

# Awakening the Giant?

An in-depth case study of the presence of and contest over European issues during the Swedish national election cycle of 2022.



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

FIGGE ROTH  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
2023

# Abstract

The Swedish national election of 2022 paved the way for potentially witnessing European issues being more prominent and contentious than ever before among the national parties. However, as the Member State has historically been characterised by its ambivalence towards the EU, there exist reasons to question this assumption. By drawing upon the context of the election, both before and after election day, this study sought to examine when and why European issues were present and contested in the Swedish national election cycle of 2022. Based on the theoretical notions of politicisation, the study regarded electoral and coalitional incentives as possible explanations. The study, which considered parties' election materials, political debates, and speeches, used a mixed-method approach by analysing the content and relations of explicit statements on European issues. The analysis showed that the issues were more contentious after election day, although they were more prevalent before election day. Although the thesis could not acknowledge a depoliticisation of the EU, tendencies towards this emerged in the analysis. A suggestion for future research is therefore to continue investigating the topic, mainly because of democratic interests and the lack of research on the case.

*Key words:* national election cycle, politicisation, Sweden, European Union, national political parties

Words: 19 629

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Jonathan Polk for guiding me through this thesis by always providing me with inspiring and valuable feedback. A big thanks goes out to all my family and friends who are there through thick and thin. A special thanks is dedicated to *Mamma, Pappa & Isabelle* for their unconditional love and support.

*Malmö*, on May 23 2023.

# Table of contents

<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Aim and Research Question.....	3
1.2 Limitations and Structure.....	4
<b>2 Background: Why Sweden?.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 A Complicated Relationship.....	5
2.2 A Vicious EU Circle.....	6
2.3 The Breakthrough of Euroscepticism.....	9
2.4 A Case Worth Studying.....	10
<b>3 Literature Review.....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 The Politicisation of the EU.....	11
3.1.2 A Sleeping Giant of European Politics?.....	12
3.1.3 Defining Politicisation.....	14
3.2 Where Do We Find European Issues Politicised?.....	14
3.2.1 The National Electoral Arena Matters More.....	17
3.2.1 Previous Findings on Sweden.....	17
3.3 Hypotheses, Gaps, and Scholarly Inspiration.....	18
<b>4 Analytical Framework.....</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1 Theoretical Basis.....	20
4.2 Conceptualising Politicisation: Saliency and Polarisation.....	21
4.2.1 Conceptual adaptation.....	22
4.2.2 The Actors.....	22
4.3 Distinguishing European Issues.....	23
4.3.1 Implications of the Categorisation.....	24
<b>5 Methodology.....</b>	<b>26</b>
5.1 Research Design.....	26
5.2 Typology of the Case Study.....	28
5.3 Content Analysis.....	29
5.3.1 A Qualitative and Quantitative Content Analysis.....	30
5.3.2 Critical Reflections.....	31
5.4 Selection of Material and Delimitations.....	32
<b>6 Analysis.....</b>	<b>35</b>
6.1 Pre-Election.....	35
6.1.2 Manifestos.....	35
6.1.3 The Riksdag Debate on the 8th of June.....	39
6.1.4 The Party Leader's Speeches at Almedalen.....	41
6.2 Post-Election.....	42

6.2.1 The Parties' Post-Election Analyses.....	43
6.2.2 The Riksdag Debate on the 26th of October.....	47
6.2.3 The Riksdag's EU-Political Debate on the 16th of November.....	49
6.3 Summarising Remarks.....	53
<b>7 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>8 References.....</b>	<b>58</b>
8.1 Literature.....	58
8.2 Electronic Resources.....	63
8.3 Appendix.....	65

# 1 Introduction

The year of 2022 was remarkable for the entire European Union (EU) and its Member States. Several elections were held, many of which reshaped the political landscape across the continent, one which was Sweden. In addition to experiencing a newly elected conservative government, that also broke the Social Democrats' longstanding governmental position, the country waited to chair the Presidency of the Council of the EU (the Council) for the third time since its formal entry into the Union in 1994 in the first half of the year 2023.

Coming out of the election, a new government was formed consisting of the Moderates, the Christian Democrats, and the Liberals. However, given the election results (Polk 2022-09-15), the formation of the government was made possible with the support of the Sweden Democrats. Although not occupying a formal position in the coalition, the party received considerable political leverage through the four parties' agreement which set generous remits for policy areas and forms of cooperation (Persson 2022-10-14). This was not least observed through a disclosure which demonstrated that the Sweden Democrats would have full influence in a large number of EU legislative processes - even those that are partly outside the areas of the agreement (Hederos 2022-09-17). While the government parties are divided if this is the case, it is nevertheless notable that a party deemed as Eurosceptic (Bulent 2021: Bolin 2015: Brack & Startin 2015) will play a significant role in the new government's decision-making power on European issues. By observing the breakthrough of Euroscepticism into the Swedish government, which otherwise consists of parties that long have held a pro-EU consensus, one could assume increasing incentives for partisan conflicts concerning issues of European integration. Furthermore, one could assume that European issues were present and contested during the national election of 2022 given the context in which the election took place.

At the same time, "the decade of crises" (c.f. Matthijs 2020) undoubtedly extended itself into a new decade with the emergence of new difficult challenges for the EU. Although managing the COVID-19 crisis with successful joint efforts (c.f. Boin & Rhinard 2023), the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 meant that the respite was short-lived for the Union. With the EU facing an ongoing energy crisis and a deepening economic recession following the war (the Council 2023-03-23) while maintaining its role as a thought leader on climate change (the Council 2023), it could be argued that European issues are more relevant and

urgent than ever. Similarly, one could assume that these contemporary challenges would be reflected in a Member State's national election who soon would come to chair the presidency of the Council.

While the vast majority of media reviewers were uninterested in demanding answers from the parties on their approach to the EU in the coming term, a few noted the absence of European issues in the domestic debate (Broqvist 2022-07-15: Asplund Catot 2022: Lowermark 2022-08-30: Renneus Guthrie 2022-09-08: Gripenberg & Melchior 2022-09-10). Perhaps the lack of competition should not come as a surprise, as existing literature has continuously highlighted Sweden's reluctant relationship with the EU (Aylott 2002: Linderoth 2011: Aylott et al. 2013: Asp 2014: Hellström 2014: Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2016:10). In particular, some literature has identified a negative trend in the country's national election as the importance of European issues for Swedish politics increases, but political divides are increasingly overlooked in election campaigns. Instead, domestic parties are choosing to pay less attention to issues they want to pursue within and with the EU (SOU 2016: 90). At a general level, the development of an even greater shift to the EU's intergovernmental decision-making body, the Council, has meant that national elections are not just about domestic issues but increasingly about European issues (Papadopoulos 2021: Heffler & Wessels 2013: Tapio 2009).

The possible absence of European issues in the national electoral competition is not only remarkable but worrying given the EU's influence over a Member State like Sweden. According to a review by *Dagens Nyheter* of all laws adopted in Sweden between the years 2012 and 2019, an average of 37% were derived from EU decisions (Örstadius 2019-05-09). By further being a relatively small and export-dependent country, the EU plays a major role in Sweden's economic prosperity. As much as 59% of the Member State's exports went to the EU in 2018, and 70% of imports came from other EU countries (Ekonomifakta 2019-02-14). Besides, the EU's external free trade agreements, job creation, and growth should also be taken into account.

By considering the initial descriptions of the case, one could assume that European issues should have been present and more debated than ever in the context of the 2022 Swedish national election. This thesis, therefore, identifies a particular scientific interest in examining the case by looking more deeply at the national election cycle of 2022. Taking into account the new government formation and post-election events emphasises the need to not only look at the election itself, but rather at the electoral cycle to examine whether European issues became more prominent in the political debate.

However, the interest is more profound and multifaceted to justify the need for further research. As of yet, there exists no current research on the Swedish

national election cycle of 2022 which has specifically examined the prevalence of European issues. This thesis therefore seeks to contribute to existing literature that has provided valuable insights into the salience of EU-related issues in the case and the Member State's ongoing relationship with the EU since accession. More generally, the project aims to link the research to a broader debate by deepening the understanding of when and why European issues can enter the public sphere at the national level. This is of importance from a citizen's perspective in the EU, mainly because the democratic process risks being undermined when policy alternatives on European issues are not sufficiently expressed. This, in turn, may foster a trend whereby European issues become a matter for the government and its bureaucracy that does not require active engagement by voters. It may even create a perception that very few decisions at the EU level are important. Summarised, the thesis identifies both societal and scientific incentives to study the subject it motivates.

## 1.1 Aim and Research Question

By drawing upon the rich body of literature which has examined the *politicisation* of European integration in electoral contexts, this thesis aims to examine when and why European issues were present and contested in the Swedish national election cycle of 2022. More specifically, the thesis adopts Grande & Hutter's (2016a: 2016b) conceptualisations of politicisation and European issues through the components of saliency and polarisation. Another objective is therefore to contribute to the existing literature on EU politicisation by analysing the Swedish election cycle. This is done by considering the attractiveness of electoral and coalition incentives for potentially politicising European issues in the context of national elections. Methodologically, this thesis builds upon a mixed method approach of a content analysis of gathered material from the parties themselves, political debates in the Riksdag, and speeches. Moreover, this thesis adopts an actor-oriented approach. The political parties and their explicit statements on European issues during the national election cycle are thus the main subjects of this research.

By further justifying Sweden as a case that begs further research, I aspire to examine and answer the following research question:

*When and why were European issues present and contested in the Swedish national election cycle of 2022?*



## 1.2 Limitations and Structure

There are limitations to this thesis. Though an ambiguous term, the national election cycle is here understood and applied to certain events prior to and after the Swedish national election of 2022. The chosen time period, which runs from the 8th of June to the 16th of November, therefore has implications for what this thesis can achieve. Previous studies have generally examined politicisation in domestic contexts over a long period of time and often in cross-country comparisons. This thesis is limited to examining politicisation in a snapshot in a particular EU Member State. The choice of doing so has implications for what this study can explain and contribute. Another limitation is the exclusion of other actors besides national parties which may have affected the potential presence and contest of European issues during the election. The choice of solely focusing on European issues further implies that domestic issues were excluded from this study. Finally, the case of interest was selected in a targeted manner, which has further implications for what this study can explain. However, the thesis does not seek to generalise across the population of cases, that is the EU Member States, by interpreting them as equal. Rather, the primary aim is to deepen the understanding of how European issues can be politicised in a Member State that has been characterised in many respects by its reluctance to the EU. The choices and limitations of the thesis will be discussed throughout the work, especially in Chapter 5.

This thesis unfolds as follows: First, further contextual background will be given to the case of Sweden, where it will also be further justified why it is worth studying. This is followed by a thorough literature review of the scientific area of interest that forms the basis of the project's hypotheses. Thereafter, the analytical framework is elaborated and discussed. I will then describe the methodology of the thesis, including the research design, chosen method, and materials. Based on these elements, an analysis of the national election cycle is carried out to identify when and why European issues were present and contested. Finally, the thesis ends with a conclusion on the result and implications of the study as a whole.

## 2 Background: Why Sweden?

In relative terms, Sweden is on the periphery of the EU in terms of decision-making power and political influence. Even if European issues were present and contentious, their significance for the whole European project still plays a minor role in the distribution of power among the Member States. This background chapter aims to refute this line of thinking by justifying Sweden as a case that requires further research in light of the recent election and its related developments. This will be done by turning to the existing literature on Sweden's relationship with the EU where I also will justify how this research contributes to existing work. Why I only will focus on the national electoral arena will be accounted for in the next chapter.

### 2.1 A Complicated Relationship

Sweden's first encounter with the European project back in the 1950s started with a reluctant attitude. Although both the EU and Sweden's approach towards the Union has evolved enormously since then, there are strong indications that the attitude remains. However, in obvious but different forms.

Initially, the negotiations between European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the EU<sup>1</sup>, which later produced the European Economic Area (EEA), was the desired avenue of European cooperation. By witnessing their Scandinavian and Nordic companions joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Swedish security policy had been based on neutrality which aimed to balance the trade relations between the Soviet Union and the West. With the end of the Cold War, a legitimate window opened to join the integration process by changing the position on neutrality. However, additional factors were needed to convince an already divided group of politicians and the population to apply for membership. Following the serious economic crisis in the 1990s, the Social Democratic government declared its intentions of applying for membership by emphasising the benefit of the Union's robust economic policy. With a narrow majority of 52,3% in the national referendum, Sweden finally joined in early 1995 (Aylott et

---

<sup>1</sup> Then called the European Communities (EC).

al. 2013, 155-156). Together with their Scandinavian neighbours, Sweden has been categorised as reluctant towards Europe (Aylott 2002, 441). Previous literature has exposed this from different perspectives. One telling example is Sweden's resort to referendums and the use of direct democracy towards the EU (Aylott 2022, 447). This has its roots in the 2003 referendum on the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). With a renewed electoral mandate, the Social Democratic government saw a promising opportunity to join the EMU with the support of the centre parties and an encouraging public opinion. However, the referendum resulted in a majority vote against it (55,9%). The failure led the five pro-EU parties<sup>2</sup> to rethink their strategies of using direct democracy to decide on difficult European issues from then on. This was exemplified when the Treaty of Lisbon<sup>3</sup> was ratified in the Riksdag 2008, combined with a rather muted opposition between the parties (Aylotte et al. 2013, 156).

The troublesome referendums tell an ambivalent story about Sweden's first years in the EU. At the same time, other scholars have explored the Member State's relationship with the EU post-Lisbon. Especially by going into detail about the state apparatus' lack of understanding and handling European issues at home.

## 2.2 A Vicious EU Circle

In the public inquiry, "EU på hemmaplan", which can be translated to the EU at home (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2016:10), Strömvik<sup>4</sup> et al. examined the possibilities to promote access, participation, and influence of the public and other stakeholders in Sweden in matters decided in the EU. The appointed expert group drew on previous research, and government surveys, and conducted opinion polls on information and knowledge about the EU among local politicians and the general public. In addition, the inquiry carried out various tests to measure the EU knowledge of students, teachers, and government officials (SOU 2016:10, 25-26). The 215-page long report contains both current opportunities and future proposals to promote accessibility to EU-related issues in Sweden.

Throughout the report, the authors recognise the lack of a lively public debate on EU policies in Sweden. The inquiry shows that cause and effect are largely the same. Namely, an extensive lack of knowledge throughout society about how

---

<sup>2</sup> The Social Democrats, the Liberals (then the People's Party), the Centre Party, the Christian Democrats, and the Moderates.

<sup>3</sup> Known in updated form as the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) (2007) which amended the Maastricht Treaty (1993).

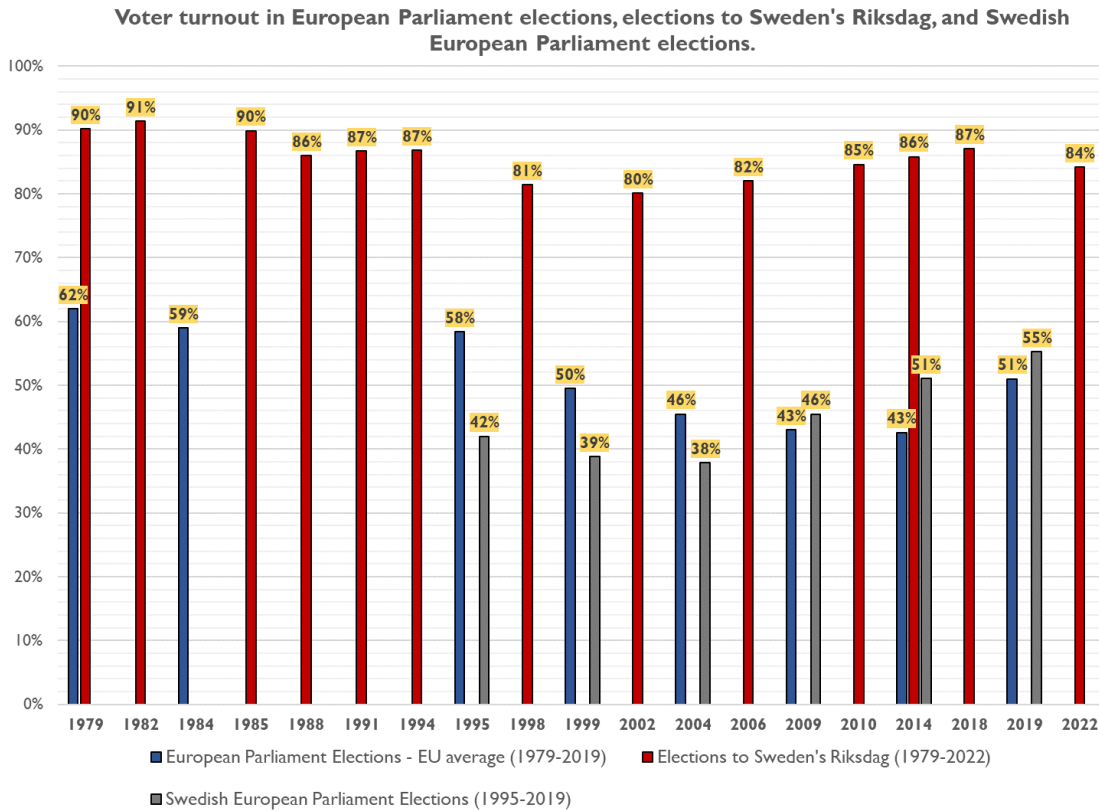
<sup>4</sup> Maria Strömvik, University lecturer at the Department of Political Science at Lund University, was appointed as special investigator for the inquiry. To see the full list of the appointed expert group, see p.3 in SOU 2016:10.

Swedish democracy works after joining the Union. The widespread lack of knowledge also applies to how common decisions are taken at the EU level and how these decisions can be influenced (SOU 2016:10, 33).

When the public debate on EU decision-making starts at home, it often comes too late and sporadically, as it tends to focus on crises. This is exemplified by various issues that have been raised in the public debate, such as the 2015 migration crisis (SOU 2016:30, 33). It is emphasised that the lack of public debate leads to unequal opportunities for influence and that this vicious circle in turn creates space for growing discontent and frustration, which can lead to false images of reality. If the public discourse is not reminded that national policies are influenced by decisions taken at the EU level and that Swedish elected representatives are involved in shaping these decisions, it may create a perception that very few decisions at the EU level are important. This view is often used to explain why voter turnout in EP elections is low and why interest in EU politics is generally low (SOU 2016:10, 34-35).

