

# Political Integration and National Parliaments in Europe

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Does political integration challenge democracy by undermining the impact of national parliaments and parliamentary elections on policy making? This question has given rise to an expansive body of literature on the role of national parliaments in the world's most advanced project of political integration, the European Union. This paper reviews what we have learned from this literature, focussing on how European integration affects and is affected by (1) parliamentary influence on legislation and (2) parliamentary links to citizens. While we have an increasingly sophisticated understanding of a variety of mutual effects regarding the first question, we observe few effects between European integration and parliamentary links to citizens.

## Introduction

Do international political institutions challenge democracy? Political integration is often defended because it contributes to efficient problem solving. At the same time, it is held liable for undermining democratic politics in constituent states (for this debate, see e.g. Keohane et al. 2009; Dahl 1994). A prominent element of this debate concerns the impact of national parliaments and parliamentary elections on policy making beyond the state. The right to vote, and the idea that the representatives thus elected take authoritative decisions, are important democratic principles. How are these principles affected by political integration? Are parliaments the losers in executive-dominated international politics? Are parliamentarians responsive to the public in matters of integration? Do elections make a difference? Answers to these questions affect our assessments of international political institutions.

This review examines what we know of the role of domestic legislatures in the world's most advanced project of political integration, the European Union (EU). The organisation of parliamentary representation in the EU has been a concern of practitioners since its very early days (e.g. Rittberger 2006). Initially, a parliamentary assembly of delegates of national parliaments was to deliver the representative element of EU legitimacy. We have since witnessed the progressive institutionalisation of a full-fledged European Parliament, directly elected since 1979 and endowed with significant and expanding legislative powers since the mid-1980s (Rittberger 2005).

In parallel, however, scholarly and professional concerns have emerged, questioning whether parliamentarisation at the EU-level suffices to legitimise the integration project. Sceptics consider it, and the institutional democratisation of the EU generally, as "façade electioneering" in the absence of the necessary political infrastructure such as a European demos (Bartolini 2005: xv). In the liberal intergovernmentalist view of European integration that emerged during the 1990s (Moravcsik 1998), the legitimacy of the EU rests on domestic democratic processes of preference aggregation. The EU itself conceives of representation as a two-track system with citizens represented by the European Parliament and by national governments accountable to national parliaments (see Article 10(2) of the Lisbon Treaty). In the view of the European Parliament (2009: paragraph B),

the necessary parliamentarisation of the European Union must rely on two fundamental approaches involving the broadening of the European Parliament's powers vis-à-vis all the Union's decisions and the strengthening of the powers of the national parliaments vis-à-vis their respective governments...

Scholars and practitioners have, thus, increasingly recognised that national parliaments will continue to matter in the EU. In some views, they remain the predominant source of legitimacy while in others they complement the European Parliament. Yet, as discussed in detail below, the predominant perception is that national parliaments are the losers of the integration project despite their relevance.

This review will not try to resolve the issue of whether national parliaments are complementary to the European Parliament. It will, in fact, largely disregard the role of the latter (for reviews, see Hix et al. 2003; Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010). Instead, the remainder of this review focuses on the empirical foundations of discussions about the role of national parliaments: how does European integration actually affect them? And how do national parliaments affect European integration? As we shall see, a considerable literature on this topic has accumulated. The aim here is to identify what, by now, we have learned about the role of domestic legislatures in the EU.

The paper will focus on two central functions of parliaments: (1) the legislative function and (2) the electoral function. The former, legislation, is commonly seen as the defining function of legislatures (Norton 1990: 1). The latter derives from a fundamental principle of representative democracy: that decision makers in parliament are elected representatives. The analysis that follows takes stock of literature on the legislative and electoral functions of national parliaments in the context of political integration in the EU. This review, thus, seeks answers to two sets of questions:

- ◆ How does political integration affect the legislative function of national parliaments? And how do national parliaments affect policy making in the EU?
- ◆ How does political integration affect parliamentary links to the public? And how do national parliaments relate to citizens in EU affairs?

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## Political Integration and the Legislative Function of Parliament

This section reviews the literature on how integration affects the legislative function of national parliaments and on how parliaments affect policy making in the EU. I begin with general remarks on the policy making role of parliaments in parliamentary democracies to embed the EU specific discussion in this context. Then follows a sub-section of national parliamentary control in EU policy making (the reason for speaking of control should become clear shortly) in which both parliament and government are looked at as largely autonomous actors. Subsequently, we can examine studies of how intra-parliamentary politics affect parliamentary control with an emphasis on the constraints and incentives political parties face. Then, strategies for parliamentary influence other than governmental control will briefly be addressed. The last sub-section, considers in what way national parliaments affect EU policy making.

