of the elite, its relations to sectoral interest and ideas about the Icelandic national identity. I believe that despite the difference of these findings, they both offer an important explanatory value. The difference between them can be explained by the fact that these different studies focus on different communicative networks.

The study of Einarsson (2009) focused on the European debate which took place within the Icelandic parliament. The parliament can be seen as a different communicative space than the newspapers or other types of communicative spaces. The difference between the parliament and the newspapers is that the parliament is an exclusive network, where only members of parliament can participate, but the newspapers can be seen as an open network. The overall tone of the attitude towards EU membership from the research does reflect to a certain extent the attitudes measured by the public opinion polls. The public in Iceland has been said to be more pro-European than the politicians, which indicated that these groups belong to a different communicative space.

The findings also indicate that in the general EU debate, outside the parliament, that the emphasis on the importance on the national identity and the fishing industry are perhaps over exaggerated. It could be that it is more ‘appropriate’ and more likely that reference made to the Icelandic sovereignty and independence of the nation are made within the parliament rather outside in the general European debate.

7.2 Limitations

In this study, an effort was made to capture the attitudes from newspaper articles and categorize them and quantify. It could be that this kind of research design does not manage to capture all the attitudes that are actually present in every article. There could be an underlying message that the coding scheme cannot capture. The author of the article and the interpretations of the coder can be different and therefore be misinterpreted.

The sample size and the sample method could create some limitations for the research design. A sample bias is always a threat to every study that involves some kind of sampling.

A large proportion of the cases were from editorial articles. It might have given different results to have excluded those articles and focus exclusively on the submitted articles. But it was thought that the editorial was a valuable and important input in the debate. As it was attempted to have as much random sample selection on the articles, apart from the guiding fixed dates, it was thought that it was necessary to include all the articles, so no effort was made to ‘control’ the sample.

The question of what kind of people participates in the debate through submitting articles to newspapers is important. The participants of the debate, who submit their articles, might have a certain motives or hidden agendas that make them not to be the ‘typical’ members of the public. As such, it might not be possible to compare the findings of a content analysis to results of a public opinion poll, as a sample which represents the population much better.

7.3 Future studies

A content analysis of this type offers an opportunity for future research on the attitude towards EU membership in Iceland. Future studies could focus on a wider time period; go further back in time to capture the attitudes that were presented in the media during the economic boom. Such research could include more variety of articles in the sample, that regular ‘news articles’ could offer valuable information about the tone and background of the debate.

A content analysis can focus on how the media frames the European debate, and how the European Union and EU membership is being presented. It could study whether the EU is being framed as an opportunity or a risk for Icelandic interests. Frame studies have valuable contributions as they study how the media operates as the media is a very important source of platform for the public.

A further study could apply a multi method approach. A content analysis could be supplemented with a survey. This kind of research would have the possibilities of researching the attitude of individuals and the reasons why they have these attitudes. The public opinion that is being presented every now and then, does not say much about the reasons behind the attitudes. These finding could be compared to the findings of a content analysis to see how well (or poorly) the actual attitudes and the arguments of individuals compare to the debate in the media. Such a study would give a good indication how the attitudes of the public relating EU membership compares to the attitudes of the political elite.

8 Executive Summary

On the 16th of July 2009, the Icelandic parliament agreed to apply for a European Union membership. This was a historical policy change for the Icelandic government, since EU membership had never before been addressed in Icelandic politics. The financial crash in October 2008 triggered events that would bring EU membership application to reality.

Following the March 2009 parliamentary election, the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA) and the Left-Green Party (LGP) formed a coalition government. The SDA is the only pro-EU party while the LGP is a strong opponent of EU membership; but still membership application was accepted by the parliament. Furthermore, public opinion polls have also demonstrated that only around 25 per cent of the population supports EU membership, but the majority is still in favor of that the accession process will be finished bringing a concluded agreement for national referendum.

The decision to apply for EU membership in 2009 came 15 years after the other Nordic countries addressed the question. It has been argued that Icelandic politicians are more Euro-skeptical than their counterparts in the other Nordic countries. Also, the Icelandic people are also thought to be more pro-Euro than the political elite.

The aim of this thesis is to study the European debate as it is being presented in the media. The aim is to study whether a dominant theme of the debate can be identified and whether the debate is characterized by references to *sectoral interest, ideas about national identity or economic attitudes*. Further, the study will focus on if and how the European debate changed following the financial crash of 2008 and after the parliament agreed to apply for EU membership in 2009. The newspapers that were selected for the study are treated as public spheres or communicative networks.