The Swedish EP elections have recently received higher turnout percentages (2009, 2014 & 2019) compared to the average turnout in EP elections throughout the EU. However, there is still a clear gap compared to participation in national elections (see *Figure 1*). Compared to other EU Member States, Sweden belongs to a group of Member States with the largest difference in turnout between European and national elections (SOU 2016:10, 91). The time period of the figure reflects the very first EP election in 1979, the Swedish turnout since its first national EP election in 1995, and the turnout in the national elections from 1979 to 2022.

The inquiry identifies a negative trend in national elections as their significance for Swedish EU politics increases while political divides are increasingly overlooked in election campaigns. Political parties are increasingly choosing to give less attention to the issues they want to pursue within the EU, and the media scrutinisers are following the same path (SOU 2016: 90). With regard to previous research, the inquiry emphasises that there is a lack of current research on the subject. The report is therefore cautious in concluding that parties do not provide enough information and knowledge on EU-related issues. It, therefore, encourages current researchers and students to undertake new studies in this area (SOU 2016: 157).



**Figure 1:** Voter turnout in European Parliament elections, elections to Sweden's Riksdag, and Swedish European Parliament elections. **Source:** Valmyndigheten (2023) (Swedish electoral authority). Created by the author.

However, existing research highlighted in the inquiry must be mentioned. Hellström (2014) has reported on the proportion of EU statements in the parties' election manifestos for national elections. Not surprisingly, the amount has decreased from an already low level between 1995-2010. Less than 1% of all statements refer to European cooperation, which should be highlighted in comparison to Austria's 4% and France's 6%. In a less limited study of the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the Moderates, Linderöth (2011) finds similar results. Another study by Asp (2014) finds that EU-related issues have received less attention on the party agendas. Likewise, it is concluded that these issues were completely absent in the 2006 and 2010 national elections.

While this thesis does not aim to further investigate the existing knowledge gap in the research field, it rather aims to contribute additional knowledge to the field by examining when and why European issues were present and contested during the national election cycle of 2022.

## 2.3 The Breakthrough of Euroscepticism

As touched upon in the introduction, the outcome of the national election meant that the Sweden Democrats achieved a powerful position in the current government. Although they are not a formal party to the constellation, the government still relies heavily on their support. In the existing literature, the party has been described as Eurosceptic (Kenes 2021: Bolin 2015: Brack & Startin 2015). Although a contested term, Euroscepticism in its simplest form can be understood as opposition to EU powers. (Brack & Startin 2015, 339). Most often the phenomenon is discussed in a “hard-soft” dichotomy. Hard means that leaving the EU is the preferred course of action, while “soft” means having fundamental objections to the Union but not wanting to leave (Taggart 2019, 26).

In a thorough analysis of the party’s first entry into the EP after the 2014 elections, Bolin (2015) summarises the party’s origins and approach towards European integration. For a long time, the radical right failed to gain ground in Sweden, while other neighbouring countries experienced the opposite. In 2010, the Sweden Democrats won 5,2% of the vote and its first seats in the Riksdag, while finally finding a demand for its far-right issues (Bolin 2015, 60-61). The party’s successful provision of these alternatives also broke the long tradition of the economic left-right divide that has long structured Swedish voting behaviour (Bolin 2015, 61). In its 2014 manifesto for the EP election, the party called for the renegotiation of Swedish membership, followed by a referendum in which voters would be allowed to initiate withdrawal from the EU as soon as possible (Bolin 2015, 65-66).

However, in 2019, the Sweden Democrats, together with the Left party, changed their exit position towards the EU by accepting Sweden’s membership while remaining critical (SR 2019-02-06: SVT 2019-02-17). An opinion piece by the party leader Jimmie Åkesson says that the party changed its position by arguing that the “bureaucratic monstrosity” is best dealt with and changed from within with like-minded parties (Åkesson 2019-01-31). Developments since 2014 could place the party in the soft sphere of Euroscepticism. However, many of the party’s original positions remain. This has been evident in the Riksdag’s Committee on EU Affairs. Within the committee, the government discusses with the Riksdag what line Sweden should take on various EU issues ahead of Council meetings (Sveriges Riksdag 2023).

According to a review of the committee's work between 2007 and 2018, it seems that the parties that have traditionally agreed on Sweden’s EU membership have become more united (Europaportalen 2022-11-30). In recent years, the cooperation parties have reached a consensus on 90% of the government’s

positions in EU negotiations. However, the Sweden Democrats increased their criticism in the committee. Between 2014 and 2018, the party expressed 39% dissenting opinions on any EU issues. In the period of 2010-2014, the party expressed 27% dissenting opinions (Europaportalen 2022-11-30). Recently, the Social Democrats, who are considered the leading opposition party, expressed concern about the current government's lack of support for EU policy in the committee. On two occasions, the new government has not sought support for the actual policies they will present in the Council. The Social Democrats noted that it has become clear that the government has chosen its partner party (Hederos et al. 2023-01-20).

The Sweden Democrats' informal position in the government has also attracted international media attention and concerns about "a far right shadow looming over Swedish EU presidency" (Petrequin 2023-01-11). Several diplomats in Brussels were also concerned that the party's EU stance could spill over into the way the presidency is run. Meanwhile, EU officials are still trying to find out what political positions the new government will take (Duxbury & Barigazzi 2022-12-29; Petrequin 2023-01-11). Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, who is also the leader of the Moderates, has also been criticised for his support by the Sweden Democrats by several MEPs (The Local 2023-01-17; SR 2023-01-17).

## 2.4 A Case Worth Studying

Against this background, it could be said that Sweden's reluctance towards the EU persists in various respects. It could be argued that the Member State is new in relative terms and is still waiting for a livelier debate on the EU. However, regarding previous findings, a Member State like Austria, which joined the EU in the same year, has proved the opposite. Although no party explicitly pursues a political agenda to leave the EU, the breakthrough of the Sweden Democrats has potentially opened up opportunities for an increased presence and contest of European issues. Similarly, the external media attention to the party's position in government provides additional incentives to study the case at this particular point in time. However, given Sweden's historical aversion to the EU, this may lead us to conclude that there is a lack of political competition on European issues.

## 3 Literature Review

While the previous chapter highlighted valuable insights on how Sweden has generally approached European issues at home, the following chapter aims to provide a broader overview of how existing literature has theoretically approached the research area of interest. The initial section will present how previous literature has talked about the *politicisation* of European integration, why it might occur, and how it could be understood, and defined. The section thereafter will expose where we are most likely to find a politicisation of European issues. Lastly, the chapter will address the current gaps in the literature and what analytical framework this thesis will adapt.

### 3.1 The Politicisation of the EU

Emphasising that there are different possibilities for studying national parties' competition and attention to EU issues, Wiesner et al. (2021, 29-31) stress that most contributors base their research on Hooghe & Marks's (2009) pioneering work. Grande & Hutter (2016a, 4-5) argue similarly by suggesting that the scholars were the ones who put the concept of politicisation at the heart of their postfunctionalist theory of European integration. According to Hooghe & Marks (2009, 7), the Maastricht Accord (1993) was the very beginning of the politicisation of European integration, as the issue entered the contested sphere of party competition, elections, and referenda. Politicisation is according to the authors understood as the inclusion of mass public attitudes towards the politics of European integration. By opposing the elite-centred view of a bottom-up perspective on European integration (c.f. Moravcsik 1999; Moravcsik 2018; Haas 1958), they render a public opinion on Europe well structured as it influences national voting and is further linked to the fundamental dimensions that challenge European societies. The European project thus became the subject of controversial "mass politics" (Hooghe & Marks 2009, 5-7).

The scholar's argument builds onto a wide range of scholars who have argued that the "giant" of European politics is still sleeping. The metaphor implies that sceptical public opinion could be aroused by certain political parties, which could change the electoral or domestic political competition and bring issues of



European integration to the forefront (van Der Eijk & Franklin 2004: de Vries 2007: Green-Pedersen 2012: Hobolt & Rodon 2020: Grande & Hutter 2016a). Although the literature is fragmented in terms of theory and explanations, it has provided fruitful research on domestic parties, their behavioural logic, strategies, and politicisation in electoral contexts.

### 3.1.2 A Sleeping Giant of European Politics?

Much of the existing literature suggests that the giant has been awakened in some cases. In a comparative study of Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (UK), de Vries (2007) employs individual-level survey data from each Member State during several national elections during 1992-2002. The foundation for providing explanations is based on what de Vries calls EU issue voting, which is defined as “*the process in which attitudes towards European integration translate into national vote choice*” (de Vries 2007, 364). Politicisation is thus understood at the electoral level, and for an issue to be a giant, EU orientations should resemble real attitudes that show meaningful variations rather than random reactions. The author argues that Eurosceptic political entrepreneurs at the ideological extremes mobilise public opinion to draw attention to provide saliency and political conflict. If so, these political parties have strategic incentives to mobilise European issues for electoral gain (de Vries 2007, 367-368). This is because Euroscepticism is ideologically compatible with their general criticism of the political and economic status quo, and public opinion is on average more Eurosceptic than mainstream elites. The concluded results show that the giant has woken up in some cases, such as in Denmark and the UK, as parties have provided a wide range of views on Europe. In Germany and the Netherlands, voters have not cared enough about the EU for political parties to compete (de Vries 2007, 379-380).

Perceiving parties as entrepreneurs has been further developed by Hobolt & de Vries (2015), but as “issue entrepreneurship”. That is a strategy whereby parties mobilise issues that have been largely ignored in the party competition. Taking a political position on an issue that differs from the usual status quo can thus lead to electoral success (Hobolt & de Vries 2015, 1161).

In a recent review of scientific knowledge on domestic contestation of the EU, Hobolt & Rondon (2020) argue that the awakening of the sleeping giant is still not fully understood. It is argued that European issues have become more prominent in domestic politics and that the issues now form a salient part of the domestic political debate. The focus should therefore remain on public opinion, as domestic competition for the EU has brought new types of challenges to European

policymakers. Among others, established government parties have started to feel the pressure of increasing politicisation of EU politics by challenger parties, and the Europeanisation of national politics has recently reshaped voters' political preferences. For example, issues of borders and European integration are increasingly central to domestic campaigns (Hobolt & Rondon 2020, 161-165).

The findings that the sleeping giant has awakened have been contradicted by Green-Pedersen (2012: 2019). This is shown in the case of Denmark, and a contrasting understanding of the politicisation of European issues on the party system agenda (c.f. Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010). Why a case study is preferable to cross-national comparison is based on the argument that politicisation is less widespread than the literature suggests. Therefore, it does not sufficiently explain how and why politicisation can occur (Green-Pedersen 2012, 117). Contrary to the aforementioned literature, the focus should not be on identifying incentives among Eurosceptic parties through public dissatisfaction. Rather, the explanation should be sought in the electoral and coalition incentives among the mainstream parties seeking to govern. Politicisation is therefore understood as a matter of saliency, which means that the issue must be at the top of the agenda of parties and voters (Green-Pedersen 2012, 117). Other parties, including Eurosceptic ones, are seen as dependent on the strategies of mainstream parties for electoral success. Europeans will therefore become politicised when one side of the competition breaks its pro-EU consensus. This position will only be implemented if they find it attractive, that is by forming favourable coalitions and achieving electoral gains (Green-Pedersen 2012, 119).

By analysing how key issues are addressed through the length of parliamentary debates, the development of different issues on the voters' agenda in national elections since 1981, and a detailed analysis of Danish party politics and public attitudes towards European integration, Green-Pedersen (2012, 126-127) renders the giant fast asleep. The author notes that Denmark's extreme parties have had an electoral interest in the issue, but that the pro-EU parties have more or less ignored it during the election campaigns, as neither the coalition nor the electoral criteria have been met (Green-Pedersen 2012, 124). Although the Danes are one of the most Eurosceptic populations and have experienced several referenda on EU issues, this was not enough for the mainstream parties to break their consensus. This contrasts with the findings of de Vries (2007) where politicisation was identified in Denmark.

### 3.1.3 Defining Politicisation

Despite the contrary understanding of the sleeping giant thesis, a significant part of the existing literature argues that European integration has indeed been politicised during electoral contexts nationally. However, the widespread understanding of the concept and its meaning requires an intelligible definition.

In their comprehensive contribution to empirical research on politicisation Kriesi, Grande & Hutter 2016 (ed.), take a firmer grip on how politicisation can be defined, operationalised, and studied by tracing politicisation comparatively in six European countries<sup>5</sup> between the years of 1970-2010. One of them being Sweden. Recognising that the term can be found in different contexts, and with different meanings, the scholars define politicisation as the “*expansion of the scope of conflict within a system*” (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 7). This internal definition contrasts the external meaning of politicisation that has been prominent in the literature on political economy and public administration. The definition is intentionally broad in terms of the type of political actors involved in a given conflict and the means they use to assert their claims. In addition, the definition includes the different political arenas in which they can act, their relationships, and the consequences of such politicisation (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 7-8). Given its advantageous breadth and explicit formulation, the thesis favours the scholar’s definition of the concept. Having acknowledged how politicisation can be defined, it is still necessary to highlight how and where we can find European issues politicised.

## 3.2 Where Do We Find European Issues Politicised?

How, where and when we can expect a politicisation of European issues depends largely on how the EU is understood as a political entity. Grande & Hutter (2016a, 18) consider the EU as a polity where the political authority is divided between the European and the national levels. Given its multi-layered structure, it is therefore justified to assume that the EU is not a “super-state”, according to the authors. This has in turn resulted in a system of dual representation where Member States are represented in the European Council<sup>6</sup> and the Council of Ministers, while the EP represents the citizens. One can therefore expect the potential politicisation of European integration in different institutional contexts at

---

<sup>5</sup> Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland and the UK constitute the sample together with Sweden.

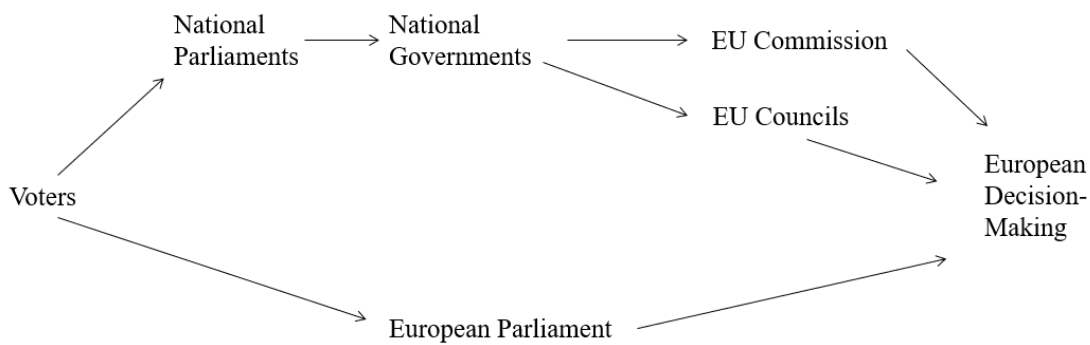
<sup>6</sup> Composed of the head of state or government of the EU Member States, not to be confused with the Council of Ministers.

both levels. However, as the EU is a community of communities, rather than a community of individuals, it is argued that the EU prioritises the representation of collectives over individuals. Due to the importance of collective representation and the prominent role of the national governments in the EU policy process, former executive actors are prioritised over non-executive actors (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 18). The same argument and view have been pursued in the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism (c.f. Moravcsik 1999: Moravcsik 2018).

Among others emphasised by the national inquiry (SOU 2016:10), there has been a substantial loss of power by the national parliament to the government. Sweden is not alone among the EU Member States in this regard (c.f. Papadopoulos 2021: Heffler & Wessels 2013: Tapio 2009). Despite an expansion of competencies through recent treaties, the EP has not been fully compensated with a proportionally equivalent increase in powers. Therefore, transnational party organisations remain weak in mobilising European issues in EP elections (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 19) (c.f. Hix & Lord 1997: Reif & Schmitt 1980). Grande & Hutter (2016a, 18-19) therefore expect politicisation to take place in the intergovernmental channel. Moreover, the extension of political conflict beyond the closed national and supranational circles is expected to be found in the national electoral arena. The authors argue that the mobilisation of non-electoral political conflict can be done by apolitical actors, but it is still expected to be most intense in the national electoral arena where parties compete for votes, offices, and policies. Political parties thus have the strongest mobilisation power compared to national referendums and protests (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 90).

The theoretical reasons why the national electoral arena is more important than the European one have also been presented by Mair (2000). Although his reasoning is based on the theoretical foundations of Europeanisation, Mair has specifically discussed how the EU affects domestic parties, their party systems, and the competition between parties on European issues (Mair 2000: Mair 2006: Mair & Thomassen 2010: Mair 2013). The literature on Europeanisation is a widespread academic interest in various fields of research (c.f. Ladrech 1994: Börzel & Risse 2000: Radaelli 2003: Schimmelfennig 2015). In its simplest form, the concept can be understood as actors' responses to the effects of European integration (Ladrech 2002, 389).

Like Grande & Hutter (2016a), Mair (2000, 43-44) emphasises that European decision-making clearly falls within the scope of both arenas while national decision-making falls exclusively within the scope of the national. Consequently, there are two different channels through which Europe can be directly accessible to voters through a system of dual representation (Mair 2000, 43-44) (See *Figure 2*).



**Figure 2:** *Electoral access to European Decision-making and the system of dual representation.*  
**Source:** Recreated from Mair (2000, 44) in “*The Limited Impact of Europe on National Party Systems*”.