### Parliaments in policy making in parliamentary democracies

In parliamentary democracies, legislatures are best understood as institutions that influence, amend or, rarely, reject policy proposals from a government.<sup>1</sup> The conceptualization of parliaments as institutions debating, preparing and determining public policy is overly simple. While the prerogative to give assent to government proposals – a function that defines them as legislatures (Norton 1990: 1) – is a powerful tool, it is rarely used to reject proposals. This does not mean that parliaments are passive takers of decisions, but rather that influence takes place less visibly in the process of legislative-executive interaction.

In this process, the parliament can be conceived of as the principal in a delegation relationship in which it has entrusted the government with a set of tasks in policy making, including the drafting and proposing of legislation (Strom 2000). If the government acts as a faithful agent, the parliament does not have to correct its proposals regularly. However, it may also be ignorant of unfaithful government action because it lacks the capacity necessary to assess executive behaviour (e.g. Andersen and Burns 1996). If we are to assess the legislative function of parliaments, the key question is, thus, the extent to which parliament controls the government.

The delegation relationship, however, is not a one-way street because the government also has reasons to control the parliament. If we take into account political parties, one could also say that partly leaders in government seek to control parliamentary backbenchers to ensure that they can implement their political agenda (Müller 2000). Thus, parliamentary control should be understood as the extent to which the balance in this relationship is more or less in favour of parliament.

For example, a common indicator of parliamentary policy influence is control over the legislative agenda in the formal sense of who controls what issues parliament votes on and when (e.g. Cox and McCubbins 2002). In a very direct way, the government can better implement its legislative agenda if in control of it. In turn, parliamentary control of the agenda indicates that the government has to invest more time anticipating the preferences of parliamentarians or negotiating with them. It signals more parliamentary control. In brief, these

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<sup>1</sup> For a more extensive discussion of the role of parliaments in policy making, see, for instance, Norton (1990) and Mezey (1979).

are the reasons why the remainder puts a heavy emphasis on how European integration affects, and is affected by, national parliamentary control of the government.

We have to be aware, further, that in the real world governments are majority rather than unanimous creations. Within parliament, different actors hold different relationships with the government. The opposition has an interest in challenging and criticising the executive and in presenting itself as an alternative to the prevailing majority (e.g. Dahl 1965; Helms 2008). The majority has an interest in sustaining the government, which results from a bargain between backbench and frontbench, and among coalition partners (Laver and Shepsle 1996; Martin and Vanberg 2004, 2005). Consequently, the conflict lines in parliamentary systems commonly run between government and opposition rather than between legislature and executive (King 1976). Therefore, a second key question in the study of parliamentary control in the EU is how integration affects the incentives, constraints and relations of intra-parliamentary actors.

The creation of supranational political institutions adds important actors that do not qualify as part of the national executive – the European Commission and the European Parliament, for example. These could form alternative routes of parliamentary influence. Hence, while in the national context the focus is on the government, European integration may have expanded the possibilities of parliaments to wield influence over policy making. Relevant research is briefly addressed towards the end of the section.

Finally, one has to be aware that legislative-executive relations and the role of parliaments in policy making have been debated for decades. In the US literature, this debate has given rise to long discussions over the decline of Congress as a legislature (for an overview see, for instance, Martin 2000). In the European context, the “complaint [that parliaments have lost their functions] is as old as the institution itself” (Schüttemeyer 2009: 1). Some even say that we witness the emergence of post-parliamentary governance (Andersen and Burns 1996). Whether this is true or not has been debated elsewhere. Important to note, however, is that we cannot blame or praise European integration for all temporal trends affecting national legislatures. We rather have to focus on the added effect of integration (Raunio and Hix 2000).

We now turn to the discussion of parliamentary control in the EU.

### Parliamentary control in the European Union

European integration is commonly said to have two negative effects on legislative control. First, it changes the constitutional basis of the policy process by transferring rule-making authority to a higher level of governance. As a consequence, parliaments lose one of their most powerful instruments of executive control, their “legislative sovereignty” (Schmidt 1999). Moreover, if they have had control over the policy agenda, this is lost in policy areas integrated at the EU-level. Whenever the Council of Ministers votes by qualified majority, they risk being forced to implement policy they have not even had the chance to reject. Finally, when the co-decision procedure applies, governments have to share power with the European Parliament.<sup>2</sup> Policy

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<sup>2</sup> As to the role of national parliaments in the co-decision procedure, there is an instructive report recently published by the British House of Lords (House of Lords 2009).

output of the EU has to be implemented by national parliaments in the shadow of a threat of financial penalties. Scholars have, therefore, feared that legislatures turn into “administrative extensions” of the EU (Duina and Oliver 2005).

