

# Coalitions in Action

A Study on Intra-Coalition Cooperation in the Council of Ministers

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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to increase the scholarly understanding of coalitions in working-groups in the Council of Ministers. In contrast to most of the literature on coalitions in the Council, this thesis is not concerned with which coalitions that will be formed. Instead, the focus is on intra-coalition cooperation, a topic that remains largely unexplored. More specifically, this thesis begins by investigating which factors that drives cooperation. This is investigated through a quantitative design with data collected through a survey that was sent to the Danish and Swedish Permanent Representations. Through a rational choice perspective and bivariate regressions, it is concluded that intra-coalition cooperation is driven by the coalition's degree of interest-homogeneity and the strength of potential counter-coalitions. Surprisingly the negotiation-mode in a working-group has no effect on intra-coalition cooperation.

The thesis then goes on to explore how coalitions cooperate internally and which benefits they reap from this cooperation. This is investigated through interviews with Danish counsellors and attachés. The thesis identifies four distinct ways coalitions may cooperate, which all provide substantial advantages; 1) Strategizing and Coordination, 2) Information Sharing, 3) Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capabilities and 4) Mutual Support. Through a case-by-case analysis followed by a cross-case comparison, it is argued that the costs of engaging in these kinds of cooperation varies significantly, and that only coalitions with a high degree of interest homogeneity who face strong opposition in their working group will have the incentives to pay the costs and engage in all four kinds of cooperation.

*Key words:* cooperation, coalition, Council of Ministers, EU, rational choice, negotiations

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# 1 Introduction

Consider two working-groups in the Council of the Ministers (the Council). In each working-group, a group of countries form a coalition to promote their interests and increase their influence. However, in the first coalition, the counsellors<sup>1</sup> meet a day before meetings and spend a lot of time coordinating their positions and making a strategy. In the second coalition, the counsellors only meet briefly before the meeting begins to ensure that they do not contradict each other directly.

Given that the counsellors in each working-group are equally professional and dedicated to securing their countries interest, it is puzzling that we would see this variation!

This scenario is not made up. In the autumn 2016, I assisted the Danish Budget Counsellor and Financial Counsellor, and I was surprised to see how different the coalitions worked. In the coalition in the Budget Committee, there was a deep comprehensive cooperation with a very high degree of coordination, whereas it was significantly lower among the Financial Counsellors. Asking the coalition members about the reasons for this variation did not help much – they did not know that the way they cooperated differed from other coalitions. Turning to the literature on political coalitions did not yield answers either! What I found was an immature literature that had mainly focused on coalition building, that is “which coalitions emerge and why?”, and seldom bothered to dig deeper than that! Instead of looking at coalitions as binary phenomena, where the principal question is whether they are present or not, I will in this thesis focus on the cases where coalitions are present, and study how coalitions in the Council cooperate internally. More specifically, I will begin by investigating which factors that drive intra-coalition cooperation. Then, I will proceed by developing a framework for *how* coalitions cooperate internally and which benefits they reap from cooperating. This thesis thus takes one step further than previous studies, and instead of looking at why coalitions are formed, it investigates how and why coalitions act as they do. This is an important step. If political scientists, and coalition-theorists in particular, are to be relevant to practitioners in the real world, we should be able to answer whether and why some coalitions in the Council perform better than other, and we should be able to advise them on how to improve the performance of their coalitions. But before we are able to do that we need to know whether there are systematic differences among coalitions and we need to know more about how coalitions work.

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<sup>1</sup>In an EU context, counsellors and attachés are diplomats who are placed between the technical level, and the political level in the Council.

## 1.1 Research Question

- (1) Which factors influence the degree of cooperation in coalitions in Council working-groups and*
- (2) how do these coalitions cooperate internally?*

## 1.2 Outline of the thesis

The thesis will be structured in the following way: I will begin by accounting for previous research on coalitions in general and for fundamental traits of negotiations in the Council. Then, I will account for the literature on coalitions in the Council and briefly discuss how we can turn a weak literature into a strong one. I will then proceed by presenting and motivating my hypotheses for what drives intra-coalition cooperation, and why I believe that a rational choice framework is appropriate when studying coalitions. Then, I will present my research design, which is split up in a quantitative part which will be used to investigate the first part of my research question, and a qualitative part, which will be used to create the framework for how coalitions cooperate. Following the logic of the research design, the analysis is also split in a quantitative and a qualitative part. The results will be discussed during the analysis. The analysis will be followed by a section that outlines which questions that need to be answered and what scholars should focus on, when studying coalitions in the future. Then I will continue to the conclusion where I summarise the findings of the thesis.

## 2 From Old Theories to New Hypotheses

### 2.1 Classic Ideas on Coalitions and Cooperation

The study of political coalitions in political science was kick started by William H. Riker in his seminal book “The theory of political coalitions” from 1962. In this book Riker’s primary argument was, that “in n-person, zero-sum games, where side-payments are permitted, where players are rational, and where they have perfect information, only minimum winning coalitions will occur” (Riker 1962:32). This meant that coalitions would only be as big, as it was required in order to enforce its will. The rationale behind this result was, that because all the actors were interested in maximising their gains, they would want to share them with as few as possible and thus only include the number of participants that would turn the coalition into a winning coalition (ibid.). In parliamentary-politics, this would mean, that if two possible winning coalitions could be formed, one with 2 parties and one with 3 parties, then the coalition consisting of only 2 parties would always be chosen. A natural consequence of minimum winning coalitions is that negotiations between coalitions become redundant, as the minimum winning coalition can force its policy through.

Robert Axelrod is another founding father of modern coalition-theory. In his classical book from 1970 “Conflict of Interest”, he argued that because actors had different and sometimes incompatible goals, the winning coalition most likely to occur was not the smallest one, but the one with the smallest internal conflict of interest (Axelrod 1970: 167). It was only when faced with two potential winning coalitions who had the same degree of conflict of interest, that the minimum winning coalition would be chosen (Ibid. 171).

In another of his classic works, “The Evolution of Cooperation”, Axelrod showed through repeated games of “Prisoners’ Dilemma”, that even under conditions of anarchy in a world full of egoists, cooperation will develop. The reason for this is, that when two actors face each other an indefinite number of times, and never know whether an encounter will be the last one, the choice of today will affect the choices of tomorrow. Because both actors are capable of learning from experience, *the future casts a shadow* on their relationship that urge them to cooperate and make them both better off (Axelrod 1984: 21).

In his seminal book, “The Logic of Collective Action” from 1965, Mancur Olson was very pessimistic on the prospects of cooperation among larger groups. He argued that groups that are formed by individuals to pursue their common interests would suffer largely from free rider problems, because

no individual had incentives to pay for what would essentially be a public good, and it would thus benefit all who shared the group's interests and not just those who paid for the good. This would essentially mean, that even if all potential beneficiaries agreed that forming the group would be a good idea, no one would have incentives to pay the costs, and the group would not be formed. Olsson did however acknowledge that an exception to this situation is when groups are so small that social pressure can be used to force free riders back in the organisation (Olsson 1965: 61-62)

In international relations theory, realist scholars have also theorised about coalition-building. Coming from the assumption that securing survival and independence state is the primary function of the state, they argue that countries have an obligation to secure a *balance of power* to avoid a hegemon imposing its will on other. Therefore, when a hegemon emerges, realist predict that countries will form a coalition to balance against the hegemon (Jackson & Sørensen 2013 :88).

## 2.2 Fundamental Features of Council Negotiations

In order to understand the context that coalitions act in, I will here account for some fundamental traits of negotiations in the Council:

In contrast to both Riker's and Axelrod's theories on minimum winning coalitions, decision-making in the Council are almost always characterised by consensus (Hayes-Renshaw et al. 2005; Naurin 2011; Naurin 2013), or as a minimum by oversized majorities (Warntjen 2010: 674).

In addition, we know from Elgström and Jönsson (2000) and Sannerstedt (2005) that negotiations in general are characterised by a spirit of expertise, that the level of trust and mutual understanding between member states is very high, and that even though member states try to promote their own interests, they will almost always genuinely try to find compromises that everyone can accept. These traits support the impression of a strong culture of consensus and deliberation. In a similar vein, Naurin (2011: 50) shows that arguing and reasoning is an important part of negotiations in the Council. More specifically, he shows that when counsellors state their member state's position, they almost always try to legitimate this position and back it up with substantive reasons. Most often, they do this because they expect, that good reasoning will affect other member states' future positions and thus facilitate compromise (Ibid.).

Because these findings seem at odds with both Riker's and Axelrod's models as well as other rational choice models that would predict, that each member state would do whatever they could to maximise their gains, scholars have tried to explain it in different ways. Some argue that Axelrod's "shadow of



the future” is the cause of the high level of cooperation and unanimity; because European negotiations are ever ongoing the member states realise that they will do much better on the long term if they cooperate, than if they try to maximise their gains on the short term (Elgström & Jönsson 2000: 687; Naurin 2013: 13). An extension of this argument is, that because member states know, that they will keep meeting each other in an unforeseeable future, “diffuse reciprocity” will develop, which means that member states will be willing to give concessions today with the expectation that they will be rewarded at an unspecified time in the future (Warntjen 2010: 669). Put differently, member states have an interest in nurturing a consensus norm, because that reduce the risk of being outvoted on important areas (Naurin 2013: 13), and because it makes little sense for member states to outvote a minority this week, when they might find themselves in a minority next week (Warntjen 2010: 674). Novak (2013) criticise the fact, that the “consensus norm”-explanation only explains approximately 80% of all Council decision under qualified majority voting and thus fails to account for 20 %. Instead, she argues that we should think of the lack of explicit voting as *unanimity* rather an expression of a consensus culture. She further argues that this is the case because ministers fear that being on the losing side will make them look weak in their home countries. Therefore, it makes better sense to either be silent, abstain from voting, or to seek compensations for accepting the proposal. The only time it will make sense for a member state to loudly go against the rest of the Council and call for a vote is when an issue is so salient on the domestic level, that the gains back home is higher than the immediate costs in the Council.

### 2.3 Previous Research on Coalitions in the Council

In 2001, Ole Elgström et al. complained, that the literature on coalitions in the Council of Ministers was “surprisingly meagre” (2001: 117). At that point, little effort had been put into investigating coalitions in the Council, and it was generally assumed, that there were no fixed coalition-patterns as the problem-solving nature of the Council-negotiations made coalitions shift from issue to issue (Naurin and Wallace 2008: 5). This was challenged by inter alia Elgström et al. who showed that two rather fixed coalitions were present – a north-western and a southern. The best explanations for the formation of these two coalitions were based on common interests and cultural affinity, while ideological- and power-based explanations were rejected. They further argued, that coalitions in the Council would become increasingly important after the enlargement and as the use of qualified majority voting (QMV) proliferated (Elgström et al 2001: 111). They therefore began investigating which coalition-patterns that existed in the Council, and what caused these patterns.

16 years later, not much has changed, and the literature is still *surprisingly meagre*! Scholars in this field (e.g. Thomson et al. 2004; Kaeding & Selck; Naurin 2008; Thomson 2009; Naurin and Lindahl 2009) have all asked the same questions as Elgström et al. and have, with better data and increasingly sophisticated techniques, broadly reached the same conclusions: coalitions are rather fixed and comprise of a north-south cleavage – the main reasons for this cleavage are common interests and cultural affinity within each coalition. One of the biggest discoveries is made by Naurin (2008) who discovers the emergence of a Baltic coalition and a Visegrad coalition after the 2004 enlargement. He also argued, in line with Elgström et al. that the proliferation of QMV and eastern enlargement had increased functional need for stable coalitions, and the idea of fluid coalitions was thus denied. The novelties do however end here, and the field has been rather silent since this publication.

