

# Political Opposition in Swedish EU Politics

## A Study on Riksdag Chamber Debates 2010/2011-2020/2021

# Abstract

In a democratic system, various party political views are set against each other, i.e. there are opposing positions, for voters to choose between, because in a democratic system the power proceeds from the people. However, national parliaments within the EU are criticised for their *democratic deficit*, which can be caused by the lack of opposition, a so-called *opposition deficit*. The problem is consequently that voters do not have the possibility of using their power by choosing from differentiated alternatives. In this paper the visibility and *normalisation* of the EU and opposition in EU politics have been studied in the Swedish Riksdag's Chamber between the parliamentary sessions 2010/2011-2020/2021. The results of the study shows, that the EU was mentioned in 39% and opposing party political views in EU politics in 3,3% of all interpellation debates within the set time frame, and that a *normalisation* of EU affairs has not occurred within the years studied. The conclusion is that the Riksdag suffers from an *opposition deficit* in EU affairs. The proposal for continued research is hence to structure an explanatory research design, aiming to answer the question *why* the Riksdag and other national parliaments within the EU suffer from an *opposition deficit*.

**Keywords:** Opposition, EU, Parliaments, Chamber Debates

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# List of Abbreviations

CA	Content Analysis
CEA	Committee on European Affairs
EU	European Union
MP	Member of Parliament
MS	Member State (of the European Union)
NP	National Parliament
TEU	Treaty on the European Union

# 1. Introduction

*1 § All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people.*

*4 § The Riksdag is the foremost representative of the people.*

(Instrument of Government 1974:152)

The Swedish parliament, the Riksdag, celebrates 100 years of democracy 2018-2022. In more than 25 of those years Sweden has been a member of the European Union (EU), and gradually adapted to the EU political system. Sweden, just like the other member states (MS), is expected to handle EU politics in a manner corresponding to the handling of domestic politics, e.g. when it comes to presenting and debating diverse party political views in the Chamber. The MS constitute a dimension of the EU political system and the EU constitutes a dimension of the domestic. This becomes evident not least in the light of the fact that MS are bound by EU law, i.e. EU law takes precedence over laws enacted in the MS, due to a number of domestic competences being transferred to the EU-level (Regeringen 2017).

Accordingly, in a democratic system diverse party political views will be set against each other for voters to choose from, because in a democratic system the power shall stem from the people. However, national parliaments (NP) within the EU have in general been criticised for their so-called *democratic deficit* incurred by their handling of EU affairs (e.g. Hoerner 2019; Neuhold 2020), and scholars have been busy debating this question since the early mid-1990s (Raunio 2009, 317). A democratic process involves various elements, and among them is opposition. The *democratic deficit* can be caused by the lack of presentation of differentiated party political views, i.e. opposition, which is referred to as a so-called *opposition deficit* (Karlsson and Persson 2018, 888-889). The problem of which is that voters cannot see which political alternatives are available and do not have the possibility of pursuing their power through choosing from differentiated alternatives. A democratic process suffering from an *opposition deficit* thereby also suffers from a *democratic deficit*. It is an issue, which can be seen in the light of democracy named as a value on which the EU is founded (article 2 TEU). Arguably, in order to use the full potential of the EU political system, there need to be

political opposition in EU affairs in the NPs. It is consequently an issue that scholars have found that NPs suffer from a *democratic deficit* in EU affairs. In case this claim has some foundation, the EU MS have fundamental issues to work on.

The precondition, that in a democracy all power proceeds from the people, is explicitly stated in the gateway article of the Instrument of Government, one of the documents that make up the constitution of Sweden, which is cited above (1974:152). Hence, in Sweden diverse party political alternatives must be known and available for the people to choose from. The Chamber of the parliament is the arena where voters are informed about EU politics, and where the MPs “*communicate the opportunities and constraints of EU affairs to their domestic audiences*” (Rauh and De Wilde (2018, 196-197). It is also claimed, that “*MPs speaking on the plenary floor know that anything they say can be heard by the wider electorate*” (ibid.). It is therefore of importance for a democratic process, that MPs make their various political positions visible through opposition in the Chamber debates.

In this paper the choice was made to study opposition in the Swedish Riksdag, because the Riksdag is one of the NPs in the EU, which is most active concerning EU scrutiny, and whose mode of parliamentary activity in EU affairs is thus categorized as a *policy shaper* by Auel, Rozenberg and Tacea (2015, 79-88). It is thereby expected that opposition in EU politics will be visible in the Riksdag Chamber, and if the EU or opposition in EU politics is not normalised and thereby visible in the active Riksdag one can draw conclusions that opposition in EU politics is not to observe in other NPs with lower EU activity either.

Blomgren states that, in EU politics, the Riksdag has not constituted an

*arena for political debate, where alternatives are set against each other and where the citizens have a reasonable chance to choose between different political solutions*<sup>1</sup>  
(Blomgren 2005, 102).

However, in general when discussing whether NPs do suffer from an *opposition deficit* scholars do not agree whether this is the case (Neunreither 1998; Schmidt 2007; Mair 2007; Rauh and De Wilde 2018) or not (Karlsson and Persson 2018). The latter group of scholars state that opposition in EU politics is a visible and a recurring element in domestic politics

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<sup>1</sup> My translation

(Hooghe & Marks 2001; de Vries 2007; Hobolt & de Vries 2015), indicating that the EU is normalised in the NPs, a claim that is built on the perception that NPs used to lack the EU dimension in their daily work, but that this dimension on EU politics is becoming a recurring element. Accordingly, the *normalisation* of EU politics indicate that the distinctions between the EU and the domestic politics have been blurred out, something that is referred to as *mainstreaming* by Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff (2015). If *mainstreaming* of EU politics does occur and the EU becomes more of a natural political dimension of NPs, then opposition on EU politics will become more visible in Chamber debates over time. This will be observed at least to some extent in the areas of highest opposition and will increase over time.

The theoretical frame will be set through findings of previous research, which will be presented in the next chapter. Scholars supporting the hypothesis that a *normalisation* of EU affairs *does not* occur in NPs in general and in the Riksdag in particular are set against scholars supporting the hypothesis that *normalisation* of EU affairs *does* occur in NPs in general and in the Riksdag in particular. If the *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* does occur in the Riksdag, this might be expected to be visible in the interpellation debates on the policy areas generating the highest opposition in the specialised Committee on European Affairs (CEA): *migration, education* and *culture*. If the EU is not visible in debates in these policy areas, conclusions can be drawn that the EU will not be visible in other policy areas either, because it is shown that there is EU opposition in these policy areas in the CEA.

The aim of this paper is to study whether and to what extent various party political views, i.e. opposition, are visible in Riksdag Chamber debates and whether these, in relation to what is claimed by the *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* theory, have become more visible over time.

The research questions are:

- *Are different party political views in EU politics visible in the Riksdag's Chamber debates between the parliamentary sessions 2010/2011 and 2020/2021?*
- *Can a normalisation of EU politics to be observed in the Riksdag Chamber debates, i.e. are changes in the direction of more EU opposition or is the EU more frequently referred to over time?*

The study will be conducted by examining all interpellation debates between September 2010 and April 2021 and within the three policy areas generating the highest opposition within domestic politics in the CEA: *migration*, *education* and *culture*. Since the Government represents Sweden in the EU, and the legislative power has shifted toward the Government in conjunction with the accession to the Union, one can expect opposition in EU politics to be particularly visible in the dynamics between the Riksdag and the Government in Chamber debates, which is why this study is focused on interpellations debates.

Interpellation debates are the one of the most common types of debates, based on the number of hours that they take up in the Chamber (Riksdagsförvaltningens informationsenhet 2014/15; 2015/16). They are scheduled in the Riksdag calendar almost on a weekly basis, in contrast to e.g. EU debates and party leader debates, which take place a few times per year. The MPs raise issues they find important and urgent in their interpellations to the ministers. One can expect opposition on EU politics to be lifted in these debates too, since if *normalisation* of EU politics occurs, the members of parliament (MPs) could be expected to be keen to raise EU issues and present various political positions on EU politics on going. In the following sections the disposition of the paper will be outlined.

### 1.1. Outline of The Paper

In this section an overview of the outline of this paper will be made known. In the second chapter the theoretical framework will be introduced. Within the framework previous research, which contain theories that are supporting the hypothetical stance that a *normalisation* of EU politics does not occur are presented in contrast to previous research, which contain theories that are supporting the hypothetical stance that a *normalisation* of EU politics occurs. The focus will first lie on NPs in general and then the Riksdag in particular. This chapter also specifies basic theoretical concepts and present the theoretical implications.

In the third chapter the chosen methods are introduced, methodological choices are motivated and the course of action is thoroughly described. Continuingly the choice of methods, what this paper can not be answering and the gathering of data are reflected upon.



In the fourth chapter the results from the study in this paper are presented, to begin with the overall results and thereafter the results policy area by policy area in order of where most to least opposition was found.

In the fifth chapter an analysis will be introduced, firstly in relation to previous research and the presented theories. Then an analysis on general trends and the effects of social development will be made. Thereafter an analysis will be made on the results in relation to the hypothesis that a normalisation does not occur and in relation to the hypothesis that a normalisation does occur respectively. Continuingly generalisations of the results in relation to previous research and presented theories are discussed and lastly concluding discussions on the results presented in the study of this paper.

In the sixth and last chapter conclusions will be drawn based on previous research, theories, hypotheses and the results of the study presented in this paper. Lastly proposals on continued research will be made.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter the theoretical framework for this paper will firstly be presented. The aim of the framework is to articulate the lens through which the method, research design and further on the analysis will take their point of view. Thereafter, the basic concepts will be introduced before the theoretical implications and hypotheses will be posited.

### 2.1. Theories on That Normalisation of EU Politics Does Not Occur

Firstly in this section theories supporting the hypothesis that *normalisation* of EU politics in NPs in general does *not* occur will be presented. Secondly the theoretical stance is applied on the case of the Riksdag. This is done by the use of studies supporting the hypothetical stance that a *normalisation* of EU politics does not occur in the Riksdag. All in all the data of these studies will be useful in contrast to the theories supporting the hypothetical stance that a *normalisation* of EU politics does occur. The latter will be introduced in the following section.

#### 2.1.1. The Case of National Parliaments in General

It is argued in a study (Winzen, de Ruiter and Rocabert 2018), mapping parliamentary debates within the five selected NPs: Austria, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Spain, that EU affairs are of low priority among the members of parliaments (MPs) and that other MPs than the party leaders are the drivers of EU-debates; that EU debates are unlikely to be the party leaders' first choice. However, the scholars claim that even the MPs who are not party leaders avoid the EU, because they do not find it worth spending their plenary time in debating the EU. The difference between these MPs and the party leaders, however, is that the former cannot always ignore the EU without criticism. Winzen, de Ruiter and Rocabert believe that this trend depends on that "*the multidimensional character of EU-topics make them ill-suited for the communication of parties' messages to voters and coalition partners*"

(Ibid. 483). The authors did not find any increase of EU debates during the years studied between 2003 and 2012.

It is argued in a second study that the NPs suffer from an *opposition deficit*, meaning that NPs insufficiently present differentiated party political positions to the voters, a factor which is explained by that the citizens in the studied countries have become more sceptical to the EU. The Government, rather than those striving for office, raise the visibility of the EU, and the opposition parties to a lesser degree than the Government parties do (Rauh and De Wilde 2018).

It is argued in a third study on European elections, that national parties are closer to their voters “*on the left/right dimension than on the EU dimension*” and that “*parties are more supportive of European integration than are their voters*” (Mattila and Raunio 2006), something that results in a gap between MPs and voters on the European dimension. Hence, vote-seeking political parties avoid debates on European integration (Raunio 2009, 320). In the next section the hypothetical stance that a *normalisation* will *not* occur will be applied on the case of Sweden through scholars sharing this hypothetical stance or whose research findings support and strengthen the assertion that this hypothetical stance is also applicable for the case of the Riksdag in particular.