The following research questions were formulated for the thesis:

- *What is the dominant theme of the Icelandic European debate?*
- *Is the debate characterized with reference to sectoral interest, national identity or economic arguments?*
- *Has the debate changed fundamentally after the financial crash hit Iceland and after the decision to apply for EU membership was made?*
- *How do attitudes towards EU membership differ between different communicative networks?*

From the 1950s, Iceland's relations to the European integration were characterized by cautious and incremental steps. In the 1970, Iceland became a member of EFTA and in 1994 it became part of the European Economic Area

(EEA). The EEA agreement has had a profound impact on Icelandic society and moved Iceland closer to the European cooperation. In the current European debate, it is questioned whether the EEA agreement does limit Iceland's sovereignty or not. Supporters of EU membership argue that the current agreement means that Iceland has less opportunity to influence the regulations and directives that Iceland has to adopt through the EEA agreement, while EU membership would mean that Iceland would be in a better position to influence the EU legislation. Opponents of EU membership however point out that the current EEA agreement does better reconcile with the Icelandic sovereignty.

Four different approaches that try to explain the negative attitude of the political elite are presented in the thesis. The 'default' explanation for the negative attitude of the Icelandic political elite and the reason why Iceland has not been willing to become a member of the European Union has been the influence of the fishing industry. The argument is that as long as the EU has its own Common Fishery Policy, membership for Iceland is impossible because it would mean delegating control over Icelandic fishing rights to Brussels. It has been studied whether the attitude of the Icelandic political elite can be explained with the priorities given to fishing interests and the fishing sector and how that has influenced the European policy of the government. It is argued that the Icelandic fishing industry has enjoyed considerable preferential position to influence the European policy of the government; but that it has not had more opportunities than other sectors. It is therefore claimed that the fishing sector is not the dominant factor in explaining the negative attitude towards EU membership.

The second approach looks into how ideas about the Icelandic national identity; ideas about independence and sovereignty, have influenced the attitude of the Icelandic political elite towards the European integration. It is argued that the current political discourse, which has strong relations to the political discourse of the 18th and 19th century, has influenced the attitude of Icelandic politicians. When Icelanders started to struggle for independence in the 19th century, it was argued that an independent Iceland was a restoration of the old Commonwealth and was therefore an Icelandic invention, rather than Iceland being influenced by events that were taking place in Europe around that time. The independence struggle was compared to long a journey, where the Icelandic people were as last 'home' when independence was declared in June 1944. Despite the fact that the independence and sovereignty has played a significant part in Icelandic politics, it has not prevented the politicians of delegating part of the sovereignty held by the Icelandic parliament through international agreements. The reason for this might explain why Icelandic politicians choose to relate Iceland to Europe through the EEA agreement, which was not formally viewed as delegating part of sovereignty, instead of seeking full EU membership. The idea of the EEA agreement therefore harmonized better with the ideas of the political elite about independence and sovereignty of the Icelandic nation

The third explanation is the special relationship Iceland has with the United States. After the Second World War, Iceland became a member of NATO in 1949 and as the Cold War escalated, the country signed a defense agreement with the US which enabled the US to open a military airbase in Iceland. The relationship

that was formed was on economic, military and cultural terms. The economic relationship was not strong enough to influence the negative attitude of the political elite towards EU membership, but the security and defense relationship was. Because of the US defense agreement and its NATO membership, the Icelandic political elite did not have to consider EU membership for security and defense reasons.

The fourth explanation focuses on the composition of the political elite and how it has influenced the negative attitude towards the European integration. The political elite was considered to have a realistic conception of how to conduct foreign policy business, and it was influenced by the periphery location of the country and its rural powerbase. All these factors have contributed to the composition of the political elite and therefore contributed to the negative attitude towards European integration.

But still the question remains; why did Iceland apply for EU membership in July 2009? The liberal intergovernmentalism would approach this question from the preferences of the political parties. It would argue that the economic crash forced the leading political parties to adapt new policies regarding EU membership. But the preferences of the political parties remained in most aspects stable after the economic crash; it did not result in any change of policy for the political parties. The decision to apply for EU membership was therefore not made because the leading political parties had changed their European policies. Rather, that the Social Democratic Alliance used a ‘window of opportunity’ to pressure the Left-Green party to form a coalition government which would have EU membership application on its agenda. The LGP, despite its anti-EU stance, agreed to these terms.

The aim of the thesis was to study the themes of the EU debate as it is presented in the news media. In an effort to measure the themes, a content analysis was chosen as a method and a research framework was constructed. The study aimed at identifying the themes and the contexts in which they were referred to; attitudes *towards EU membership*, *attitude towards EU accession process/membership application*, *attitude towards EU institutions* and *attitudes towards Iceland-EU relations*. 180 newspaper (editorial and submitted) articles were analyzed.