## 2.4 Maturing Coalition Theory

To me, it seems curious, that while a lot of effort has been put into mapping out coalition-patterns and predicting which ones that would occur, little has been done to understand coalitions and how they work. If we as political scientists wish to explain negotiation- and policy-processes, it is simply not enough to map out which coalitions that are present. We need systematic knowledge of all the aspects of political coalitions. To encourage a systematic analysis and make it easier to identify the blank spaces on the map, I argue that the study of coalitions can be divided into at least three distinct blocks (Figure 1):

The first block, *Coalition Formation*, is concerned with which coalitions that will be formed and why. As we should know by now, this block has received almost all of the attention from scholars since the 60's and was championed by game-theorists such as Riker and Axelrod. The above-mentioned scholars who studied coalition-patterns in the Council can also be placed in this block.

The second block, *Coalitions in Action*, is concerned with how coalitions behave, interact and which strategies they choose. A good (and lonely) example of a study in this area is Elgström's 2016 article "Norm advocacy networks: Nordic and Like-Minded Countries in EU gender and development policy". This thesis will mainly be placed in the second block.

The third block, *The Effects of Coalitions*, is concerned with the consequences of coalition's actions, e.g. do coalitions with deep and comprehensive cooperation perform better than coalitions with a shallow degree of cooperation and how does the presence of coalitions affect the culture in an organisation? Even though it is not the main focus of their article, an example of this could be, Arregui

and Thomson (2009) who find a modest statistical significant relationship between member states' level of network capital, i.e. how many other member states a member states have informal contacts to, and their bargaining-success.

The last two blocks have, to be best knowledge, not received the focus they deserve from coalition-scholars, and many questions beg to be asked.

**Figure 1: The Building-Blocks of Coalition-Studies**



## 2.5 Conceptualising Coalitions.

As with many other social science concepts, the concept of a coalition has been given different definitions by scholars in the field. Other scholars have used entirely different concepts than “coalition” to capture the phenomena. In their 2001 article Elgström et al defined a coalition as “A set of actors that coordinate their behaviour to reach goals they have agreed upon” (2001: 113). This definition pictures coalitions as rather formalised with a high degree of cooperation<sup>2</sup>. Nedergaard (2008: 652) disagrees with this definition and argue that a better definition would be “a group of actors subscribing to the same position or perceived to share the same position by other actors”. In my opinion, the fact that Nedergaard removes the cooperation component and focus only on policy-positions make his definition way too loose and borderline conceptual-stretching. The phenomenon he studies might thus seem closer to what Thomson et al. (2004) and Thomson (2009) call “actor alignment”. In their articles, they focus on the initial policy-preferences of member states and search for different groupings, but do not investigate whether member states cooperate or not.

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<sup>2</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary (2017) defines cooperation as “The action of co-operating, *i.e.* of working together towards the same end, purpose, or effect.”

In a recent article, Elgström (2016) investigates the strategies of Nordic “norm advocacy networks”. These networks are characterised as open, informal and comprised of a relatively stable set of individual or organisational actors (2016: 3).

If we exclude the feature of networks, that they can include members from other organisations or institutions, the two definitions provided by Elgström et al (2001) and Elgström (2016) can be perceived to be two extremes of the forms a coalition in the Council can take, and not two distinct phenomena. In the one extreme it may take form of a loose informal network and in the other extreme, the coalition is formalised and well-coordinated.

I believe that the important attributes of a coalition are 1) a group of actors from the same organisation 2) who perceive each other to be a part of the same group and 3) who cooperate to promote their interests and values. Several other attributes could be added (see e.g. Stevenson et al 1985) but these three attributes serve to capture both extreme forms of coalitions, but it also makes it possible to distinguish a coalition from individual actors who work towards the same goals, but without any kind of coordination.

It should be noted, that it is not within the scope of this thesis to categorise and create a typology of different kinds of “coalitions”. But the insight, that the nature of coalitions vary is useful to keep in mind.

## 2.6 Extending the Theory of Political Coalitions

Because this field is largely under investigated there is not much theory that can guide me on the way. While I will try to draw on the parts of the coalition tradition that is relevant, this also means that I will have to theorise a lot myself, but also that I won't be able to test all of the assumptions that I make during the thesis. I do however believe, that the assumptions made are reasonable enough to be the foundation of my analysis.

In line with most studies on coalitions, the theoretical framework, that I will use is based on a rational choice approach. Rational choice theory is rooted in microeconomics, and the aim of this tradition is to explain why individuals act as they do. In brief, rational choice theory assumes that individuals are rational actors with exogenous preferences that use their scarce resources to maximise their utility, in this case influence in the Council. It is also assumed that individuals have sufficient information and

intelligence to take the decisions which maximise their utility (Collin 2012: 200; Nedergaard 2012: 485).

While I recognise that the assumptions behind rational choice models are far from realistic, they are still useful as a model and as a heuristic, analytical tool to explain a part of the variation in intra-coalition cooperation.

Based on these assumptions, I presume that once a coalition has been formed, it will, through trial and error, increase its level of cooperation until the marginal costs of cooperation equals the marginal benefits. I further assume, that at the time of my investigation, eight years after the Treaty of Lisbon and four years after the last enlargement, each coalition has found an equilibrium. This is the focal point of my theoretical framework, and I will on the basis of these assumptions derive three hypotheses about what I expect causes variations in cooperation among coalitions in Council working groups.

## 2.7 Derivation of hypotheses

In this section I will present three hypotheses on what may drive intra-coalition cooperation. The hypotheses are seen as independent of each other, and complimentary.

### 2.7.1. The Importance of Negotiation Mode

In the negotiations literature, two modes of negotiation have been highlighted; Bargaining and problem-solving. *Bargaining* has traditionally received most attention, and is the mode which is assumed in many game-theoretic models. It is characterised by conflict with a focus on explicit red-lines, where the actors tend to use manipulative tactics in order to win and increase their relative gains. (Hopmann 1996: 53; Elgström & Jönsson 2000: 685). *Problem-solving* on the other hand is characterised by a spirit of cooperation where the actors share information and a focus on absolute gains. Where self-interest is the main logic in bargaining, it is a focus on common interests that creates problem-solving behaviour. (Hopmann 1996: 53; Elgström & Jönsson 2000: 685).

Bargaining and problem-solving can be seen as ideal-types of negotiation-behaviour, as traits from both types are present in most negotiations, including EU committees. It is thus useful to consider the negotiation-mode as a continuum between two ideal-types instead of a dichotomy (Hopmann 1996: 60; Sannerstedt 2005: 97).

In their article, Elgström and Jönsson argued that negotiation mode depended on the type of policy, how politicised it was and the stage in the decision mode. They also speculated (2000: 696) that formalisation of coalitions would decrease the likelihood of problem-solving behaviour – they did however only find mixed result for this effect (Ibid.: 699). While this effect has not yet been falsified, and might be present, I suspect that it is mainly the other way around and that it is the mode of negotiations, that affect the degree of cooperation. To me, it seems implausible that the fact that member states are better prepared and have more information should significantly increase conflict or inhibit it. What matters more to negotiation mode is factors such as level of politicisation and type of policy.

This leads to my first hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Problem-solving negotiations lower the needs for cooperation within a coalition, whereas negotiations characterised by bargaining increase it.*

The logic behind this hypothesis is, that when a counsellor finds herself in a negotiation characterised by conflict where everybody focus on their own national interest, it incentivises her to team up with counsellors from countries who share the same interests, to increase their influence and make sure that their arguments are watershed. Conversely, in a negotiation characterised by problem-solving and win/win attitudes, the necessity for intra-coalition cooperation should be remarkably lower.

By testing this hypothesis, we do not only get new information about what causes variations in intra-coalition cooperation, but we also shed more light on the effects of the negotiation-mode and how much it matters.

To be sure, both Elgström and Jönsson (2000) as well as Sannerstedt (2005) find that the vast majority of committees are characterised by problem-solving. I do however expect, that if we dig deeper, there will be enough variation to between the groups to spot a pattern.

### 2.7.2 The importance of national interest

As mentioned in the introduction, most articles on coalition patterns in the Council find, that coalition patterns are fixed and determined by similar national interests and cultural affinity. But whereas the cultural affinity of the members of e.g. the coalition of north-western countries is close to constant across different working groups, it is unlikely that the similarity of their national interests will be just

as constant in areas such as security, agriculture and economic policy. As Axelrod would say, the conflict of interest varies.

In a coalition, where the members have very similar interests I expect it to be easy to increase cooperation because none of the members have to make any significant concessions to the group and because it will take little time for the members to come to a common understanding. Conversely, it will be much more cumbersome for a coalition with very different interests to reach even a low degree of cooperation, because they simply do not agree from the beginning. The transaction costs of cooperation are thus much lower for coalitions with very homogeneous preferences than coalitions whose preferences are less so.

These insights lead to my second hypothesis:

*H<sub>2</sub>: The more homogeneous preferences that the coalition members have, the higher is the level of cooperation*

### 2.7.3 The Effect of Counter-Coalitions

The last hypothesis is based on the idea of relative advantage. When a group of member states begin coordinating their efforts to achieve a certain policy outcome, they gain a relative advantage. As will be seen later, this might comprise of better arguments and information or more credible red-lines. Being put in disadvantaged position, the member states that disagree with the objectives of the coalition, are incentivised to form a counter-coalition and increase their level of cooperation as a response. This is interesting, as this group of countries might not have had the necessary degree of e.g. preference homogeneity to reach this new level of cooperation, but because it has been put to a disadvantage, the relative costs of cooperating decrease. This is somewhat similar to the logic of balancing in international relations theory: because no countries would accept to be systematically dominated by a strong coalition, they will form a counter-coalition and increase cooperation to balance it.

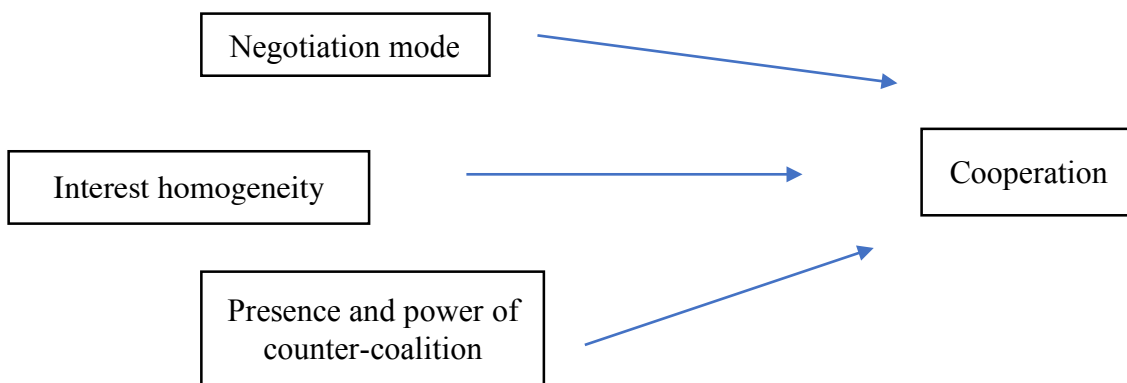
This leads to my third hypothesis:

*H<sub>3</sub>: The degree of cooperation in a coalition is affected by the presence of a counter-coalition and how strong this coalition is.*

With this logic in mind, one might make the straw man fallacy that all coalitions will have the same level of cooperation, because all coalitions keep trying to get a relative advantage to their competitors and react to being put in a disadvantage. This, however, ignores that it gets more and more difficult to increase cooperation and that the opportunity costs of increasing cooperation thus increase. This means that at some point coalition members might gain more from spending an hour on other activities than e.g. coordinating internally.