#### 2.1.2. The Case of the Riksdag in particular

The finding on what is to be observed for NPs in general is also supported by Hellström (2009, 31) to be the case for the Riksdag. Hellström shows that less than 1 per cent of all the statements by Swedish politicians before the Riksdag elections in the 1990s and 2000s covered the European cooperation. The author draws the same conclusions as Mattila and Raunio, that parties and their representatives do not win elections through discussing the EU (Hellström 2014). The findings of these studies cover the engagement of MPs in discussing and debating EU politics in Sweden. The following section will bring some clarity to the public discussions on EU-politics in Sweden and what implications these can have on the vote-seeking MPs.

A Swedish official governmental investigation (SOU 2016:10) states that there are shortcomings in the public discussions on issues concerning the EU level. The investigation shows among other things a lack of knowledge among the general public and among teachers in elementary and upper secondary school and university. The lack of knowledge among teachers at different levels is explained by a negative spiral of university education not educating the teachers in EU politics to a satisfactory degree; the EU is said not taught in the education on Swedish politics. The investigation also shows a lack of knowledge about the EU among politicians and elected representatives on the local level, where a large amount estimate their EU-knowledge as low. The investigation also points at the finding that many Swedish citizens consider themselves not to be able to influence politics on EU-level. However, even if the participation in the EP-elections is lower in Sweden than the national parliamentary elections, there has been an increase of participation in the last two EP-elections. In the 2014 elections 51,1 % participated in the EP election and 82,5 % participated in the national parliamentary one. Lastly, the investigation highlights the correlation between low media reports on the EU and the lack of knowledge about the EU among the general public (SOU 2016:10).

The studies introduced in the above sections are perhaps stemming from a common democratic issue in terms of take-off point: that voters know too little about the EU to become interested and the parties do not present their intentions in EU politics, because the time and resources invested in debating EU politics will not lead to winning votes in an upcoming election. However, even though there are scholars who claim the *normalisation* of EU politics is in progress, and that the differentiation between the EU and the domestic politics is blurred, involving more and more MPs – something referred to as *mainstreaming* (Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff, 2013; 2015). This theory will be presented in the section below.

## 2.2. Theories on That Normalisation of EU Politics Does Occur

Firstly in this section the theories supporting the hypothesis that *normalisation* of EU politics does occur will be introduced. Secondly a section on reflections will be made on whether the applicability of the hypothetical findings for NPs in general also is applicable on the Riksdag in particular. The findings of this section and the ones above are further useful for posit hypothetical implications and formulating hypotheses in the upcoming section 2.4.

### 2.2.1. The Case of National Parliaments in General

According to the scholars Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff (2013; 2015), there are changes taking place in direction of a *normalisation* of NPs – what they refer to as *mainstreaming*. The scholars observe a trend in NPs that has been realised mainly because of the Lisbon Treaty from 2009 and the 2008 financial crisis, the effect of which has meant “*the diffusion of EU affairs to a greater number of actors and activities*” (Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff 2013, 18). The Lisbon Treaty is claimed to have implicated both opportunities and challenges for NPs, which in turn has come to constituting an onset for the *mainstreaming* of EU affairs scrutiny into other parts of the NPs than the specialised Committees on European Affairs (CEA). Through the Lisbon Treaty the NPs were assigned an even more prominent role in the European governance, adding an increased pressure to the NPs CEAs, which has led to a spill-over of EU politics from the specialised committees into other parts of NPs, where a *normalisation* of the handling of EU politics takes place. This implicates that European integration for NPs no longer only is motivated by participation through transferring competences to the EU-level, but a *diffusion of EU affairs* takes place, meaning that there is a *normalisation* of EU politics toward being handled correspondingly to the domestic one. The scholars write that *mainstreaming* is:

*the integration of EU affairs scrutiny into the work of a wider circle of MPs of a parliament with a view towards the normalization of the treatment of EU affairs also in terms of procedures* (Ibid. 5).

Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff have, after noticing *mainstreaming* to occur in the studied NPs, set up a frame of six factors, three incentives and three disincentives of *mainstreaming* EU scrutiny outside the CEA (Ibid. 7-10). The aim of presenting the frame of incentives and disincentives is not to position and analyse the probability or extent of *mainstreaming* that occurs in the Riksdag, but to make known that there are – at least in theory – push and pull effects on the likelihood of *mainstreaming* occurring and also that the Riksdag is probably affected by a shift in the way in which EU politics are handled domestically. When analysing what underlying factors contribute to *mainstreaming* to occurring in the NPs studied in the research the scholars noted the three incentives and three disincentives introduced in the following paragraphs.

The three incentives are: 1) that there are very few aspects of national policy that remain untouched by the European dimension; the lines between what is domestic and what is European are blurred. This results in difficulties and a lack of resources to only deal with EU issues within the CEA, because its resources are not enough to deal with all EU issues. 2) The Lisbon Treaty is a critical juncture for NPs to have more of a say in the policy making process. This is due to e.g. the increased possibility of scrutiny and the establishment of the so-called *political dialogue*, through which the NPs can send opinions and reasoned opinions on Commission proposals directly to the Commission and receive direct answers on these (Rozenberg and Heffler 2015, 12-14). According to the *mainstreaming* incentives the *political dialogue* adds pressure on the CEA's resources, *why* the *mainstreaming* is likely to occur. 3) A shift of EU-scrutiny outside the CEA is likely to occur if NPs believe that *mainstreaming* will be cost-effective and simultaneously will improve their power of European scrutiny – “*whether by mandating, influencing policy or holding governments to account*” (Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff 2015, 9).

The three disincentive of *mainstreaming* EU scrutiny are: 1) the cost of resource and time; MPs and staff in other parts of the NPs, who have a full workload, are less likely to welcome additional tasks and new everyday portfolios. The *mainstreaming* will also mean the engagement in cooperation between committees and groups, a type of cooperation that seems “*fairly weak*” (Ibid.). 2) The political visibility of EU issues and degree of pro-Europeanness also seems to matter; a high level of pro-Europeanness decreases the chance of *mainstreaming*, because if the level of EU popularity is high the EU is not considered to warrant a significant scrutiny. 3) The effectiveness of a centralised CEA matters; the

*mainstreaming* is less likely in an NP where the level of effectiveness in a centralised CEA's is high, because the EU scrutiny sufficiently and to a satisfactory degree is handled in the CEA.

Even though the authors have up a frame for both incentives and disincentives for *mainstreaming* to occur, they find in their study that for the NPs studied, the incentives for *mainstreaming* outweigh the disincentives for *mainstreaming*, and a *normalisation* of EU affairs occurs. In the next section hypothetical reflections are made on the case of the Riksdag in particular.

### 2.2.2. The Case of the Riksdag in Particular

As mentioned, this paper will not attempt to position the Riksdag within the frame of incentives and disincentives of the *mainstreaming* theory. However, to posit theoretical implications one must look beyond the isolated Chamber in order to make a picture of the likelihood of whether and to what extent voters will be presented with various political positions. If the *mainstreaming* theory is correct, and EU politics are normalised in the Riksdag, then EU opposition could be expected to be visible in the Chamber. However, if the *mainstreaming* theory is not correct, and EU politics are not normalised in the Riksdag, then EU opposition could be expected not to be visible in the Chamber.

There are not many studies made on the *normalisation* theory in the Riksdag in particular. However, there is a study by Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson (2018), which supports the hypothetical stance that a *normalisation* does occur. The three authors studied EU opposition in the specialised Committee on European Affairs (CEA), a type of committee established to involve NPs in the decision-making process (Hegeland and Mattson 1995, 435). The three scholars have studied EU opposition covering the years from the Swedish association to the Union in 1995 until 2016, corresponding to 150 meetings and 6 215 statements from members of the parliament (MPs), showing that there is a higher level of disagreement and disputes than consensus in the CEA.

Their study also shows that the opposition increases over time, in the CEA with the highest proportion of opposition opinions noted for the last governmental term of office studied, 2014-2018 with 57% opposition found in all the statements studied (Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson 2018, 5; 13). The three scholars conclude their study by commenting that not only the level of opposition has increased but also that the level of opposition in the CEA was higher than expected. The scholars contend that the quality of the EU-debates in the Riksdag has increased, meaning that Sweden has become a more skilled member of the Union; the MPs to an increasing degree make known of alternatives to the Government's pursued EU politics, rather than simply criticising it (Ibid. 6). Their study can be interpreted as supporting the hypothetical stance that a *normalisation* of EU opposition in the CEA occurs. As the theoretical framework is accounted for, some basic concepts will be sorted out before the theoretical implications can be posited and hypotheses can be introduced.

### 2.3. Basic Concepts

In this section it will be elaborated what the basic theoretical concepts *democracy* and *political opposition* implicate, because the concepts can be defined in various ways. The definitions set in this section constitute the stance on which the theoretical implications will be deposited and the hypotheses formulated.

#### 2.3.1. Democracy

There is no clear definition of the term democracy, but in this section the definitions that are connected to opposition by various eminent scholars will be compiled. Schumpeter, an Austrian political economist active in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, defines democracy as following:

*[T]he democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote* (Schumpeter 1942, 269).



Lipset, an American sociologist, further stresses the ability of choosing among alternatives, meaning that a political system shall permit “*the largest possible part of the population to influence these decisions through their ability to choose among alternative contenders for political office*” (Lipset 1959, 71).

Dahl states that one can “*attempt to understand modern democratic politics by examining opposition*” (Dahl 1966, xviii). Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson claim that Dahl once shall have said that opposition is “*close to the most distinctive feature of democracy*”<sup>2</sup> (2018, 2), and according to Fabbrini, Dahl shall have stated that “*polyarchies [another of Dahl’s terms for opposition] come to resemble ideal democracies as closely as possible*” (Fabbrini 2003, 134). Political opposition is clearly a fundamental feature of a prosperous democracy, why it is of interest to further looking into. In the following section voices of *political opposition* will be heard and the notion of the term will be sorted out.

### 2.3.2. Political Opposition

In an active parliamentarism the parliament shall constitute an arena for negotiations and debates on the Government’s proposal, where opposing ideas can influence the political outcomes (Blomgren 2005, 79-80). As mentioned, in a *democratic process* diverse political positions will be set against each other for the voters to choose from, which indicate that there need to be some degree of opposition. If the political representatives would agree on all issues there would be no alternatives for the voters to choose from (Ibid. 81). According to Dahl there is no clear definition of opposition. However he defines opposition as a time period, within which “*B cannot determine the conduct of the government; and that B is opposed to the conduct of government by A*”. B is what Dahl refers to as opposition. He also stresses an interest in A and B insofar they perform their roles in different ways.

Further he states that it is useful to distinguish between *active* and *passive opposition*. The difference in mode lies in whether B decides to undertake a deliberative course of action or simply recognize the conflict, but decide not to act on it (Dahl 1966, xvi-xvii). Dahl further refers to *political opposition* as the possibility of *gaining enlightening understanding*,

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<sup>2</sup> My translation

which in short terms indicate that in a *democratic process* different political positions shall be set against each other and be presented to the voters to choose from (Dahl 2015, 37-38). This definition of opposition is close to Kirchheimer's (1957) definition of *classic opposition*, i.e. opposition to political content.

In this paper, the term opposition refers to the above-mentioned definitions of *active opposition* to political content rather than opposition in term of the distinction between governing parties and parties in opposition. As the theoretical framework and basic concepts are clarified theoretical implications will be deposited and hypotheses formulated.

#### 2.4. Theoretical Implications and Hypotheses

In this section the theoretical implications deposited from the findings of previous research, i.e. the theoretical framework, will be introduced. We have seen studies claiming that in general there are incentives for *mainstreaming* of EU politics in terms "*towards the normalization of the treatment of EU affairs*" within the NPs and that more and more MPs are involved in EU affairs. Seen from the study by Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff one can draw the conclusion that a *mainstreaming* generally occurs in the EU MS.