The study reveals that the most prominent theme in the Icelandic EU debate is the economic theme, occurring almost twice as often as both the national identity theme or the sectoral theme. The strategic theme only occurred rarely. The findings of the study show that the different sides, the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ sides, refer to the themes in different ways. The economic theme is the most frequently referred by the ‘Yes’ side; occurs in almost 40 percent of the articles. The most frequently referenced theme for the ‘No’ side are attitudes referring to EU institutions, or in almost 30 per cent of the articles. The second most frequently referred theme for the ‘No’ side was the economic theme, with a few more per cents than the sectoral and national identity theme.

The strong presence of the economic theme can partly be explained by how the idea of the European Union is being perceived in Iceland; as an economic project, not as a political organization. It is possible that many parties focus

primarily on the economic side of the European debate, because the EU is thought to be an economic organization, above everything else. As such, other elements of the EU are not as much in the spotlight.

The sectoral theme and the national identity theme have a surprisingly low presence, compared to the other themes. The financial crash, that created the situation where EU membership application came on the political agenda, may have influenced how people prioritized their values and attitudes towards EU membership. As the economies of many families were affected, many could have changed their priority, leaving the interest of the fishing sector and ideas about the independence and sovereignty of the country to the sides.

The economic theme was the most dominant theme prior to the economic crash in October 2008 and that was still the case in 2009, in 2010 the prominence of the economic theme decreased. References to the themes were on the whole more or less stable, in the pre and post economic crash period, and after the decision to apply for EU membership were made.

The issue of security and defense did not have much presence in the findings but the Iceland-US relationship could have had a strong influence on attitudes towards EU membership. Iceland's relations to the US have been conducted on both bilateral and equal base. The idea of the European Union, where member states delegate part of their sovereignty to supranational institutions and where they 'pool their resources' together, may be an unfamiliar and even a strange idea to Icelanders.

The findings indicate much difference between the European debates as it is identified in the content analysis on the one hand and the literature on the attitude of the political elite on the other hand. The communicative network that was chosen for this study differs considerably from the communicative network that existing studies focus on, namely the Icelandic parliament. It is possible that the national identity theme is for a large part present in the debate of the MPs as the parliament may be more suitable place for that kind of attitudes. Also, the importance of the national identity within the European debate might also be overestimated.

9 References

- Avery, Graham, et al. 2011. "Iceland's application for European Union Membership". *Studion Diplomatica LXIV – 1.* 93-119.
- Bjarnason, Magnus. 2010. *The Political Economy of Joining the European Union: Iceland's Position at the Beginning of the 21st Century.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Boomgaarden, Hajo G. and de Vreese, Claes H. 2006. "Media Effects on Public Opinion about the Enlargement of the European Union". *Journal of Common Market Studies.* Vol. 44, No. 2, p. 419-36.
- Easton, Martha. 2009. . "Emotion, rationality, and the European union: a case study of the discursive framework of the 1994 Norwegian referendum on EU membership". *International Social Science Review.* Spring-Summer, p. 44-63.
- Einarsson, Eiríkur Bergmann. 2003. *Evrópusamruninn og Ísland.* Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Einarsson, Eiríkur Bergmann. 2009. *Hið huglæga sjálfstæði þjóðarinnar.* Reykjavík: Háskóli Íslands.
- Eriksen, Erik Oddvar. "An emerging European Sphere". *European Journal of Social Theory.* Vol. 8, issue 3. P. 341-363.
- Gstöhl, Sieglinde. 2002. *Reluctant Europeans: Norway, Sweden and Switzerland in the process of integration.* Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Hauksson, Úlfar. 2002. *Gert út frá Brussel?* Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Hix, Simon. 2005. *The Political System of the European Union.* New York: Palgrave.
- Hálfðánarson, Guðmundur, 2001. *Íslenska þjóðríkið: uppruni og endamörk.* Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag.
- Hálfðánarson, Guðmundur. 2004. "Icelandic nationalism and European integration" in Thorhallsson (ed.) *Iceland and European Integration: On the edge.* New York: Routledge.
- Hansen, Lene. 2002. "Introduction" in Hansen and Wæver (ed.), *European integration and national identity.* London: Routledge. 2002.
- Hermannsson, Birgir, 2005. *Understanding Nationalism: Studies in Icelandic Nationalism 1800-2000.* Stockholm: Stockholm University.
- Ingebritsen, Christine. 1998. *The Nordic States and European Unity.* Itacha: Cornell University Press.
- Ingimundarson, Valur. 2008. "Öryggissamfélag" Íslands og Bandaríkjanna, 1991-2006" in Ingimundarson (ed.) *Uppbrot hugmyndakerfis: Endurmótun íslenskrar utanríkisstefnu 1991-2007.* Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag.
- Katzeinstein, Peter J. 1985. *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe.* Itacha: Cornell University Press.