By testing this hypothesis, we will not only get new information about which factors that affect coordination, but we will also gain new knowledge on how coalitions react to each other's actions.

**Figure 2: Causal Model**



#### 2.7.4 Alternative explanations

Social science theory does of course offer an abundance of ideas and concepts that could be used, and should be used to try to explain varying levels of cooperation among coalitions. Most of them are outside the scope of this thesis, but I will however, briefly discuss why I only expect them to play a minor role.

Historical institutionalists might argue, that the rationality of actors is not sufficient to explain variations in the level of cooperation. Instead they would argue, that path-dependency within each coalition determines the degree of cooperation, and once it has been locked in, it becomes very difficult to change that even though circumstances, like new member states or proliferation of qualified majority voting, change. While path-dependency might play a role, I suspect it to be a minor one, since coalitions in the EU are constituted by a handful of members combined with the fact that



diplomats are not posted at one place for too many years at a time. This means that whenever a diplomat leaves and a new arrives, the current level of cooperation in a coalition might be challenged.

Charismatic leaders or entrepreneurs might also play a role, but because these entrepreneurs have to convince not only colleagues to form a coalition but also capitals, I suspect that this play a minor role and only in the few cases where an entrepreneur is actually present. This theory might thus be better to explain outliers with a larger than expected degree of cooperation.

One might also argue that the degree of cooperation within a coalition is not a fixed parameter, but that it varies across policy proposals and phases in the negotiation-process. This argument definitely has some merit, and ought to be investigated. I do however believe, that it is more important to begin by determining whether there actually are general variations among coalitions in different working-groups and why this is the case, before we proceed to dig deeper in what determines variations in cooperation. Studying different phases in the negotiation-process would also not be feasible within the research-design intended for this study. To do that, a case-study might be more appropriate.

The above mentioned and probably many other explanations could be added to construct a very comprehensive and complex model. However, in order to increase the leverage of my model (King, Keohane & Verba 1994: 29), I will not include them, as I do not believe, that they can explain as much of the variation as the factors that I have chosen and that the added value of including them will be very small.

Regarding tests for spurious relations, it has not been possible for me to think of factors that could affect both my independent and dependent variables and which should be controlled for, and I do thus not expect an omitted variable bias – this does of course not mean, that I can deny that “lurking variables” may exist.

### 3 Research Design

This chapter is divided in two parts – one for each research question. I will thus begin by accounting for why I have chosen to investigate my hypotheses through a large-n study and a survey and the consequences of these choices. The statistical techniques which I use may not be equally familiar to all, and brief explanations of the different techniques will therefore be placed in footnotes. I will then proceed to explain how I have designed and structured my survey and the choices made in this process and briefly account for how I have collected my data.

In the second part I will account for why a qualitative design made sense for this part of the analysis, and elaborate on my case-choices. Then I will explain how I will go by analysing the data, that will lead to the creation of the framework on how coalitions cooperate. I will conclude the chapter by discussing and summarising the advantages and drawbacks of my research design.

#### 3.1 Quantitative Design

In order to be able to test my hypotheses, I wish to get as much variation on my variables as possible. A way to achieve this could be a strategic selection of a handful “diverse cases” (i.e. coalitions) that cover both extremes of my independent variables (Gerring 2008: 652). But considering that there is very little knowledge on this topic so far, a strategic selection of cases would not be feasible because we do not know which coalitions that have extreme values. Instead, I have chosen to increase the number of cases, and thus increase the likelihood of covering the entire range of variation on my variables – this is of course only true given that the cases are not selected in a too biased way. By increasing the number of cases, I also minimize the risk, that my analysis will be driven by outliers or that I falsely reject a hypothesis because I unwittingly had selected a deviant case. Increasing the number of observations also allow me to use statistical techniques to assess whether there are significant correlations between my variables and how much of the variation on my dependent variable each independent variable explains. This mean that I can have more faith in my results, than if I had made a small n study, and that I can assess which of my hypotheses that have the most explanatory power.

In an ideal situation, with abundant time and resources and no access restrictions, I would have followed as many coalitions from all parts of Europe in many different the working groups and

observed how they coordinated outside the Council and then assessed their level of cooperation, preference homogeneity etc.

Because of access-restrictions, the chance that I would be allowed to follow just a few coalitions in their daily work is rather low. Instead, I have chosen to study the coalitions indirectly by making an internet survey which was then sent out to counsellors at the Danish and Swedish Permanent Representations. This begs two questions: why poll counsellors, and why only send the survey to the Danish and Swedish Permanent Representation?

Firstly, because counsellors represent the different member states in the working-groups and thus also participate in coalition-building, it is reasonable to assume, that counsellors have a pretty good idea about how much the coalition cooperates, the mode of negotiations in their working-groups, how aligned the coalition members are and whether the coalition members are aware of a competing coalition in their working-group. It thus makes good sense to base the analysis on the counsellors' perceptions of their working groups. It should be noted, that because I poll counsellors and attachés, the results say more about day-to-day negotiations than history-making decisions.

Secondly, the reason for only sending the survey to the Danish and Swedish Permanent Representation instead of following the ideal-strategy and making a random sample of counsellors from all member states is rather simple: access. I had contacts on both representations who were willing to distribute my survey and encourage their colleagues to respond to it. This drastically increased the chances that I would get a sufficient number of respondents. When that is said, a time-consideration also mattered. Because it is very time-consuming to code the survey-answers in a statistics-programme, I would not have time to analyse all the respondents if I had sent the survey out to a larger number of Representations.

Recalling that Denmark and Sweden very often engage in coalitions together along with other the north-western countries, it is obvious that this research design creates a clear north-western bias. I will thus not be able to make a clear generalisation to all coalitions in Council working-groups, and I can only be certain that they can be generalised to north-western coalitions. But since this study is the first to investigate this problem it can be perceived as an exploratory effort to probe whether there is something to be found. However, lacking good arguments about why coalitions with member states from other parts of Europe would be driven by different motives than north-western countries, it is not unreasonable to assume that the results will also be valid for other coalitions – but we should be cautious until this has been tested empirically. The results may also serve as inspiration for scholars

who wish to investigate similar phenomena in other international organisations where coalitions increase in importance.

### 3.1.1 Survey Design

As mentioned above, I investigated my research question by making an internet-survey, that was sent as a link by e-mail to counsellors at the Danish and Swedish Permanent Representations. A clear benefit of making an internet-survey is, that it is a relatively cost-free way to increase the number of cases. Because diplomats are notoriously busy people, and because long difficult surveys tend to be discouraging to respondents (Hansen 2012: 318-319) it was pivotal that I minimised the costs of answering the survey. I therefore faced the trade-off between measuring my variables very accurately (which increases the time it takes to respond) and ensuring many respondents. This is a painful trade-off. Because strategic selection of cases was not possible due to lack of pre-existing knowledge and because of the benefits a large-n study, I decided to compromise on measurement validity to increase the number of respondents. This does of course not mean that I accepted a bad or inadequate measurement validity. It rather means that I aspired to keep my survey short and concise to prevent fall-outs.

In order to ensure, that the questions were formulated in a way that easily understandable with minimal degree of interpretation, the survey was pilot-tested by former interns at the Danish and Swedish Permanent Representations and adjusted on the basis of their feedback.

Because all my variables constitute concepts which cannot adequately be captured by a single question, I increased the number of questions asked in order to create an index for each variable. Index-creation provides two important advantages. First of all, it increases the measurement validity of my variables. This is the case because an index can capture several dimensions of a phenomenon instead of just one. Second of all an index increases the reliability of the results, because random errors will cancel each other out as the amount of indicators increase (Pedersen 2012: 406-7).

My dependent and three independent variables will all be measured on symmetric scales with five categories. An example of these types of categories could be “1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neutral; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree”. Even though this scale is ordinary, it can arguably be treated as interval-scaled, if we assume that there is an equal distance among the different categories. Treating

the variables as interval-scaled allows me to make OLS-regression<sup>3</sup> analysis and significance tests<sup>4</sup> to see whether there are correlations among my dependent- and independent variables.

I have chosen not to include a “don’t know”-category in the survey. A risk, of not including this category is, that respondents might be forced to respond to questions which they do not know the answer to. However, because I am not asking questions about trivia or current affairs, but questions on how they conduct their everyday work, I believe it is reasonable to expect the respondents to be able to answer the questions.

#### 3.1.1.1 Cooperation

My measure for cooperation is inspired of what network researchers call *intensity*, that is the frequency of meetings and other interactions (Jönsson & Strömviik 2005; Elgström 2016: 3). The measure will thus include questions on e.g. how often the respondents meet with coalitions-members and how often they coordinate positions and discuss how to approach negotiations. I have chosen to focus on strategy and coordination because I assume that these activities are among the most important ones in coalitions in the Council.

#### 3.1.1.2 Negotiation-mode

To measure negotiation-mode, the questions asked in the survey were inspired by the questions which Elgström & Jönsson (2000) and Sannerstedt (2005) used in their analyses. As noted earlier, bargaining is characterised by inter alia zero-sum logics, conflict and references to red-lines whereas problem-solving negotiations are characterised by cooperation and focus on common interests. The questions thus tried to catch these characteristics (see appendix XY). Respondents was inter alia asked about how often different kinds of behaviour occurred and whether their colleagues cared more about the common good or getting the best possible result for their states.

#### 3.1.1.3 Interest homogeneity

In the literature on coalitions in the Council, interest homogeneity has been measured in different ways.

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<sup>3</sup> Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression is a technique that plot the most accurate linear relationship between two interval-scaled variables and estimates the parameters of the relationship (Agresti & Finlay 2009: 288).

<sup>4</sup> Significance tests assumes a random sample and estimates the likelihood of finding a certain result if there was no correlation between the variables (Agresti & Finlay 2009: 173-174). This likelihood is symbolised through the p-value, which in this study has to be below 0,05 before a finding will be deemed significant.

For example, Kaeding & Selck (2005) use expert interviews to assess member states' preferences on different legislative proposals, while Naurin (2008: 17) uses economic variables like net-contributions to the budget and stances on regulation-free market (OECD's Product Market Regulation-index) to measure preference homogeneity, the role of the government in the economy and trade-openness. These approaches make good sense if you want to map out general patterns and compare the interests of different countries. However, when you poll representatives from two countries instead of 15 or 25, as Naurin does, these measures make little sense. Instead the respondents were asked to assess how close/far away the members of their "like-minded group" typically are from each other, when a new proposal is presented, and the degree to which they share the same concerns and priorities. I used the term "like-minded group" in the survey because "coalition" might seem like a very hard-core word, which respondents may not associate their coalition with, and because it is the word often used in Brussels to describe countries who cooperate in the Council. This concept will thus have more "resonance" to respondents (Gerring 2012: 117), than if I had used the term "coalitions".