Given this dispersion and distribution of power in each electoral arena, it is assumed that issues relating to Europe’s constitution are best suited for competition in the national arena, while issues relating to the “day-to-day” functioning of Europe are best suited to the European arena. To divide the competition in any other way would risk creating meaningless competitions in each of the arenas (Mair 2000, 45-46). Despite this, Mair argues that the opposite occurs in the domestic party competition between parties on European issues, as they barely feature in national elections, while the debate on the constitution of Europe mistakenly takes place in the European electoral arena. The removal of the issues from the electoral competition, where they belong, is because the parties remain isolated from electoral constraints by not offering policy alternatives for which they can be held accountable. This act should be seen as a process of depoliticisation, according to Mair (2000, 46-47)

In the aftermath of a possible depoliticisation of European issues, voters are offered voices that are likely to have little say in European decision-making. Europe thus becomes an issue for the ruling politicians and their bureaucracies who do not need the active involvement of the electorate. This act of disengagement by political parties also risks undermining the democratic process (Mair 2000, 48-49). Although Mair does not define depoliticisation, it could be understood conversely to the Grande & Hutter (2016a) definition.

### 3.2.1 The National Electoral Arena Matters More

Strikingly, the theoretical reasoning corresponds to the inquiry on Sweden's separating treatment of the EU, the parties' lack of interest in drawing attention to European issues and, more generally, the democratic shortcomings of non-existent competition of the issues (SOU 2016:10). Although there has been a significant institutional development in the distribution of powers between the EU governing bodies since Mair's argument (2000), the existing literature still shows that the intergovernmental channelling of European decision-making and electoral gains is superior to the EP (c.f. Grande & Hutter 2016a). From a different perspective, these arguments highlighted belong to a group of scholars who have treated the EP elections as "second-order elections" given the lower turnout, the target efforts of the parties in the campaigns, and the increased conflict outside the supranational channel at the European level (c.f. Ehin & Talving 2021; Schmitt 2005). However, in a scientific report on the Swedish EP election of 2019, Berg (2019) puts forward evidence that could reverse the assumptions concerning the latest result of the mentioned EP election. When interpreting voter turnout from a longer-time perspective (see *Figure 1*), it can still be argued that EP elections are second-order in Sweden. Overall, the national electoral arena matters more when looking at the politicisation of European issues. Meanwhile, this could imply high stakes at play as European issues have to compete with other domestic political issues. Therefore, it should not be assumed that these issues will be dominant (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 19).

### 3.2.1 Previous Findings on Sweden

When reviewing existing studies on the politicisation of European issues (3.1), Sweden tends to be an excluded case. However, in their extensive research on politicisation, Kriesi, Grande & Hutter (2016) include Sweden as a case when they examine the phenomenon comparatively in six European countries between the years of 1970-2010. The selection strategy follows a model most-similar-systems design where only Western European states with stable democratic systems throughout the research period are included (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 28). The temporal and comparative scope of the study utilises major integration steps as research objects, as they represent decisive phases where attention is focused on certain aspects of European integration (Dolezal et al. 2016, 39). The data analysed is collected from the mass media during public debates, election campaigns, and domestic protests (Dolezal et al. 2016, 43-44).

Throughout the mentioned work, Sweden is considered a case that represents a low degree of politicisation compared to the other cases.

By analysing non-governmental actors, civil society organisations, and political parties' politicisation of European integration in public debates, Grande & Hutter (2016a, 63-88) report a low level of politicisation in Sweden. Though a high level was observed in the 1990s because of conflicts over the EU and EMU membership, politicisation was subsequently low in debates on the Constitutional Treaty. Furthermore, when specifically examining the level of politicisation in the national electoral arena through campaigns, the scholars report that Europe has been a salient issue in all cases except Sweden throughout the time period (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 90-111). As underlined in the findings from the public debates, Sweden represents a case of an intensive membership conflict but subsequently very low levels of politicisation. Following the negative referendum on adopting the Euro in 2003, European issues were subsidised in the national contest. Lastly, in an analysis of how European issues have been framed differently in political conflicts by parties to further understand politicisation, Sweden is not included. The decision of excluding Sweden is based on the interest of analysing cases which represent high levels of politicisation, but also due to resource constraints (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 181-206).

### 3.3 Hypotheses, Gaps, and Scholarly Inspiration

Given the reviewed literature and the reported findings on Sweden, including Chapter 2, it is justified to argue that the giant has been sleeping in the Swedish electoral arena. Although there are various plausible reasons behind why this is the case, theoretical explanations lead us to assume more depoliticisation than actual politicisation of European issues in the national election cycle of 2022. Overall, two hypotheses can be formulated:

**H1:** European issues were less politicised in the Swedish pre-election of 2022 because the parties identified no electoral or coalition incentives to be salient on the issues

**H2:** European issues were likelier politicised in the Swedish post-election of 2022 because the parties remained unrestrained of any coalition and electoral threats after election day

The explanation why we can expect less politicisation of European issues (**H1**) is that the parties did not find any electoral or coalitional incentives before the election. This can be observed mainly among the Eurosceptic party, the Sweden Democrats (c.f. de Vries 2007) or among the mainstream parties, the Moderates or the Social Democrats (c.f. Green-Pedersen 2012). The reason why politicisation is more likely to be expected after the election is that the competing parties remain insulated from electoral and coalition threats (**H2**) (c.f. Mair 2000). It is therefore more favourable to express policy alternatives on European issues when the electoral spotlight is off. There are therefore reasons to look beyond election day to detect possible signs of politicisation.

As mentioned, Sweden is a case not included in the literature reviewed. Although Kriesi, Grande & Hutter (2016) (ed.) have provided results on the case, the findings are restricted to the year 2010. Moreover, the scholars' study precedes the Sweden Democrats' parliamentary breakthrough after 2010. This further motivates why the case is worth studying in the chosen time period. Thus, the thesis seeks to build on previous findings by specifically examining the Swedish national election cycle of 2022. Finding the authors' definition of politicisation most valuable, I will adapt the scholars' framework to analyse and test the hypotheses in the chosen case. This will be presented next.



## 4 Analytical Framework

In the following, Grande & Hutter's (2016a: 2016b) framework for politicisation will be developed. First, the scholar's theoretical understanding of the politicisation of European issues will be laid out. Then, I will discuss how this thesis will adapt the author's conceptualisation of politicisation. Finally, the same will be done for the conceptualisation of European issues. Overall, the adaptation of the scholar's framework will be used to analyse the case.

### 4.1 Theoretical Basis

Having presented the authors' definition earlier, it is necessary to outline the theoretical basis on which the scholars expect politicisation before presenting their conceptualisation in full. Grande & Hutter's (2016a, 7) concept of politicisation underlines political conflict; they build their theoretical basis on the causes of such conflicts in the integration process. They centre their understanding of politicisation around *saliency*, *polarisation*, and *actor expansion*. Based on this, it is assumed that the process of European integration generates several typical political conflicts that derive from decisions about the constitutive elements of the European polity. The constitutive conflicts that participants in the European project have faced, and continue to face, are the problems of the scope of cooperation, membership and enlargement, and institutional design and authority (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 12-16). These conflicts are not unique to European integration, but as the project is the most ambitious and demeaning form of regional cooperation in terms of the level and scope of cooperation, these conflicts should be particularly intense within the polity. Therefore, the authors expect increasing political conflicts in three different but interdependent developments: *a substantial transfer of political authority to supranational institutions (1)*; *a significant increase in the size and heterogeneity of membership (2)*; and *increasing demands on solidarity requiring a substantial reallocation of financial resources among member states (3)* (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 16). Against this outline, the scholars agree with Hooghe & Marks (2009) in assuming a significant and lasting politicisation of the European integration process in all the EU member states and candidate countries (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 16-17).

Given the authors' theoretical basis, we should reasonably assume finding European issues politicised in Sweden. However, according to the hypotheses, which are based on the findings of the case and its recent developments, this is not expected. At the same time, I do not aim to refute the theoretical arguments of Grande & Hutter (2016a). Instead, the thesis agrees with the theoretical proposals but sees Sweden as a deviant case. Moreover, I aim to take advantage of the scholars' framework by testing the hypotheses.

## 4.2 Conceptualising Politicisation: Saliency and Polarisation

In line with the stated expectations, I will adopt a broad conceptualisation and operationalisation of politicisation to increase the chances of finding it.

By understanding the phenomena as “*an expansion of the scope of conflict within a system*” (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 7), the authors continue the conceptualisation of politicisation by perceiving it as multi-dimensional. The multidimensionality of the concept is characterised by three interrelated dimensions: *issue salience* (visibility), *actor expansion* (range), and *polarisation* (intensity and direction) (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 8; Grande & Hutter 2016b, 25).

The first dimension builds onto Green-Pedersen's (2012:2019) proposal of assuming that salience is the most basic dimension of the phenomena, as such, only topics that are raised by political actors in public debates can be considered politicised. Therefore, an increase in the occurrence of the issue partly contributes to higher levels of politicisation (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 8; Grande & Hutter 2016b, 25).

The second dimension refers to the increasing number of types of actors involved in public debates. If only a restricted number of elite actors advance their positions publicly on European issues, it could indicate that the issues are only politicised to a limited extent. The expansion of actors can both take place *within* and *across* political arenas. Concerning the electoral arena, the expansion of actors does not only include representatives of the party's government but also party actors without executive functions such as party leaders and opposition politicians (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 9; Grande & Hutter 2016b, 25).

The final dimension concerns the intensity of conflict over the issue. Apart from a highly salient public debate, the actors need to express differing positions and we must find opposing camps. Polarisation is therefore understood as the intensity of conflict related to an issue among the actors involved (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 9; Grande & Hutter 2016b, 26). Differing positions thus constitute differing

perceptions of what the parties wish to achieve for Sweden as a Member State within the EU.

#### 4.2.1 Conceptual adaptation

Taken together, the conceptualisation should be seen in relative terms as politicisation can vary from low to high degrees. If we observe a low degree of non-observable signs, it raises concerns about depoliticisation. The definition is intentionally broad as it widens the scope of which types of political actors are involved in a given conflict, the means they use to advance their positions, the relationship among them, and the consequences of such politicisation (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 7). While the authors give importance to the “protest arena” in their examination by including actors from civil society and non-governmental representatives, this study is restricted to examining political parties *within* the national electoral arena and not across any other arena. Therefore, the dimension of actor expansion will not be included. This limitation has implications since the authors emphasise that we cannot consider an issue to be highly politicised in debates among executive politicians, even if it may be relatively salient, by bypassing other actors (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 9). However, with regard to the purpose of this study, I will only consider saliency and polarisation. Although, I will consider the expansion of political actors beyond representatives of the government parties. Summarised, saliency is a necessary but not a sufficient condition, we must thus observe some degree of polarisation among the parties.

#### 4.2.2 The Actors

By taking an actor-oriented approach, it is necessary to clarify who the subjects in this thesis are. Against the discussed conceptual adaption, the actors included in this thesis are constituted by the competing parties in the election at the national level. That is, parties that had allocated seats<sup>7</sup> in the Swedish Riksdag when the “campaign” began and after the election day. This excludes supranational, regional, and local political parties, but includes the parties constituting the government, parties without executive functions, and opposition parties. Concerning individual politicians, the focus is further restricted to only include party leaders. This choice of limitation is partly motivated by available material,

---

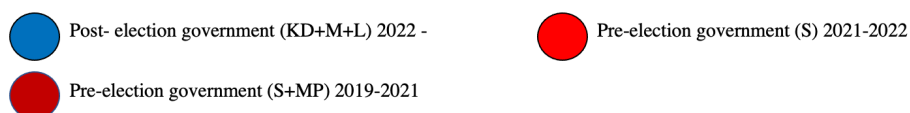
<sup>7</sup> The threshold rule for receiving allocated seats is that a party must receive at least 4% of the votes. Exceptions to this general rule are made if a party receives at least 12% of the votes in a constituency (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-09-20).

but also because party leaders function as representative subjects for the parties of interest.

The national parties are divided into a system of (European) party families to give the reader a comparative appreciation of how and where the parties belong within the political spectrum (c.f. Ennser 2012). By already knowing the outcome of the election, the government constellation changed after the election. This is clarified in *Table 1* below where the parties and their respective party leaders are included. Note that the Social Democrats formed a one-party government during the pre-election period of this thesis.

**Table 1:** Representation of Actors, Their Party Families Belonging, and Allocated Seats.

Party families belonging	Communists/ Left Socialist	Greens	Social Democrats	Liberals	Christian Democrats/ Conservatives	Populist Radical Right
<b>Parties</b>	Vänsterpartiet – V (Left Party)	Miljöpartiet de Gröna – MP (Environmental Party – The Greens)	Socialdemokraterna – S (Social Democrats)	Centerpartiet – C (Centre Party)	Kristdemokraterna – KD (Christian Democrats)	Sverigedemokraterna – SD (Sweden Democrats)
				Liberalerna - L (The Liberals)	Moderaterna - M (Moderate Party)	
<b>Party leader</b>	Nooshi Dadgostar	Per Bolund & Märta Stenevi	Magdalena Andersson	C: Annie Lööf L: Johan Pehrson	KD: Ebba Busch M: Ulf Kristersson	Jimmie Åkesson
<b>Allocated seats pre-election</b>	8,00% (28)	4,41% (16)	28,26% (100)	C: 8,61% (31) L: 5,49% (20)	KD: 6,32% (22) M: 19,84% (70)	17,53% (62)
<b>Allocated seats post-election</b>	6,75% (24)	5,08% (18)	30,33% (107)	C: 6,71% (24) L: 4,61% (16)	KD: 5,34% (19) M: 19,10% (68)	20,54% (73)



**Source:** Valmyndigheten (2023) (Swedish electoral authority). Created by the author.

### 4.3 Distinguishing European Issues

By acknowledging that the national electoral arena is the most likely place to find politicisation, it still has to compete with other domestic political issues. To increase my chances of finding any signs of politicisation of European issues in the Swedish case, the scope of what European issues could imply will be widened to increase the chances of finding it politicised.

To distinguish European issues, Grande & Hutter et al. (2016a, 56) draw upon Bartolini's (2005, 310) typology to form their categorisations: *General*

*orientations, Constitutive issues, and Policy-related issues.* The former refers to the positive or negative position towards European integration or the EU in general, while the second categorisation covers the nature of the EU polity which includes questions of membership, competencies and decision-making rules. The last categorisation includes the factual, or potential, use of the EU's competencies in a specific policy domain.

To further specify actors' positions on European issues, the categories of constitutive and policy-related issues are divided into subcategories. Constitutive issues thus constitute: *Widening, Economic deepening, and Non-Economic deepening.* Whereas policy-related issues are divided into *Economic intervention* and *Non-economic intervention* (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 56). To overview the complete categorisation, see *Table 2.*

The division of economic/non-economic subcategories is established to differentiate between policy fields that are closely related to the regulation and re-regulation of the internal market on one side, and all other types of non-economic policy fields on the other side. The differentiation is of utmost necessity as the EU has expanded its competencies broadly beyond economic integration. Given this subcategorisation, it is possible to examine the potential politicisation of the EU's political authority in non-economic domains as well (Grande & Hutter 2016a, 56-59).

#### 4.3.1 Implications of the Categorisation

The categories of what European issues imply are advantageous since they cover a broad spectrum of how the parties could position themselves on the EU, and towards each other, in a possible case of politicisation. While clarification and differentiation from domestic issues are necessary, it is not ideal. Analysing political conflict over European issues encounters multifaceted problems given that it is not a fixed condition. There is no simple answer to where it begins, ends, or what it should become (Dolezal et al. 2016, 33). As of today, there is scarcely any policy domain which is not affected by the EU acquis. This implies that almost any issue could end up becoming a European issue if political actors or institutions are given an opportunity to become involved (Dolezal et al. 2016a, 36). This objection follows the thoughts of treating the EU as a *sui generis* (c.f. Hlavac 2010; Phelan 2012), however, scholars like Hooghe & Marks (2009, 2) suggest that the EU has developed from being a *sui generis* issue to an issue among others that may become part of party competition.

By having raised these concerns, it should be underlined that European issues can be distinguished differently by taking further issue with what the nature of the

EU is and can be. Nevertheless, the accounted categorisations will be used to code the parties' explicit positions on European issues, but only when the parties explicitly express their position by referring to "Europe" or the "EU". How this will be carried out methodologically will be elaborated in the following chapter.

**Table 2:** *Coded Categories of European Issues.*

<b>General orientations</b>	<b>Constitutive issues</b>	<b>Policy-related issues</b>
Positive or negative positions towards integration or the EU in general.	Position towards the nature of the EU polity. Questions of membership, competences, and decision-making rules.	The factual, or potential, use of the EU's competencies in a specific policy domain.
	<b>Subcategories of issues:</b>	<b>Subcategories of issues:</b>
	<b>Widening:</b> Issues related to the territorial dimension of European integration (most importantly, the accession of new member states)	<b>Economic intervention:</b> Issues related to the question of whether and how Europe should use its competencies in economic policy domains
	<b>Economic deepening:</b> Issues related to the transfer of additional competencies to the EU in economic fields (e.g. fiscal policy)	<b>Non-economic intervention:</b> Issues related to whether and how Europe should use its competencies in non-economic policy domains.
	<b>Non-Economic deepening:</b> Issues related to the scope and level of integration in non-economic fields (e.g. foreign and security policy)	

*Source:* Created on the basis of Grande & Hutter's (2016a, 56) categorisation of European issues. Created by the author.

# 5 Methodology

In the following, the methodological considerations made with regard to the purpose of this thesis will be developed. I begin by outlining the research design and how the analysis is structured. The typology of the case study is then discussed. Thereafter the chosen method of content analysis, its applicability, and its shortcomings are presented. Finally, the selected material and delimitations of the analysis are discussed.

## 5.1 Research Design

To address this thesis' objective and answer its research question, a single in-depth case study of Sweden is conducted as this project aims to elucidate and produce knowledge about the particular case of Sweden. Sweden was thus selected as a single case among the population of the EU Member States due to its historical reluctance of the EU in general, and specifically during national elections. It is therefore the specific characteristics of the case which justify its selection against the accounted contexts in which the recent national election of 2022 took place. The units of analysis for this single case study are the competing national political parties and their explicit statements on European issues. In turn, the used material consists of primary data retrieved from the parties themselves or in contexts where they directly expressed statements during the time period of interest.