However, other scholars have shown that in general EU affairs are of low priority among the NP's MPs; that the NPs suffer from *opposition deficit*; and that vote-seeking political parties avoid debates on European integration due to the gap between MPs and voters on the European dimension. This paper takes the stance that the *opposition deficit* theory is applicable on the Swedish Riksdag in particular. This since it is shown from a Swedish official governmental investigation that there are shortcomings in the public discussions on issues concerning the EU level and a wide spread lack of knowledge on the EU, which partly can be explained by knowledge deficit within the educational system and the medias' lacking reports on EU politics. The low level of knowledge can explain the low level of interest for EU affairs among the citizens, which in turn can explain why vote-seeking parties are not investing time and resources for debating EU-politics. This paper therefore formulate its hypotheses as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): If the *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* theory is correct and EU politics is normalised in the Riksdag, then the mentioning of the EU and EU opposition is visible in the Chamber.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): If the *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* theory is incorrect and EU politics is not normalised in the Riksdag, then the mentioning of the EU and EU opposition is not visible in the Chamber.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): If the *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* theory is correct and EU politics is normalised in the Riksdag, then the mentioning of the EU and EU opposition become more visible in the Chamber over time.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): If the *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* theory is incorrect and EU politics is not normalised in the Riksdag, then the mentioning of the EU and EU opposition do not become more visible in the Chamber over time.

### 3. Methods

To remind on the aim of this paper, it is to study whether and to what extent EU politics and various party political views, i.e. opposition, are visible in Riksdag Chamber debates and whether these have become more visible over time will be examined.

A quantitative Content Analysis (CA) was the method used for conducting the study in this paper, since the aim of this study is to examine the frequency of a phenomenon, i.e. opposition in EU politics, for which the CA as method was determined most useful. However, the counting of words, which otherwise characterise CA, was not applicable for capturing EU opposition as there is no party political position to compare the opposition to. It was not the content in the opposition *per se* that was of interest but to what extent EU opposition is visible in the Chamber as articulated through uttered opposing ideas.

According to Krippendorff, the type of CA approach used in this paper is abductive and related to the type of research design, which is characterised as problem-driven (Ibid. 357-370). In a problem-driven analysis one can gain knowledge through “*a systematic reading of potentially available texts*” (2013, 357). Thereby, CA is the tool, which was determined most useful for systematically extracting the frequency of opposition in EU politics within the policy fields of highest opposition. It is also a flexible tool, which can be used to study everything from small to big amounts of data and both manually and automated (Esaiasson et al. 2012; Boréus and Bergström 2012, 50; Krippendorff 2013), which was useful in this two-folded quantitative study.

A first, manual step was needed to extract the relevant data into a data matrix, as there was no political position to compare the opposition to, which otherwise would have enabled an automated approach, and since all interpellation debates together with all other events in the Chamber have been recorded in the same Chamber protocol. Content analysts tend to use unique tailored coding categories to the available texts (Krippendorff 2013, 366), which also was the case for the method in this study. The coding categories were structured to capture the mentioning of the words *EU*, *Europe* or *European*, which were searched for in the Chamber’s

protocols for the interpellation debates handling the policy areas of relevance. The presence or absence of the terms was coded in a structured data matrix.

Oppositions were detected by identifying in what context the terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European* were used and by reading the statements before and after the current statement involving the term *EU*, *Europe* or *European*. If the EU was mentioned to e.g. compare Swedish politics with other EU member states, then the term EU was not mentioned in a context where activities on the EU level is debated and these were overlooked. The statements of relevance were those where the EU was mentioned to raise the topic of action on EU level. When these were detected, opposition was searched for in adjacent statements. The study were therefore structured by manually filling out a data matrix according to coding categories unique for this study. The analysis units were debates of relevance in chronically ordered, newest first, with date as a first variable to structure the matrix. A further description of the coding will be introduced further down this chapter.

The second step of an automated quantitative approach was needed in order to statistically analyse the data collected manually in the data matrix. Together with the applicable theories built on findings from previous researchers, earlier presented in this paper, the research questions will be able to be answered. The aim of this abductive research is to systematically generate knowledge on whether EU politics and EU opposition are visible and whether this visibility increases in Chamber debates.

The overall research design introduced in this section was structured to be doable and reasonable in relation to the ambition of a high level of *reliability* and *validity*, i.e. that the data, to a high level remain constant throughout variations in the measuring process (Kaplan and Goldsen 1965, 83-84) and the correspondence between what is claimed to be measured actually is measured through the use of the data instrument (Krippendorff 2013, 329). In the next section the analytical choices made of the research design will be introduced, followed by a section on the coding and reflections on the choice of methods.

### 3.1. Analytical Choices of the Study

In this section the analytical choices of the study are presented. They had to be set with respect to the limited resources in terms of manpower and time. First the time frame will be clarified, then the type of debates selected and lastly the policy areas.

#### 3.1.1. Time Frame

The time frame was set to cover the Riksdag parliamentary sessions 2010/2011 – 2020/2021, beginning in September 2010 correlating with the beginning of a new governmental term of office, i.e. Reinfeldt II, and running until the end of April 2021, the last full month before the deadline of this paper. The time frame on almost eleven years thereby includes three governmental terms of offices, the third one still running, with the next election coming up in September 2022. The terms of offices are Reinfeldt II, covering the parliamentary sessions 2010/2011-2013/2014, Löfven I: 2014/2015-2017/2018 and Löfven II: 2018/2019 and onwards. The Government Löfven II was however not formed until January 2019 as the prime minister lacked sufficient support, why the prime minister communicated that the Government would not answer interpellations or written questions before the new Government could be formed (Riksdagens protokoll 2018/19:4). This means there is a gap in the data between the election in September 2018 and the formation of Government in January 2019.

The time span was selected with the attempt of covering a result that is mostly up to date and doable given the limited resources and time. During these years it is of relevance to bare in mind the effect of social development in terms of crises, which can have an affect on the results – most importantly the repercussions of the financial crisis from 2008, the migrant crisis from 2015 onwards and the Covid-19-crisis from 2020. Further the choice of debates is presented and further on the policy areas in 3.1.3.

### 3.1.2. Type of Debate

For this study, the choice was made to study all interpellation debates in the three policy areas generating highest opposition, according to the findings by Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson (2015): *migration, education and culture*, which will be accounted for below.

An interpellation is a question asked by a MP, directed at a minister. S/he is bound to answer the interpellation in the Chamber, an occasion, which is followed by an interpellation debate, on which any MP can participate (Riksdagen 2021a). The aim of this procedure is for “*the Riksdag to control the work of government, to receive information or to draw attention to a particular issue*”<sup>3</sup> (Svensen 2018). Interpellation debates were selected because they are the second most common type of debates after floor debates seen from the number of hours treated in the Chamber (Riksdagsförvaltningens informationsenhet 2014/15; 2015/16), being scheduled on the Riksdag calendar virtually weekly, in contrast to e.g. EU debates and party leader debates, taking place a few times per year. Only the floor debates are more common, taking up more plenary time than the interpellation debates. The latter were even though selected, because of the dimension between the Riksdag and the Government, which will be emphasised further down, and because of the possibility of studying all interpellation debates over the time frame selected, instead of selecting cases of floor debates, which will be reflected upon in section 3.3. Further, the MPs raise issues they find important and urgent in their interpellations to the ministers. One can thereby expect opposition on EU politics to be raised in these debates too, because if *normalisation* of EU politics occurs, the MPs would be keen to raise EU issues and present various political positions on EU politics on going, why interpellation debates are selected.

There are more types of debates than interpellations debates, namely: debates on proposals, party leader debates – EU debates included – foreign affairs debates and general debates. The differentiated debates have different formats and debating rules. Interpellation debates are however the second most common type of debates, taking up most time in the Chamber after floor debates (see table 3.1), with an average of 566 interpellations being sent to the ministers in Government per year between the Riksdag sessions 2010/2011 – 2020/2021, taking place

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<sup>3</sup> My translation

virtually weekly with an average of 72,5 interpellation debates per year in the Chamber during the same time period (Riksdagen 2021b).

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Floor Debates</b>	351	376,5	297	324	343	387	253	300	307	330
<b>Debates*</b>	73	32	61	43	43	69	52	40	36	38
<b>Question Time and the Prime Minister's Question Time</b>	21,5	24	23	28	25	25	25	32	36	34
<b>Answers on Interpellations**</b>	219	177,5	164	173	197	214	248	227	168	185
<b>Information from the Government and Feedback</b>	9,5	7	6,5	5	7	5	3	7	6	6
<b>Voting</b>	11	11,5	13,5	15	15	15	8	11	12	13
<b>Other</b>	7	6,5	10	7	8	6	9	5	6	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>613</b>

Table 3.1: Hours Speaking Time in the Chamber per Type of Debate and Parliamentary Session 2008/09 – 2017/18 (Riksdagsinformation 2021)<sup>4</sup>

\* Not further specified in the table

\*\* Answers on Interpellations and following interpellation debates

Interpellation debates were also selected because of the format, which builds on the dynamic between the MPs and ministers. Since the Government is representing Sweden in the EU, and the legislative power has shifted toward the Government in conjunction with the entrance to the Union, one can expect opposition in EU politics to be particularly visible in the dynamics between the Riksdag and the Government in Chamber debates. Interpellation questions may be used e.g. to ask about the purpose of the ministers' activities on EU level. Thereby, one can expect to find above all the dynamic between the Government and the non-governing parties. By opposing the political position of the governing parties at interpellation debates, the non-governing parties can present alternative party political positions in contrast to the current pursued politics. This however does not exclude the possibility of opposition to occur among the non-governing parties. In the next section the policy areas are constituted for.

<sup>4</sup> My Translation



### 3.1.3. Policy Areas

The analytical choice was made to design a study based on a strategic case selection following the most likely case design. The selection of policy areas is thereby made in accordance with those in which Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson (2018) noted to generate the highest opposition in the CEA. The three policy areas are: *migration* and *education and culture*. Since the findings show that there are clear and opposing party political positions in the CEA one can also expect to see opposing party political positions in the Chamber. Stated differently, the purpose of studying the policy areas of highest opposition in the CEA was to further being able to generalise about the expected findings in the Chamber. If low levels of EU opposition in the Chamber are found in the policy areas generating the highest opposition in the CEA, then one can expect to find low or lower EU opposition in other policy fields too. Since Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson observe an increase of opposition within the policy areas over time, one can expect an increase of opposition in the policy areas in the Chamber too, even if the levels are lower than in the CEA.

The scholars have however not defined the policy areas generating the highest opposition more thoroughly, neither have they accounted for what the policy areas in their study is covering. More on the research design will be introduced in the next section.

## 3.2. Coding

In a first, manual step a data matrix in SPSS was set up for the variables date, year, policy area, whether *EU*, *Europe* or *European* were mentioned and whether there was opposition. Following data from the interpellations debates were to be extracted and structured in the data matrix according to the following course of action.

It turned out, that it was not that easy or possible to a satisfactory degree extract relevant debates through applying search strings in the search function for the Chamber protocols at the Riksdag webpage – this because the Chamber protocols involve all debates/events on the same day without being labelled. Accordingly the choice was made to handle the sifting out of relevant debates manually. For this, the calendar on the Riksdag's webpage was useful, where the agendas for all the debates/events in the Chamber are being gathered.

The calendar only runs from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016. For interpellation debates between September 2010 and December 2015 the relevant debates were detected by systematically going through the tables of contents of the Chamber protocols within the relevant time frame at the Riksdag's webpage for Chamber protocols and sifted out by parliamentary session and month-by-month, where each month was handled separately and sifted out as search words. Debates between 2016 and 2021 were sifted out by the use of the Riksdag calendar, in which the interpellation debates of relevance could be preselected in settings to only show this result. It was not possible to select the policy field of interest, but by the help of the calendar it was possible to quickly go through the agendas to detect on what days debates of interest, i.e. on which the relevant policy fields were being handled. This way it was possible to sift out all debates of relevance.

The interpellation debates of relevance were sifted out by interpellations directed to and answered by the ministers responsible for the policy areas *migration*, *education* respectively *culture*. This was studied for the three governmental constellations of relevance for the years selected in this study, i.e. 2010/2011 – 2020/2021. The three governmental constellations are Löfven II: 2019 – 2022, Löfven I: 2014 – 2019 and Reinfeldt II: 2010 – 2014. The reason for focusing on the ministers involved and not the committees, responsible for preparing issues and decisions within the relevant policy fields, depended on that individual MPs might raise interpellations, i.e. questions to the ministers, meaning that the MPs in these cases do not represent their committees. The interpellations hence constitute the onset for further debates (Riksdagen 2021a).