It could be argued, that it is a problem that my measure is based on the respondents' own perception and not on external indicators. I do however believe, that it, in this case, is more accurate to use the respondents' perception, because it is their perceptions of interest homogeneity which drive them to cooperate. To illustrate: if a coalition members believe they have a lot in common interest-wise, they would feel encouraged to cooperate. In contrast, if they believe that they don't have a much in common, they would not be too enthusiastic about the idea of intense cooperation. Because the degree of cooperation is based on their own analysis of the situation, this way of measuring interest homogeneity is the better one.

I do however expect that most respondents will give "positive" responses on these questions in the sense, that if coalition members in general had very little in common, they would not be in a coalition together. This realisation also becomes obvious when you consider the Brussels term for a coalition; "like-minded group".

#### 3.1.1.4 Counter-Coalitions

To my knowledge, there has been no previous attempts to measure how a coalition is perceived by a competing coalition in the Council.

Just as with "homogeneity of interests" I will measure this variable on the basis of my respondents' perception of the situation. Because my theory argues that coalition members will intensify their cooperation when confronted with a counter-coalition, it is the respondents' perception of the

situation that is important. Respondents are thus asked whether there is a group of like-minded countries they typically disagree with, and are then asked to assess the unity and influence of this group of member states.

### 3.1.2 Data Collection

The survey data was collected between the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 and the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2017.

My contact persons at the Danish and Swedish Permanent Representations sent a link to counsellors and attachés with a brief description of the content of the survey and how long it would take to answer the survey. Respondents were promised anonymity. Because respondents who were engaged in a coalition might be more interested in answering the survey than respondents who never or rarely engage in a coalition, I attempted to mitigate this by encouraging counsellors who were not part of a coalition to answer. This request should also help ensuring that I get as much variation as possible. Respondents were further instructed to base their answers on long-lasting coalitions in order to avoid the possibility that participants in ad hoc coalitions would distort the study.

A week after the survey was sent out, a reminder was sent to the respondents. Out of 106 possible respondents 40 completed the survey and 3 respondents completed the survey partially.

After respondents from the same coalitions had been merged to one observation/coalition, 35 respondents were left. Because a clear assumption in statistics is random sampling, or at least that the sample is representative, a fallout analysis (Table 1) was conducted to ensure that there was no systematic fallout. The fallout analysis showed, that at least two cases from all Council configurations were present, and that there was no systematic fall-out. It also showed that working groups from Foreign affairs (8) and Economic and Financial Affairs (5) were a bit overrepresented. However, because of the diversity between working groups within each Council configuration, this is of minor importance.

**Table 1: Fallout analysis**

<b>Council configuration</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Agriculture and Fisheries	2
Competitiveness	4
Economic and Financial Affairs	5
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	2
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	3
Environment	2
Foreign Affairs	8
General Affairs	3
Justice and Home Affairs	2
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

### 3.1.3 Quantitative Analysis Strategy

When the data has been collected, it will be analysed the statistics program *Stata*. To enhance transparency, a copy of the unprocessed data will be stored and a “do-file” that saves all my computation will be produced and stored for further reference. When the indexes have been created, each variable will be rescaled to either 1-9 (for preference homogeneity and power of counter-coalition) or 1-25 (for cooperation level and negotiation mode). This rescaling does not change anything substantially, but it makes it easier to interpret e.g. the level of cooperation when the scale goes from 1-25 than when it goes from 5-30<sup>5</sup>.

The cases in this study will be analysed through a cross-case comparison with no time variation. H<sub>1</sub> will initially be analysed through logistic regression<sup>6</sup> to determine whether negotiation mode increases the likelihood that a respondent participates in a coalition, and whether a counter-coalition

<sup>5</sup> When an index is created from 6 questions with 5 possible categories, the final scale will go from 5-30.

<sup>6</sup> A logistic regression estimates the parameters in a relationship between an interval-scaled independent variable, and a dependent dummy-variable. A dummy-variable is a variable with only two categories such as no/yes or no membership/membership. More specifically a logistic regression estimates the *odds* that we see e.g. membership instead of no membership when the independent variable, negotiation mode, increases with 1 point, everything else being equal (Agresti & Finlay 2009: 511).



is present or not. This is interesting because one can imagine, that the negotiation mode in a working group would be so problem-solving in nature, that coalitions were redundant.

Hereafter, all the hypotheses will be analysed through bivariate OLS-regressions, which make it possible to estimate the relative importance of each variable, and through significance test, we can minimize the risk that we accept a false hypothesis. Because  $H_3$  predicts that it is not only the strength of a counter-coalition that matters, but that the presence of a counter-coalition itself has an effect on cooperation, a dummy-variable regression<sup>7</sup> (ANOVA) will be conducted to test this expectation.

In an ideal situation, the next move would have been to include the significant variables into a multivariate model, and test how much of the variation each variable explains, when controlled for the other variable. However, because of the low level of respondents who reported a counter-coalition ( $n=20$ ), we would not get any meaningful results from such a model. It will therefore be up to future studies to collect enough data to make this analysis possible.

### 3.2 Qualitative Design

In contrast to part 1, this part does not try to establish causal relationships. Instead, the aim of this part of the analysis is to create a framework for how coalitions cooperate internally, and explain why they do so. I have chosen to investigate this through a small  $n$  qualitative design. Just as with the first part of the research question, there is very little knowledge about how coalitions cooperate and this is thus an exploratory venture. However, this part differs from the first part in at least two ways. Firstly, in contrast to the first part, I have no theoretical expectations about the different ways coalitions might cooperate, and it would thus not make sense to investigate this through a survey with a set of fixed questions, which may turn out to be irrelevant. The same goes for a fully structured interview, which would not have the flexibility that is required for theory generation. In the other extreme, if I picked a completely unstructured interview, it would not necessarily end up being about the topic of interest. It might turn out to be, but I cannot be certain. Like Goldilock, I have instead chosen a middle way and decided to make semi-structured interviews, which contain a loose structure, but allows the interviewee to elaborate and reflect on their points, and at the same time it makes it possible for the interviewer to ask unplanned follow-up questions on interesting points. These features make this technique particularly well suited for the purpose of theory generation (Harrits & Pedersen & Halkier 2012: 145; 149-150).

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<sup>7</sup> A dummy-variable regression, or Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), estimates the parameters in a relationship between an independent dummy-variable and an interval-scaled dependent variable. In this case, this means that we are able to test whether the mean level of cooperation is significantly different when a counter-coalition is present, than when it is not, everything else being equal (Agresti & Finlay 2009: 433).

Secondly, after I have conducted the first part of the analysis, I have gained knowledge about the level of cooperation of different coalitions, and in contrast to the first part of the study, it is thus possible to undertake a strategic selection of cases. I have chosen to use this knowledge to investigate four cases that spans almost the entire range on the cooperation variable – to ensure this the interviewees were thus chosen among the counsellors and attachés who had responded to my survey. The only case that I miss in order to cover the entire range is a coalition with a very low level of cooperation, but none of the respondents with that level wished to participate in an interview. However, because I cover almost the entire variation (the interviewees’ respective coalitions had scores from 16-25), this way of selecting cases is arguably more representative than cases picked by other techniques (Gerring 2008: 652). This is a clear advantage, because I want to understand how coalitions in general cooperate, but also leave space for the possibility that the way coalitions cooperate can vary.

**Table 2: Overview of Interviewees**

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Working Group</b>	<b>Level of Cooperation</b>
Danish Budget Counsellor	Budget Committee	25
Danish Counsellor of Business and Growth	Working Party on Competitiveness and Growth	21
Danish Social Attaché	Social Working Group	18
Danish Deputy Nicolaidis	Working Party on Human Rights	16

During the interviews, the interviewees were *inter alia* asked to describe how a coalition-meeting usually took place, what they cooperate about and what issues they would not cooperate on. After these “easy” and more descriptive questions the interviewees were asked to reflect upon what they gained from engaging in these kinds of activities and from participating in a coalition.

### 3.2.1 Qualitative Analysis Strategy

After the interviews had been conducted, each interview was transcribed and coded.

Because of the explorative nature of this analysis I began by performing an open coding of the data, where everything that was related to coalition behaviour was coded. The idea was to let the data “speak for itself” whilst keeping theoretical and personal presumptions in the background. While this is not possible in reality, it is an ideal to strive for during an open coding (Jakobsen 2012: 178). When

the open coding had been performed, the aim was to theorise on the basis of the nodes, and create theoretical concepts and explanation for how coalitions cooperate. Then a second coding was conducted based on the new theoretical concepts. At this stage, the aim was to test whether the new concepts would actually fit the data (Ibid.: 183). This was followed by a second round of theorising. When the framework on how coalitions cooperate and why they do so was completed, I used the newly created concept to structure an analysis on how many of these activities each coalition used and how the degree to which each activity was used. The possible degrees were high, medium, low and no cooperation. High degree was assigned when an interviewee indicated that her coalition regularly engaged in an activity with little or no reservations. Medium degree was assigned when an interviewee indicated that her coalition occasionally engaged in an activity or she had reservations for when they would engage in it. Low degree was assigned when an interviewee indicated that her coalition rarely engaged in an activity. No cooperation was assigned when an interviewee explicitly said that her coalition did not engage in an activity – if there were neither evidence for or against the engagement in an activity it was coded as an “x”.

To facilitate the analysis I created a “display” for each case to showcase which activities it engaged in. A display can be described as a concentrated showcasing of qualitative data, which makes it easier to structure an analysis (Dahler-Larsen 2012: 188). I then created another display which was used to compare the different cases, in order to see if there were patterns in which coalitions that engaged in the different activities.

Because of the inductive nature of this part of the analysis and because of the lower number of cases investigated, the results will be more tentative than in the first part. This does not mean that the results are wrong, but rather that the new concepts and explanations should be tested rigorously in the future.

### 3.3 Discussion of Research Design

This research design provides a set of distinct advantages, but also a few drawbacks.

First of all, because I don't make random sampling of all Council working-groups one of the very good arguments for large-n quantitative designs is lost, that is high external validity or generalisability. But as noted, since I investigate coalitions from many different working groups and since there are no theoretical reasons to believe that southern or eastern coalitions would be driven by different motives than north-western coalitions, we can reasonably expect the results to be valid for coalitions in general.

Second of all, the main advantage of this design is, that I can make statistical tests, and that my analysis is not as sensitive to outliers and deviant cases, as if I had chosen a qualitative design with few cases. The risk that I accept a false hypothesis or reject a valid hypothesis are thus minimised. Since my variables are independent of each other I might encounter equifinality, where different combinations of the independent variables create the same value on my dependent variable. Equifinality might have made it difficult to spot a pattern in a small-n study. But by making statistical tests, I can investigate the relationship between my independent variables and my dependent variable. I can also easily assess which hypothesis, that explains most of the variation on my dependent variable, and thus settle which factor that matters the most in facilitating intra-coalition cooperation.

Third of all, I have chosen to use index-construction to measure the complex phenomena that hides behind my variables. This should increase my measurement-validity. I have however sacrificed some of the measurement validity, in order to increase the number of respondents. I do however expect the measurement validity to be adequate enough to provide the basis of my analysis.

Fourth of all, because I am transparent with my methodology and the questions included in the survey (see appendix A), and because I only poll counsellors from two Permanent Representations, this study could easily be replicated and expanded by scholars who would wish to put my results to a tougher test.