Attempting to identify when and why European issues were present and contested through the presented framework of politicisation, the analysis deploys a *longitudinal*<sup>8</sup> design on the basis of the formulated hypotheses (Gerring & Cojocaru 2016, 401; Gerring 2017, 23). This implies that the potential politicisation of European issues was observed before and after the election day on the 11th of September 2022. Contrasting a cross-sectional design, which looks at different samples of the material or population at one point in time, this project studies a phenomenon over an extended but delimited period (Bryman 2012, 58). While Grande & Hutter (2016a) denote the last two months before the election

---

<sup>8</sup> Also known as an interrupted time-series, a repeated measures, or a repeated observations design (Gerring & Cojocaru 2016, 401).

day as the critical period of a national campaign, this thesis stretches the timeline by beginning the analysis on the 8th of June 2022 when the last party leader debate in the Riksdag took place before the election. Formally, the analysis terminated on the 16th of November 2022 when the new Government presented its EU declaration, and the EU political party leader debate took place in the Riksdag. Informally, the analysis still consists of the parties' own manifestos and post-election analysis which have been published at different times during the year 2022 or 2023. Against this, the analysis is structured into two parts where the first one handles the pre-election and the second one the post-election.

In order to identify the presence and contest of European issues through the analytical lenses of politicisation via saliency and polarisation, the methodological procedure was organised as an explanatory sequential design. This was together carried out with a mixed methodological design through a two-stage data collection in the analytical process. Contrasting quantitative and qualitative traditions, the mixed method approach advocates the use of all the methodological tools required to answer the research question (Creswell & Creswell 2023; Tashakkori & Creswell 2007, 4-5). The reason for including both elements is that they can provide a more complete utilisation of the data than a separate quantitative or qualitative approach would. While partly pursuing a quantification of words to numbers, the observations remain qualitative as the inference is based on pieces of non-comparable observations that address different aspects of a problem. The evidence is thus observational and will not be manipulated (Gerring 2017, 18-20). In other words, the numbers do not have value in themselves, instead, they are used to convey the content and remain dependent on their context (Crespy 2015, 114).

In the first level of analysis, quantitative data was collected through relational content analysis. The content consisted of parties' statements on European issues that were coded and measured using the constructed and adopted categories presented in *Table 2*. Thereby, the coded categories guided the analysis in a deductive manner by measuring explicit statements about the "EU" or "Europe". The purpose of this was to observe how salient the issues were pre- and post-election. To identify any polarisation of the European issues between the parties, the second stage of analysis was complemented by a qualitative analysis. At this stage, a qualitative content analysis was used to provide more in-depth insights into any apparent political groupings and how the issues were referenced to discover any similarities or differences.

To answer the research question, a mixed content analysis was used complementary as a method by providing both quantitative and qualitative descriptions. Before presenting the method, I will lay out the typology of the case study.



## 5.2 Typology of the Case Study

The case of Sweden was selected due to its specific characteristics and recent developments. By further adopting an overall qualitative approach to the study, the case was chosen in a targeted fashion (Gerring 2017, 18-19). The case study is, therefore, limited in terms of making any established generalising claims. However, the danger of selection bias arises when individual cases are selected in a purposive way (Seawright & Gerring 2008, 295). To minimise potential bias, the following discussion explains how the case was selected in light of the stated ambitions of the study.

Although the terminology is disputed (c.f. Gustafsson 2017), Gerring & Cojocaru (2016, 384) suggest that a case study is best understood as an intensive study of a single case that promises to shed light on a large population of cases. Furthermore, a case study can be used to construct or validate a theoretical proposition (Levy 2008, 2). As this thesis aims to test the formulated hypotheses derived from the insights of the case and the selected analytical framework of politicisation, its typology is consistent with *hypothesis-testing* (Levy 2008, 6). Thus, the aim is not to disprove a theory in a decisive way but rather to examine whether and how theories should be extended or restricted by their scope and conditions (George & Bennett 2005, 112). Gerring & Cojocaru (2016) argue similarly, although they use different terminology about the different objectives of what a case study might entail. When the purpose is to test a hypothesis, the authors state that the function is usually used to refer to a broader population in a large number of cases. However, there are circumstances where it is possible and advisable to test a hypothesis in a single case. One of them is *longitudinal* design, which means that the research design involves repeated observations at different repeated times (Bryman 2012, 63). The rationale for choosing a case study in this way is due to the inappropriateness of including more cases to provide a stronger basis for inferences (Gerring & Cojocaru 2016, 401; Gerring 2017, 23).

With the ambition to observe the politicisation of European issues in two different periods, the case study's typology also corresponds to a longitudinal design. The reason for choosing a single case study over a comparative approach is that additional cases would not provide a stronger basis for conclusions than an in-depth analysis of the case itself. On the other hand, the selected case could speak for other EU Member states if they were in a similar situation in the domestic electoral cycle, if they had a similar historical reluctance to the EU, or if public opinion was similarly structured. A similar logic of case selection could therefore be used for other cases among the population of EU Member States if similar characteristics are identified. The evidence produced in this case study

could therefore be compared to a larger population of cases if similar characteristics can be found.

Like many other single case studies, I do not attempt to estimate precise causal effects or establish generalised claims as one might expect from large-scale cross-case research. If the variables and the causal relationship are to be specified in the selected case, the presence of and contest over European issues can be regarded as the dependent variable. By deriving from the theoretical notions of politicisation, it could be stated that this study considers electoral and coalition incentives as the independent variables. However, there are many possible independent variables that could explain when and why European issues were present and contested, which this study has not taken into account. Such variables may include the highlighted knowledge-gap on the EU in Sweden, opinion polls, the role of media during the election campaign, etc. Caution must therefore always be taken when generalising what has not been studied, as this carries a certain risk of erroneous inferences since other cases might differ in causal variables (George & Bennett 2005, 108-112). With that being said, the thesis is aware of its limitations in what it can, and cannot, explain in the selected case of Sweden. Thereby, I will not strive to generalise across the population by interpreting them as equal (Vromen 2017, 272-273). While maintaining its observational focus, the overall aim is moreover to bring forth a deeper understanding of the case itself.

### 5.3 Content Analysis

Content analysis as a method involves a systematic research technique to make replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful things to the context in which they are used. However, the reference to text is not restricted to written material. Debates, images, art, protocols, signs, and other things can be considered texts under the circumstances provided they speak to someone about phenomena outside of what can be observed or sensed (Krippendorff 2018). What makes the method unique is that it could be used through both a quantitative and a qualitative methodology that can be applied in an inductive or a deductive way (Ho & Limpaecher 2023). The method therefore serves the purpose of identifying quantifiable trends and opportunities for proximity to the text, which is beneficial when the word frequency alone is not enough. This thesis uses a combination of both coding content and relations. However, having the coding categories of what European issues may imply and the formulated hypotheses presented, this thesis has coded the retrieved material in a deductive manner.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methodological components causes ontological and epistemological implications. Ontologically, this thesis rests upon the tradition of foundationalism because it assumes that the parties possess attributes that are independent of the researcher (Marsh et al. 2017, 211). Epistemologically, the project shares the understanding of critical realism as it presumes that not all social phenomena, including the relationship between them, are directly observable. Therefore, this research does not accept what appears to be, or what the parties simply convey, as it is an active version of how reality is structured. To uncover causes behind outcomes, critical realism emphasises that the role of theory is of utmost necessity if we are to explain social phenomena. Foremost because we need to understand both the external “reality” and the social construction of that “reality” (Marsh et al. 2017, 222). To fill these requirements, the hypotheses and the analytical framework of politicisation are utilised. As a tradition, critical realism acknowledges both qualitative and quantitative data to study how a phenomenon appears and how it is being perceived (Marsh et al. 2017, 222-223). The thesis will therefore take advantage of both.

### 5.3.1 A Qualitative and Quantitative Content Analysis

Because the focus of this thesis is on the contestation between political parties as actors, a specific method of content analysis is first applied: A *relational content analysis* (RCA). The method has been used by Grande & Hutter (2016a) and therefore appears fruitful to utilise. However, the thesis will not take full advantage of its methodological proposition given the delimited scope of this thesis. A relational analysis explores the relationships between concepts, however, there is no meaning assigned to the concepts in and of themselves, instead, it is the relationship between words that symbolises an idea that helps the researcher answer their research question (Ho & Limpaecher 2023; Van Atteveld et al. 2006).

The unit of analysis in this quantitative version of content analysis is thus a relation between a subject and an object in which a grammatical sentence can include several of these relationships, here termed “core sentences”. The core sentences of interest for this study are the two types of *actor-issue* and *actor-actor* sentences. In the former one, an actor (the subject) positions himself towards an issue (the object). Here, only sentences when the actors refer to European issues will be included. The latter includes the relation between two actors, though I will only include actor-actor sentences which explicitly refer to “Europe” or the “EU” in the texts. As such, the parties can also appear in the form of an object (c.f. Dolezal et al. 2016, 49). This selected focus thus implies that every sentence, or

relation, was not coded in the selected material through the RCA. Concerning actors, the actor-actor sentences analysed included at least one actor as the subject, or object, of the sentence.

The relational content analysis is in sum utilised to quantify how *salient* European issues were during the national cycle to investigate whether the issues were politicised. The latter will thus include whether the parties position themselves on European issues throughout *general orientations*, *constitutive issues*, or *policy-related issues*, and the accompanied subcategories of the latter two. These findings will be presented illustratively through graphs. Though having a more elaborate and developed methodological framework, Grande & Hutter (2016a, 10-11) emphasise that the quantitative approach to measure politicisation has disadvantages. Primarily because information can become lost which could be instructive for an in-depth analysis. To overcome this downside, the thesis will utilise a *qualitative content analysis* (QCA).

Contrasting the quantitative method, this method is used to systematically describe the meaning of qualitative data by categorising parts of material using a coding scheme (Boréus & Kohl 2012, 50). The difference between the two versions is however not absolute, but relative. Furthermore, drawing an absolute distinction between qualitative and quantitative content analysis questions the validity and usefulness of the method since all reading of a text is qualitative, according to Krippendorff (2018). Moreover, it is not uncommon that QCA is utilised for analyses in which quantification is included. Foremost since the combination of them both contributes to a more uniform picture of the data and the phenomena in question (Boréus & Kohl 2012, 51).

The advantages of supplementing the RCA with CQA are found in analysing the potential *polarisation* throughout the actor-actor sentences. The method thus enables an in-depth analysis of how the parties position themselves towards each other, and how the issues may be referred to, through political groupings. Either in unison or disagreement. Still, the qualitative component will maintain the main focus on core sentences. Moreover, while a party may refer to another in the core sentences, it could be done with general orientations. As such, an observed statement must not implicate an observation of polarisation. Overall, the CQA enables a more descriptive approach to the analysis.

### 5.3.2 Critical Reflections

As a technique, and research method, a content analysis expects to be reliable and replicable. Therefore, scholars pursuing research at different timings, and under different circumstances, should achieve the same result when applying the same

method (Krippendorff 2018). To achieve this, the analysis is structured according to the longitudinal case study design (pre- and post-election) while the coded categories presented in *Table 2* have aimed to create a replicable analysis tool. In the presented findings, the analysis is further organised following the retrieved material so that the reader can follow the process step by step. The pronounced and chosen focus on saliency and polarisation further guides the attention of the analysis. In addition to this, the analysis is solely delimited on encompassing explicit statements on the “EU” or “Europe”. A keyword search in the retrieved material thus makes it possible for the scrutineer to overview the identified statements by the parties. By pursuing a qualitative interpretive approach to reading the material, a close reading usually requires a small amount of text (Krippendorff 2018). However, a larger sample is more favourable to achieving credibility. How the latter was carried out will soon be discussed.

To further increase the reliability of the analysis, exemplifying quotes from the collected material are included to allow the reader to judge whether the presented findings can be deduced in connection with the parties’ positioning on European issues (Bergström & Boréus 2012, 41). Despite this, there does exist room for interpretation that is unavoidable as the coding scheme is based on a certain framework of what politicisation and European issues imply. Accordingly, the material is read and interpreted with intent to particular contexts. With a pronounced focus on the explicit, the method further runs the risk of missing out on the unspoken in the material. This could be of importance as the unspoken is often of obvious importance, therefore it is most often not pronounced. Another concern is that the determined code scheme tends to control attention, as such it could cause difficulties to be completely open towards the material. A more open and flexible framework could thus have made the content more visible (Boréus & Kohl 2012, 79-80). However, following the discussed implications of the adapted analytical framework, it is still deemed viable though I am aware of the foregoing objections.

## 5.4 Selection of Material and Delimitations

The scrutinised material in the analysis consists of the parties’ manifestos, post-election analysis, speeches, and party leader debates in the Riksdag. The material has been retrieved from the parties themselves, the Riksdag, and the Swedish National Data Service (SND). The latter source has been utilised to access the parties’ manifestos as they were not available to gather from the parties. The data consist of both written and oral material based on the content

analysis. The oral material had already been transcribed into text by the original source, all material is thus available for review and revision both written and oral. The language of the material is however in Swedish. This in itself is a strength for me as a researcher because I am a native speaker of the language, though it could raise validity and reliability problems when translating and interpreting. To address these problems, the translation software DeepL has been utilised. As mentioned in the introduction, media coverage of the election was limited in terms of the parties' statements on European issues. Any material from the mass media has therefore been excluded. To increase the credibility of the study, the analysis sought to obtain an evenly distributed sample for the pre-and post-election periods.

To observe the presence of and contest over European issues, domestic political debates are perceived as crucial material. Thereof, three party leader debates in the Riksdag were included. The first one consists of the last debate before election day. This debate is also the beginning of this thesis's time period. The second one includes the first debate after election day, only eight days after the new government was presented and declared. The last debate consists of the EU political debate when the new government presented its EU declaration. This debate is the end of the thesis's time period.

All debates, therefore, represent crucial events during the national election cycle when European issues could be present and contested. However, the latter debate will only be analysed qualitatively as it is of a different nature than the other material. As European issues naturally are salient, the focus is directed towards analysing polarisation. While this causes difficulties in comparative terms to the other material, it also opens up the possibility of an in-depth analysis of political groupings when European issues are enforced. Several other debates took place during the election campaign on various news channels, these are excluded in favour of the Riksdag's debates as they follow the same organised procedure.

The parties' manifestos and post-election analyses are included in order to analyse the actor's initial pre-election positions and their retrospective position after election day. The first delimitation is that the Sweden Democrats did not publish an analysis of the election. A second delimitation concerning this material is its heterogeneity in scope, content, and length. To overcome these downsides, debates and additional speeches have been included. The speeches have been retrieved from the Almedalen week, which took place between 27 June and 1 July. The event is popularly known as the politician week where the Riksdag parties take turns to make speeches on their visions annually (Almedalsveckan 2022-10-27). Taking into account that it was an election year, the event represents a crucial period of the pre-election analysis. A general shortage of the parties' material concerns the time of publication. For example, the post-election analyses

have been published either just after the election or in early 2023. This could imply that some parties were more incentivised to speak out on European issues as the Presidency approached or took palace. A second objection is that the different publication dates could affect the thesis's understanding of election cycles. However, by having a broad mix of different types of material, the thesis has aimed to address these problems.

The time period of interest has been chosen based on strategic considerations. On the one hand, with regard to available material, and on the other hand, with regard to the analytical framework and the hypotheses. Although it could be argued that the time period could be further extended or delimited, no other options were considered equally favourable.

A final delimitation that should be mentioned regarding the material and how it will be analysed is the consequences of not taking into account the dynamics of competition in domestic issues. This may be relevant to answer the research question, but since this thesis is particularly interested in European issues, the methodological approach in combination with the analytical framework was considered most appropriate.

In the following chapter, insights from the material will be presented and discussed in accordance with the research design of the study.

# 6 Analysis

In this chapter, the analysis of the chosen material will be carried out through the analytical framework to detect when and why European issues were present and contested among the parties. The chapter is structured into two sections with respective subsections according to the events of focus during the Swedish election cycle of 2022. Every subsequent section except the last starts with some reflections on the saliency of the different types of European issues. Each section later proceeds to analyse potential polarisation between the parties by providing in-depth insights into any political groupings and how the issues were referred to. The chapter concludes with summarising remarks on the aggregated analysis.

## 6.1 Pre-Election

Entering the Swedish election cycle of 2022, the competing parties were faced with numerous EU events potentially influencing the election campaign. Moreover, Sweden waited to chair the presidency for the third time since the Member State's formal entry into the Union. However, following **H1** of this thesis, and the basis from which the hypothesis derives, the politicisation is expected to remain low due to the lack of finding electoral and coalition incentives.

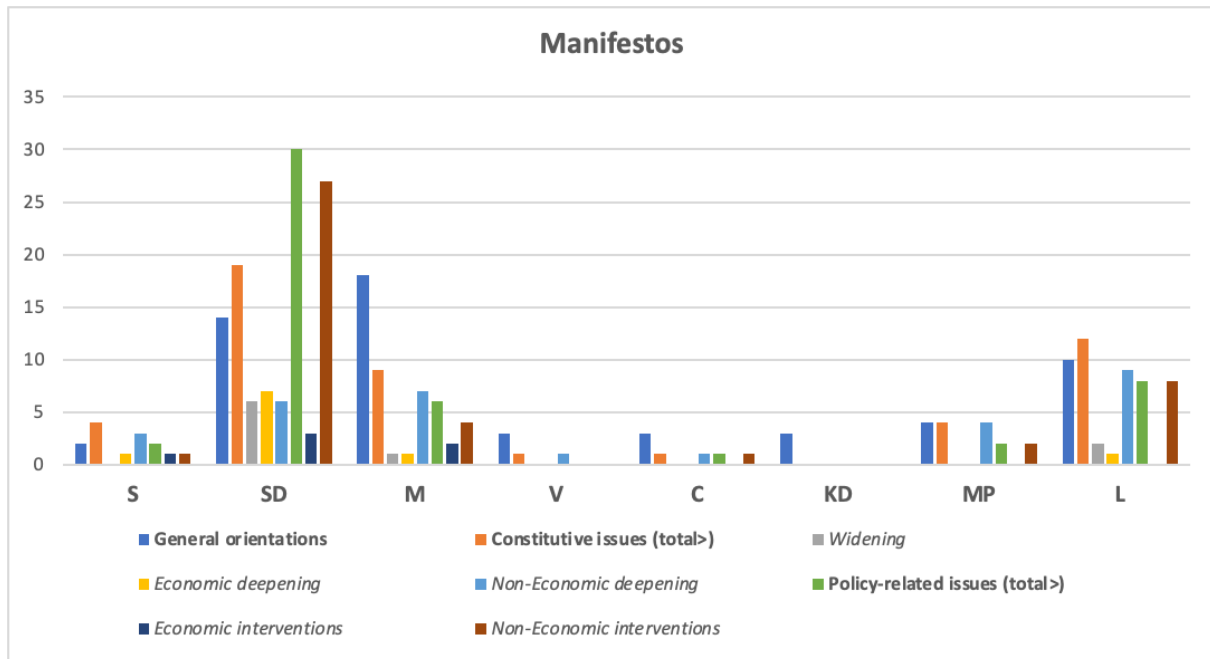
This section of analysis begins with the parties' manifesto and then proceeds to the one selected Riksdag debate in the pre-election period. Lastly, the speeches by the party leaders at Almedalen are scrutinised.