The ministerial posts and portfolios on the policy areas differ among and within governmental constellations. For migration the relevant posts in Government Löfven II are: Minister for Justice and Migration, Morgan Johansson. In Löfven I: Minister for Justice, Migration and Asylum Policy, Morgan Johansson/Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy and Deputy Minister of Justice, Heléne Fritzon. In Reinfeldt II: Minister of Migration, Tobias Billtröm.

For education the relevant posts in Government Löfven II are: Minister for Education, Anna Ekström and Minister for Higher Education and Research, Matilda Ernkrans. In Löfven I: Minister for Education, Gustav Fridolin, Minister for Upper Secondary School and Adult Education and Training, Aida Hadzialic/Helene Hellmark Knutsson (temporary)/Anna

Ekström, and Minister for Higher Education and Research, Helene Hellmark Knutsson. In Reinfeldt II: Minister for Education, Higher Education and Research, Jan Björklund, thereto Deputy Minister of Education, Nyamko Sabuni/Maria Arnholm.

For cultural affairs the relevant posts in Government Löfven II are: Minister for Culture and Democracy, with responsibility for sport, Amanda Lind. In Löfven I: Minister for Culture and Democracy, Alice Bah Kuhnke. In Reinfeldt II: Minister for Culture and Sport, Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth.

Following the policy areas of the relevant ministerial posts, one can notice that the portfolios are differing from one governmental term of office to another and that all the education and cultural issues are connected to the delimited portfolios of responsibility to the ministers on education and culture respectively, but that the ministers of migration also bear the responsibility for issues on justice for two of the three terms of offices. The analytical choice of studying migration implicated the need of sifting out migration issues from issues on justice on the agenda, since the latter is not a policy area targeted for the study in this paper. The migration issues were sifted out by solely looking at the debates sent to the minister for justice and migration or any other minister, where the buzzwords *migration* (however, not when referring to Minister for Justice and Migration), *citizenship*, *asylum*, *immigration*, *refugee* or *expulsion* were to find in the interpellations. It was mostly interpellations sent to the ministers for justice and migration, but the choice was made to look at any interpellation on migration, which the MPs have sent to the ministers. This means that all interpellations sent to the ministers of education and culture were sifted out, but that interpellations on migration not necessarily solely are sent to the minister of justice and migration.

It shall also be noted that the portfolios of the ministers are shifting from one governmental term of office to another, as presented above, but where one or two ministers' portfolios cover the main policy areas. Hence, for the term of office Reinfeldt II, Nyamko Sabuni and Maria Arnholm are successively Deputy Minister of Education, but also take on other portfolios in the Government. Here the buzzwords *~school~*, *university*, *research* and *education* were applied on the interpellations in order to sift out interpellation debates on the policy area education.

As the interpellation debates were sifted out the data was to be extracted by firstly noting the date of the interpellation and secondly to what parliamentary session it belongs. The parliamentary sessions, labelled year, were coded 1 for parliamentary session 2010/2011; 2 for 2011/2012; 3 for 2012/2013; 4 for 2013/2014; 5 for 2014/2015; 6 for 2015/2016; 7 for 2016/2017; 8 for 2017/2018; 9 for 2018/2019; 10 for 2019/2020 and 11 for 2020/2021.

Thirdly was to searching for the mentioning of the words *EU*, *Europe* or *European* in the Chamber's protocols. The presence or absence of the terms was to be coded in the structured data matrix: 1 for presence and 0 for absence. When coding the absence of the term *EU*, *Europe* or *European* the words referring to the EU institutions, agencies etc. and the MS were coded as absence, while the words referring to "*outside European borders*" (*utomeuropeisk*), *Council of Europe*, *European Court of Human Rights* or *European Convention on Human Rights* were coded as absence, since they do not refer to EU, but broader international institutions or conventions. The term Europe can refer to both the EU's MS or to Europe in a broader sense. Even though the term Europe was coded as presence, because it was not always obvious which the term referred to, but where it was common to refer to the EU as Europe. The decision was made that a potential marginal of error is acceptable. Another thing to bear in mind is that potentially the MPs and ministers can have referred to the Council of the European Union without mentioning the EU, i.e. simply referred to it as the Council. In these cases this method was only able to detect and code situations, to which the EU was referred.

Fourthly opposition was to be detected by identifying in what context the term is used and by reading the statements before and after the current statement involving the term *EU*, *Europe* or *European*. If the EU is mentioned to e.g. compare Swedish politics with other EU member states, then the term EU is not mentioned in a context where activities on the EU level is debated and these will be overlooked. The statements of relevance are those where the EU is mentioned to raise the topic of action on EU level. The presence of opposition was coded 1 and the absence of opposition was coded as 0.

No matter the course of action, when there were uncertainties on the content of an interpellation debate, it was possible to quickly skim through the relevant interpellation. For most interpellation debates it was enough to read the name of the interpellation and the minister, who was to answer the interpellation to get a grasp of whether the content was of

interest. When the relevant debates were detected it was of interest to find out whether the *EU*, *Europe* or *European* was mentioned. It was relatively smooth to open the Chamber protocol as a PDF, check the relevant pages, which were handling the debate of relevance and set the search function on “EU”, which also would catch the words *Europe* and *European*. This way it was also smooth to overlook mentioned words not of interest, which were not relating to the EU somehow, such as “gymnasieutbildning” or “museum”.

The CA was also useful for a second quantitative step, extracting statistical results and making analyses of the qualitative findings from the variables in the data matrix. For making such extraction the use of the statistics programme SPSS was used. Even if there are alternative data programmes, such as Microsoft Excel, which also would have been suitable for the study, the choice was made to run the data matrix in SPSS. This programme is useful for everything from simple to advanced calculations and has the possibility of structuring the findings in neat figures. In the next section reflections on the choice of methods and what this study can not be answering will be discussed.

### 3.3. Reflections on the Choice of Methods

One should be aware that the manual CA has its implications on the question of validity and reliability, where the validity may be bigger than reliability. However the question of reliability is approached partly by the use of data matrix with clear definitions of what was looked for according to the coding steps presented in previous section. The benefits of this course of action are that all interpellation debates of relevance were sifted out and that it was possible to design the research with a high level of reliability and validity. The disadvantage of this course of action is on the other hand that it was time consuming.

A decision on whether to set a time frame or to sample material had to be done. The choice was made to cover all interpellation debates within a set time frame rather than to sample debates from a broader one. The risk of sampling cases in relation to limited resources, in terms of manpower and time, would be that there would not be enough cases to be representative of what the debates actually looked like. Therefore the choice was made to

study all interpellation debates within an eleven years time frame and not floor debates that is the most common type.

The time frame on eleven years is wide enough to grasp an image of the visibility of EU politics in the Chamber, to notice whether *normalisation* of EU politics is visible in the Riksdag, i.e. whether there are more EU opposition in the Chamber over time and thereby to draw conclusions on whether the *normalisation* thesis is true in the case of the Riksdag. Since interpellation debates are one of the most common types of debates, the level of opposition on EU politics is expected to be reflected there. Interpellation debates also constitute an important arena for dynamic between the MPs and ministers in Government. However, a risk of narrowing the study down to interpellation debates was that all EU opposition could potentially occur in other types of debate than the interpellation debates. The highest risk is of missing out on EU opposition in floor debates, the most common type of debate. However, the floor debates lack the Riksdag – Government dimension, which the interpellation debates have and is expected to be an incentive for EU opposition. Since interpellation debates are the second most common ones, one can also expect the opposition to be lifted in these debates too, because if *normalisation* of EU politics occurs, the EU opposition is not isolated to e.g. floor debates, EU debates or party leader debates, the latter two taking place a few times per year.

### 3.4. Reflections on the Gathering of Data

When compiling the data some reflections on the coding were made in relation to cases of uncertainties in how to code the material and when the way the material was presented affected the coding and thereby the result.

First of all there are a handful of cases when an interpellation was to be answered by a minister in the Chamber, but where the interpellant has been absent due to impediment or illness. In these cases the minister still answered the interpellation, but a debate did not follow. In other few cases the interpellant has put the interpellation to a minister, but another minister, who was estimated to be better fitted to give an answer, answered the interpellation instead. In these cases it may be that the interpellation would fall on one of the three policy

areas of relevance for this study, but was answered by a minister in charge of another policy area. These interpellation would consequently not fall under loupe for this study; in so far the interpellation was not on migration, since interpellations on this policy area were sifted out through buzzwords, i.e. the risk of falling outside the scope of the study was a risk for interpellations on education and cultural affairs. This was however only the case for a few interpellations, why the change of method was not estimated to be needed.

It seems to have been the case when an interpellation fell within the grey zone between two or among more policy areas. An example of a grey zone between two policy areas was on immigrants on the labour market, which referred to migration policy, integration policy and labour policy. In such cases the interpellation was coded as migration policy, since it contained the buzzword migration. For education and cultural affairs the answering minister determined the coding of the interpellation. It has also happened in a few cases that common interpellations were answered by different ministers, presumably due to interpellations in grey zones between policy areas.

Other cases which were a little more difficult to assess are those where MPs are expressing criticism against how the politics on EU level is executed, not the politics that the Government pushes for, but the output of the EU politics in terms of decisions already made. This in turn indicates a wish to see the Government pushing the EU politics in another direction. In cases the Government did not meet the criticism with an opposing political view it was not coded as opposition. It may also be that the MPs ask for further specification of the activities that will be taken on EU-level and ask the relevant ministers to be clear on the EU level what the Swedish priorities are, but without opposing the activities that the Government plan to take. In other cases issues were pushed for on EU level, but where MPs oppose the Government's activities on domestic level.

There were also cases, which were a little more difficult to assess. This because the MPs made their party political views known on EU politics, but where these did not oppose the view of the Government. The statements of the MPs were simply stated different, but contained common views to those made known by the Government or MPs representing other political parties. At times the current minister who answered the interpellation was commenting on a MPs presented party political view, noticing that this was common to the political view, which was made known by the Government. One example of that is a debate

on the Swedish participation in a European Space Agency (ESA) project. A party in Government and an MP from an opposing party uttered their parties' political views preferred activities on the EU level, where the MPs tried to distance themselves from each other in through what words were used, but where the views fundamentally were common. In the type of cases accounted for in this section no opposition was coded.



## 4. Results

In this chapter the results of the study will be introduced – to begin with the visibility of the EU, i.e. the mentioning of the terms *EU*, *Europe* and *European* and the level of opposition and the trend over time are presented. Thereafter the results are introduced policy area by policy area in order of where most to least opposition was found. The differences between the areas are however small. The results on the mentioning of the terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European* are of interest for the visibility of the EU in Chamber debates. One can thereby set the share of EU opposition in comparison to a broader representation of the EU in the debates, to analyse the broader interest for the EU in comparison to the level of opposition, and also *normalisation* of the handling of EU politics.

When introducing and later analysing the results one needs to remember that the last governmental term of office, 2018 and onwards, and the last parliamentary session, 2020/2021, studied in this paper are still running. This mostly has an impact on the conclusions one can draw from this last parliamentary session, as the data is incomplete, but can indicate the level of opposition for the last session. Usually, no interpellation debates are held in July and first half of August due to summer vacations, and only a few interpellation debates are held from late August and beginning in September before the new parliamentary session begins. This means that the results for 2020/2021 more or less only lack data from May and June 2021.