- Kristinsson, Gunnar Helgi. 1996. "Iceland and the European Union: Non-decision on membership" in Miles (ed.) *The European Union and the Nordic Countries*. London: Routledge.
- Kristinsson, Gunnar Helgi and Thorhallsson, Baldur. 2004. "The Euro-sceptical political elite" in Thorhallsson (ed.) *Iceland and European Integration: On the edge*. New York: Routledge.
- Krippendorf, Klaus. 2004. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. London: Sage.
- Maier, Jürgein and Rittberger, Berthold. 2008. "Shifting Europe's Boundaries: Mass Media, Public Opinion and the Enlargement of the EU". *European Union Politics*. Vol. 9, No. 2, p.243-267.
- McLaren, Lauren M. 2002. "Public Support for the European Union: Cost/Benefit Analysis or Perceived Cultural Threat?". *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 64, No. 2, p. 551-566.
- McLaren, Lauren M. 2004. "Opposition to European Integration and fear and loss of national identity: Debunking a basic assumption regarding hostility to the integration project". *European Journal of Political Research*. Vol 43, p. 895-911.
- Neumann, Iver. This little piggy stayed at home: why Norway is not a member of the EU, in Hansen and Wæver (ed.), *European integration and national identity*. London: Routledge. 2002.
- Rebhan, Christian and Thorhallsson, Baldur. 2011. "Iceland's Economic Crash and Integration Takeoff: An end to European Union Scepticism?". *Scandinavian Political Studies*. Vol. 34. No.1. 53-72.
- Spano, Robert R. 2007. "Hugleiðingar um umfang lagabreytinga í tilefni af skuldbindingum Íslands samkvæmt EES-samningum" in Omarsdottir (ed.) *Ný staða Íslands í utanríkismálum: Tengsl við önnur Evrópulönd*. Reykavik: Haskolautgafan.
- Stephensen, Ólafur P. 1996. Áfangi í Evrópuför: Evrópskt efnahagssvæði og íslensk stjórnsmál. Reykjavík. Alþjóðamálastofnun Háskóla Íslands.
- Thorhallsson, Baldur, 2000. *The role of Small States in the European Union*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Thorhallsson, Baldur. 2004a. *Iceland and European Integration: On the edge*. New York: Routledge.
- Thorhallsson, Baldur, 2004b."Approaching the question; Domestic background and conceptual framework" in Thorhallsson (ed.) *Iceland and European Integration: On the edge*. New York: Routledge.
- Thorhallsson, Baldur, 2004c."Shackled by smallness: a weak administration as a determinant of policy choice" in Thorhallsson (ed.) *Iceland and European Integration: On the edge*. New York: Routledge.
- Thorhallsson, Baldur, 2004d."Towards a new theoretical approach" in Thorhallsson (ed.) *Iceland and European Integration: On the edge*. New York: Routledge.
- Thorhallsson, Baldur and Vignission, Hjalti Thor. 2004a. "Life is first and foremost saltfish" in Thorhallsson (ed.) *Iceland and European Integration: On the edge*. New York: Routledge.

- Thorhallsson, Baldur and Vignission, Hjalti Thor. 2004b. "The special relationship between Iceland and the United States of America" in Thorhallsson (ed.) Iceland and European Integration: On the edge. New York: Routledge.
- Thorhallsson, Baldur and Vignisson, Hjalti Thor. 2004c. "The first steps: 1944-72" in Thorhallsson (ed.) Iceland and European Integration: On the edge. New York: Routledge.
- Thorhallsson, Baldur and Vignission, Hjalti Thor. 2004d. "Membership of the EEA" in Thorhallsson (ed.) Iceland and European Integration: On the edge. New York: Routledge.
- Webber, Robert Philip. 1990. Basic Content Analysis. London: Sage Publications.

Internet references

- Capacent 2010. "Avarage reading of the Icelandic newspapers 2010." Assessed 20.03.2011
<http://www2.capacent.is/?PageID=67&templateid=50>
- Commission 2010. Commission Opinion on Iceland's application form membership of the European Union. Assessed 10. Mai 2011.
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/is_opinion_en.pdf
- Committee of Europe 2007. Report of the Committee on Europe on Icelandic relations with the European Union. Assessed 11. Mai. 2011.
<http://www.forsaetisraduneyti.is/media/frettir/SkýrslaEvropunefndar-.pdf>
- Foreign Ministry 2010. Report from the Foreign Minister, Össur Skarphéðinsson, on foreign and international affairs. (Skýrsla utanríkisráðherra Össurar Skarphéðinssonar um utanríkis- og öryggismál). Assessed April 21, 2011.
<http://www.althingi.is/altext/138/s/pdf/1070.pdf>
- LIU 2011a. "Proportion of fishing products in export of goods, export of goods and service and in proportion of GDP and contribution of fishing to GDP from 1994 to 2009 (Hlutfall útflutnings sjávarafurða af vöruútflutningi, útflutningi vöru og þjónustu og í hlutfalli af vergri landframleiðslu og framlag sjávarútvegs til VLF 1994-2009).
http://www.liu.is/files/Hlutfall%20%C3%BAtflutnings%20sj%C3%A1varafur%C3%A9%C3%B0a%20af%20v%C3%B3ru%C3%BAtflutningi%201994-2009_1677023206.pdf
Accessed 4. April 2011.
- Visir.is 2011. Public opinion poll from Frettabladid from 24. January 2011. Assessed 22. April 2011.
<http://www.visir.is/um-thridjungur-vill-draga-umsokn-ad-esb-til-baka/article/2011780279656>