### 6.1.2 Manifestos

An initial analysis of the manifestos reveals an uneven distribution of the frequency of European issues among the parties. Overall and in relative terms, the Sweden Democrats show higher saliency figures than the other parties. Particularly concerning policy-related issues by repeatedly mentioning European issues of non-economic interventions 27 times. However, both the Moderates and the Liberals exhibit saliency, but to a lesser extent. In these cases, the mentioned



parties tended to make general orientations on European issues though the Liberals are distinguished by their focus on constitutive issues and subsequently issues of non-economic deepening. Meanwhile, the remaining parties demonstrate a low frequency of saliency. If mentioned, it is usually done through general orientations or constitutive issues.



**Figure 3:** Observed and measured frequency of European issues in the Manifestos. The vertical axis represents the number of statements, while the horizontal axis represents the distribution of statements among the parties. Subsequent graphs follow the same structure.

Furthermore, all core sentences analysed in the manifestos consisted of actor-issue sentences except two. The latter two sentences were expressed by the Moderates and the Liberals. The former party positioned itself towards the then one-party government, consisting of the Social Democrats, by an underling that the shutdown of two nuclear power plants leads to an increase of emissions by 8 million tonnes within the EU (Moderaterna 2022, 19). The latter party instead positioned itself towards the red-green parties, consisting of the Left Party, the Social Democrats, and the Greens, by expressing the following statements:

“We are the obvious voice for more cooperation in Europe and the EU - not just against the Russian threat, but against all threats and problems that are best solved together. When the red-green parties dream of weakening or dissolving the EU, we want to deepen the cooperation” (Liberalerna 2022, 17).

While the Moderates turn towards a general orientation of European issues to accuse the previous government of its mismanagement of energy politics

domestically, the Liberals express opposition through constitutive issues by claiming that the red-green parties have the opposite ambitions. Though an ambiguous statement of which specific deepening the party refers to, it is here interpreted in light of non-economic interventions. The accused parties demonstrate no opposition or expression towards the mentioned parties in their manifestos. Overall, the limited amount of actor-actor sentences underline a low level of polarisation.

When diving deeper into the concerned material in search of any political groupings, most of the parties did not refer specifically to policy-related European issues. Noteworthy is that only the Sweden Democrats have included a chapter on “Europe” in their manifesto (Sverigedemokraterna 2022, 59). Though no opposition is apparent towards other parties, the Left Party expresses one negative position towards the EU concerning its approach to migrants and migration (Vänsterpartiet 2022, 15). However, compared to the Sweden Democrats, the party expresses marginal negative positions. In their manifesto, the Sweden Democrats voiced a considerable amount of negative statements on European issues through general orientations (14), constitutive issues (19), and most prominently policy-related issues (30). Concerning the first two categories, the party claims that the migration crisis and the pandemic exposed weaknesses in the European project. Moreover, and most prominently, the Sweden Democrats claim that the power shift to the EU at the expense of Sweden’s autonomy has gone too far (Sverigedemokraterna 2022, 59). Among several solutions to stop the transfer of power to the EU, the party suggests expanded opportunities for influence among the citizenry:

“It is about time for a European policy that puts Sweden and Swedish interests first. The Sweden Democrats want to strengthen Sweden’s negotiating position in the EU through a referendum instrument that gives the Swedish people the opportunity to make their voice heard before proposals for a transfer of power to Brussels are approved by the Riksdag.” (Sverigedemokraterna 2022, 59)

Besides the proposed referendum instrument, the party stands out through its repeated suggested measures to stop the EU from inferring Swedish autonomy. This is evident through the category of constitutive issues and subsequently non-economic interventions. According to the party, the EU should limit its use of powers in the policy areas of environment, migration, asylum, labour market, digitalisation, the EU Arms Directive, and forestry and agricultural policy. Conversely, the party emphasises that the entire EU should adopt the same Swedish standard regarding animal husbandry (Sverigedemokraterna 2022, 33). The following quote in connection with forestry and agricultural policy is included to exemplify the party’s general reluctant positions towards the EU:

“Swedish forestry is under pressure today, both from the government and from the EU and various environmental organisations. The forest within the EU must be managed by the Member States themselves, but the European Commission is increasingly restricting this right”. (Sverigedemokraterna 2022, 31)

Further, the search for similarities and differences to observe any political groupings appears scarce between the parties. While the Moderates generally adopt general orientations on European issues, they take sides with the Sweden Democrats by declaring that the EU’s weapon directive should not be implemented as it negatively affects hunters, sport shooting, and weapon collectors (Moderaterna 2022, 20). Moreover, the party concurred with the Sweden Democrats by proposing that the Swedish asylum legislation should be adapted to the minimum level according to EU law (Moderaterna 2022, 25). Like the Liberals, they also emphasise that Sweden shall stand up for Ukraine through financial and military aid concerning the security policy situation in Europe (Moderaterna 2022, 27; Liberalerna 2022, 17). Out of very few parties, the Moderates raise awareness of the upcoming presidency and the need for Sweden taking increased responsibility in certain policy domains. At the same time, they declared themselves as the “European Party” in Swedish politics:

“For the Moderates, it goes without saying that Sweden as a chairing country must step forward and take responsibility for common European issues, such as security and climate, and at the same time push issues that are particularly important for Sweden, such as the conditions for the forestry industry. The Moderates are the European Party in Swedish politics, and we are ready to take on the task to lead the Swedish EU presidency” (Moderaterna 2022, 27)

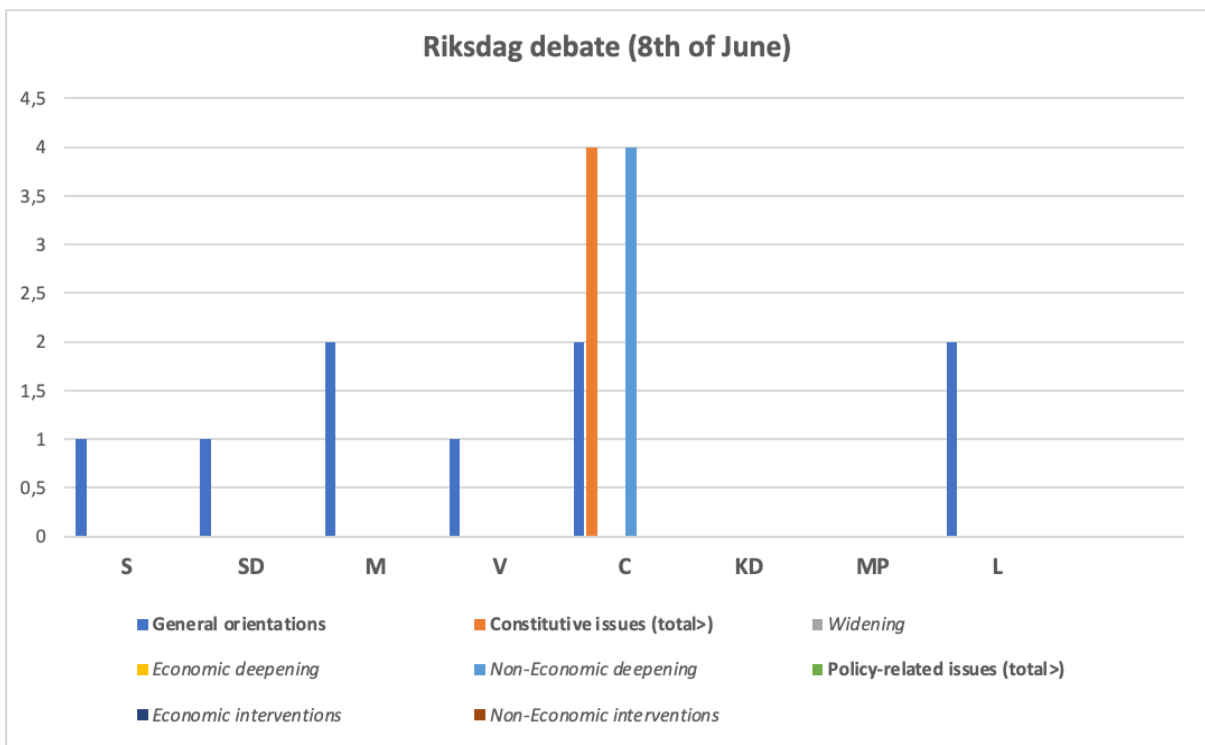
The Greens, the Centre Party, the Social Democrats, and the Christian Democrats did, on the other hand, demonstrate low levels of saliency on European issues and voiced no opposition towards other parties, or for that matter, the EU. Despite low levels, some parties voiced both constitutive issues and policy-related issues. The Greens emphasise that the EU should seek to raise the price of emission rights, introduce climate tariffs on goods from outside the EU, and aim to be less dependent on fossil energy (Miljöpartiet 2022, 3-4). Like the Sweden Democrats, the party also expressed that the rules on animal husbandry must be tightened considerably (Miljöpartiet 2022, 5). Quite similarly, the Social Democrats emphasise that Sweden shall be a strong voice to make the countries of the world increase their commitments to the environment (Socialdemokraterna 2022, 24). Furthermore, the party expressed that they are convinced that EU cooperation is the best way to solve many of the most difficult problems of our time (Socialdemokraterna 2022, 29). Despite mentioning some constitutive issues and

policy-related issues, the parties did most commonly make general orientations on European issues like the aforementioned.

Summarised, the parties' manifestos did show a certain level of salience on European issues. However, to confirm any significant polarisation between the parties would be wrongfully assumed, even though some parties shared similar positions on a few European issues.

### 6.1.3 The Riksdag Debate on the 8th of June

Compared to the manifestos, the frequency of European issues during the last debate before the election day revealed lower saliency. Although the debate was not explicitly focused on the EU, the event provided useful opportunities for parties to express their policy preferences on European issues in the remaining period until election day. In total, the parties referred to European issues 13 times. When expressed it was most commonly done through general orientations. The Centre Party is within this context an exception by being the only party that expressed another type of categorisation. When doing so, it was through constitutive issues by emphasising non-economic deepening. Another finding worth noting is that neither the Christian Democrats nor the Greens voiced any statements on European issues.



**Figure 4:** Observed and measured frequency of European issues in the Riksdag debate on the 8th of June 2022.

Out of the analysed core sentences, four actor-actor sentences were discovered in connection with European issues. Yet again, the Centre Party distinguished itself from the rest by constituting all four of them against the Left Party. This is voiced both through general orientations and constitutive issues. In the first sentence, the Centre Party claims that the Left Party aims to stop the export of Swedish energy to Europe despite the ongoing war in Ukraine:

“A lot has happened since the Left Party stood here in January and said that they wanted to stop the plans for the construction of electricity cables to Europe and prevent Swedish exports of clean electricity without climate emissions to our neighbouring countries to help them get rid of their dependence on gas and coal, get rid of the gas that is pumped into Europe every day and that pays for Putin’s war against Ukraine which is against international law.” (Annie Lööf 2022-06-08)

In the succeeding observed sentences, the Centre Party questions the Left Party on whether they are to maintain their position. Although the party leader of the Left Party, Nooshi Dadgostar, responded to claims being made by expressing that Sweden’s exports need to be re-regulated, it is done without any reference to the EU or Europe. In the remaining actor-actor sentences, the Centre Party continues to position itself against the Left Party by questioning why they say no to a more efficient climate policy which is needed by the whole of Europe. Furthermore, the Centre Party questions why the Left Party does not show solidarity with its European neighbours. The responding party answers with similar arguments, but yet again, without mentioning any European issues (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-06-08).

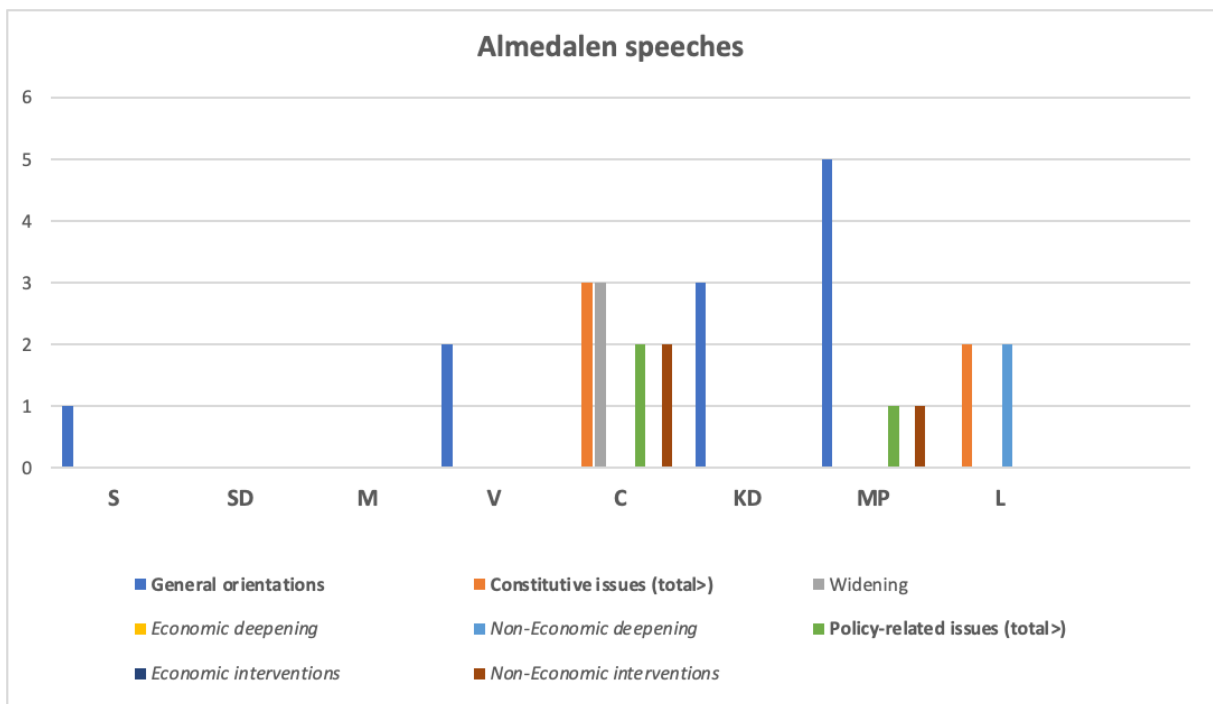
Despite the observed exchange of views between the mentioned parties, the low frequency of actor-actor sentences during the last Riksdag debate before the election day renders polarisation low. This finding is moreover reflected when digging deeper into the actual material.

All parties except the Greens and the Christian Democrats express themselves on European issues through general orientations by referring to the security situation in Europe and the war in Ukraine (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-06-08). As such, the parties do not express any European issues concerning how the EU should use its competencies in certain policy domains, nor issues relating to the nature of the EU polity. Nor were any differentiating political groupings observed among the parties.

Overall, the saliency and polarisation of European issues in the highlighted debate are considered lower than the manifestos.

### 6.1.4 The Party Leader's Speeches at Almedalen

Having analysed the parties' manifestos and the last Riksdag debate before the election day, we now turn towards the party leader's speeches at Almedalen. As mentioned, this event is perceived as a crucial episode of the electoral campaign. However, when displaying the frequency of statements on European issues, the speeches follow a similar trajectory to the debate. European issues were referred to 19 times by the parties. Within the context, the Sweden Democrats and the Moderates expressed no statements on European issues. Though displaying a low frequency of salience, the Greens exhibited the highest number by mentioning European issues six times. This was primarily done through general orientations except for one occasion. This was followed by the Centre Party instead of general orientations expressing policy-related issues and constitutive issues.



**Figure 5:** Observed and measured frequency of European issues during the party leader's speeches at Almedalen 2022.

Throughout the analysed speeches, no actor-actor sentences were observed between the parties. The initial analysis thus provided signs of a low polarisation. The same goes for in-depth analysis in the search for any political groupings.

By being the most salient party during the speeches, the Greens expressed one policy-related issue through non-economic interventions by referring to the stricter emissions trading within the EU. At the same time, the party emphasise Sweden's successful efforts in producing electric cars in the EU:

“The Greens have pushed forward the Swedish proposal for stricter emissions trading throughout the EU, we have ensured that Sweden has a radical climate law, we were the ones who negotiated the Paris Agreement for the countries of the world. We have created the green industrial transition in Sweden, we have ensured that Sweden is the best in the EU in bringing out new electric cars.” (Per Bolund 2022-07-07, 10).

While the first sentence can be considered a policy-related issue, the latter reference to the EU is deemed as a general orientation reference. Concerning the emission trading within the EU, the Centre Party expresses that it should be expanded to countries outside the Union as well (Centerpartiet 2022-07-06). This matches their expressed position in their manifestos. Apart from the mentioned parties, together with the Liberals who referred to non-economic deepening in connection with the EU’s security policy (Liberalerna 2022-07-05), the remaining parties that referred to European issues did it through general orientations.

Against the analysis of the speeches, both saliency and polarisation were scarce among the parties. Though being considered a critical event of the electoral campaign, European issues were absent to a large extent. By further taking the highlighted debate and the parties’ manifestos into consideration, the pre-election period of the national election cycle 2022 exposed similar findings. However, some parties’ manifestos showed distinctive signs of saliency. Before fully elaborating on the observed findings in the final chapter of this thesis, the post-election period will be analysed in the next part.