### 4.1. The Overall Results

In all 628 interpellation debates on the three policy areas during the eleven parliamentary sessions studied the term *EU*, *Europe* or *European* were mentioned in 245 debates, equalizing to 39% of the debates. It is notable that the terms were mentioned the most times in the parliamentary sessions 2012/2013 and 2011/2012; with a share of mentioning of the term adding up to 63% and 51% respectively (see table 4.1). Otherwise the variation shown in the

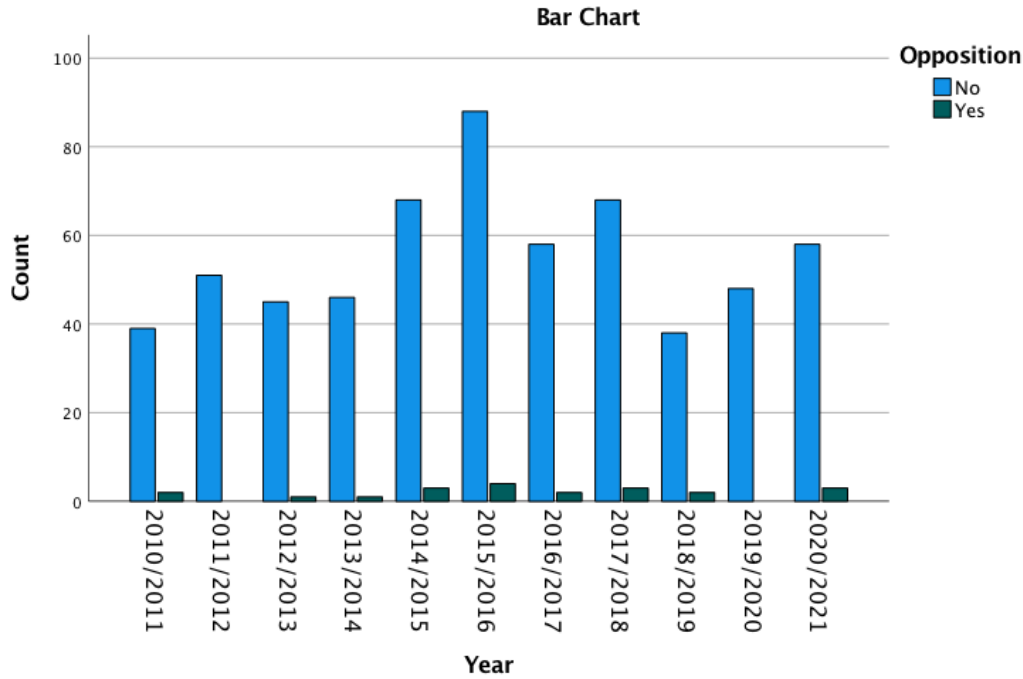
share of the mentioning of the term *EU*, *Europe* or *European* does not show a trend of increasing or decreasing over the parliamentary sessions studied.

When it comes to the opposition in EU politics the highest levels of opposition in EU politics are found in the sessions 2018/2019, 2010/2011 and 2020/2021, with a share of EU opposition measuring up to 5,0%, 4,9% and 4,9% respectively of all the interpellation debates held in the current sessions. The variation in levels of share of opposition for each session does not indicate that the trend of opposition is neither increasing nor decreasing (see table 4.1).

	<b>Opposition (%)</b>	<b>Opposition (N)</b>	<b>EU, European, Europe mentioned (%)</b>	<b>EU, European, Europe mentioned (N)</b>
<b>2010/2011</b>	4,9%	2	34,1%	14
<b>2011/2012</b>	0%	0	51,0%	26
<b>2012/2013</b>	2,2%	1	63,0%	29
<b>2013/2014</b>	2,1%	1	48,9%	23
<b>2014/2015</b>	4,2%	3	22,5%	16
<b>2015/2016</b>	4,3%	4	33,7%	31
<b>2016/2017</b>	3,3%	2	41,7%	25
<b>2017/2018</b>	4,2%	3	43,7%	31
<b>2018/2019</b>	5,0%	2	32,5%	13
<b>2019/2020</b>	0%	0	31,3%	15
<b>2020/2021</b>	4,9%	3	36,1%	22
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3,3%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>39,0%</b>	<b>245</b>

Table 4.1: Amount of Opposition and the Mentioning of the Terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European* per Parliamentary Session in % and Amount

The extracted data into bar charts show that the level of different party political views, i.e. opposition, are to a limited extent visible in the Riksdag Chamber debates and do not become more visible over time during the parliamentary sessions 2010/2011 and 2020/2021 (see bar chart 4.1).



Bar chart 4.1: Level of Opposition per Parliamentary Session 2010/2011-2020/2021

At a first glance, it seems that the theory on *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* of EU politics is incorrect. The blue pile presents the amount of times that the debates do not contain opposition on EU politics as the green piles present the amount of times opposition occurs.

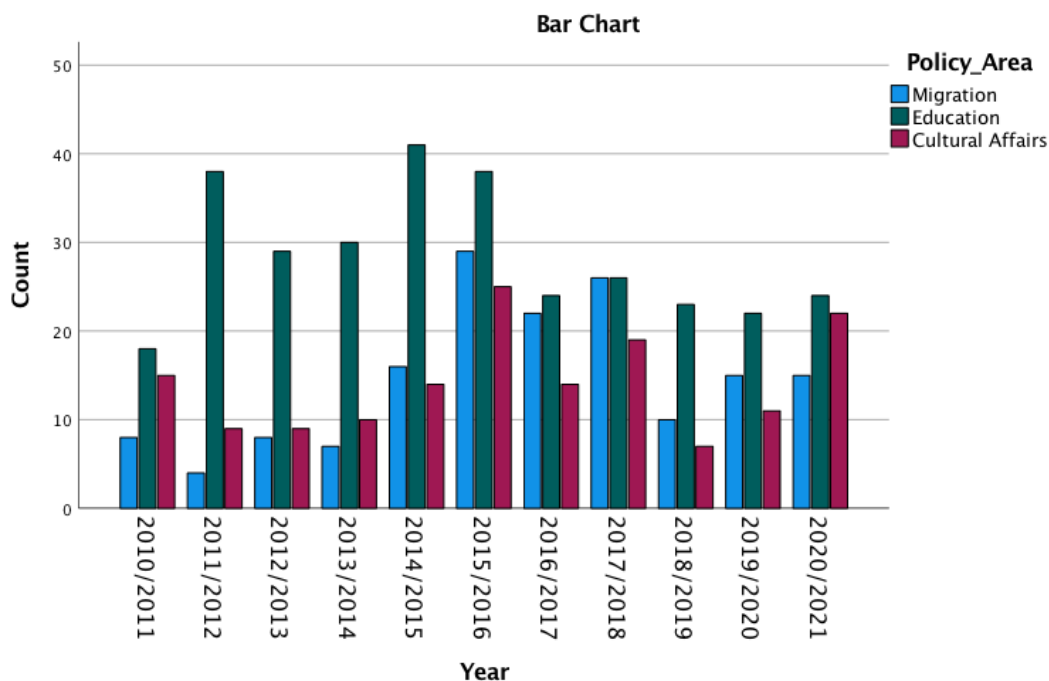
Seen in all policy areas there are 21 debates, in which opposition in EU politics can be observed, corresponding to 3,3 % of all the interpellation debates (see table 4.2).

	Opposition (%)	Opposition (N)	EU, European, Europe mentioned (%)	EU, European, Europe mentioned (N)	Amount of interpellation debates in total
<b>Migration</b>	7,5%	12	63,1%	101	160
<b>Cultural Affairs</b>	3,2%	5	37,4%	58	155
<b>Education</b>	1,3%	4	27,5%	86	313
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3,3%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>39,0%</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>628</b>

Table 4.2: Amount of Opposition and the Mentioning of the Terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European* per Policy Area in % and Amount

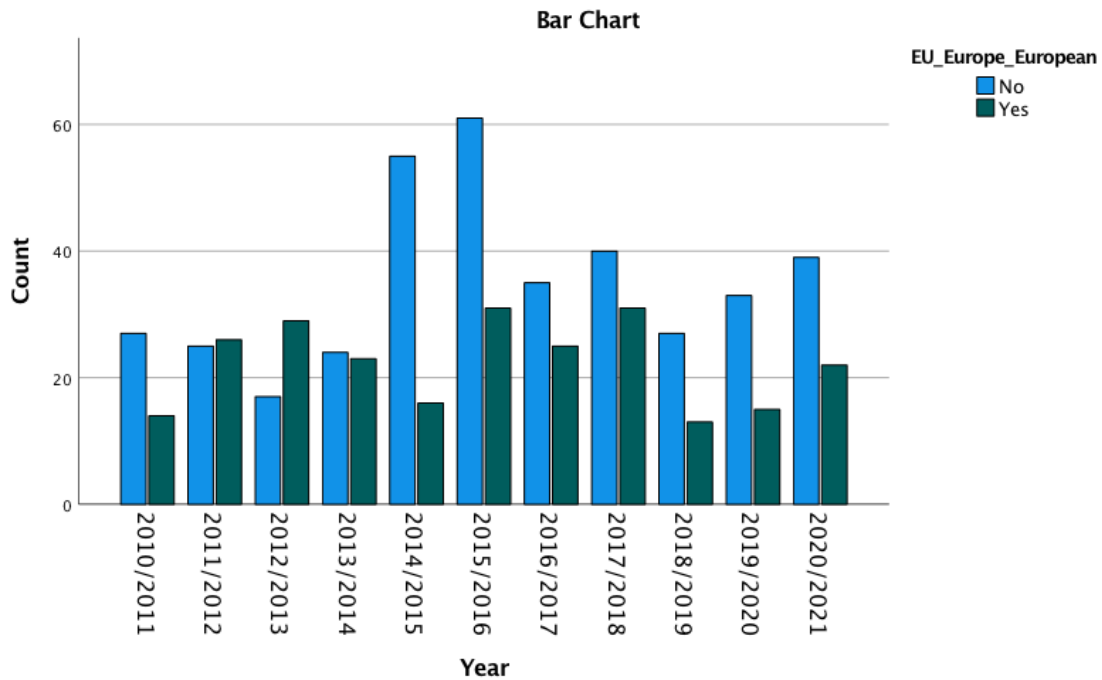
Behind the results, when looking into the interpellation debates, it is clear that the MPs and ministers more often raise their party political view on activities to take on a domestic level than on the EU level. The EU is visible in the debates, but is more often referred to when it comes to comparing the Swedish political system to other MS' - e.g. the Swedish education system and education quality in relation to other MS' and European standards - or referring to the transposition of EU-law into domestic law or decisions taken on EU-level - including e.g. communication by the European Commission, discussions on Swedish legislation, which needs to be compatible with the EU-law or activities on domestic level which need to be put in place before Sweden can push for certain common activities on EU-level, such as a fair distribution of refugees in the EU.

In a few cases alternative views on common European activities are discussed, not even in the common European challenge of the refugee crisis resulting in more than a few debates on various activities in the Chamber. Even here the Swedish activities are separated from the EU activities. Most commonly Swedish activities are compared to those of other member states, resulting in a higher level of interpellation debates on migration (see bar chart 4.2),



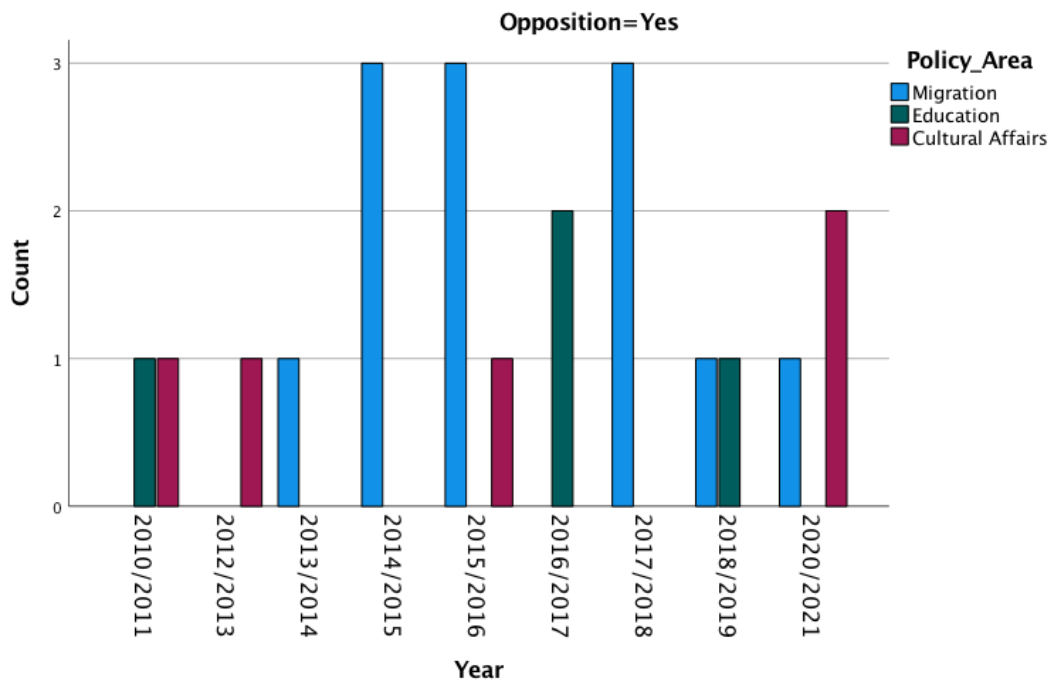
Bar chart 4.2: Amount of Interpellation Debates per Policy Area and Parliamentary Session

and visibility of the EU through the usage of the terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European* in the years around the migrant crisis (see bar chart 4.3).