Second, European integration changes a number of characteristics of the actual operation of the policy process. Policy making often takes place in networks that, first, privilege executive and administrative actors and, second, are difficult to monitor (Papadopoulos 2003, 2007; Rometsch and Wessels 1996). Even if parliaments can muster the necessary resources to participate in EU policy making, they may find access restrictions to apply. While governments are recognised actors in EU-level politics, national parliaments are not (but note recent developments mentioned below) (Sprungk 2010).

The combination of both arguments mirrors the most common critique of the legitimacy of political integration beyond the nation state (for a brief discussion, see, for instance, Keohane et al. 2009). In the discussion over the democratic deficit of the EU, the two arguments form the domestic component of the “de-parliamentarization thesis.” This thesis has formed the core of critiques of EU-level democracy ever since its first systematic articulation (Weiler et al. 1995; Follesdal and Hix 2006).<sup>3</sup>

We have to be aware that the de-parliamentarisation thesis applies only selectively to policy areas integrated within the EU. Hence, the most salient spending and social policies are, if not unaffected, only marginally influenced by European integration (e.g. Moravcsik 2008). For instance, in their seminal study of government formation and termination, Laver and Shepsle (1996) identify the ministries of foreign affairs and finance as the most salient cabinet positions in most European countries. Both ministries cover policy areas that are at best weakly integrated in the EU. The same could be said for other areas such as health care, pensions, (un)employment, migration, education and defence. Almost twenty years after the official beginnings of political union in Maastricht, it may not be fair to say that all EU policies are regulatory and about pareto-efficient policy adjustment (cf. Majone 1998). Issues such as the widening and deepening of the EU or particular legislative matters such as the harmonisation of cross-border services do incite considerable public attention. Yet, it seems hard to deny that many salient issues of domestic politics remain only weakly affected by the EU.

While this observation limits the scope of the negative effects of European integration on parliamentary control, it has one downside too. One of the threats in the hand of legislatures is the withdrawal of confidence in the government. As a measure of last resort, it forces any government to refrain from legislation so far out of what is acceptable to the parliament that it may lose confidence in government. But the reality of European integration means that the questions on the EU agenda are normally not important enough to warrant using the “nuclear option” of a vote of no-confidence. This tool, as much as the option to amend government legislation, is normally not available to parliaments in EU affairs.

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<sup>3</sup> The EU level component of the de-parliamentarisation thesis refers to the inability of the European Parliament to compensate for the loss of national parliaments. This is variously attributed to the limits to its policy making competences, its connection to the electorate, or the lack of control it exerts over national governments in the Council with which it cooperates in legislation (e.g. Follesdal and Hix 2006).

As yet, there is no agreement as to how policy areas with a level of integration between full EU competences and full domestic competences fit into the picture. In the past years, the Open Method of Coordination has spread as a policy instrument relying on soft law, learning and peer pressure (e.g. Borrás and Jacobsson 2004). In this framework, national parliaments remain constitutionally unaffected. But governments could potentially use the open coordination process to underpin their policy proposals while national parliaments appear to be hardly involved or aware (Duina and Raunio 2007). On a positive note, parliaments might use this learning process to improve the quality of policy output and to justify laws which otherwise could not have been passed at home (Duina and Oliver 2005).

Scholars have also been concerned with the cooperation of member states in security and defence policy. Here it is argued that the density, secrecy and, sometimes, urgency of cooperation along with the irrevocability of decisions renders the fact that the policy area is governed by unanimity less important (Wagner 2006). However, whether the EU contributes anything above and beyond the traditional secrecy of foreign and defence policy making is not entirely clear. And even if one agrees that it has added transparency problems, the very fact that parliaments have to give assent does put limits on what governments can agree to at the EU-level if they do not want their commitments unravelled at home (cf. Martin 2000).

When the de-parliamentarization thesis was first introduced, scholars also examined the way parliaments organised governmental control in EU affairs at home. At that time, Judge (1995) identified a “dual democratic deficit” based on the accretion of authority at the EU-level and insufficient efforts at governmental control at home. A long list of comparative studies has since examined the domestic level of parliamentary control empirically, coming to two main conclusions (e.g. Norton 1996; O’Brennan and Raunio 2007b; Tans et al. 2007; Kiiver 2006; Maurer and Wessels 2001; Barrett 2008). First, over time all national parliaments have adapted the formal rules and structures governing executive control in EU affairs. Notably, they have set up EU affairs committees and put in place regulations on information access. Second, notwithstanding this general trend, there is also notable cross-national variation. The Nordic parliaments are often said to have adapted better than those of Southern Europe. Denmark, for instance, is often praised for its mandating system and strong EU affairs committee. Finland receives credit for its system of involving sectoral committees. Data on the new member states is still scarce but it has been argued that they have adopted rather stronger scrutiny systems than the old member states on average (O’Brennan and Raunio 2007a).