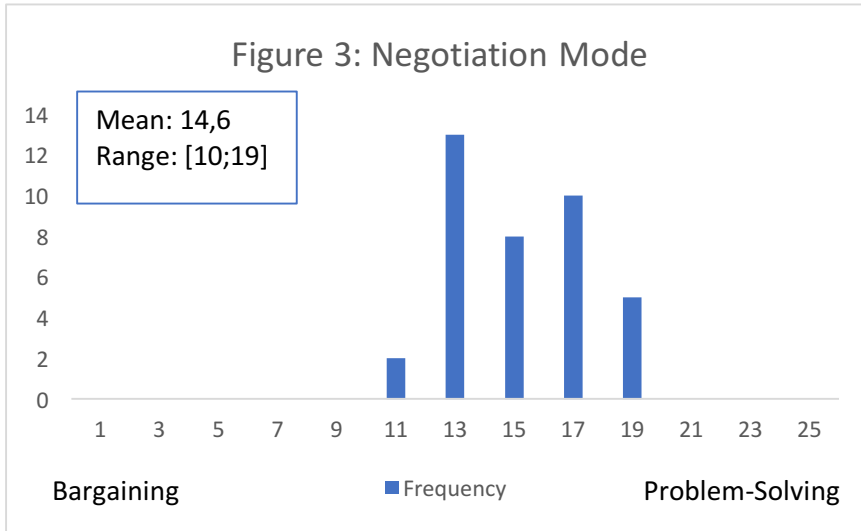
Finally, the use of semi-structured interviews and open coding allow me to generate theory about how coalitions cooperate internally and the rationales behind. By investigating four diverse cases, I utilise some of the knowledge gained in the first part of the analysis and ensure a certain degree of representativeness. However, because of the inductive nature of the qualitative analysis, these results are more tentative in nature, and should be explored further.

## 4 Quantitative Analysis: What Drives Cooperation?

In this section I will analyse my hypotheses one by one. I will begin with  $H_1$  and discuss how my data on negotiation mode in Council working groups differs from previous studies. Then I will go on to test whether negotiation mode has an effect on coalition membership, the presence of a counter-coalition and on the degree of intra coalition cooperation and briefly discuss my results. In the following section I will go on to test  $H_2$  to see whether there is a relationship between interest homogeneity and cooperation and follow with a test of  $H_3$  on whether there are correlations between the presence and strength of a counter-coalition and the degree of cooperation in a coalition. I will then continue with a brief discussion and summarise my results.

### 4.1 The Effect of Negotiation Mode

The initial results of my analysis on the nature of negotiation mode are not unambiguously similar to the findings of Elgström and Jönsson (2000) and Sannerstedt (2005). In both of these studies it was reported that the main negotiation-mode in the Council working groups was problem-solving, but with elements of bargaining being present. The data in this study shows that a shift towards bargaining has taken place since they collected their data in the late 90's, so that most respondents now lie in the middle between problem-solving and bargaining with a small tilt towards problem-solving. The small tilt towards problem-solving can be observed in Figure 3 and by looking at the mean of the negotiation mode, which is 14,6. If problem-solving had unequivocally been the negotiation mode, we would have expected a mean much closer to 20 than to 12. The tilt towards bargaining can also be seen by the fact that only 74 % report that the atmosphere in their working group is characterised by cooperation or high degree of cooperation, which is 12 percent-points lower than the 86% reported by Sannerstedt (2005: 101). However, considering the significant enlargement of the EU, which have made the EU Member States a much more heterogeneous group, a shift towards bargaining is not surprising, and it is still quite impressive, that almost three out of four respondents report that the atmosphere in their working groups is characterised by cooperation or a high degree of cooperation.



Turning to the effect of negotiation mode on the degree of cooperation, the hypothesis was, that the more a working group was characterised by bargaining, the bigger would the incentives for organising be. As mentioned in the analysis-strategy, this hypothesis is tested in two steps. First a logistic regression will be carried out to determine whether negotiation mode influences the likelihood of participating in a coalition and the likelihood that a counter-coalition is present. Then an OLS-regression will be carried out to test whether negotiation mode affect the degree of cooperation among the respondents who are members of a coalition.

**Table 3: Logistical Regressions**

	Coalition participation			Presence of Counter-Coalition		
Negotiation mode	-0,11	(0,26)	[-0,01]	0,02	0,14	[0,00]
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0,01			0,00		
n	35			35		

**Note:** unstandardized logit-coefficient with standard-error in parentheses and average marginal effects in square brackets.

\*:p<0,05

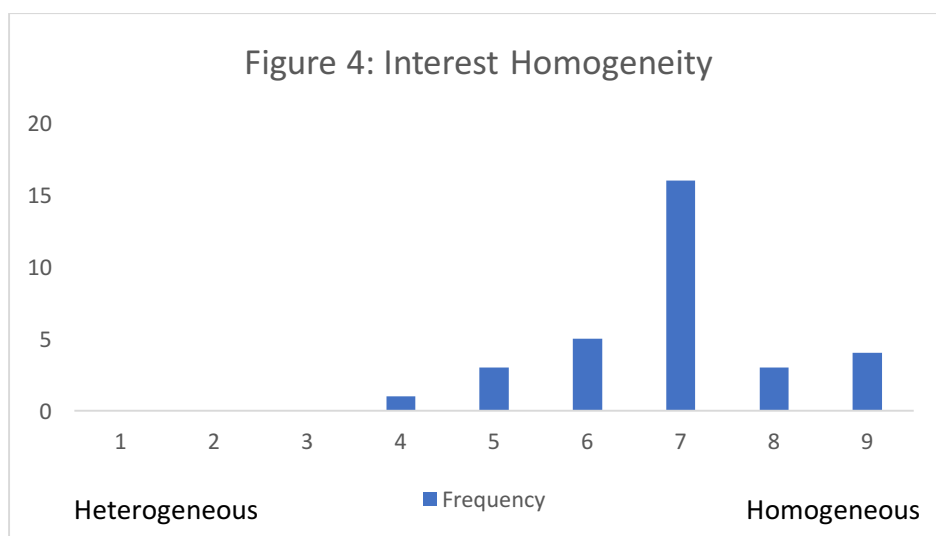
As can be seen in Table 3, and Table 4, there are no significant correlations between negotiation mode and coalition membership, negotiation mode and the presence of a counter-coalition and degree of cooperation within a coalition. With p-values above 0,6 on all regressions, these results are almost as

far away from the significance level as you can get. That is, assuming that there is no relationship between our variables, we would find this result more than 60 % of the time, due to random sampling error, and it is thus safe to reject the hypothesis and say, that there is nothing to be found here.

This is a very interesting finding for at least two reasons. First of all, because it shows that Elgström and Jönssons speculation that formalisation of coalitions would inhibit problem-solving and facilitate bargaining-behaviour, as well as my hypothesis that bargaining behaviour increases the incentives for coalition cooperation are both wrong! Second of all, this is interesting because it rejects the effect of a variable, that tend to have an influence on many factors in negotiations. This finding is positive from a research point of view, because it means that we can focus our efforts on other explanations in future studies.

## 4.2 The Effect of Interest Homogeneity

Mirroring Nedergaard's (2009) notion that "there are coalitions everywhere", 32 out of 35 respondents reported that they are part of a coalition. When inspecting the interest homogeneity of the different coalitions, which can be seen in Figure 4, it turns out that the degree of interest homogeneity follows the normal distribution with the vast majority of respondents reporting, that their coalition has rather homogeneous and very homogenous interests, and only few respondents reporting that the coalition members have neither homogenous nor heterogeneous interests. No respondents reported heterogeneous interests. As mentioned in the operationalisation of interest homogeneity, these findings are in line with what I would expect, because it makes little sense to organise in a coalition if the members have little or nothing in common.



Turning to the effect of interest homogeneity on the degree of intra-coalition cooperation, I hypothesised that the more homogeneous interests, the higher would the degree of cooperation be. When looking at Table 4 it becomes clear from that there is a significant correlation between the degree of interest homogeneity and the degree of cooperation ( $p < 0,05$ ). This means that it is highly unlikely, that we would have found this correlation, if there was in fact no relationship between our variables

The direction of the effect is the one we expected theoretically, so that the more homogeneous interests a coalition have, the higher will the degree of cooperation be. From Table 4, we can also see that the correlation is of medium strength. To illustrate, it means that if a coalition move from having heterogeneous interests to completely homogeneous interests (that is, a score on 1 to a score on 9), they will, everything else being equal, gain approximately 11,5<sup>8</sup> points on the cooperation scale. Put differently, it would mean that a coalition could go from having a low degree of cooperation to a high degree or from a medium degree to a very high degree, depending on the starting point. The strength of the correlation is backed by the fact that interest homogeneity explains 14 pct. of the variation of cooperation ( $R^2 = 0,14$ ).

**Table 4: Bivariate Analyses<sup>9</sup>**

Variable	Unstandardised Beta-coefficient	R <sup>2</sup>	n
Negotiation Mode	0,16 (0,34)	0,01	33
Interest homogeneity	1,44* (0,65)	0,14	32
Presence of Counter-coalition			
- No Counter-coalition	Reference		
- Counter-coalition	1,22 (1,67)	0,02	32
Counter-coalition power	1,78* (0,72)	0,24	20

**Note: OLS-regressions. Standard-errors in parentheses.**

**\*:  $p < 0,05$**

<sup>8</sup> In Table 4 we can see that the beta-coefficient (the slope of the curve in a linear model) is 1,44, meaning that when a coalition gain 1 point in interest homogeneity, they gain 1,44 points on cooperation. So when they go from 1-9 on interest homogeneity, they gain  $8 * 1,44 = 11,52$ .

<sup>9</sup> Control-tests for linearity, influential observations, heteroscedasticity and whether residuals were normally distributed were performed. There were no troubles to report.



### 4.3 The Effect of Counter-Coalitions

Only 20 out of 35 respondents reported that a counter-coalition was present in their working group. This is curious, considering that we know from Naurin (2009) that apart from the Nordic coalition, a Mediterranean-, a Baltic and a Visegrad coalition is also usually present in working groups, and that 32 out of 35 respondents reported that they participate in a coalition. If so many respondents participate in a coalition why don't their counterparts do the same? At first sight, this finding seems to run contrary to our expectation that when a group of countries form a coalition, a counter-coalition will form. However, because the question to the respondents asked whether there was a like-minded group which the respondents *typically* disagreed with, it could also indicate that the conflict-lines in working-groups without counter-coalitions are diffuse, and that there is no single coalition, which the respondent's coalition systematically disagrees with. This means that two coalitions could be on the same side on one issue and opponents on another.

Regarding whether the presence of a counter-coalition has an impact on cooperation, Table 4 shows that there is no significant correlation between these two variables even though the direction is the predicted one. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean level of cooperation in coalitions that face a counter-coalition and those that do not. However, when one looks at the cases where a counter-coalition is in fact present, it turns out that there is a significant relationship between the strength of the counter-coalitions and the degree of cooperation in the respondents' coalitions. This means that it is highly unlikely that we would have had this result, if there was no correlation between the variables. The direction of the effect is the expected one, so that the stronger a counter-coalition is, the more will a coalition have to cooperate. The correlation is of medium to high strength. This can be seen from the fact, that if a counter-coalition went from being very weak to very strong (from a score on 1 to a score on 9), the level of cooperation in the respondent's coalition would increase more than 14 points<sup>10</sup> meaning that it would go from a medium-low level to a very high level of cooperation. The strength of the correlation is backed by the fact that it explains 24 pct. of the variation on our dependent variable ( $R^2=0,24$ ).

The two latter findings seem to contradict each other. How can we make sense of the fact that the presence of a counter-coalition does not affect the level of cooperation, but when a counter-coalition *is* present, the strength of it affects the level of cooperation?