Bar chart 4.3: Amount of Mentioning of the Terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European* per Parliamentary Session

However the opposition in EU politics is still lacking, even if a small increase in opposition can be observed in the years around the migrant crisis (see bar chart 4.4). In the next three sections the results will be introduced policy area by policy area, beginning with the area of highest opposition according to the results of this study, namely migration.



Bar chart 4.4: The Amount of Opposition per Policy Area and Parliamentary Session

#### 4.1.1. Migration

As observable in the bar charts, migration is the policy area where most opposition occurs. However, the amount of opposition statements is not very high. Out of the 628 interpellation debates on all policy areas and parliamentary sessions included, 160 refer to migration. Of these 160 interpellation debates on migration 101 debates or 63,1% of these mention the term *EU*, *Europe* or *European* (see bar chart 4.5 below). Out of these only 12 include opposition on EU politics, amounting to 7,5% opposition on all debates on migration (see table 4.2).

The parliamentary sessions with most EU political opposition in migration policy can be found 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2017/2018. These parliamentary sessions all included three interpellation debates with observable opposition each. What is worth noticing is that no political opposition were to be coded in the session 2016/2017. It seems that the MPs shifted their focus from presenting opposing party political positions on common EU activities to deal with the migration crisis to making known of their party political positions on the Swedish activities in order to handle the situation in Sweden, or to compare the Swedish way of acting with the way of other MS.

#### 4.1.2. Cultural Affairs

The policy area generating the next highest level of opposition is cultural affairs. Out of the 628 interpellation debates on all policy areas 155 consist of debates on cultural affairs. Out of these 155 debates 58 of them or 37,4% mention the term *EU*, *Europe* or *European*. Opposition in EU politics can be found in 5 interpellation debates, which is equal to 3,2% of all interpellation debates on cultural affairs (see table 4.2).

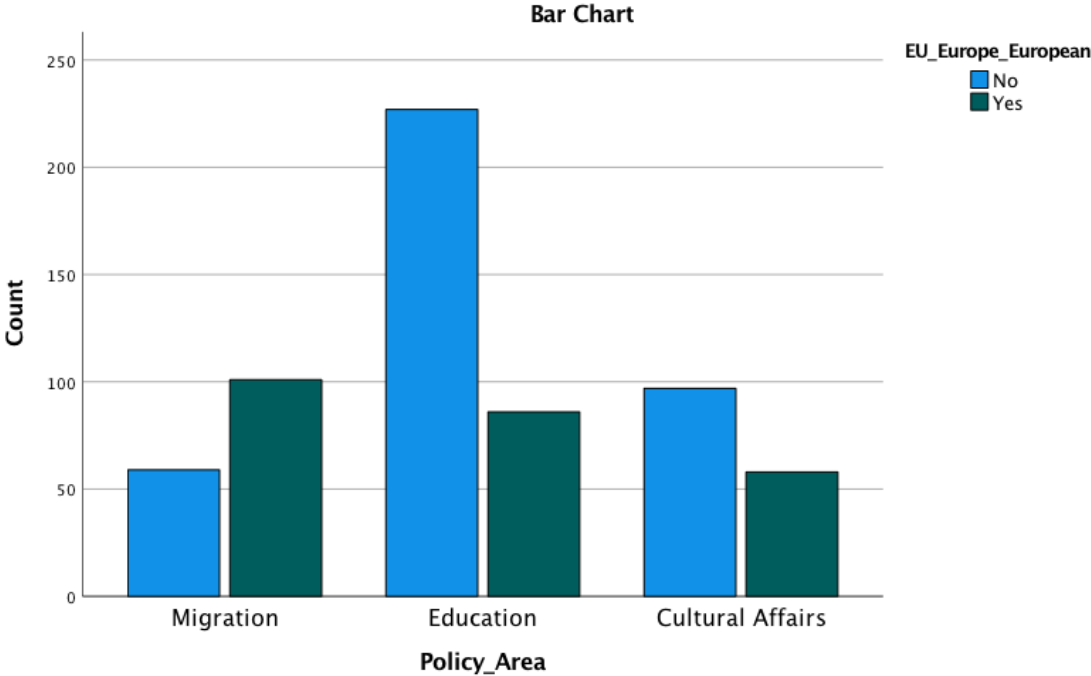
The most opposition in cultural affairs can be found during the parliamentary sessions 2020/2021, where two interpellation debates involved opposition on EU politics. The amount of debates during this session are too few to analyse in comparison to parliamentary sessions involving fewer oppositions in EU politics, i.e. where one interpellation debate contains opposition in EU politics. Hence, the conclusion is drawn that cultural affairs does not constitute a policy area, on which a notable level of opposition in EU politics can be found.

#### 4.1.3. Education

The policy area where the least opposition can be found is education; it is however also the policy area on which most interpellation debates were held during the parliamentary sessions studied in this paper (see bar chart 4.2). Out of the 628 interpellation debates in total, 313 debates are on education. Out of these 313 debates 86 of them or 27,5% involve the terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European*. However, only 4 of these debates involve opposition on EU politics, measuring up to 1,3% of the debates on education (see table 4.2).

The most opposition on EU politics on the policy area education was held in the parliamentary session 2016/2017 when two interpellation debates involved EU opposition. Just as for the results on the policy area cultural affairs, the amount of debates for the session with most EU opposition are too few to analyse in comparison to parliamentary sessions involving fewer oppositions in EU politics, i.e. where only one interpellation debate involved

opposition on EU politics. The conclusion on this result is once again that education is a policy area where a notable level of EU opposition is not to be found.



Bar chart 4.5: The mentioning of the terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European* per policy area



## 5. Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter the results introduced in the previous chapter will be analysed and discussed in relation to previous research and the presented theories. To begin with the results will be analysed and discussed in relation to possible effects of social development in terms of crises, which could affect the results. Thereafter analyses and discussions will be made in relation to the hypothetical approaches introduced in chapter 2 on that *normalisation* does *not* occur and on that *normalisation* does occur respectively. In the section following that, section 4.2, attempts will be made to generalise about the results of the study in this paper on the case of the Riksdag and apply this to other NPs of the EU based on expectations on NPs' modes of parliamentary activity set by Auel, Rozenberg and Tacea (2015). The results on overall trends of the mentioning of the EU, European or Europe, and of the level of opposition, will be analysed in relation to the hypothetical approaches claiming that *normalisation* will not occur or will occur respectively. The opposing theories will be handled in separate sections. In the last section a concluding discussion on the overall results will be held. Before that, an analysis of the results in relation to previous research and presented theories, and an analysis of general trends and effects of social development will be introduced.

### 5.1. Analysis of Results in Relation to Previous Research and Presented Theories

The results in this study may be interesting to analyse in relation to previous research, whether the results coincide or not. The study by Auel, Rozenberg and Tacea (2015), categorised the Riksdag as a "*policy shaper*" because they estimated the Riksdag to be one of the NPs in the EU that is most active in EU scrutiny. According to the three scholars' categorisation of the Riksdag, one would expect the EU to be visible in Chamber debates, and *mainstreaming* of EU politics to occur. However, the results of this study implicate that this is not the case, i.e. that the EU is not particularly visible in the Riksdag Chamber debates.

In comparison and contrast to the noted results in the study by Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson, the opposition in EU politics is conspicuously more visible in the CEA than in the interpellation debates in the Riksdag Chamber. The three scholars found that almost every other statement, i.e. 48,5%, in the CEA contained opposition on EU politics and that the level of opposition is increasing (2015, 12), whereas this study shows that only 3,3% of all the interpellation debates during the parliamentary session studied contain opposition in EU politics. The visibility of opposition in EU politics, which can be found in the CEA, is contrarily not mirrored in the interpellation debates in the Chamber. A result equal to the one observed in the CEA was not expected to be found in the Chamber. However, since there is a noticeable amount of opposition in the CEA it was expected to find at least some opposition in the Chamber if the *normalisation* hypothesis would be correct. This result implicates that the *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* theory is incorrect. For some reason the MPs do not raise their various party political views in the Chamber concerning EU related issues. The underlying causes will be analysed, or rather speculated about by posing implications from the introduced hypothetical perspectives.

The results of the study in this paper may also be seen in contrast to the study above on the CEA when it comes to the overall trend of the mentioning of the EU and the level of opposition over time. The three scholars note that the level of opposition in the CEA increases over time, i.e. the MPs have become keener and find it more meaningful to make known of their differentiated party political views in EU politics. However, the study in this paper shows that in interpellation debates in the Chamber, the MPs to a limited degree present their party political views in EU affairs when it comes to their preferences of Swedish activities on the EU level, and that this trend has not varied from one governmental term of office to another. The degree of EU opposition has not increased during the parliamentary sessions studied in this paper. The level of EU opposition today is on the same level as it was during the first parliamentary session 2010/2011. Stated differently, the visibility of the EU and the level of opposition in EU politics neither increase nor decrease during the parliamentary sessions studied. If the *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* theory were to be correct, we would have expected to see an increase of opposition over time in the Chamber debates. These findings lead to analysing the results in relation to the presented theories and the hypotheses set for the study in this paper. The theories can be said to indicate probable explanations for the results in this study, but the results cannot prove the theories right or wrong.

In the following sections, the results of the study in this paper will be analysed in relation to the introduced theories on that *normalisation* will *not* occur and on that *normalisation* will occur respectively. Before that, an analysis on the overall results and in relation to general trends and effect of social development will be made.

#### 5.1.1. Analysis of General Trends and Effects of Social Development

In this section an overall analysis of the results of this study on the Riksdag, as well as an analysis of the results in relation to the effects of social development in terms of crises, will be made. Based on the results of this study, i.e. that the level of opposition in EU politics between the parliamentary sessions 2010/2011-2020/2021 is measured to be 3,3%, one can draw the conclusion that Blomgren was right in his claim that in EU politics the Riksdag has not constituted an

*arena for political debate, where alternatives are set against each other and where the citizens have a reasonable chance to choose between different political solutions*<sup>5</sup>  
(Blomgren 2005, 102).

The results of this study, which cohere with the statement by Blomgren, may be of interest in relation to the study by Auel, Rozenberg and Tacea (2015). The scholars categorise the Riksdag as a “*policy shaper*” because the Riksdag’s extensive activity in scrutinizing EU politics makes them regard it as one of the most active NPs among the MS, even though the level of EU opposition in interpellation debates in the Riksdag’s Chamber is limited. Even in the interpellation debates, which are held almost every week, and through which the MPs raise issues of immediate concern, the various party political positions on EU politics are only visible to a limited degree visible. If rising differentiated party political views in EU politics were of importance to the MPs, then EU opposition would have been more visible in interpellation debates. The results of 3,3% opposition in EU politics of all interpellation debates held in the three policy areas and during the set time frame indicates that EU politics are not a top priority among the MPs. A further discussion with generalisations of the results

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<sup>5</sup> My translation

in this study on the Riksdag in relation to expected general trends in other MS will be presented in the next chapter. In the next paragraphs a short analysis on the results in relation to the effects of social development in terms of crises will be made.