10 Appendix A: The Code Book

1. Article's information

Article ID	All articles were identified with an ID number.
	Full list of articles is in Appendix B

Date	Dates were divided into six periods:
-------------	--------------------------------------

	Period
1	January-June 2008
2	July-December 2008
3	January-June 2009
4	July-December 2009
5	January-June 2010
6	July-December 2010

Nr.	Type of article
1	Submitted article
2	Editorial
3	Column
4	Signed guest column
5	Interview

	Articles were re-coded into two categories:
1	Submitted article:
	Submitted article
	Signed guest column
	Interview

2	Editorial article:
	Editorial
	Column (Written by a journalist)

2. Participants

	Participants of debate
1	MP
2	Minister
3	Interest group representative
4	NGO member (the 'Yes' and 'No' movements)
5	Public official
6	Member of political organization
7	Municipal representative
8	Academic society
9	Foreign official/politician
10	EU official
11	Other
12	Public
13	Business community
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then editorial article.

	Political party
1	IP
2	SDA
3	LGP
4	SDA
5	TM
6	LP
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then editorial article.

	Gender
1	Male
2	Female
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then editorial article.

3. Contexts

	Attitude towards EU membership
-1	Negative
0	No attitude
1	Positive
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then context not included in article.

	Attitude towards EU accession process/application
-1	Negative
0	No attitude
1	Positive
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then context not included in article.

	Attitude towards the EU or EU MS
-1	Negative
0	No attitude
1	Positive
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then context not included in article.

	Attitude towards Iceland - EU relations
-1	Negative
0	No attitude
1	Positive
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then context not included in article.

4. Themes

	Sector theme
-1	EU membership bad for sector
0	No attitude
1	EU membership good for sector
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then no theme was present in article.

	Sector theme type
1	Fishery industry
2	Agriculture
3	Fishery and agriculture
4	Other industry
99	Missing value*

**If missing value then no theme was present in article.

	National identity theme
-1	EU membership bad for national identity
0	No attitude
1	EU membership good for national identity
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then no theme was present in article.

	National identity type
1	Independence
2	Sovereignty
3	Independence and Sovereignty
4	Other national identity
99	Missing value*

**If missing value then no theme was present in article.

	Economic theme
-1	EU membership bad for economy
0	No attitude
1	EU membership good for economy
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then no theme was present in article.

	Economic type
1	Economic benefits/loss
2	Currency debate
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then no theme was present in article.

	Strategic theme
-1	EU membership bad for strategic interest
0	No attitude
1	EU membership good for strategic interest
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then no theme was present in article.

	Strategic type
1	EU membership and security and defence issues
2	Closer relations to EU or other regions
99	Missing value*

*If missing value then no theme was present in article.

11 Appendix B: List of articles

2008

Id.	Date	Article name	Newspaper	Article type
1	3.1.2008	Dvínandi afli í Evrópu	Frettabladid	Submitted article
2	5.1.2008	Springur í Kosovo?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
3	10.1.2008	Dvínandi afli: Taka tvö	Frettabladid	Submitted article
4	28.1.2008	Ísland og umheimurinn	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
5	30.1.2008	Halda þarf öllum valkostum opnum	Frettabladid	Editorial
6	5.2.2008	HVAR ERU HUGMYNDIRNAR?	Morgunbladid	Editorial
7	13.feb	Er krónan byrði eða blóraböggull?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
8	17.2.2008	Að þora í krónu- og evruumræðu	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
9	19.2.2008	Nýr tímaás	Frettabladid	Editorial
10	28.2.2008	MÁLIÐ AFGREITT	Morgunbladid	Editorial
11	5.3.2008	Mótum eigin framtíð	Frettabladid	Submitted article
12	11.3.2008	Sendibréf til sjálfstæðismanna	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
13	17.3.2008	Mótum eigin framtíð	Frettabladid	Submitted article
14	20.3.2008	Aðild að ESB kemur ekki til greina	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
15	30.3.2008	Evrópuumræðan	Frettabladid	Submitted article
16	5.4.2008	Ervuvæðing: Málið afgreitt?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
17	11.4.2008	Pjóðin hafi síðasta orðið	Frettabladid	Submitted article
18	20.4.2008	Reykjavíkur	Morgunbladid	Editorial
20	25.4.2008	STAKSTEINAR	Morgunbladid	Editorial
19	25.4.2008	Nóg af svo góðu	Frettabladid	Submitted article
21	5.5.2008	Evrópuglufa Guðna!	Frettabladid	Submitted article
22	10.5.2008	KRÓNAN OG ESB	Morgunbladid	Editorial
24	25.5.2008	Reykjavíkurbréf	Morgunbladid	Editorial
25	28.5.2008	Á móti internetinu?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
26	6.6.2008	Hvað vakir fyrir Jóni?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
27	13.jún	Sabína-rökvillan	Frettabladid	Submitted article
28	21.6.2008	Lýðræðisást ESB-sinna	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
29	22.6.2008	Grunnfær áróður	Frettabladid	Submitted article
30	27.jún	Evrópusambandsaðild?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
31	2.7.2008	EES til óþurftar	Frettabladid	Submitted article
32	7.7.2008	Sér Geir Evrópuljósíð?	morgunbladid	Column
33	10.7.2008	Að vera tekinn alvarlega	Frettabladid	Submitted article
34	14.7.2008	Hverju skal fórnæð fyrir aðild að Evrópusambandinu?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
35	31.7.2008	Um hvað?	Frettabladid	Editorial
36	7.8.2008	Orðræða um orðræðu	Morgunbladid	Submitted article