## 6.2 Post-Election

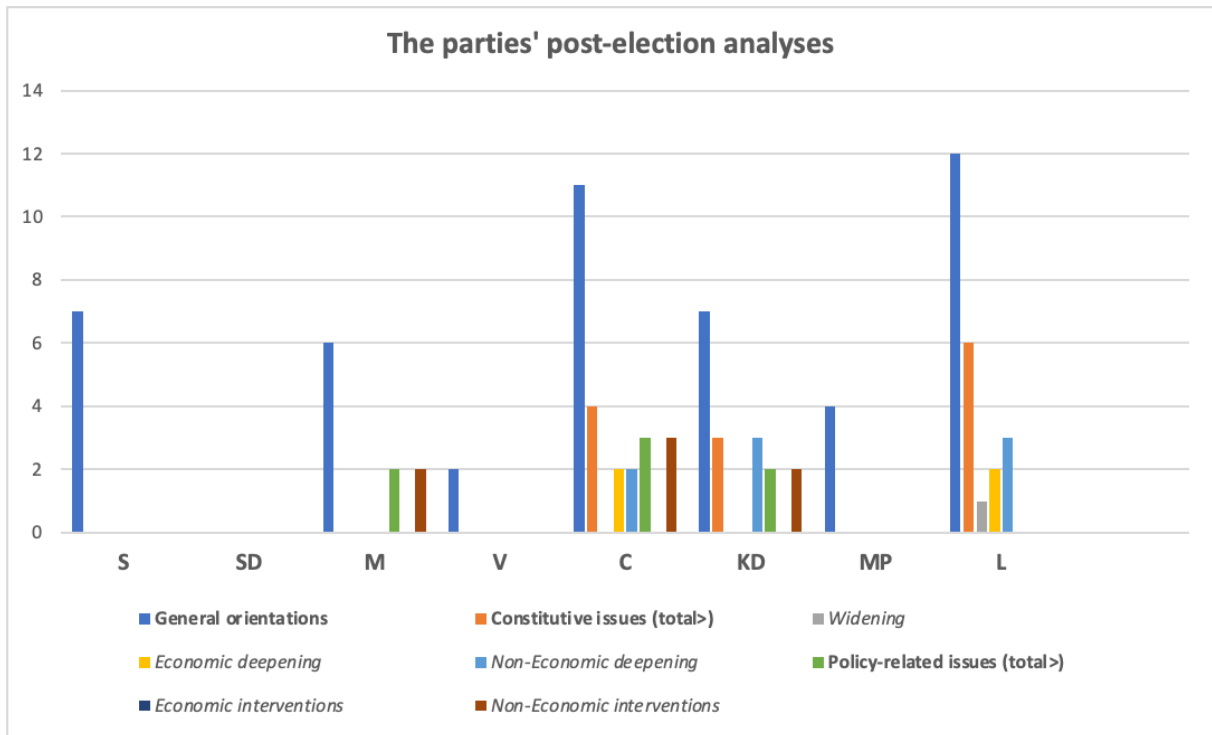
After the election day on the 11th of September 2022, a new government constellation was formed consisting of the Moderates, the Christian Democrats, and the Liberals. The formation was however possible with the support of the Sweden Democrats who received an informal position in the government with considerable influence. Following **H2** of this thesis, European issues will more likely be politicised in the following period. This is based on the assumption that the parties remained isolated from any coalition and electoral threats post-election day.

The section begins by analysing the parties’ own published post-election analyses and then proceeds to the first Riksdag debate after the election day. Last off, the EU political debate is scrutinised.

## 6.2.1 The Parties' Post-Election Analyses

A first analysis of the parties' analyses reveals a mixed frequency of statements on European issues. Most often, it was done based on general orientations. Despite this, there are some observations on statements of both constitutive issues and policy-related issues. Overall, statements of European issues were referred to 69 times in the analysed material. As underlined, the Sweden Democrats did not publish any own analysis of the election.

From a comparative perspective, the Liberals and the Centre Party demonstrated the highest frequency by each referring to European issues 18 times. While most of them were general, the Liberals voiced some constitutive issues (6). In the lower bracket, the Left Party only expressed two statements.



**Figure 6:** Observed and measured frequency of European issues during the parties' post-election analyses.

The core sentences analysed revealed five actor-actor sentences expressed by the Moderates, the Christian Democrats, and the Greens. In their assessment of the voter turnover, the Moderates refer to the Social Democrats' electoral success by putting into perspective the decline of other labour parties across Europe (Moderaterna 2023-04-23, 32). A similar assessment is carried out concerning the Greens who experienced a decline (Moderaterna 2023-04-23, 37). However, by doing this based on general orientations, it could scarcely be deemed as polarising statement. In their portrayal of the election campaign, the Christian



Democrats positioned themselves towards the Social Democrats' party leader through a policy-related issue:

“On the September 2nd, Magdalena Andersson announces that she is cancelling most of the remaining election campaign to focus on EU issues linked to the energy crisis” (Kristdemokraterna 2023-02-17, 6)

In comparison to the Moderates, the party voices opposition to the previous governing party. However, no actor-actor sentences on European issues were observed in the Social Democrats' post-election analysis. The remaining actor-actor sentences observed were voiced by the Greens who positioned themselves towards the Liberals' cooperation with the Sweden Democrats given the new government formation. More specifically, the party addressed the reaction of the Liberal party group within the EP:

“It also became clear to their party group in the European Parliament, which voted to exclude L from the liberal group and also sent representatives to Sweden for ‘fact finding’ after the election” (Miljöpartiet 2023-02-20, 16)

Noteworthy, the targeted party did not refer to any European issues which embraced the Greens statements. Although not explicitly mentioning the Sweden Democrats, both the Social Democrats and the Centre Party stated that the rise of the far-right has been evident domestically and across Europe (Socialdemokraterna 2023-02-03, 23; Centerpartiet 2023-02-20, 108).

By considering the observed actor-actor sentences, the initial analyses of the parties' post-election analyses exhibited low polarisation. In an attempt to discover potential political groupings, the parties' tended to rather focus on the EP election of 2019 than the national election of 2022 by considering the entire term of office.

Looking at the distribution of statements on European issues, the Christian Democrats, the Moderates and the Centre Party supplied most of their statements on the prior EP election. The two latter mentioned parties have further assigned explicit sections to the election (Moderaterna 2023-04-23, 42-43; Centerpartiet 2023-02-20, 69-70). Among others, the concerned parties addressed the electoral outcome, then-current European issues, and which issues that could be focused on for the upcoming EP election 2024. The Moderates portray the election as successful thanks to the focus on the policy-related European issues of nuclear power and law and order. The party furthermore underlines that the experience from the EP election benefited its preparation for the national election of 2022. Consequently, the Moderates perceive the upcoming EP election with the same possibilities and expectations (Moderaterna 2023-04-23). While not expressing

anything about the upcoming EP election, the Centre Party emphasised that the EP election of 2019 was a success because of the focus on certain European issues. The party thereby refers to both constitutive and policy-related European issues in these references:

“A greener EU - by tackling emissions, improving conditions for sustainable and competitive green industries and better environmental management on land and at sea. An EU that safeguards democracy - with deeper cooperation to combat crime and external threats, and an orderly, lawful and humane migration policy. A freer EU - with more free trade, increased research cooperation, less red tape for businesses, and vigorous action against Member States that limit the rule of law” (Centerpartiet 2023-02-20, 69-70)

Like the Centre Party, the Christian Democrats assessed the EP election of 2019 as a success but the party does not provide any statements on the recent national election nor the coming EP election. In their analyses, they underline that they approached the EP election with a message that the EU should focus on its core task, and take a step back in policy areas that are better handled at the national level. However, the Christian Democrats expressed that the last period of the campaign was affected by an extensive storm of criticism. According to the party, this was due to actions in the EP in votes concerning sexual and reproductive health during the years 2014-2019 (Kristdemokraterna 2023-02-17, 3). Taking the referred constitutive European issues above into account, the Christian Democrats distinguish themselves by expressing some type of opposition towards the EU. Furthermore, when assessing which issues have been most important among the Christian Democratic voters, the party reports that the “EU” was the third least important issue (Kristdemokraterna 2023-02-17, 13).

Of all parties, the Liberals were the only one who included an explicit chapter on “European politics”. Likewise, they were the only party that acknowledged the Swedish presidency. At the same time, the party expressed voices of self-criticism in connection with the lack of focus on European issues:

“We are the most pro-European party but we sometimes forget to explain why. In this term of office, which sees both a Swedish presidency of the European Union and elections to the European Parliament, we should build on this year’s dramatic events to point a way forward for the Liberal Party’s policy for Europe and what kind of organisation the European Union should be.” (Liberalerna 2022-11-23, 8)

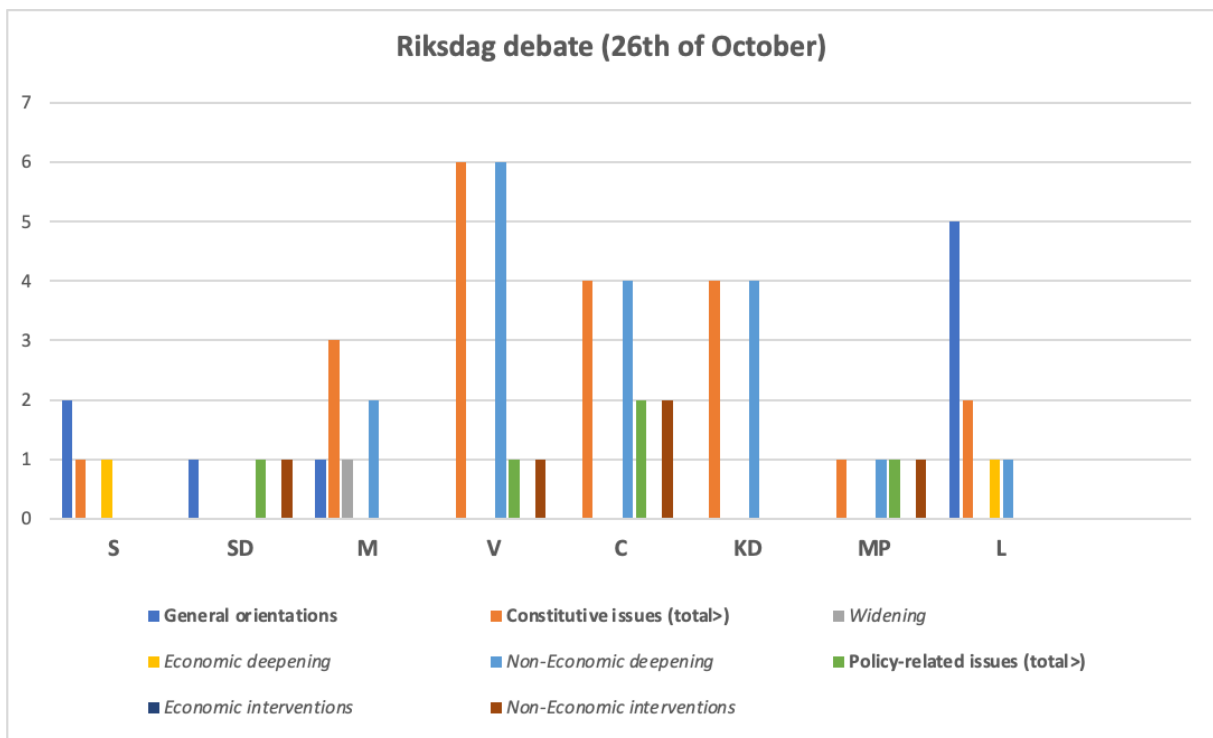
Besides providing the highlighted statements of general orientations on European issues, the Liberals also voiced constitutive issues concerning the war in Ukraine. Within this context, the party emphasised that the war has pressured European cooperation and solidarity. Despite this, the party underlines that European cooperation has gotten stronger and that European policies and decisions have

been followed in detail by the Swedish media and the public. Against this, the Liberals voiced a greater need to promote their policy for an open and democratic Europe with free trade with other countries (Liberalerna 2022-11-23, 8). Particularly about the upcoming EP election (Liberalerna 2022-11-23, 2).

Although the highlighted material revealed a lower frequency of salience compared to the parties' manifestos, there were a few signs of polarisation in the observed actor-actor sentences. Still, no specific political groupings between parties were identified. Remarkably, some parties paid more attention to the previous EP election of 2019 than the recent national election of 2022. However, the Liberals showed some awareness of the presence of European issues during the national election.

## 6.2.2 The Riksdag Debate on the 26th of October

The post-election analysis now turns towards the first party leader debate after the election day. At first glance, the debate reveals a lower frequency of observed statements on European issues compared to the previous section. The same can be said when comparing the debate to the last debate before the election day (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-06-08). While all parties voiced at least one statement, the Left Party and the Liberals were most prominent by voicing seven references each. Totally, European issues were expressed 35 times by parties. Constitutive issues were the most common category of European issues (21), followed by general orientations (9), and lastly, policy-related issues (5).



**Figure 7:** Observed and measured frequency of European issues in the Riksdag debate on the 26th of October 2022.

In the analysed material, ten actor-actor sentences were revealed. More specifically, all parties except the Sweden Democrats and the Liberals expressed this type of core sentence.

In his opening remarks, Ulf Kristersson, party leader of Moderates, and new Prime minister, both expressed general orientations and policy-related European issues by mentioning the climate minister, Romina Pourmokhtari, and the minister for energy and industry, Ebba Busch (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-10-26). As these expressions were carried with emphasis on further cooperation between the EU and the government, they could not be perceived as polarising statements. The

Moderates did however acknowledge the presidency through a constitutive issue. In particular, by expressing the need to further provide aid to Ukraine:

“The fourth major task is to lead Sweden into NATO, to take responsibility as the next EU Presidency and to help Ukraine in every way we can to win the war - and then to win the peace.”  
(Ulf Kristersson 2022-10-26)

On the other hand, the Centre Party positioned itself towards the Sweden Democrats. This was expressed through a policy-related European issue by questioning the party’s ambition towards climate change within the EU and globally. In response, the party did not refer to any European issues (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-10-26). The Centre Party further positioned themselves on the Left Party by questioning their actions in the EP concerning the EU’s military aid to Ukraine:

“Will the Left Party continue to waver in the European Parliament and here in the Riksdag when it comes to prolonged and increased military aid to Ukraine, or has it just been an accident at work?”  
(Annie Lööf 2022-10-26)

In contrast to the Sweden Democrats, the Left Party responded through a general orientation by stating that they have only abstained on issues related to the NATO application and NATO membership (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-10-26). Continuing, the Christian Democrats, like the Centre Party, also positioned themselves towards the Left Party. Yet, the party questioned by expressing both constitutive issues and policy-related issues:

“At the same time, as Annie Lööf just pointed out, the Left Party in the European Parliament voted against military aid to Ukraine, in favour of abolishing the budget for the European Defence Fund and against research, cooperation and development in the field of defence.” (Ebba Busch 2022-10-26)

Though providing a similar answer to the Christian Democrats, the Left Party also expressed that Sweden should have a Swedish Supreme Commander and that it is not certain that we should have a European one (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-10-26). Besides the actor-actors statements which largely involved non-economic deepening, the Social Democrats did further position themselves towards the Liberals but through a general orientation. In this sentence, the Social Democrats questioned the Liberals' cooperation with the Sweden Democrats with reference to the reaction of other liberal parties within the EU. While responding, the Liberals did not refer to any European issue (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-10-26).

The observed actor-actor sentences did reveal some tensions between the parties in connection with European issues, especially towards the Left Party. Furthermore, the Centre Party appeared particularly active in positioning itself towards other parties through both constitutive and policy-related issues. However, the following in-depth analysis of the debate did not provide any signs of additional political groupings.

While not expressing opposition towards other parties, the Liberals did however express some European issues. Concerning constitutive issues, the party underlined the EU's decisive role in the fight towards climate change and to ensure Ukraine's future and security. The Liberals did further voice the expressions on the upcoming Swedish presidency and the opportunities to drive European development forward (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-10-26). Both the Social Democrats and the Sweden Democrats raised concerns over the European security order following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In connection with this, the former party also expressed concern over Europe's reluctance to resume the import of Russian gas. The latter party further emphasised that the Swedish asylum legislation should be aligned with the EU's minimum level. The Greens were relatively silent on European issues during the debate. Among others, they expressed one statement in conjunction with Europe's aid policy (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-10-26).

When overviewing the entire debate, the analysis did observe some polarisation among the parties. Still, no distinctive political groupings on certain European issues were observed. When put into comparison, the debate displayed a higher frequency of salience compared to the last debate before election day. Compared overall, the debate demonstrated a slightly lower frequency of European issues.

### 6.2.3 The Riksdag's EU-Political Debate on the 16th of November

Arriving towards the end of the national election cycle of 2022, the EU political debate will lastly be scrutinised. Compared to the other scrutinised events, this debate will solely be analysed through qualitative means. The focus is not on saliency, it is rather directed towards carving out which European issues the parties invoked and the extent of polarisation among potential political groupings.