As can be seen from table 4.1. on the amount of opposition and the mentioning of the terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European* per parliamentary session, it is noticeable that the share of EU opposition is higher in the 2010/2011, 2018/2019 and 2020/2021 sessions and somewhat higher in the 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2017/2018 sessions. The higher level of EU opposition in last three sessions when the share of EU opposition was somewhat higher could potentially be explained by the migrant crisis. As can be seen from bar chart 4.4, migration was the most debated policy area during these years. The question is however *why* EU opposition in migration is *not* visible for the session 2016/2017. The answer can only be speculated about, the change in trend may also depend on the results being based on few cases, where small variations in number have impacts on the overall trend.

As can also be seen from bar chart 4.4. the EU is visible only to a limited extent visible in the interpellation debates. Even in the parliamentary sessions where the amount of debates containing EU opposition is the highest, the amount of cases are few. Because of this, it is not possible to draw many conclusions on the effect of social development. One can however notice that the highest percentage of EU opposition in 2010/2011; 2018/2019 and 2020/2021 follow the repercussions of the financial crisis from 2008, the migrant crisis from 2015 onwards and the Covid-19-crisis from 2020, but the results are too uncertain to draw such conclusions from the results. It could be claimed that the migrant crisis has generated increased opposition in interpellation debates in the Chamber, but again, the cases are too few to warrant such a conclusion. In the next sections the results of the study in this paper will be analysed in relation to presented theories supporting the hypothesis that *normalisation* does *not* occur and that *normalisation* does occur respectively.

### 5.1.2. Analysis of Result in Relation to Theories on That Normalisation Will Not Occur

From a first short glance at the result it is clear that the *mainstreaming* theory is incorrect and EU politics is not normalised in the Riksdag, because EU opposition is visible to a limited extent in the Chamber. The findings correspond well seen from the hypothetical perspective on *that* opposition in EU politics does *not* occur. In general, NPs chambers are shown not to engage in EU affairs, which are claimed to be of low priority among MPs (Winzen, de Ruiter and Rocabert 2018). However, even if the level of opposition in EU politics turned out to be visible only to a limited degree, the terms “EU”, “Europe” and “European” are mentioned to an increasing extent (see table 4.1. in previous chapter). The hypothesis that the EU is of low priority among the MPs in the Chamber is thus not completely self-evident. However, it is fair to say that the MPs do not prioritise making known of their diverse party political views when it comes to debating various political activities on the EU level in the Chamber. The visibility of the EU mostly consists of comparisons between Swedish politics and that of other MS, comparisons between Swedish and European standards, discussions about the implications of EU decisions already made, or opinions about how common European policies should work differently. However, the visibility of the EU does not lead to opposition on EU politics, why the level of EU visibility is higher than the level of EU opposition.

The results of this study and the research design in this paper do not explain why the EU is visible to only a limited degree in the interpellation debates in the Chamber. Theories in previous research would seem to suggest the explain the results on 3,3% opposition in EU politics with e.g. that the *“the multidimensional character of EU-topics make them [the MPs] ill-suited for the communication of parties’ messages to voters and coalition partners”*, as is claimed by Winzen, de Ruiter and Rocabert (2018), or that the citizens have become more sceptical to the EU, as is claimed to be the case in the parliaments studied by Rauh and De Wilde (2018). Both theories are connected to the idea that national parties are closer to their voters *“on the left/right dimension than on the EU dimension”* and that *“parties are more supportive of European integration than are their voters”*, as claimed by Mattila and Raunio (2006).

Hellström shows that less than 1 per cent of all the statements by Swedish politicians before the Riksdag elections in the 1990s and 2000s covered the European cooperation, and he concluded with the explanation that parties and their representatives do not win elections

through discussing the EU (Hellström 2014). The explanation seems to imply the idea that political parties are more supportive than their voters to European integration (Hellström 2009), which correspond with the conclusions of Mattila and Raunio above.

There are also perceived shortcomings in the public discussions in Sweden on issues concerning the EU level based on the lack of knowledge about the EU among the general public and among teachers in elementary school, upper secondary school and university, but also among politicians and elected representatives on the local level. The lack of knowledge among the general public is said to be correlated with low media reports on EU politics (SOU 2016:10). These ideas can be discussed in relation to the result of the study in this paper, showing that opposition in EU politics to a limited degree is visible during the time studied, which could possibly to be explained by the fact that the MPs do not believe that the work spent raising party political views in Chamber debates will increase their chances of winning votes or elections. Strategically, more focus is spent on the issues that the general public cares about, and on the parts of the political system that the voters are familiar with. Since the media to low degree reports on EU politics, the general public will not expect or desire to be presented with various party political views on Swedish activities on the EU level. This theoretical perspective is supported by the results in this study showing a limited degree of EU opposition.

Apart from this the investigation shows a lack of knowledge about the EU among politicians and elected representatives on the local level, who, to large extent, estimate their EU-knowledge as low. There is no research on the EU knowledge among the MPs in the Riksdag, but it could be considered that the level of opposition in EU politics in interpellation debates in the Chamber is correlated to a low level of knowledge on the EU among MPs in general, due to the fact that the MPs in the Riksdag were educated in the same educational system as the general public. However, their level of EU knowledge can only be speculated about, and the correlations between possible explanations and the results in the study of this paper cannot be determined. Though one can say that for some reason the MPs differentiate between EU and domestic politics, and that the ideas some scholars have corresponding to the *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* theory do not seem to be evident in the Chamber. In the next section the results will be analysed in relation to the hypothetical belief that *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* will occur.

### 5.1.3. Analysis of Result in Relation to Theories on That Normalisation Will Occur

In this section it is of interest to set the hypothetical belief that *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* will occur in relation to the results of this study, showing a limited degree of opposition in EU politics in the Chamber, but a higher degree of visibility of the terms *EU*, *Europe* and *European*. The aim of analysing the *mainstreaming* theory and the set framework of incentives and disincentives for *mainstreaming* to occur can open up for further discussions and later to propose possible continued research. It will not be used to answer the research questions, since the aim of this study is not to answer *why normalisation* occurs or *not*. The analysis will rather be used for further discussions and for proposals for continued research in the next chapter.

To recap, according to the *mainstreaming* theory an increased pressure to the NPs CEAs has led to a spill over of EU politics from the specialised committees into other parts of NPs, where a *normalisation* of the handling EU politics take place. The scholars behind the *mainstreaming* theory, Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff (2013), state that they observe three incentives and three disincentives for *why* a *normalisation* of EU affairs does occurs. To recap, the three incentives are: 1) that there are very few aspects of national policy that remain untouched by the European dimension; the lines between what is domestic and what is European is blurred. This results in difficulties and lack of resources to only deal with EU issues within the CEA. 2) The Lisbon Treaty is a critical juncture for parliaments to have more to say in the policy making process, due to e.g. the increased possibility of scrutiny and the establishment of the so-called political dialogue. According to the *mainstreaming* incentives the political dialogue adds pressure on the CEA's resources, *why* the *mainstreaming* occurs. 3) A shift of EU-scrutiny outside the CEA is likely to occur if NPs believe that *mainstreaming* will be cost-effective and simultaneously will improve their power of European scrutiny – “*whether by mandating, influencing policy or holding governments to account*” (Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff 2015, 9).

Further on the three disincentive of *mainstreaming* EU scrutiny are: 1) the cost of resource and time; MPs and staff in other parts of the NPs, who have a full workload are less likely to welcome additional tasks and new everyday portfolios. The *mainstreaming* will also mean the

engagement in cooperation between committees and groups, a type of cooperation that seems “fairly weak”. 2) The political visibility of EU issues and degree of pro-Europeanness also seems to matter; a high level of pro-Europeanness decrease the chance of *mainstreaming*, since if the level of EU popularity is high the EU is not seen to deserve a significant scrutiny. 3) The effectiveness of a centralised CEA matter; the *mainstreaming* is less likely in an NP where the level of effectiveness in a centralised CEA’s is high.

In relation to the frame of incentives and disincentives, and the findings by Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson (2018) the results of the study in this paper would indicate that a *normalisation* of EU affairs has *not* yet occurred; that the EU affairs are still to large extent isolated to the specialised CEA. In the following paragraphs first the incentives and thereafter the disincentives will be analysed respectively and later on discussed.

The first of the three incentives suggests that there would be a lack of resources to only deal with EU issues in the CEA because the pressure on the CEA gets too high as the lines between what is European and what is domestic are blurred. The results of the study, seen in relation to the study on opposition in the CEA by Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson (2018), indicate that the tendency to debate EU issues and the concern to make known of diverse party political views in EU politics is highly centralised or isolated to the specialised CEA. Even if the EU is visible in the Chamber as a dimension to relate domestic politics to, indicated through the frequency of the mentioning of the terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European*, the lines between what is European and what is domestic are not yet to be defined as blurred.

The second incentive indicates that the so-called political dialogue would add pressure on the CEA, resulting in *mainstreaming* of EU affairs. This incentive is difficult to analyse seen from the results of the study in this paper. One can however draw the conclusion that since the level of opposition in EU politics in the interpellation debates has not increased over the time studied *mainstreaming* has not occurred, and that in the Riksdag the level of EU opposition in Chamber debates are not to be explained by increased pressure on the CEA due to the political dialogue. It could also be commented that in the Riksdag it is the specialised committees suggesting that the Riksdag shall leave a reasoned opinion, as part of the political dialogue, and not the CEA (see e.g. Reasoned Opinion 2013/14:SkU:35).



The third incentive suggests that *mainstreaming* occurs due to cost-effectiveness and the motive of the NP improving its power – “*whether by mandating, influencing policy or holding governments to account*” (Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff 2015, 9). Seeing the results in relation to the theorisation of this incentive one can say that the Riksdag does not find the cost-effectiveness of *mainstreaming* EU scrutiny into the Chamber to be worth the effort.

The first of the three disincentives for *mainstreaming* to occur suggests that *mainstreaming* will not occur due to the limited resources and time needed to handle EU issues; that MPs who have a full workload are less likely to welcome additional tasks and everyday portfolios. However, the extensive mentioning of the terms *EU*, *Europe* and *European* shows that the MPs are following the development on the EU level and are at least somewhat engaged in the EU system, even if a considerable share of the mentioning of the EU consists of comparisons between Swedish politics and other MS'. This disincentive can be seen in comparison to the theory on parties not winning votes by presenting various party political views on EU-politics. It can be that MPs do not see the cost benefits from engaging in EU politics in relation to what they get back in terms of votes.

The second disincentive suggests that pro-Europeanness would decrease the chance of *mainstreaming* and vice versa. The theory is not applicable on the results from this study, since the political parties raising debates were not coded. However, theoretically it seems logical that parties critical to the EU and a membership in the Union would be keen to raise their party political stance in debates in order to criticise the EU political system. This disincentive is supported by the findings from the study of the CEA by Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson (2018). In their study one can observe that a noticeable amount of opposition comes from the EU sceptical Left Party (V) and far right Sweden Democrats (SD). A further analysis on whether this is the case for the Riksdag Chamber can be raised in a future study on political parties' interests in debating the EU in the Chamber.

The third disincentive suggests that the effectiveness of a centralised CEA matters, where high effectiveness decreases the chance of *mainstreaming* to occur because the EU scrutiny sufficiently and to a satisfactory degree is handled in the CEA. The result of the study in this paper would indicate that the level of effectiveness in the CEA would be high, since the level

of opposition in EU politics in interpellation debates in the Chamber is not. However, this is something that is not to be analysed due to the lack of information.

To sum up Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff's frame of incentives and disincentives in relation to the results, the following can be said: The results 1) show that the lines between what is European and what is domestic is not yet to be defined as blurred, 2) are not affected by added pressure on the CEA from the political dialogue, as it is not the CEA but the other specialised committees suggest that the Riksdag shall leave reasoned opinions, 3) could not be discussed in relation to the incentive of NPs seeking to improve their cost-effectiveness through mainstreaming in order to gain power, since there is no such information or theoretical support in this paper 4) can be explained by added costs of resources and time for the MPs, at least if connecting this disincentive to that vote seeking parties avoid making known of their party political view in EU politics because it will not lead to winning votes 5) could theoretically be explained by the level of pro-Europeanness, even if the results of this study cannot be used for such discussion and 6) could not be discussed based on the level of effectiveness of the CEA due to the lack of such information in the study of this paper.