37	9.8.2008	Evrópa í sögulegu samhengi	Morgunbladid	submitted article
38	17.8.2008	Óðurinn til gleðinnar	Frettabladid	Submitted article
39	22.8.2008	Hvaða nauður?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
40	23.8.2008	Ísland fyrr og nú: Saga og samhengi	Morgunbladid	submitted article
41	6.8.2008	STAKSTEINAR	Morgunbladid	Editorial
42	12.9.2008	Nei	Frettabladid	Editorial
43	19.9.2008	Af lýðskrumi	Frettabladid	Editorial
44	24.9.2008	Evran og matseðill Evrópusambandsins	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
45	29.9.2008	Hvað lærði Árni í Brussel?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
46	2.10.2008	Vaknið?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
47	5.10.2008	Ávísun á skerskerðingu fullveldis	Frettabladid	Submitted article
48	12.10.2008	Sitt er hvað evra og ESB	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
49	22.10.2008	Skýrir kostir	Frettabladid	Editorial
50	27.10.2008	Aðild að Evrópusambandinu	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
51	1.11.2008	Evróputrúboðið	Frettabladid	Submitted article
52	5.11.2008	Að benda bara á eitthvað annað	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
53	12.11.2008	Af hverju einhliða upptaka evru er ekki góður kostur	Frettabladid	Submitted article
54	15.11.2008	ESB-umræða frá öllum hliðum	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
55	24.11.2008	Endurreisnin	Frettabladid	Editorial
56	1.12.2008	Fullveldi í 90 ár	Morgunbladid	Editorial
57	6.des	Ingibjörg Sólrun og Þorgerður Katrín - sýnið nú kjarkinn	Frettabladid	Submitted article
58	9.12.2008	Almannahagsmunir hljóta að ráða ferðinni	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
59	11.12.2008	Djúpt mat á ESB	Frettabladid	Submitted article
60	18.12.2008	Auðlindir, fullveldi og ESB	Morgunbladid	Submitted article

2009

61	4.1.2009	Samstaða um Evrópu	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
62	9.jan	Spilling í Brussel	Frettabladid	Submitted article
63	10.1.2009	Örlög Íslands öruggust í höndum Íslendinga	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
64	20.1.2009	Krónan, evran og kostir Íslands	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
65	26.1.2009	Lýðskrumshætta	Frettabladid	Submitted article
66	5.2.2009	Framtíðarsýn?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
67	11.2.2009	Sleggjudómar eða rökstudd álit	Frettabladid	Editorial
68	15.2.2009	Lýðræðishallinn í EES	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
69	18.2.2009	Hvað ætla Vinstri græn að gera?	Frettabladid	Editorial
70	25.2.2009	ESB sem aflvél byggðanna	Frettabladid	Submitted article
71	5.3.2009	Í átt að Evrópustefnu	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
72	10.3.2009	Má fara aðra leið?	Frettabladid	Editorial
73	15.3.2009	Fjölbættir öryggishagsmunir Íslands	Morgunbladid	Editorial
74	25.3.2009	Endurreisn sjálfstæðismanna á misskilningi byggð?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
75	25.3.2009	Taka þarf á því sem máli skiptir	Frettabladid	Editorial