The debate began by building on the government's EU declarations for the following term of office which were presented by Ulf Kristersson. While giving some importance to Sweden's development in the EU, the content remained focused on the EU as a whole with reference to the presidency. In his opening statements, the Prime Minister emphasised four contemporary issues of European destiny that are the top priority: European security, the climate transition,

Europe's competitiveness, and the EU as a community of values that must be safeguarded (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-11-16). The Moderates expressed a variety of constitutive and policy-related European issues throughout the debate. As an illustrative example, the party underlined the need to clarify the division of power among the Member States and the EU:

“The new government will look at EU policies from top to bottom, not to make all policies EU policies, but to make the EU good where it is needed and leave national and local policies alone” (Ulf Kristersson 2022-11-16)

Seen overall, however, policy-related issues tended to dominate the debate with a particular focus on climate change where several parties questioned the new government's legitimacy. In particular, Sweden's role within the EU and the Member State's policy direction are in contrast to the EU. This was expressed by the Social Democrats, the Left Party, the Centre Party, and not least, the Greens:

“When the government fails every climate promise and breaks every climate target, our hope is in the EU. While Sweden lowers its climate ambitions, the EU strengthens its. This is not thanks to the actions of the Swedish government. Sweden's role internationally and in the EU has gone from being a driving force on the climate issue and showing the way to being a laggard and a brake.” (Per Bolund 2022-11-16)

The Centre Party continued on the same line by specifically positioning themselves towards the Sweden Democrats, the government parties' cooperation with the party, and their influence on European politics during the presidency. Besides the policy-related issue of climate change, the Centre Party questioned the government's ambition on strengthening European competitiveness and safeguarding the EU's fundamental values (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-11-16). The Sweden Democrats, on the other hand, stressed its reluctance towards the EU by urging no further transfer of power while at the same time underlining that the cooperation is necessary:

“I believe that these federalist superpower ambitions are the single greatest threat to stable and long-term European cooperation. There must be a realisation that the self-determination of nation states is at the heart of a future prosperous European cooperation.” (Jimmie Åkesson 2022-11-16)

While not being as explicitly critical towards the EU, the Christian Democrats raised similar concerns through constitutive and policy-related European issues. According to the party, the EU shall not micro-regulate forests, snuff, and health care. Rather, the EU should focus on its core tasks by promoting peace through trade and being a strong voice in difficult times. As shining examples, the Christians Democrats raised concerns in connection with the EU's increased

influence over the labour market and social policies (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-11-16).

On the other side, the Centre Party, the Left Party, the Liberals, the Greens, and the Social Democrats stressed the need of deepening EU cooperation through constitutive and policy-related issues. These statements were partly expressed with reference to Sweden's general relationship with the EU. However, most often these statements were voiced in connection with the waiting presidency. The Centre Party emphasised the need of giving the EU more tools to manage democracy, rights, and the rule of law to act as a counterbalance towards the increasing authoritarian direction around the world. Meanwhile, the Social Democrats expressed that the Swedish EU membership has strong support among the population. The reasons for this strong support are motivated by the fact that European cooperation allows Sweden to meet the challenges of our time with other EU Member States, according to the party. Contrastingly, the Sweden Democrats claimed that the Swedish population are fundamentally quite critical of the EU because of broken promises by previous and current politicians (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-11-16).

Following the accounted and differing views on European issues, political groupings tend to appear where the Christian Democrats, the Moderates, and the Sweden Democrats in particular, voice more negative statements towards the EU than the other parties. The red-greens, together with the Centre Party and the Liberals, continuously and repeatedly urged the need to further deepen the cooperation. Both economically, non-economically, and through widening. It should however be noted that the Sweden Democrats' statements on European issues appear significantly more critical than the Christian Democrats and the Moderates. On several occasions, this was expressed in direct opposition between parties. Though, this might not be as surprising given the obvious presence of European issues following the characteristics of the debate itself. Moreover, signs of fissures and opposing views were also observed between the cooperating government parties.

By referring to various constitutive European issues, the Liberals emphasised that the EU is constantly being challenged as some Member States keep restricting the rule of law, freedom of expression, and media independence. Therefore, the party voiced their devotion to ensuring that principles of democracy and the rule of law will be strengthened during the Swedish presidency (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-11-16). In a later response, the Sweden Democrats questioned the Liberals' constitutive statements by asking what the meaning of anti-European forces implies:



“According to Johan Pehrson and the Liberals, are all those who do not support more power transfer to Brussels more centralisation, a more federalist EU and so on anti-European forces, or who are the anti-European forces?” (Jimmie Åkesson 2022-11-16)

The Liberals responded by underlining that there exist various attitudes towards, but the aforementioned constitutive European issues encompass Member States that for years have received EU funds even though they have restricted people’s rights and freedoms. The Sweden Democrats remained firm in their initial view of the greatest threats towards a long and stable European cooperation, in addition, they urged worries that government representatives expressed that there are strong anti-European forces in Europe today (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-11-16). The political confrontations between the two cooperating parties were later commented on by the Centre Party:

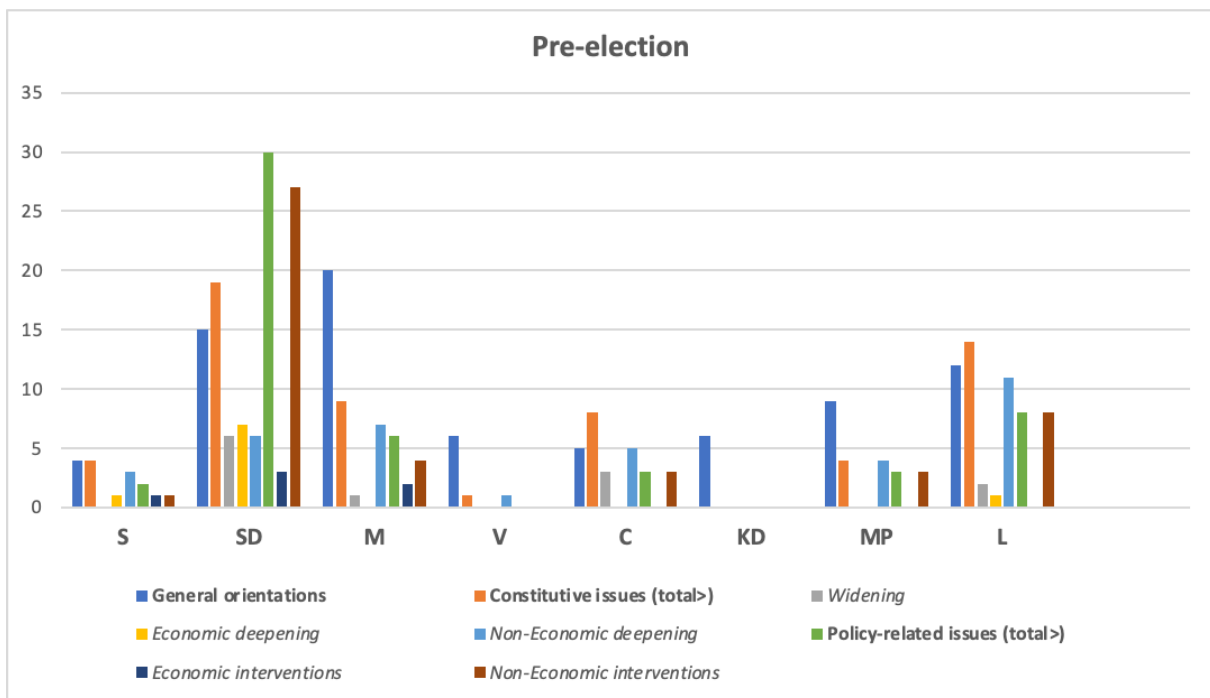
“It is remarkable that Johan Pehrson was not able to criticise the Sweden Democrats as an openly anti-EU party that openly praises Viktor Orbán’s Hungary - not even once during the previous exchange of lines.” (Annie Lööf 2022-11-16)

The Liberals did further receive oppositional statements from the Greens and the Social Democrats regarding their legitimacy as the most positive EU party within the Riksdag. When asked whether the Liberals are concerned about the consequences of now cooperating with the Sweden Democrats, who are openly critical of Sweden’s role in the EU according to the Greens, the party stressed that the government does not have cooperation regarding EU policies (Sveriges Riksdag 2022-11-16).

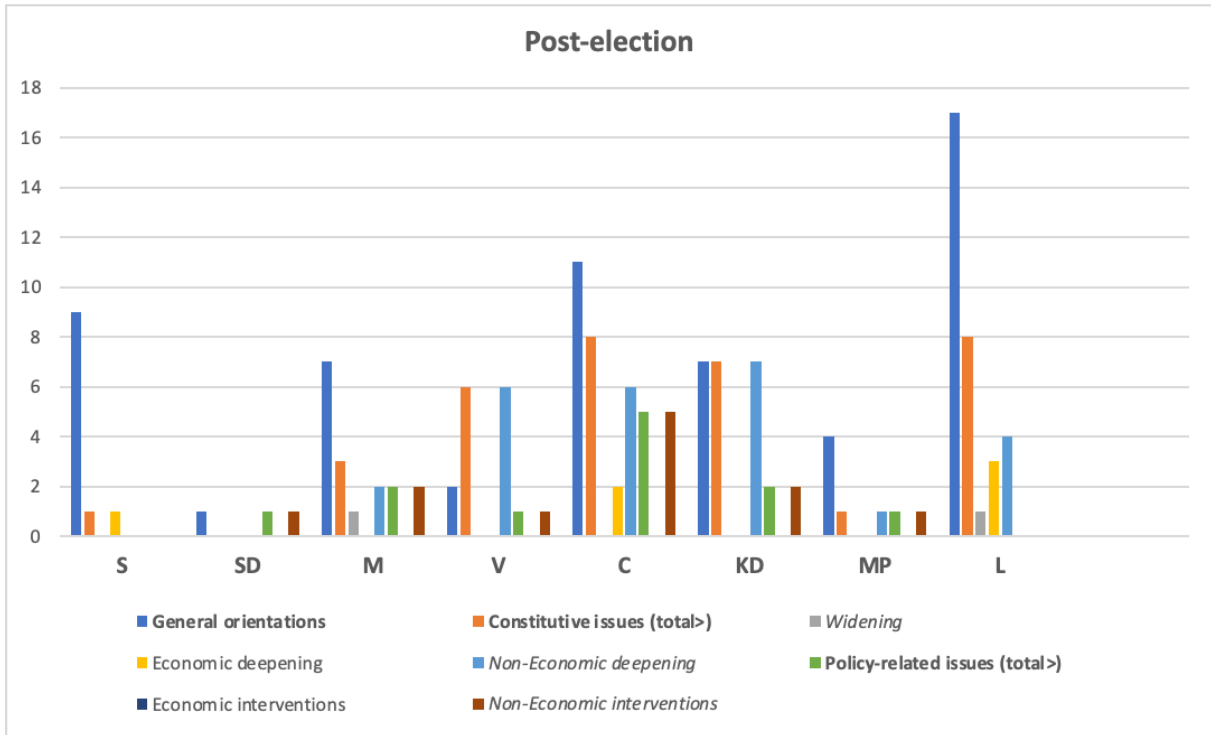
Apart from observing distinct political groupings between the parties on European issues, the elucidated confrontation above also showed signs of direct polarising political opinions within the new government. However, this was prominent to a lesser extent compared to the occurrence of statements directed towards the government by the Greens, the Social Democrats, and the Centre Party. On a broader level, the observed polarisation and political groupings appeared more distinctive in comparison with the other analysed events. This may indicate that parties are more likely to express opposition towards each other when a debate is limited to focusing on the EU specifically.

## 6.3 Summarising Remarks

The figures below display a brief overview of the distribution of European issues during the national election cycle. An aggregated observation of the analysed material in the national election cycle shows European issues being more salient pre-election (188) compared to post-election (104). However, actor-actor sentences were more prominent in the post-election analysis (17) compared to the pre-election one (6). The frequency of statements and actor-actor sentences should however be perceived with some caution as the analysed EU political debate is not comparable on the same basis as the other analysed material. Additionally, some statements in which parties positioned themselves towards others were done through general orientations. This was not deemed in agreement with this thesis's understanding of polarisation.



**Figure 8:** Summary of observed and measured frequency of European issues during pre-election.



**Figure 9:** Summary of observed and measured frequency of European issues during post-election.

## 7 Conclusion

The conducted analysis aimed to identify when and why European issues were present and contested during the Swedish national election cycle 2022. In light of the posed research question and the hypotheses to be tested, various conclusions can be drawn from the analysis.

Firstly, the distribution of statements can be taken into account. On the one hand, European issues were more salient before the election; on the other hand, a greater polarisation was observed after election day. By interpreting polarisation as a sufficient condition, and saliency as a necessary condition for politicisation, it could be argued that European issues were more politicised post-election. At the same time, the significantly higher level of pre-election saliency should not be forgotten. The inference should at the same time be considered with some caution as the analysed differences between actor-actor sentences are not significant. However, the analysed EU-political debate revealed more distinct political groupings and intensity. As underlined before entering the analysis, the identified polarisation from the mentioned debate is not equally comparable to the other material which creates limitations for conclusions. Nevertheless, the debate revealed political conflicts about the EU that were not as evident in other events during the election cycle.

According to the theoretical basis and the formulated hypotheses of the thesis, the explanatory factors behind the results depend on the parties' willingness to politicise European issues on the basis of electoral and coalition incentives. One telling example from the analysis was the Sweden Democrats' change in saliency over the two periods. Potentially, the party found it most attractive to be salient on European issues pre-election to achieve electoral gains. While no party expressed similar criticising statements, both the Christian Democrats and the Moderates showed signs of reluctance towards an increasing power shift to the EU concerning constitutive and policy-related European issues post-election. On the other hand, the latter-mentioned parties were rather withdrawn during the pre-election period and did further provide positive statements as well. As highlighted, the three parties together with the Liberals constitute the current governmental basis. Within the government cooperation, conflicts were also revealed between the Liberals and the Sweden Democrats over constitutive European issues. Although this was observed to a lesser extent, conflicts over constitutive issues are particularly distinctive given the recognised ideological

differences that exist between the two government parties. It becomes even more striking when one recalls the positions taken by the Sweden Democrats in the Committee on EU Affairs.

Like the Sweden Democrats, the Centre Party also showed a change in saliency during the two periods. Moreover, the party often positioned itself against others during the post-election. At the same time, the mainstream parties showed low levels of saliency and polarisation. Though the Moderates were more prominent than the Social Democrats, the statements on European issues were often pronounced through general orientations. As such, none of the mainstream parties politicised European issues in a way that violated their consensus, especially in the pre-election period.

The observed findings are consistent with the assumption that the presence of no coalition or electoral threats can contribute to more politicisation after election day. The same applies to electoral and coalition uncertainty in the pre-election period, given the attractiveness of politicising or not in order to gain further electoral gains. The findings thus provide support for both hypotheses.

However, the support of each hypothesis should not be taken for granted given the limitations of this study in making generalising claims. In addition, there are alternative explanations that can disprove the hypotheses. Firstly, this study did not compare European issues with domestic ones which causes estimation problems in determining actual politicisation. In connection with this, the dynamics of the electoral competition on domestic issues could have provided another explanation for when and why European issues were present and contested in the national election cycle.

To some extent, the results suggest that domestic issues received more attention and that European issues were sometimes displaced, or potentially, depoliticised. This was evident in some parties' post-election analyses, where the recent EP election and the upcoming one received more attention than the concerned national election. Thus, it can also be argued that some statements on European issues were referred to within the European electoral arena rather than the national electoral arena, which was the main focus of this thesis. However, another telling example of domestic issues being more prominent was the relative infrequency of statements during the Almedalen speeches. Still, it cannot be determined whether European issues were depoliticised intentionally or not by the parties to avoid being held accountable.

Although this thesis cannot provide sufficient explanations for depoliticisation, the latter observations could lead to an assumption that the giant of European politics is still sleeping in the Member State of Sweden. This is remarkable given the EU's influence over national politics. As emphasised by the national inquiry (SOU 2016:10), the lack of public debate on the EU could create false images of

reality through growing discontent. In the long term, the risk of undermining the democratic process increases when the citizens are not offered political alternatives, or for that matter opportunities for accountability, on issues that affect their daily lives in multiple ways. Similarly, it could send a signal that very few decisions at the EU level are important. What these actions can lead to in the future in terms of the Swedish opinion on the EU is uncertain. However, based on the results and references to existing literature, it can be concluded that European issues deserve more attention in the public debate. More specifically, EU issues deserve attention in the context of what Swedish politicians want to achieve within and with the EU beyond general references. As a gentle reminder, the EU influences almost 37% of all laws enacted in the Member State (Örstadius 2019-05-09).

A proposal for future research is therefore to continue to investigate how EU issues are characterised in Sweden and what space they are given. Not only with the purpose of exploring eventual depoliticisation, but more generally how European issues are talked about, perceived, and competed for in the Member State. This is needed research given the lack of research on Sweden, as has been pointed out both in this study and in previous research. Following the recent developments of the Sweden Democrats' breakthrough, there exist additional reasons to examine how the EU and its related issues will be handled in the time to come. Especially concerning constitutive issues of the EU and the ideological differences between the cooperating government parties. However, concerning the EU's influence over society at large, there does also exist incentives to examine other research subjects besides the political parties within electoral contexts. One way to do this is to focus on the emphasised knowledge-gap about the EU through the public administration, the business sector, or the general public. A final suggestion for future research is to consider the possibility of extending the time period of an election as in this study. The benefits of doing this could provide more coherent views on how attitudes towards certain issues might change or party behaviour might change.



## 8 References

### 8.1 Literature

- Asp, Kent (2014). EU:s och Europasamarbetets plats i offentligheten. Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet.
- Aylott, Nicholas, Blomgren, Magnus & Bergman, Torbjörn (2013). *Political Parties in Multi-Level Polities: The Nordic Countries Compared*. London: Springer
- Aylott, Nicholas (2002). "Let's Discuss this Later: Party Responses to Euro-Division in Scandinavia". *Party Politics*, 8(4), pp. 441-461.
- Boin, Arjen & Rhinard, Mark (2023). "Crisis management and performance and the European Union: the case of COVID-19". *Journal of European Public Policy*, 30(4), pp. 655-675.
- Bartolini, Stefano (2005). *Restructuring Europe: Centre formation, system building, and political structuring between the nation state and the European Union*. OUP Oxford.
- Bergström, Göran & Boréus, Kristina (2012). "Samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys" in Boréus, Kristina & Bergström, Göran (ed.) (2012). *Textens mening och makt: Metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys* (4th ed.), pp. 17-45.
- Boréus, Kristina & Kohl, Sebastian (2012). "Innehållsanalys" in Boréus, Kristina & Bergström, Göran (ed.) (2012). *Textens mening och makt: Metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys* (4th ed.), pp. 49-89.
- Brack, Nathalie & Startin, Nicholas (2015). Introduction: Euroscepticism, from the margins to the mainstream. *International Political Science Review (IPSR)*, vol. 36(3), 239-249.
- Bryman, Alan (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th Ed). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bolin, Niklas (2015). A Loyal Rookie? The Sweden Democrats' First Year in the European Parliament. *Journal: The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*. Issue No. 2, 59-77.
- Börzel, Tanja & Risse, Thomas (2000). "When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change". *European integration online papers (EIoP)* 4(15).