The attempt of analysing the incentives and disincentives for *mainstreaming* to occur above could not be used to draw conclusions on the results for this study. The aim of this study is neither to answer *why mainstreaming* or *normalisation* occurs or *why not*, but to examine whether and to what extent various party political views, i.e. opposition, are visible in Riksdag Chamber debates and whether these have become more visible over time. However, reflections made when analysing the results in comparison to the theories supporting the hypotheses that *normalisation* does occur or *not* will be targeted for further discussions. These can be found in the last section of this chapter, section 5.3. on concluding discussions on the overall results and in the last section of the last chapter, section 6.1. on proposals for continued research. In the next section attempts will be made to generalise about the results on the study of the Riksdag into other NPs in the EU with support of previous research and analysis.

## 5.2. Generalisation of Results in Relation to Previous Research and Theories

Based on Auel, Rozenberg and Tacea's categorisation of the Riksdag's mode of parliamentary activity as a *policy shaper* (2015), being one of the most active parliaments in the Union it was stated in the gateway chapter of this paper that: it is: *expected that opposition in EU politics will be visible in the Riksdag chamber, and if the EU or opposition in EU politics is not normalised and thereby visible in the active Riksdag one can draw conclusions that opposition in EU politics is not expected to be observed in other NPs with lower EU activity either.* In this section the expectation formulated in the statement will be analysed and discussed.

The limited level of opposition in EU politics observed in this paper is discussed to indicate as limited or even more limited levels of EU opposition in other member states, which are categorised as having an equal or lower mode of parliamentary activity than the Riksdag. The results of the study in this paper can thereby be discussed to indicate a common issue that MS in the EU have; that MPs in the NPs to a limited extent present their various party political views in EU affairs, leading to the lacking possibility for the citizens to pursue their power through choosing from diverse alternatives. The NPs are thus in general expected to suffer from an *opposition deficit*, and accordingly from a *democratic deficit*. For the EU to reach its full potential and for the MS to live up to the EU's founded value democracy, the *opposition deficit* needs to be solved. The case of the Riksdag is consequently marking the upper limit of what is expected to be observed if studying EU opposition in all NPs.

However, this conclusion is not applicable on the visibility of the EU in debates, as the amount of times the terms *EU*, *Europe* or *European* were mentioned did, in contrast to opposition in EU politics, not turn out to be limited. Thereby one can draw the conclusion that the mentioning of the EU also can be visible in other NPs to further extent than EU opposition. This conclusion is however not to be drawn as decisively as the conclusions on the level of opposition in EU affairs in other NPs. On the contrary, conclusions on the visibility of the EU in debates can be said not to have an impact on the *opposition deficit* and the *democratic deficit*, since the visibility of the EU does not mean that MPs are making their various party political positions known in the debates, but that they simply are aware of the EU level and the political outcomes in the other MS. Further discussions will be introduced in the next chapter on concluding discussion on the overall results.

### 5.3. Concluding Discussion on Overall Results

As seen in a previous chapter, according to Auel, Rozenberg and Tacea (2015) the Riksdag can be categorised as a *policy shaper*, being one of the most active NPs in EU scrutiny. If this is the case one would have expect the EU to be visible in Chamber debates and *normalisation* to occur. However, the results in the study of this paper however imply that it is not the case with the EU mentioned in 39% and EU opposition in 3,3% of all interpellation debates within the set time frame, and that a *normalisation* of EU affairs has not occurred within the eleven years studied. It can accordingly be discussed that the visibility of EU opposition in the Riksdag Chamber is not just to be claimed to be limited but low, based on the expectations on interpellation debates and the policy areas studied.

Even in interpellation debates, one of the most common types of debates, which take place almost weekly and where there is an obvious dynamic between the MPs and the ministers in Government, opposition in EU politics is to a limited degree visible. Seeing it from the perspective of the Government representing Sweden in the EU, and the legislative power has shifted toward the Government in conjunction with the entrance to the Union, a higher level of opposition was expected. Thereby the level of opposition is discussed to be low.

A higher level of opposition was also expected due to the trend of high levels of opposition in the CEA and with an increase over time, as noted by Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson (2018), one would expect to find higher levels of opposition on EU politics in the Chamber; which constitutes the arena where the political positions reach the voters, not the specialised CEA. Even if the debates are recorded and can be found on the Riksdag's webpage, it is the specially interested voters that know about the transparency of the CEA meetings that potentially find the recorded meetings. For the broader general public, the diverse political positions are made known through the more accessible Chamber and through media reports from Chamber debates.

Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson (2018) conclude their study on EU opposition in the CEA by commenting that not only the level of opposition has increased but also the quality of the

EU-debates in the Riksdag, meaning that Sweden has become a more skilled member of the Union. This is explained by the fact that the MPs to a high degree present various alternatives to the Government's pursued politics. However, this conclusion is not applicable to the results of the study in this paper. As has been shown in the study, the EU is to a limited degree visible in interpellation debates in the Riksdag's Chamber and a *normalisation* of EU politics does not occur. It can also be commented that the governmental terms of offices are not to be said to have affected the results, because the level of visibility of the EU and the level of EU opposition are somewhat the same during the parliamentary sessions studied. It can also be discussed whether Sweden has become a more skilled member of the Union, or if it is rather the CEA that has become a more skilled specialised committee of the Riksdag. One can question whether the categorisation of the Riksdag as a *policy shaper* is correct.

It can be discussed that *normalisation* of EU politics is of importance, that the handling of EU affairs is not to be centralised or isolated to a certain part of a parliament, such as the specialised CEA. For such discussion one could use the support of Blomgren (2005). Following, in order for the oppositional opinions to reach the voters they need to be transposed beyond the CEA for at least three reasons: 1) Principally, the CEA, and only the CEA is part of the EU legislative procedure, leaving out the traditional decision-making procedure of the full Chamber. 2) The CEA is not able to make any formal decisions; its role is consultative. 3) The CEA is being brought into the discussion process only when the proposals are deliberated in the Council, meaning that the questions have already been dealt at the lower preparatory levels to the Council. It is therefore not up to the CEA to shape the NP's long-term EU policy (Blomgren 2005, 87, 92, 94). In this concluding chapter the overall conclusions of study in this paper can be drawn and proposals for continued research to be introduced.

## 6. Conclusions

As seen in the introduction, the *opposition deficit* relates to the *democratic deficit*. Philosophers, e.g. Dahl and Kirsheimer, stress the importance of a number of elements, which together make up a political system. Among these elements is political opposition to find. Without political opposition a political system is not to be seen as democratic, because political opposition is the element through which citizen gain enlightened understanding, as stated by Dahl. In a democratic system all power proceeds from the people. This is also explicitly stated in the gateway article of the Instrument of Government, one of the documents that make up the constitution of Sweden. Thereby, in a democratic process different political positions shall be set against each other and be made known to the voters to choose from.

Continuingly the aim of this paper was articulated in the following research questions:

- *Are different party political views in EU politics visible in the Riksdag's Chamber debates between the parliamentary sessions 2010/2011 and 2020/2021?*
- *Can a normalisation of EU politics to be observed in the Riksdag Chamber debates, i.e. are changes in the direction of more EU opposition or is the EU more frequently referred to over time?*

The results of the study in this paper show that the EU was visible in 39% of all interpellation debates and EU opposition in 3,3% of all interpellation debates within the selected policy fields and set time frame, and that a *normalisation* of EU affairs has not occurred within the eleven years studied.

It can continuingly be discussed that the visibility of EU opposition in the Riksdag Chamber is not just to be claimed to be limited but low, based on the expectations on interpellation debates and the policy areas studied. One can however notice that the highest percentage of EU opposition in 2010/2011; 2018/2019 and 2020/2021 follow the repercussions of the financial crisis from 2008, the migrant crisis from 2015 onwards and the Covid-19-crisis from 2020, and that the migrant crisis showed to imply somewhat of an effect on the amount of

opposition within migration policy. However, the results are too uncertain to draw such conclusions from the result.

The purpose of studying the policy areas of highest opposition in the CEA was to further being able to generalise about the expected findings in the Chamber. The results of this study imply that the visibility of the EU and the level of EU opposition are low in the Chamber. Since the policy areas generating the highest opposition in the CEA result in low levels of EU visibility and opposition in the Chamber, then one can expect to find low or lower levels of visibility and EU opposition in other policy fields. Since Karlsson, Mårtensson and Persson observe an increase of opposition within the policy areas over time, one would have expected an increase of opposition in the policy areas in the Chamber too, even if the levels were to be lower than in the CEA. However, increases of EU visibility and opposition were not found in this study.

Because the Riksdag is categorised as a *policy shaper*, being one of the most active NPs in EU scrutiny, following conclusions can also be drawn: Since the level of opposition in EU politics is low in the Riksdag Chamber debates and a *normalisation* of EU politics is not to be observed, opposition or a *normalisation* of EU politics is not to be expected to be observed in other NPs with lower EU activity either. Stated differently one cannot expect a higher level of EU opposition or changes toward more EU opposition over time in other NPs of lower EU scrutiny activity either. Continuingly one can draw the conclusion that for most NPs still, opposition on EU politics is centralised or isolated to the specialised CEAs.

The results of the study in this paper also shows that the visibility of the EU through the mentioning of the terms *EU*, *Europe* and *European* and the level of opposition in EU politics in the Chamber is clearly higher than the level of opposition, but that it does not increase over time, i.e. a *normalisation* or *mainstreaming* of EU does not occur. In relation to the study by Auel, Rozenberg and Tacea one can also believe that this is the case for other MS too. Thereby one can expect the EU to a higher degree than opposition to be observed in other NPs too.

H2 and H4 were partly correct stating that: “*If the mainstreaming theory is incorrect and EU politics is not normalised in the Riksdag, then the mentioning of the EU and EU opposition is not visible in the chamber.*” and: “*If the mainstreaming theory is incorrect and EU politics is*

*not normalised in the Riksdag, then the mentioning of the EU and EU opposition do not become more visible in the chamber over time*". The EU was visible throughout the studied parliamentary sessions; the mentioning of the EU was stable and higher than expected, even if the visibility of the EU neither increased nor decreased. Otherwise the H2 and H4 were correct stating that the *normalisation* theory was incorrect; the level of opposition in EU politics is to a limited degree visible in the Chamber and the level of opposition does not increase over time.

The overall conclusion of this study is consequently that in EU affairs the Riksdag suffers from an *opposition deficit*; in EU politics various party political views are to a limited extent set against each other and the voters to a limited degree have the possibility of pursuing their power through choosing from diverse alternatives. This paper therefore claims that the Riksdag suffers from an *opposition deficit* in European affairs and thereby from a *democratic deficit*. This is an aspect to bear in mind as the Riksdag celebrates 100 years of democracy. In the last section of this paper proposals for continued research will be introduced.

## 6.1. Proposals for Continued Research

In a future research it would have been of interest to study the visibility of the EU and EU opposition in all types of Chamber debates, covering the years since the Swedish entrance of the EU in 1995. It would also have been of interest to study the share of opposition statements from each political party in order to analyse what effect e.g. the level of pro-Europeanness has on the tendency of political parties' interests in debating the EU in the Chamber.

A future research could advantageously aim to explain *why* or *why not* the visibility of the EU, opposition and the *normalisation* of EU politics occurs, since this is not the aim of this study and this study can only speculate around. The aim of such future research could be to attempt to position the Riksdag within the frame of incentives and disincentives of the *mainstreaming* theory introduced in chapter 2 of this paper.

A future research can even attempt to widen the scope of cases, comparing more NPs with each other, e.g. comparing some most likely cases with some least likely cases, i.e. some NPs



in which a high level of EU visibility and EU opposition is expected to occur with some NPs in which a low level of EU visibility and EU opposition is expected to occur. The aim of such study would be to test the credibility of the theoretical framework of incentives and disincentives set up by Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff (2015).

It would also be of interest to see a future study on the level of EU knowledge among MPs in the NPs, in order to find out to what extent the MPs knowledge level can explain the visibility of the EU and level of EU opposition in the NP's chambers. A low level of EU visibility and opposition is expected to relate to the general level of EU knowledge among MPs. Theoretically, what you do not have knowledge about you do not debate on.

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