76	4.4.2009	Stefna eða stefnuleysi	Frettabladid	Editorial
77	14.4.2009	Eitt í dag og annað á morgun	Frettabladid	Submitted article
78	20.4.2009	Heimskreppan, ESB og krónan	Morgunbladid	Signed column
79	25.4.2009	Tækifæri Íslands innan Evrópu	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
80	27.4.2009	Um þetta var kosið	Frettabladid	Signed guest column
81	10.5.2009	Rökþrota hópur gegn ESB	Morgunbladid	Signed column
82	18.5.2009	Ólíku saman að jafna	Frettabladid	Editorial
83	21.5.2009	Íslenskur landbúnaður og ESB	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
84	25.5.2009	Hvað er Evrópusambandið?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
85	26.5.2009	Hlutur Alþingis	Frettabladid	Editorial
86	6.6.2009	Vinstri græn og tímamótin í ESB-umræðunni	Frettabladid	Submitted article
87	11.6.2009	Fiskveiðar, Ísland og ESB	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
88	13.6.2009	Djúp börf fyrir kaflaskil	Frettabladid	Editorial
89	17.6.2009	Samvinna eða skoðanakúgun?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
90	20.6.2009	Ísland og umheimurinn - Land, þjóð og tunga	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
91	3.7.2009	Icesave = ESB	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
92	7.7.2009	ESB eykur efnahagslegt öryggi	Frettabladid	Submitted article
93	14.7.2009	Vöknum, Íslendingar	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
94	15.7.2009	Hver vill hvað í Evrópumálum?	Frettabladid	Editorial
95	25.7.2009	AF KÖGUNARHÓLI ÞORSTEINS PÁLSSONAR	Frettabladid	Signed guest column
96	9.8.2009	"Tak þennan kaleik frá oss"	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
97	10.8.2009	Stundum erfið	Frettabladid	Submitted article
98	16.8.2009	Kaus ekki um að ganga í Bandaríki Evrópu	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
99	21.8.2009	Evrópa beitir okkur ofbeldi	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
100	24.8.2009	Frá kögunarholí dagsins til framtíðar	Frettabladid	Submitted article
101	6.9.2009	1262 + 750 = 28?! Stjórnarskráin, Evrópusambandið og skóli sögunnar	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
102	15.9.2009	Með opnum huga	Frettabladid	Signed guest column
103	16.9.2009	Af samræðupólitífk	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
104	19.9.2009	Vísbending um einangrunarhyggju	Frettabladid	Signed guest column
105	25.sep	Hafta-aðallinn	Frettabladid	Submitted article
106	2.10.2009	Látið ekki kúga ykkur meir en orðið er	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
107	10.10.2009	AF KÖGUNARHÓLI ÞORSTEINS PÁLSSONAR	Frettabladid	Signed guest column
108	14.10.2009	Stærsta framlagið til mannréttinda og lýðræðis í Evrópu	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
109	23.10.2009	Ætlið þið að eyðileggja Ísland?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
110	24.10.2009	Er stjórnin sek um landráð?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
111	7.11.2009	Búum að góðri reynslu	Frettabladid	Interview

112	11.11.2009	Hvaða styrkir eru betta, Össur?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
113	19.11.2009	ESB-umsókn arfavitlaus þegar þörf er á samstöðu	Frettabladid	Interview
114	21.11.2009	Evrópusambandslyðraði	Morgunbladid	Editorial
115	27.nóv	Gatið hægra megin	Frettabladid	Editorial
116	5.12.2009	Íslenska krónan – bjargvættur eða blórabögull?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
118	17.12.2009	Valdhafarnir og ESB	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
117	17.12.2009	Er krónan vandamál?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
119	28.12.2009	Pingmenn taki höndum saman	Frettabladid	Submitted article
120	31.12.2009	Pjóðin sýnir styrk sinn	Morgunbladid	Submitted article