- Crespy, Amandine (2015). "Analysing European Discourses" in Lynggaard, Kennet, Manners, Ian, Löfgren, Karl (2015) (ed.). *Research Methods in European Studies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Creswell, John. W & Creswell, David J. (2023). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage publications.
- De Vries, Catherine E. (2007). "Sleeping giant: Fact or fairytale? How European integration affects national elections". *European Union Politics* 8(3), pp. 363–385.
- Dolezal, Martin, Grande, Edgar, & Hutter, Swen (2016a). "Exploring politicisation: Design and methods" in Swen, Hutter, Edgar, Grande & Hanspeter, Kriesi (ed.) (2016) *Politicising Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 32-60.
- Ennsner, Laurenz (2012). "The homogeneity of West European party families: The radical right in comparative perspective". *Party Politics*, 18(2), pp. 151-171.
- George, Alexander L. & Bennett, Andrew (2005). *Case studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. MIT Press.
- Gerring, John (2004). "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?" *American Political Science Review*, 98(2), pp. 341-354.
- Gerring, John & Cojocaru, Lee (2016). "Selecting Cases for Intensive Analysis: A Diversity of Goals and Methods". *Sociological Methods & Research*, 45(3), pp. 392-423.
- Gerring, John (2017). "Qualitative methods". *Annual review of political science*, 20, pp. 15-36.
- Grande, Edgar, & Hutter, Swen (2016a). "Introduction and the challenge of politicisation" in Swen, Hutter, Edgar, Grande & Hanspeter, Kriesi (ed.) (2016). *Politicising Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-31.
- Grande, Edgar, & Hutter, Swen (2016a). "The politicisation of Europe in public debates on major integration steps" in Swen, Hutter, Edgar, Grande & Hanspeter. Kriesi (ed.) (2016). *Politicising Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 63-89.
- Grande, Edgar & Hutter, Swen (2016a). "Is the giant still asleep? The politicisation of Europe in the national electoral arena" in Swen, Hutter, Edgar, Grande & Hanspeter. Kriesi (ed.) (2016). *Politicising Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 90-111.
- Grande, Edgar & Hutter, Swen (2016b). "Beyond authority transfer: explaining the politicisation of Europe". *West European Politics*, 39(1), pp. 23-43.

- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer (2012). "A giant fast asleep? Party incentives and the politicisation of European integration." *Political Studies*, 60(1), pp. 115-130.
- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer & Mortensen, Peter B. (2010). "Who sets the agenda and who responds to it in the Danish parliament? A new model of issue competition and agenda-setting". *European Journal of Political Research*, 49(2), pp. 257–28.
- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer (2019). *The Reshaping of West European Party Politics: Agenda-Setting and Party Competition in Comparative Perspective*, Comparative Politics.
- Gustafsson, Johanna (2017). "Single case studies vs. multiple case studies: A comparative study". Halmstad: Halmstad University. Academy of Business, Engineering and Science.
- Haas, E. (1958). "The Challenge of Regionalism". *International Organization*, 12(4), pp. 440-458.
- Heffler, Claudia & Wesseles, Wolfgang (2013). *The Democratic Legitimacy of the EU's Economic Governance and National Parliaments*. Instituto Affari Internazionali.
- Hellström, Johan (2014) "EU-frågan som försvann". Om makt och politik. Blog post 2014-09-04. Available: <https://maktochpolitik.wordpress.com/2014/09/03/eu-fragan-som-forsvann/> (Retrieved: 2023-05-23).
- Hix, Simon & Lord, Christopher (1997). *Political Parties in the European Union*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Ho, LaiYee & Limpaecher, Alex (Delve) (2023c, January 25). *What is Relational Content Analysis in Qualitative Research? A Step-By-Step Guide* <https://delvetool.com/blog/relational-content-analysis> (Retrieved 2023-05-23).
- Hooghe, Lisbet & Marks, Gary (2009) "A postfunctionalist theory of european integration: From permissive consensus to constraining dissensus". *British Journal of Political Science*, 39 (1), pp. 1–23.
- Hobolt, Sara B. & De Vries, Catherine E. (2015). "Issue entrepreneurship and multiparty competition." *Comparative Political Studies* 48(9), pp. 1159-1185.
- Hobolt, Sara B., & Rodon, Toni (2020). "Domestic contestation of the European Union." *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(2), pp. 161-167.
- Hlavac, Marek (2010). "Less than a State, More than an International Organization: The Sui Generis Nature of the European Union." *More than an International Organization: The Sui Generis Nature of the European Union (December 2, 2010)*. Bratislava: Central European Labour Studies Institute.
- Kenes, Bulent (2021). "The Sweden Democrats: Killer of Swedish Exceptionalism." *ECPS European Center for Populist Studies*.

- Krippendorff, Klaus (2018). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Fourth Edition. Sage publications.
- Linderoth, Johanna (2011) "Den dolda europeiseringen. En studie av svenska partiers retoriska förändring mellan 1995 och 2010". Kandidatuppsats. Växjö: Linnéuniversitetet, Institutionen för samhällsvetenskaper.
- Ladrech, Robert (2002). "Europeanization and Political Parties: Towards a Framework for Analysis". *Party politics*, 8(4), pp. 389-403.
- Ladrech, Robert (1994). "Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 32(1), pp. 69–88.
- Levy, Jack S. (2008). "Case Studies: Types, designs, and logics of inference". *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 25(1), pp. 1-18.
- Mair, Peter (2013). *Ruling the void: The hollowing of Western democracy*. London: Verso books.
- Mair, Peter, and Thomassen, Jacques (2010). "Political representation and government in the European Union." *Journal of European public policy*, 17(1), pp. 20-35.
- Mair, Peter (2000). "The limited impact of Europe on national party systems". *West European Politics*, 23(4), pp. 27-51.
- Mair, Peter (2006). "Political Parties and Party Systems" in Graziano, Paolo & Vink, Maarten (ed.) *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 154–166.
- Marsh, David, Ercan, Selen A. & Furlong, Paul (2017). "A Skin Not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science" in Lowndes, Vivien, Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry (2017). *Theories and Methods in political science* (4th ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Matthijs, Matthias (2020). "Lessons and learnings from a decade of EU crises". *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(8), pp. 1127-1136.
- Moravcsik, Andrew (1999). "A New Statecraft? Supranational Entrepreneurship and Interstate Cooperation". *International Organization*, 53(2), pp. 267-306.
- Moravcsik, Andrew (2018). "Preferences, power and institutions in 21st-century Europe". *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56(7), pp. 1648– 1674.
- Palonen, Kari, Wienser, Claudia, Selk, Veith, Kauppi, Niilo, Dupuy, Claire, Van Ingelgom, Virgine & Liste, Philip (2021). "Rethinking politicisation" in Wiesner, Clauda (ed.) (2021). *Rethinking politicisation in politics, sociology and international relations* (Vol. 1). Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 248-281.
- Papadopoulos, Yannis (2021). Political accountability in EU multi-level governance. Sieps (Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies) 2021(4).
- Phelan, William (2012). "What is sui generis about the European Union? Costly international cooperation in a Self-Contained regime". *International Studies Review*, 14(3), pp. 367–385.

- Raunio, Tapio (2009). "National parliaments and European integration: What we know and agenda for future research". *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 15(4), pp. 317-334.
- Reif, Karlheinz & Schmitt, Hermann (1980). "Nine second-order national elections-a conceptual framework for the analysis of European Election results". *European Journal of political research*, 8(1), pp. 3-44.
- Statens Offentliga Utredningar (SOU) (2016:10). "EU på hemmaplan". Kulturdepartementet, Statsrådsberedningen,. Available: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2016/02/sou-201610/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23).
- Seawright, Jason & Gerring, John (2008). "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options". *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), pp. 294-308.
- Schmitt, Hermann (2005). "The European Parliament elections of June 2004: still second-order?". *West European Politics*, 28(3), pp. 650-679.
- Taggart, Paul (2019). "Party-based hard Euroscepticism in the 2019 European parliament elections." in Bolin, Niklas, Falasca, Kajsa, Grusell, Marie & Nord, Lars (ed.) (2019). Euroreflections. leading academics on the European Elections (40), pp. 26-27.
- Tashakkori, Abbas, and John W. Creswell (2007). "The new era of mixed methods." *Journal of mixed methods research* 1(1), pp. 3-7.
- Van Atteveldt, Wouter, Kleinnijenhuis, Jan. & Carley, Kathleen (2006). "Rcadf: Towards a relational content analysis standard". *Presented at the International Communication Association (ICA), Dresden*.
- Van der Eijk, Cees & Franklin, Mark. (2007) "The Sleeping Giant Potential for Political Mobilization of Disaffection with European Integration", in Van der Brug, Wouter & van der Eijk, Cees (ed.) (2007). *European Elections and Domestic Politics*. Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 189-208.
- Vromen, Ariadne (2017). "Qualitative Methods" in Lowndes, Vivien, Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry (2017). *Theories and Methods in political science* (4th ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing.

## 8.2 Electronic Resources

- Almedalsveckan (2022-10-27). “Almedalen Week”  
<https://www.almedalsveckan.info/english> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Broqvist, Ellen (Centrum för europaforskning) (2022-07-15). “För lite EU i riksdagsvalet” <https://www.cfe.lu.se/artikel/lite-eu-i-riksdagsvalet> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Council of the European Union (the Council) (2023-03-23). “Infographic - Energy crisis: Three EU coordinated measures to cut down bills”  
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/eu-measures-to-cut-down-energy-bills/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Council of the European Union (the Council) (2023). “Taking the lead on climate change” <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/eu-climate-change/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Duxbury, Charlie & Barigazzi, Jacopo (Politico) (2022-12-29). “Brussels fears Swedish far right aims to thwart EU law-making program”  
<https://www.politico.eu/article/brussels-eu-fears-spoiler-role-sweden-far-right> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Ekonomifakta (2019-02-14). “EU:s betydelse för svensk ekonomi”  
<https://www.ekonomifakta.se/Artiklar/2019/februari/eus-betydelse-for-svensk-ekonomi/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Europaportalen (2022-11-30). “Riksdagens EU-beslut: EU-nämnden”  
<https://www.europaportalen.se/tema/eu-namnden?page=3> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Gripenberg, Pia & Melchior, Sigrid (Dagens Nyheter) (2022-09-10). De osynliga frågorna i valrörelsen.  
<https://www.dn.se/varlden/de-osynliga-fragorna-i-valrorelsen/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Hederos, Jacob, Olsson, Miranda & Telin Hyttenäs, Axel (Altinget) (2023-02-10). “S anklagar regeringen för fulspel i EU-nämnden: ‘Valt sitt samarbetsparti’” (Retrieved 2023-X-X)  
<https://www.altinget.se/artikel/kritiken-regeringen-fulspel-i-eu-namnden>
- Hedfors, Jacob (Altinget) (2022-11-17). Altinget avslöjar: SD får omfattande inflytande på EU-politiken.  
<https://www.altinget.se/artikel/altinget-avslojar-sd-faar-omfattande-inflytande-paa-eu-politiken> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Persson, Maria (Aktuellt i politiken) (2022-10-14). SD utanför regeringen - men ändå inte. <https://aip.nu/38329-2/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)

- Petrequin, Samuel (AP) (2023-01-11). “Far-right shadow looming over Swedish EU presidency” <https://apnews.com/article/politics-sweden-government-europe-european-union-d6e0caa44d234f822a055998dc6c9ff7> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Polk, Jonathan (The London School of Economics and Political Science) (2022-09-15). Sweden’s general election: Winners, losers, and what happens next. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2022/09/15/swedens-general-election-winners-losers-and-what-happens-next/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Renneus Guthrie, Anna (Tidningen näringslivet) (2022-09-08). “Därför tar EU inte plats i valet: ‘Dags att kliva in’” <https://www.tn.se/inrikes/20518/darfor-tar-eu-inte-plats-i-valet-dags-att-kliva-in/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- SVT Nyheter (2019-02-17). “V ska inte driva EU-utträde”. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/v-ska-inte-driva-eu-uttrade-i-valet> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Sveriges Radio (SR) (2019-02-06). “Sverigedemokraterna ändrar sig inom EU”. <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/7150267> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Sveriges Radio (SR) (2023-01-17). “Kristersson criticised in the European Parliament for working with the Sweden Democrats” <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/kristersson-criticised-in-the-european-parliament-for-working-with-the-sweden-democrats> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Sveriges Riksdag (2023). “Committees” <https://www.riksdagen.se/en/committees/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Sveriges Riksdag (2022-09-20). “Elections to the Riksdag” <https://www.riksdagen.se/en/how-the-riksdag-works/democracy/elections-to-the-riksdag/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- The Local (2023-01-17). “Sweden’s PM grilled by the EU MEPs on his dependence on the far-right” <https://www.thelocal.se/20230117/swedens-pm-grilled-by-eu-meps-on-his-dependence-on-the-far-right/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Åkesson, Jimmie (Aftonbladet) (2019-01-31): “SD: Därför ändrar vi vår EU-politik”. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/A2Kpyr/sd-darfor-andrar-vi-var-eu-politik> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Örstadius, Kristoffer (Dagens Nyheter) (2019-05-09). “Fakta i frågan: Hur stor makt har EU i Sverige?” <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/fakta-i-fragan-hur-stor-makt-har-eu-i-sverige/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)

## 8.3 Appendix

- Centerpartiet (2022). “För Sveriges bästa - valmanifest 2022” <https://snd.gu.se/en/vivill/party/c/v/2022> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Centerpartiet (2022-07-06). Annie Lööf’s speech at Almedalen <https://almedalsveckan.info/2374> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Centerpartiet (2023-02-20). “Eftervalsanalys 2022: Hela landets liberala röst - Nystart för ett starkare centerparti.” <https://www.centerpartiet.se/download/18.4e7cf7a51866cc5c7e838/1676877375666/Centerpartiets%20valanalys%202022.pdf> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Liberalerna (2022). “Maktskifte för ett nytt Sverige. Liberalernas valmanifest 2022” <https://snd.gu.se/en/vivill/party/l/v/2022> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Liberalerna (2022-07-05). Johan Pehrson’s speech at Almedalen <https://almedalsveckan.info/2372> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Liberalerna (2022-11-23). “Rapport från Liberalernas valanalysgrupp 2022” <https://www.liberalerna.se/wp-content/uploads/valutvardering-2022.pdf> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Kristdemokraterna (2022). “Redo för en ny regering - Valmanifest 2022” <https://snd.gu.se/en/vivill/party/kd/v/2022> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Kristdemokraterna (2022-07-05). Ebba Busch’s speech at Almedalen <https://almedalsveckan.info/2371> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Kristdemokraterna (2023-02-17). “Kristdemokraternas valutvärdering 2022” <https://kristdemokraterna.se/download/18.7eb46d0d1864ba3105947d9/1676643282722/Kristdemokraternas%20valutva%CC%88rdering%202022.pdf> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Miljöpartiet de gröna (2022). “Valmanifest 2022 - Alla ska med när Sverige ställer om” <https://snd.gu.se/en/vivill/party/mp/v/2022> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Miljöpartiet de gröna (2022-07-07). Per Bolund’s speech at Almedalen <https://almedalsveckan.info/2375> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Miljöpartiet de gröna (2023-02-20). “Valanalys 2022” <https://www.mp.se/just-nu/miljopartiets-valanalys-ar-klar/> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Moderaterna (2022). “Så får vi ordning på Sverige - Moderaternas valmanifest 2022” <https://snd.gu.se/en/vivill/party/m/v/2022> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Moderaterna (2022-07-04). Ulf Kristersson’s speech at Almedalen <https://almedalsveckan.info/2369> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Moderaterna (2023-04-23). “Eftervalsanalys: Maktskiftesvalet 2022 - En resa in i det okända”

- <https://moderaterna.se/app/uploads/2023/03/Moderaternas-Eftervalsanalys-2022.pdf> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Riksdagen (2022-06-08). Partiledardebatt [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/partiledardebatt/partiledardebatt\\_H9C120220608pd](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/partiledardebatt/partiledardebatt_H9C120220608pd) (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Riksdagen (2022-10-16). Partiledardebatt [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/partiledardebatt/partiledardebatt\\_HAC120221026pd](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/partiledardebatt/partiledardebatt_HAC120221026pd) (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Riksdagen (2022-11-16). EU-politisk partiledardebatt. [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/partiledardebatt/eu-politisk-partiledardebatt\\_HAC120221116pd](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/partiledardebatt/eu-politisk-partiledardebatt_HAC120221116pd)
- Socialdemokraterna (2022). “Socialdemokraternas valmanifest 2022 - Vårt Sverige kan bättre” <https://snd.gu.se/en/vivill/party/s/v/2022> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Socialdemokraterna (2022-07-03). Magdalena Andersson’s speech at Almedalen <https://almedalsveckan.info/2368> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Socialdemokraterna (2023-02-03). “Valanalys 2022” <https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/download/18.3f06add218529ebfe3ba5b2/1675428857569/Socialdemokraternas%20valanalys%202022.pdf> (Retrieved 2023-x-x)
- Sverigedemokraterna (2022). “Valplattform 2022 - Inriktningsprogram för Sverigedemokraternas inflytande över svensk politik under nästa mandatperiod” <https://snd.gu.se/en/vivill/party/sd/v/2022> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Sverigedemokraterna (2022-07-06). Jimmie Åkesson’s speech at Almedalen <https://almedalsveckan.info/2373> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Vänsterpartiet (2022). “Vänsterpartiets valplattform 2022” <https://snd.gu.se/en/vivill/party/v/v/2022> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Vänsterpartiet (2022-07-04). Nooshi Dadgostar’s speech at Almedalen <https://almedalsveckan.info/2370> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)
- Vänsterpartiet (2022-12-05). “Valanalys 2022” <https://www.vansterpartiet.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/valanalys-2022-vacc88nsterpartiet.pdf> (Retrieved 2023-05-23)