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<sup>10</sup> In Table 4 we can see that the beta-coefficient is 1,78. If the strength of a counter-coalition moves from a score on 1 to 9, the coalition will react by increasing its cooperation with  $8 * 1,78 = 14,24$  points.

This apparent contradiction might be explained if we reconsider the idea of diffuse conflict lines and expand the theory to include a situation where a coalition faces not only one counter-coalition but several coalitions who may be on the same side on one issue and opponents on another. In a case like this, it is not the strength of *one* counter-coalition that affects its degree of cooperation but the size of the potential opposition that it may face. To appreciate this idea, consider the main incentive a coalition has for increasing cooperation when faced with a strong counter-coalition: it is the relative disadvantage and the expectation of less influence in the future if the coalition does not act, that drives it to increase its level of cooperation. This effect could also very well be present in situations where multiple coalitions are present. So when a coalition faces several coalitions, that are well organised and can thus convincingly argue for their interests which are not necessarily in line with the coalition's own interests, it will have to increase its level of cooperation to mitigate a potential loss of influence. If this is the case, a logical consequence is, that the results from the bivariate regression can be extended to that situation.

These new insights mean that a modification of  $H_3$  is required:

*H<sub>3</sub>: The degree of cooperation in a coalition is affected by the strength of other coalitions.*

An implication of this modified hypothesis is, that in future studies it won't be sufficient to question respondents about the strength of one counter-coalition. Quite contrary, scholars should ask whether other coalitions are present in working groups and make respondents assess 1) how influential and cohesive these coalitions are, and 2) how much the respondents typically disagree with each coalition.

As should be clear now, I have tried to explain the variation in intra-coalition cooperation through rational explanations, while assuming that cultural affinity was constant. While my results, do not yield any answer to how varying degrees of cultural affinity affect cooperation, it is striking that we in the data can observe coalitions in which the Member States have very little in common (interest homogeneity-scores on 4-5) and where there either is no counter-coalition or where it is very weak. According to rational explanations, the costs of forming and maintaining a coalition would simply be too high compared to the benefits. Considering previous research, these observations affirm the notion that cultural affinity does indeed matter to coalition formation, and that it can make people cooperate even though it is pointless from a rational perspective.

As we know, the two explanations that proved significant explained respectively 14 and 24 pct. of the variation on cooperation. Even considering that random variation has a substantial effect on social phenomena (King, Keohane & Verba 1994: 80), there is still a substantial part of the variation that

we cannot account for. If culture was not in fact as constant as assumed this could have played a minor role, as well as many other factors, of some have been accounted for above. A consequence of this is, that scholars should keep theorising and testing new explanations that can account for the remaining variation.

#### 4.4 Summary

In this section I have, through bivariate regressions, tested the following three hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Problem-solving negotiations lower the needs for cooperation within a coalition, whereas negotiations characterised by bargaining increase it.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: The more homogeneous interests that the coalition members have, the higher is the level of cooperation*

*H<sub>3</sub>: The degree of cooperation in a coalition is affected by the presence of a counter-coalition and how strong this coalition is.*

The analysis showed that there are no correlations between negotiation mode and coalition membership, intra-coalition cooperation or the probability that a counter-coalition was present. This was surprising because negotiation mode is believed to be an influential factor on negotiations in general, and because both Elgström and Jönsson (2000) and I had theorised that negotiation mode and cooperation would be correlated albeit we disagreed over the direction of the effect.

Whereas H<sub>1</sub> turned out insignificant, both H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> were significant on the 0,05 level and the correlations had respectively medium to high strength. It did however turn out, that there was no relationship between the *presence* of a counter-coalition and the degree of intra-coalition cooperation. This contradiction was explained through the idea of diffuse conflict-lines, and that multiple coalitions is most likely present in working groups. What matters then is not the strength of one coalition but the aggregate strength of other coalitions in a working group. This explanation was backed by the correlation between the strength of a counter-coalition and the degree of cooperation, and it is expected that with an improved measure, a similar correlation will be found between the strength of other coalitions and cooperation.

## 5 Qualitative Analysis: Developing a Framework on Cooperation

The objective of this analysis is to open the black-box of Council-coalitions and develop a framework for how Coalitions cooperate internally and the benefits they reap from this cooperation. It has been possible for me to identify four distinct ways, that coalitions may cooperate: 1) Strategizing and Coordination, 2) Information Sharing, 3) Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity and 4) Mutual Support. These ways are complementary and may reinforce each other if used wisely. I begin by presenting the framework and describing how each way of cooperation works and what the rationale behind it is. I then apply this framework to each coalition and move on to a cross-case comparison to explore whether there are systematic differences in the ways the investigated coalitions cooperate. As mentioned in the research design, *displays* will play an important role in structuring and showcasing the data in this analysis. I conclude with brief discussion of what these differences tell us about each way of cooperating and how the results from the first analysis may help us predict which coalitions that will be able to engage in the different kinds of cooperation.

### 5.1 Strategizing and coordination:

The most fundamental way of cooperating among coalition members is through strategizing and coordination. All the interviewees stated, that if coalition members are capable of coordinating their efforts, they will stand stronger, than if they had acted individually. One interviewee even compared it to the fact that two atoms weigh more together than they do individually. This is very much in line with Stevenson et al. who argued that coalitions are formed, because “they allow individuals to exert more influence than they could have done individually” (Stevenson et al. 1985: 262) and Tallberg (2008: 267) who conceives coalition building as a strategy of pooling bargaining power.

According to my interviewees, coalition members will often hold informal meetings before Council meetings to discuss how to approach negotiations and the policy process in general. Here they inter alia discuss how they can best “push their ideas”. To illustrate, the deputy Nicolaidis explained that they in the Human Rights Committee were trying to pressure the European External Action Service to add a point on the agenda. The Social Attaché mentioned something similar, when she said that her coalition had discovered that their words carried more weight when they had joint meetings with the Commission or Presidency, than if they held individual meetings. When preparing for particular Council meetings the interviewees also reported, that they try to align their positions and plan who says what when. They do this to signal how strong their preferences are on a given proposal.

*“We like to coordinate before the meeting who will be the first to flag and take the word... it depends on which signals you wish to send. If we are really against something, we’d like to be among the first to speak”* (Social Attaché)

The coordination of the order in which coalition members take the word may also serve another purpose. Because no coalitions agree on everything, they may coordinate their comments in order to hide potential disagreements between the members and thus seem more cohesive than they actually are. The more cohesive a coalition is, the more credible will its positions and red-lines also seem, whereas a coalition that seems internally divided may tempt its counterparts to use this division to break the coalition.

*“It is all about avoiding showcasing that there are differences in our positions... We can avoid this by coordinating the order in which we state our positions, so we support each other and don’t contradict each other... We coordinate in a way, that makes it seem like we agree on all areas, but that France just added another element, which they want money for”* (Budget Counsellor).

These two latter examples of strategizing and coordination suggest that coalitions through carefully coordinated action can take advantage of the consensus-culture in the Council. If coalition members can credibly show that they are united as a group and care a lot about an issue, other member states will be likely listen and give concessions to get the coalition on board. If the coalitions members had only seemed loosely associated and with different aims, the push for concessions would not have been as strong.

## 5.2 Information Sharing

Another very used way of cooperating in a coalition is through information sharing.

According to my interviewees, high quality information is important for at least three reasons: Firstly the more you know about the policy process, the easier it is for you to affect it. Secondly, information about other member states’ preferences is pivotal in order to assess where their red-lines are. And thirdly, because there is a significant information asymmetry between member states and the Commission in terms of expertise, information about how the Commission works and which assumptions it makes it important when a member state wish to make amendments.

Because each member has her own network, from which she can receive insider-information and sometimes even leaked documents, engaging in a coalition can significantly increase the size of their joint network and can thus provide access to information the members otherwise would not have had

access to. This is supported by the Counsellor for Business and Growth who noted that “[*coalitions*] are a great source of information. You give a little and learn a lot, simply because it is a bigger group. By cooperating, we learn much more than we would have done individually.”

According to both the Budget Counsellor and the Social Attaché, gathering information is what justifies the fact that their jobs exist, and the coalition is a great place to do that: “*Providing information is what Budget Counsellors live off; then we can be well prepared and affect the policy-process from the early stages. And you can rarely do that alone*” (Budget Counsellor).

The interviewees do however stress that mutual trust is extremely important when sharing sensitive information; the Social Attaché recalls a proposal, where all of the coalition members had received a draft-proposal under the counter, and all of them knew that the other members probably had it as well, but nobody wanted to be the first to break it – the trust was not high enough.

### 5.3 Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity

The cooperation in a coalition may spill over to the capital-level. Instead of being just one counsellor supported by one capital, the coalition will comprise of a group of counsellors with support from several capitals. This can create distinct advantages. First, it allows experts from capitals to share analyses with each other, discuss where their analyses diverge and when they agree, they may credibly claim that the validity of the analyses is high. The Budget Counsellor described it in the following way: “... *It is always a huge advantage when we as a group agree on a calculation, and since it has been checked by 8 different ministries of finance, it should be pretty solid!*”. Second, apart from making joint analyses, capitals may develop policy together and draft joint non-papers – a sort of policy proposal. As with joint analyses, we can expect that when a non-paper has been reviewed by several capitals it will be of higher quality, and just like with the first kind of cooperation, *Strategizing and Coordination*, a non-paper will carry more weight when it is supported by several member states. A bonus of this kind of cooperation is, that it allows for a distribution of labour. So instead of having all coalition members initiating their own non-papers and starting from scratch with all analyses, each coalition member can focus on their strengths and priorities. This frees up time and other resources, which can be used to promote the coalition’s interests in other ways. According to the Counsellor for Business and Growth, there is a clear expectation in his coalition, that if one of the members either has a special interest in a proposal or if they have an expert in the capital who would be particular well-suited to draft a proposal, then they ought to volunteer to draft the paper.

Recalling that negotiations in the Council are characterised by expertise and that counsellors expect that they can convince each other through sound reasoning, these findings suggest that coalitions can take advantage of this “expert-culture” to promote their views. By investing their joint resources in providing sound and solid analyses and non-papers they can get the upper hand in the “argumentative contest” that is also said to characterise Council negotiations (Nedergaard 2009: 652). This is supported by the Budget Counsellor who noted that “... *on the EU-budget, meetings are often one big math-competition, and those who have the best calculations also have the best arguments for how EU’s recourses should be allocated*”.

#### 5.4 Mutual support

This kind of cooperation was only detected in the Budget Counsellor’s coalition. Cooperating in a coalition may foster *loyalty* between members, so that one member can call upon the rest of the coalition to actively support a position they otherwise would not have taken a stance on or supported. This “one for all, all for one”, or in a less romantic way, “if you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours”-logic is possible because of the ever-ongoing nature of EU-negotiations. A shadow of the future (Axelrod 1984: 12) incentivise the other members to help their ally today, because they know, that they might need the support tomorrow. Engaging in a coalition thus becomes a way of securing your special interests, because you can rely on your coalition to back you up. The Budget Counsellor explained it this way; “*If there is an issue which I am very concerned about, and which is very unfortunate for Denmark, then it is often possible to secure support for issues, which the other may not have supported in the first place*”. He illustrated this by mentioning how Denmark got support for sustained funding for Greenland at a point where everyone but Denmark wanted to reduce the funding drastically. This would not have been possible without support from the rest of the coalition. Because of the explorative nature of the interviews, this way of cooperating may be underrepresented among the other interviewees. In future research, counsellors and attachés should be asked more directly whether they engage in this kind of cooperation.