2010

121	7.1.2010	Upplýst þjóð segir nei við ESB	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
122	16.1.2010	Pólítískir leikir í ESB-umræðu	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
123	22.1.2010	"Hjálp vor kemur nú að utan"	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
124	23.1.2010	Traust bakland um völdin	Frettabladid	Submitted article
125	28.1.2010	Innstæðulausar ályktanir	Frettabladid	Submitted article
126	2.2.2010	Fórum að tala saman	Frettabladid	Signed guest column
127	5.2.2010	Ekki þetta sem við þurftum helst	Morgunbladid	Editorial
128	11.2.2010	Tólf rök með Evrópusambandsaðild Íslands	Frettabladid	Submitted article
129	19.2.2010	Pjóðin á móti Evrópusambandinu – Umsókn í boði VG	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
130	24.2.2010	Sterkara Ísland innan ESB	Frettabladid	Submitted article
131	1.3.2010	Að missa spón úr aski sínum	Frettabladid	Submitted article
132	10.3.2010	Sýnum ESB meiri kurteisi	Morgunbladid	Editorial
133	18.3.2010	Evran engin skyndilausn	Morgunbladid	submitted article
134	18.3.2010	Skjögrandi á háum hælum	Frettabladid	Signed guest column
135	20.3.2010	Evrópukrísa ritstjórans	Frettabladid	Submitted article
136	6.4.2010	Stóra ESB- blekkingin	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
137	10.4.2010	Fiskveiðistefna Íslands og ESB	Frettabladid	Submitted article
138	17.apr	Hættuleg óvissuferð	Morgunbladid	Editorial
139	24.4.2010	Ekki stórasta landið	Frettabladid	Submitted article
140	26.4.2010	Ekki er staðan beysin	Morgunbladid	Editorial
141	7.5.2010	Er evrunni viðbjargandi?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
142	7.5.2010	Hvers vegna Evrópa þarfnað þín nú	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
143	15.5.2010	Opin og upplýst umræða	Frettabladid	Editorial
144	20.5.2010	Evran við öndunarvélina	Morgunbladid	Editorial
145	28.5.2010	Órar um Evrópu og evru	Frettabladid	Submitted article
146	3.6.2010	Fjárlagabandalagið ESB	Morgunbladid	Editorial
147	13.6.2010	Bændur beittir kúgunum	Morgunbladid	Editorial
148	15.6.2010	Aðildarumsókn er tímabær	Frettabladid	Submitted article
149	21.6.2010	Íslenski stillinn	Frettabladid	Submitted article
150	26.6.2010	Evran í ógöngum	Morgunbladid	Editorial

151	3.7.2010	Mistök að draga umsókn til baka	Frettabladid	Submitted article
152	12.7.2010	Gegn umsókn eða aðild?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
153	29.7.2010	ESB eflir íslenska menningu	Frettabladid	Submitted article
154	6.7.2010	Ósáttir inn í evruna	Morgunbladid	Editorial
155	17.7.2010	Sannleikur ungra baðna og Evróputrúboðsins um hermál	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
156	3.8.2010	Engar undanþágur eða sérlausnir í boði	Morgunbladid	Editorial
157	5.8.2010	Er ESB skrifræðisbákn?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
158	11.8.2010	Engar líkur á að Norðmenn gangi í ESB	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
159	18.8.2010	Landnám ESB?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
160	26.8.2010	Leyniáætlun Evrópusinna	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
161	2.9.2010	Pjóðin ræður	Frettabladid	Submitted article
162	7.9.2010	Illbærilegar upplýsingar	Morgunbladid	Editorial
163	16.9.2010	Færeyjar, Ísland og evran	Frettabladid	Signed guest column
164	25.9.2010	Pjóðarvilji og Evrópusambandið	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
165	29.9.2010	Til hvers að sækja um aðild að ESB?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
166	1.10.2010	Kommissarinn koðnaði	Morgunbladid	Editorial
167	6.10.2010	Hvað er að óttast?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
168	11.10.2010	Andvökufölví Evrópumanna	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
169	21.10.2010	Er skrýtið að traustið sé lítið?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
170	28.10.2010	Hvert stefnir Evrópusambandið í utanríkismálum?	Morgunbladid	Submitted article
171	2.11.2010	Svik við málstaðinn?	Frettabladid	Signed guest column
172	9.11.2010	Umræðan þar og hér	Morgunbladid	Editorial
173	10.11.2010	ESB stuðlar að friði	Frettabladid	Submitted article
174	15.11.2010	Sjávarútvegur Skota og ESB	Morgunbladid	Editorial
175	20.11.2010	Sósíalistar og utanríkisstefnan	Frettabladid	Submitted article
176	4.12.2010	Einstefna Evrópu sambandsins	Morgunbladid	Editorial
177	8.12.2010	Icesave-spuninn um ESB	Morgunbladid	Editorial
178	9.12.2010	Bændaforusta og samninganefnd	Frettabladid	Submitted article
179	20.12.2010	Vinna fjöldiðlar gegn landbúnaði?	Frettabladid	Submitted article
180	21.12.2010	Ólyðræðið í Evrópusambandinu	Morgunbladid	Editorial

12 Appendix C: Table of participants

Actors	EU membership	EU membership (+1)	EU membership (-1)	Accession process	EU institutions	Sector	National id.	Economic	Strategic
Fbl. Editorial	21	6	0	8	0	1	1	14	1
Mbl. Editorial	20	1	9	11	14	5	4	11	3
MPs/Ministers	24	5	16	12	12	11	9	11	1
Interest groups	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0
NGOs	9	5	4	2	9	3	4	4	2
Public official	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Member of pol. Org.	3	1	2	2	0	1	2	2	0
Academic society	22	8	5	5	17	6	5	13	1
EU Official	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Business Community	7	1	2	2	0	2	3	4	1
Others	43	9	22	13	24	11	15	22	7