## 5.5 Case-by-case Analysis

### 5.5.1 Analysis of Budget Counsellor's Coalition:

**Display 1: Budget Counsellor (25 cooperation points)**

Dimension	Level	Quotes
<b>Strategizing and Coordination</b>	High	<i>If there is a working-group meeting on a Wednesday, where we are going to discuss issue xyz, we will meet in the morning or a few days in advance and go through everyone's positions and approaches to the issues on the agenda.</i>
		<i>What we may do – this often happens on important issues – is that we coordinate the order in which we speak. Especially if there are minor differences in our positions.</i>
		<i>It is all about avoiding to showcase that there are differences in our positions... We can avoid this by coordinating the order in which we state our positions, so we support each other and don't contradict each other... We coordinate in a way, that makes it seem like we agree on all areas, but that France just added another element, which they want money for.</i>
<b>Information Sharing</b>	High	<i>Providing information is what Budget Counsellors live off; then we can be well prepared and affect the policy-process from the early stages. And you can rarely do that alone!</i>
		<i>It requires a high degree of confidentiality [in the coalition] to share this kind of information, but we do it to a very large extend.</i>
<b>Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity</b>	High	<i>It is almost a kind of putlock dinner of analytical capacity because we share so much!</i>
		<i>... It is always a huge advantage when we as a group agree on a calculation, and since it has been checked by 8 different ministries of finance, it should be pretty solid!</i>
		<i>We definitely work with joint non-papers! Because we on some important cases need to send an external signal on writing, what this group of member states believe</i>
<b>Mutual Support</b>	High	<i>It can be a considerably more difficult, and a much more bureaucratic process for the larger countries to draft these kinds of non-papers. Also, because, that if it leaks that France, Germany or UK has drafted a non-paper on an area which is controversial, it will create a lot more headlines than if it was drafted by Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria or Finland – whatever! So, there are fewer potential negative costs when a smaller member state draft than when a large one does it.</i>
		<i>If there is an issue which I am very concerned about, and which is very unfortunate for Denmark, then it is often possible to secure support for issues, which the other may not have supported in the first place</i>
		<i>To illustrate, funding for Greenland is an extremely sensitive issue for Denmark, and there have been some incidences where there have been made severe cuts in this funding. The only way that we could ever prevent that ensure that Greenland got more funding was through this loyalty and were able to say: "Guys, we know that you would not usually support this. But it is super important for Denmark, so we hope that you can help us on this small issue". It goes without saying, that we would also help the other in these kinds of incidents.</i>



According to my quantitative measure of cooperation, the Budget Counsellor's coalition had the deepest level of cooperation of the chosen cases. This very deep level of cooperation is confirmed in the qualitative analysis, where we can see (Display 1), that this coalition has a very comprehensive cooperation on all four dimensions of coalition cooperation. On *Strategizing and Coordination*, the Budget Counsellor described how they align their positions and approaches to the negotiations, and how they plan which order they should speak in the Council to send as strong and cohesive messages as possible. On *Information Sharing* he noted that they share a lot of confidential information with each other because the increased information gives them an edge when trying to affect the policy process. This coalition also *share Expertise and Analytical Capacity* to a large degree, in order to have the best arguments in the Council. According to the Budget Counsellor, they also take advantage of each other's strengths, and it is therefore mainly the smaller members of the coalition who draft non-papers, because their relatively small bureaucracies make the process much more efficient than in the larger member states where a paper can spend several weeks in coordination. The consequences of a leak would also be smaller if a controversial paper was drafted by Denmark or Sweden than by Germany or France. As the only case, this coalition also engaged in *Mutual Support*. Here the Budget Counsellor provided the example about funding for Greenland which was mentioned earlier.

## 5.5.2 Analysis of Counsellor for Business and Growth’s Coalition

**Display 2: Counsellor for Business and Growth (21 cooperation points)**

Dimension	Level	Quotes
<b>Strategizing and Coordination</b>	High	<i>And then we of course also discuss strategy. It could be something like “what do we do on the working-group meeting on Monday?”, “how do we send a strong joint message?”, “should we invite the Presidency to do this and that?” and “should we suggest something on this and this article?”. So basically, we know that we stand stronger together, and we thus try to align in terms of both strategy and content.</i>
		<i>There is an understanding that we in the like-minded group have much more in common, than we have with other member states, so if we can align our positions in between the meetings, there is a better chance that we can pull the proposal in our direction.</i>
		<i>So it is very “hands-on”. On other like-minded meetings we may discuss how we can push our ideas to the inner market, but it depends on where we are in the policy-circle.</i>
<b>Information Sharing</b>	High	<i>There is also a much larger likelihood that the Commission will listen if we come as a group of member states and want something. It is quite fundamental; we gain influence.</i>
		<i>It is also about sharing information with each other. It is a good way to gain credit. It is a bit “give and take”, so if you hear something you may happen to whisper it to your friends and the other way around.</i>
<b>Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity</b>	High	<i>[coalitions] are a great source of information. You give a little and learn a lot, simply because it is a bigger group. By cooperating, we learn much more than we would have done individually</i>
		<i>When we are drafting [the non-paper] often circulates between capitals, and all are involved. But it can also occur that Denmark and Sweden take ‘lead’ and draft something together, followed by a review from the rest of the group. (...) It also depends on the situation and how technically complicated it is. Then we may say “we have an expert who knows a lot about the goods area” or that the Irish say “we have a guy who is an expert on this, and who has the time recourses and interests to do it.</i>
<b>Mutual support</b>	X	X

The Counsellor of Business and Growth’s coalition also had a very high score on my quantitative measure of cooperation. Once again this was reflected in the qualitative analysis which showed a very deep cooperation in his coalition (display 2). They use *Strategizing and Coordination* to a high degree and try to affect the negotiations process through concerted action. They do this because they recognise that they share some fundamental beliefs and that they matter more as a group than individual countries. This coalition also use *Information Sharing* to a high degree, and its members

acknowledge that by engaging in this kind of cooperation, they will all learn a lot more, than if they had acted on their own. They are also highly engaged in *sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity* and draw on each other’s expertise to create high quality non-papers which can be supported by the entire group and thus play into negotiations. There were however no indications, that this coalition engaged in *Mutual Support*, so members would support each other when they had special interests on different issues.

### 5.5.3 Analysis of the Social Attaché’s Coalition

**Display 3: Social Attaché (18 cooperation points)**

Dimension	Level	Quote
Strategizing and Coordination	High	<i>There is a lot of strategy. If we are a set of countries who want to push for something, then we say to each other “let’s meet before the Council meeting and discuss which strategy we should choose”. “When are you going to say something?”, “When do we go on?”, “What are we actually going to say?” and “what should we pick up on and what is important for us?”.</i>
		<i>We like to coordinate before the meeting who will be the first to flag and take the word... it depends on which signals you wish to send. If we are really against something, we’d like to be among the first to speak</i>
Information Sharing	Medium	<i>It is a big part of what we use each other for – it’s outright information exchange, so that we can be as prepared as possible</i>
		<i>We don’t share everything with each other. Documents we have received under the counter from cabinets for example. It depends on the case and how sensitive it is...</i>
Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity	Low	<i>Even though we’d all seen the proposal, it took the first ten days before anybody would say something, because we are loyal to our cabinets.</i>
		<i>We met a few days ago and decided to make a table that shows how the legislation is in our countries and the consequences this proposal would have.</i> <i>We make non-papers to articulate the Danish position. We have done it a lot on a recent proposal. It is an important tool. We usually send our non-papers to the Commission and our like-minded countries.</i>
Mutual support	X X	

The Social Attaché’s coalition had a medium score on my quantitative measure of cooperation. Once again, this is reflected in the qualitative analysis, where there are varying levels in the degree to which the coalition use the different ways of cooperating (display 3). It uses *Strategizing and Coordination* to a high degree. Like the two previous cases, this coalition meets before working group meetings to align their positions and lay down a strategy. Even though this coalition also engages in *Information*

*Sharing* and perceive it as an important part of the cooperation, unlike the other cases, they are warier about sharing confidential and sensitive information with each other. This coalition also show a rather low degree of cooperation on *sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity*. Instead of agreeing as a group that a non-paper should be produced to promote their joint interests, the Social Attaché only report that when Danish non-papers have been written, they are subsequently send to like-minded who can support them if they like. They have however cooperated on making a table that would highlight the consequences of a proposal in their countries. There were no indications that the coalitions engaged in *Mutual Support*.

#### 5.5.4 Analysis of the Deputy Nicolaidis’ Coalition

**Display 4: Deputy Nicolaidis (16 cooperation points)**

Dimension	Level	Quotes
Strategizing and Coordination	High	Usually, we look at the meeting-agenda and discuss how we should approach the meeting strategically, who we can manipulate a bit and how we ensure that our arguments are as sharp as possible. And then we plan who should speak and who should support.  [Coordination] can happen anytime from before a meeting to the margins of a meeting. All of a sudden, you can get poked on the shoulder by a colleague who says “we need to interfere and say something on this and this topic”.
Information Sharing	Low	The member states that we are most like-minded with is Sweden and the Netherlands. We can almost tell in advance what they would like to say, and then support them – sometimes we do need to ask them though. But information sharing per sé... we’ve mainly done it with the Commission on climate, where the eastern member states were against, and where I and a few other were informed about some Council Conclusions we could use.
Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity	No Cooperation	We haven’t made any joint non-papers in my working group. I know they do it in other CFSP-groups <sup>11</sup> , but we haven’t. It would be fun though...
Mutual support	x	x

The Deputy Nicolaidis’ coalition had the lowest score on my quantitative measure for cooperation, and also showed the most limited cooperation in the qualitative analysis (display 4) of the four cases. Like the other coalitions, this coalition engages in *Strategizing and Coordination* to a high degree; they meet before Council meetings to align their positions, lay down a strategy and plan who says what when. When it comes to *Information Sharing* the cooperation is much more limited. It is either low or non-existing, and the deputy Nicolaidis reported that they usually did not have to share information because they all knew each other’s positions most of the time. They did not engage in

<sup>11</sup> CFSP is an abbreviation of Common Foreign and Security Policy

*Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity*, even though they were aware that other groups in the Common Foreign and Security area did. There were no indications that the coalitions engaged in mutual support.

## 5.6 Cross-Case Comparison

When I had conducted this analysis, I was amazed how well the results fitted my quantitative measure for cooperation. That this measure can be used to predict the level of cooperation on different dimension adds to the validity of the measure even though it was rather rudimentary. As can be seen in Display 5, there is a remarkably clear pattern between my measure of cooperation and the number of ways a coalition cooperates and the degree to which it uses the different ways. The Budget Counsellor’s coalition which had the highest quantitative level of cooperation engages in all four kinds of cooperation to a high degree. The same is true for the Counsellor of Competitiveness and Growth’s coalition, which had high levels on all dimensions but *Mutual Support*, which there were no indications that the members engaged in.

**Display 5: Cross-case Comparison**

Coalition	Cooperation Level	Strategizing & Coordination	Information Sharing	Sharing of Expertise & Analytical Capacity	Mutual Support
Budget	25	High	High	High	High
Competitiveness & Growth	21	High	High	High	X
Social	18	High	Medium	Low	X
Human Rights	16	High	Low	No cooperation	X

Moving on to the Social Attaché’s coalition we begin to see significant differences in the cooperation compared to the two other coalitions. In this coalition, they are more hesitant to share sensitive information, and they barely engage in *Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity*. The Deputy Nicolaidis’ coalition from the Human Rights Committee had both the lowest degree on the quantitative measure and on the different dimensions of cooperation. It almost seemed like the *raison d’être* of this group was plain *Strategizing and Coordination*, as it hardly engaged in any other ways of cooperation.

Another pattern in the data is rather interesting; All coalitions coordinate and discuss how to approach negotiations to a high degree no matter the quantitative score on cooperation. This suggests that *Strategizing and Coordination* is the most fundamental and cost-free way of cooperating. It only

requires that the coalition members meet before a Council meeting and sit down together for a short while. *Information Sharing* is already more difficult and costly, as it requires a high degree of trust before sensitive information can be shared among the like-minded. This makes intuitive sense; if a counsellor fails to protect her sources, her access to information will be closed and others will be hesitant to share with her in the future. So even though there is a lot to win for coalition members if they are able to share information to a high degree, it is costly because it requires them to build a trustful relationship. *Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity* seems to be even more costly, as only the two coalitions with a very high level of cooperation engage in it. Even though there are obvious benefits to reap from the distribution of labour and higher quality analyses and policies, this is costly as it requires cooperation, not only among counsellors who meet several times a week, but among civil servants in capitals who may not know each other so well, and have to discuss complicated matters over the phone or email instead of face to face. As I mentioned when I first accounted for it, *Mutual Support* may have been underrepresented in the interviews since I did not ask directly about it. However, the fact that only one interviewee brought it up as a clear benefit of being in a coalition suggests that it is not as common as the other ways of cooperating. I am not going to discuss all the social preconditions for loyalty and a “club-feeling” to emerge, but I speculate that, in line with the first analysis, a strong counter-coalition and a long shadow of the future may be necessary requirements for loyalty to emerge.

To tie these results to the first analysis one may reasonably argue, that a coalition who shares the same goals and values, and who faces a strong opposition in the Council will easily tap into the potential of a coalition and use the benefits it provides to affect the policy process from an early stage and to take advantage of the argumentative contest and consensus culture which are present in the Council; simply because the transaction costs are smaller and the gains will be relatively larger compared to a coalition with less homogeneous interests and a more diffuse opposition in the Council.

## 5.7 Summary

In this section I have shown that coalitions may engage in at least four distinct kinds of cooperation. Strategizing and Coordination, Information Sharing, Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity and Mutual Support. Through a case-by-case analysis followed by a cross-case analysis I showed that my quantitative measure for cooperation corresponded accurately with my qualitative data, so the higher score a coalition had, the more it would use the different ways of cooperating. This can be seen as a validation of my quantitative measure.

I also argued that the costs of engaging in the different kinds of cooperation differed significantly with *Coordination and Strategizing* being the cheapest and *Mutual Support* the most expensive. I tied these findings to the first analysis, and argued that we can expect coalitions with very homogeneous preferences that face strong opposition in the Council to use the potential of their coalition to a higher degree than coalitions with less homogeneous preferences and diffuse opposition.

Even though these results are of a more tentative nature than the results of the previous analysis I believe that they are highly interesting. Firstly, because I have managed to open the black-box of coalitions in the Council and identify clear patterns in the way they work. Secondly, these results can guide future coalition scholars who wish to create more accurate indexes of cooperation. This framework provides the directions for which dimensions of cooperation that should be investigated and how each dimension should be weighted in the index construction. Thirdly, they are interesting, because coalition members can use this framework to easily analyse how their coalition work and where they may enhance their cooperation. Coalitions may then begin to experiment with ways to reduce transaction costs and thus gain an advantage.

## 6 Future Research on Coalitions in the Council

To schedule how a research programme on coalitions should be organised I have brought back the three building blocks of coalition-research that I presented in section 2.4 As I also mentioned there, the purpose of this research programme would be to structure research on coalitions in order to mature coalition theory and become more relevant to practitioners.



**Figure 1: The building-blocks of coalition-studies**

### 6.1 Coalition Formation: Block 1

Even though a lot of energy have been put into investigating this block, we have not reached a satisfying level of knowledge about the nature of coalitions in the Council yet. What we need in this area is not more studies about which countries that cooperate and why, but rather thick descriptions of the nature of coalitions in the Council. A clear requirement for deeper and more complex studies of a phenomenon is an accurate description of the beast. As John Gerring notes, accurate descriptions require a significant amount of resources, and it is thus more efficient to collect descriptive evidence when description is the sole purpose. In contrast, during causal studies, scholars only collect the descriptive evidence that is necessary to answer their research question. In Gerring's words: "Narrowly focused data expeditions entail scaling high cliffs and returning to base camp with only a small sample of what one finds at the peak" (Gerring 2012: 110). I completely agree with this proposition, and a natural first step would be for scholars to develop a systematic framework of how coalitions in the Council are structured and which structures that are most prevalent. Inspiration from network analysis could be used to describe coalitions in terms of whether there is a core and a periphery of members, how formalised coalitions are and how open they are to new members (Elgström 2016: 2-4). Ideally, a typology of coalitions could be developed and we could begin testing which factors determine the type of coalition. The better we know the units of our analysis, the more qualified theories we can make! Another interesting phenomenon to investigate would be the few



cases where a country does not engage in a coalition at all. Three out of the 35 cases in my quantitative analysis did not participate in a coalition. In depth analysis of these cases could shed light on the necessary and sufficient conditions which are needed for a coalition to emerge.

## 6.2 Coalitions in Action: Block 2

When we know more about which types of coalitions that exist and which are the most prevalent, new questions will have to be answered. E.g. Do different types of coalition engage in different kinds of cooperation? Are some kinds of coalitions better at overcoming transaction costs and can we for example expect that coalitions that are more closed to newcomers are better at sharing more sensitive information than other kinds of coalitions?

Another issue in this block would be to identify which transaction costs apart from time and energy that prevent cooperation. The Budget Counsellor, who had the highest level of cooperation noted that a potential cost was, that members occasionally would have to moderate their positions if their coalition opposed it. In that sense, loss of autonomy may also be a potential cost that should be weighed against the benefits of coalition membership. When we have a better knowledge of the transaction costs coalitions in the Council face, we can switch the focus to ways to limit transaction costs, as suggested in the qualitative analysis.

Future research should also seek to test the revised  $H_3$ , which stated that it is the potential strength of other coalitions and not the strength of one counter-coalition in particular that drives a coalition to increase its cooperation.

## 6.3 The Effects of Coalitions: Block 3

This block may be the most complex to conduct research on, simply because it is causal in nature. However, research in this block holds the possibility of making coalition theory relevant to practitioners. With a typology of coalitions and knowledge about how each coalition tend to cooperate internally, we may try to measure whether some coalitions are more successful than other.

A well-known function of coalitions is that they simplify negotiations by decreasing the number of actors (Hopmann 1996: 250-251). A different approach to this block would be to investigate whether the quality of legislation varies when coalition patterns are fixed or fluid or whether a compromise is more just when one type of coalitions occurs compared to another type.

## 7 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have investigated the following research question:

- (1) Which factors influence the degree of cooperation in coalitions in Council working-groups and*
- (2) how do these coalitions cooperate internally?*

The motivation for asking this question was the empirical observation, I made in Brussels, that coalitions in Council working groups cooperate to very different extends, and that the nature of the cooperation varies significantly.

### 7.1 Conclusion on Part 1

To answer the first part of the research question, I started from a rational choice approach, and with the classic works of coalition theory in mind, I derived the following three hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Problem-solving negotiations lower the needs for cooperation within a coalition, whereas negotiations characterised by bargaining increase it.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: The more homogeneous interests that the coalition members have, the higher is the level of cooperation*

*H<sub>3</sub>: The degree of cooperation in a coalition is affected by the presence of a counter-coalition and how strong this coalition is.*

To test these hypotheses, I chose a quantitative design and collected the data through a survey which was sent to the counsellors and attachés at the Danish and Swedish Permanent Representations. When the data had been gathered, the hypotheses were analysed through bivariate regressions.

H<sub>1</sub> was quickly falsified, and it turns out negotiation mode has no effect what so ever, on the degree of cooperation, coalition membership or the presence of a counter-coalition. Even though this finding was surprising, I argued that it was positive that a factor which often receives a lot of attention in negotiation theory could be rejected this clearly, as it allows us to focus our efforts on other explanations in future studies.

H<sub>2</sub> could not be falsified, as there was a significant correlation between interest homogeneity and cooperation. This hypothesis has thus been made probable. This correlation was of medium strength.

The test of H<sub>3</sub> yielded some very curious results. Even though the *presence* of a counter-coalition had no effect on cooperation, it turned out, that in the cases where a counter-coalition was present, the strength of this counter-coalition had a strong significant effect on cooperation. This apparent contradiction was explained through the concept of diffuse conflict lines, and I proposed a revised H<sub>3</sub>:

*H<sub>3</sub>: The degree of cooperation in a coalition is affected by the strength of other coalitions.*

As this revised hypothesis was not tested, it will be up to future research to determine its validity, but the fact that there was a strong significant correlation between cooperation and the strength of a counter-coalition strongly suggests that there is something to be found.

## 7.2 Conclusions on Part 2

Lacking solid theoretical expectations about how coalitions would cooperate, I chose an explorative approach to answer the second part of the research question. Here, I used the knowledge from my quantitative analysis about the level of cooperation in my respondents' coalitions to choose four cases with very different levels of cooperation. With interview-data from each case, I developed a framework on how coalitions cooperate, and I was able to identify four distinct kinds of cooperation which a coalition may engage in. These were 1) Strategizing and Coordination, 2) Information Sharing, 3) Sharing of Expertise and Analytical Capacity and 4) Mutual Support. With this framework in hand, I conducted case-by-case analysis followed by a cross-case analysis. These analyses showed that my quantitative measure accurately fitted the qualitative data, so that the higher score on the quantitative measure that a coalition had, the more kinds of cooperation would it participate in. I then tied this analysis to the quantitative results and argued that the transaction costs between these four ways of cooperating varied significantly, with Strategizing and Cooperation being the cheapest and Mutual Support the most expensive. I further argued, that if transaction costs are low enough, engaging in these activities allow coalition members to affect the policy process at an early stage and take advantage of the culture in the Council where reasoning and consensus are strong norms.

### 7.3 Final Words

After I had answered my research question, I elaborated on how a future research programme on coalitions in the Council could be designed. The aim of this research programme would be to qualify the literature, and make coalition theory more relevant to practitioners.

Even though the results of this thesis cannot be generalised immediately to all coalitions in the Council due to a north-western bias, I still suspect that they will be valid for coalitions from other regions. I suspect this because it seems highly unlikely that counsellors from south- and eastern Europe would have different motives than their north-western colleagues, and that they would be significantly more or less calculating in their coalition-cooperation.

Even though the advantages of engaging in a political coalition played very well into the culture in the Council, these advantages are probably not limited to the Council but may be also be reaped by coalition members in international organisations in general. As international organisations become more important, so may coalitions due to the significant benefits they provide to their members. The results from the quantitative analysis may also be relevant to coalitions in international organisations, and we can reasonably expect, that the countries that share the most interests also have the deepest cooperation. And as the EU, which can be perceived as a highly-formalised coalition, become an increasingly more cohesive player on the international stage it will be interesting to follow whether other regional collaborations increase their coordination in response to the advantages

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