Analysts point to several factors to explain cross-national differences. These include: the depth and salience of integration in the country, especially at the time of the first creation of an oversight system; levels of Euroscepticism within parties and publics; the size of the cabinet (i.e. the number of parties); heterogeneity and volatility of the domestic cabinet; pre-existing levels and patterns of organising governmental control; and diffusion via exchange of best practices (e.g. Pahre 1997; Raunio 2005; Saalfeld 2005; Bergman 2000, 1997). Page limitations prevent further analysis of all these factors (for a more comprehensive review, see Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2008). What should be noted is that most of the arguments are supported by at least some case studies, bivariate correlations, and anecdotal evidence from descriptive accounts. However,

more systematic, large-N studies are lacking so far. Given the large amounts of data now available due to the aforementioned comparative projects, future research could take on the task of applying more conclusive empirical tests.

### **Extensions: behaviour, attitudes and intra-parliamentary politics**

In the preceding section, we have seen that European integration has had a set of negative effects on parliamentary control of the government. Even so, national legislatures have reacted by establishing better control systems. The empirical literature emerging from the 1990s onwards initially focussed primarily on formal rules and structures such as mandating rights. It also commonly relied on a single measure of control for a parliament with less attention paid to intra-parliamentary politics – that is, the activities, incentives, constraints and relations of different actors within the legislature.

Two interrelated additions have been put forward in the literature. First, the focus on formal rules may only capture part of the picture of parliamentary control. When studying attitudes or behaviour, we may find indications of more or less control. Second, the study of parliamentary behaviour has also triggered attention for differences between parliamentary actors. Studying intra-parliamentary politics helps in understanding who does what in the parliamentary control process, and whose functions are affected in what way by European integration.

Both points are not neatly separated. In fact, some contributions have much to say about both behaviour and differences between actors. Even so, for reasons of clarity, this section proceeds stepwise. It first discusses the differences between studies of formal rules and behaviour, and then proceeds to address studies of intra-parliamentary politics.

#### **Formal rules and parliamentary behaviour**

We may study the formal prerogatives and structures of parliamentary control in a legislature and find that it has, first, strong mandating and information rights, second, an EU affairs committee and, third, rules for consulting sectoral committees.<sup>4</sup> Does this finding allow us to conclude that parliamentary control is strong in this case relative to another parliament lacking one or more of these characteristics?

The core of the problem behind answering this question is the difficulty of empirically observing control. In theory, we can consider control to be present if the government acts according to parliamentary preferences *because* of the parliament. However, it is not necessary that the parliament actually engages in any activity. If it is in control, the government will anticipate what is acceptable to the legislature in order to avoid being rebutted. The parliament does not need to act in this case. At the same time, parliamentary inaction can also mean ignorance – the parliament merely has not realised that the government action is against its preferences. Ignorance and control are, thus, observationally equivalent.

Against this background, using formal rules to measure control has several virtues (e.g. Martin 2000; Saalfeld 2005). Formal rules and structures constitute the opportunities and constraints under which legislative-executive relations unfold. The threats and prerogatives formally guaranteed to the legislature cannot be

ignored by the government as it has to take into account the possibility that parliament uses them. The existence of a specialised committee constitutes the opportunity of parliamentarians to specialise. The obligation to put EU legislation on the agenda of specialised committees ensures that experts in parliament pay attention to it. More pragmatically, formal rules are observable and easier to compare across countries. They are also commonly used to measure the strength of parliaments more generally (consider, for instance, the parliamentary power index in Fish and Kroenig 2009).

But formal rules as indicators of parliamentary control also have weaknesses (e.g. Auel 2007; Auel and Benz 2005; Hegeland and Neuhold 2002; Pollak and Slominski 2003; Wessels 2005). First, they do not reveal whether the formal rules are used, how frequently, and to what effect. Is it meaningful to have an EU affairs committee, if parliamentarians are not motivated to make use of the opportunities it provides? Are mandating rights important if parliaments rarely issue a mandate? These questions reflect the aforementioned ambiguity whether inactivity means control or ignorance. Second, as historical institutionalists argue, formal rules are sometimes difficult to change (Pierson 2004; Dimitrakopoulos 2001). Even if the formal rules reflect the motivation and opportunities of parliamentarians at their creation, incongruence may emerge over time. While motivations of actors can change, for instance, with a parliamentary election, formal rules may remain stagnant and unchanged. Third, as formal rules are the same for a given parliament, studying them does not allow us to draw conclusions on the differences among actors within parliament (Auel 2007). This point is returned to in the following section.

A number of empirical studies shed some light on this exchange. Wessels (2005) studies the attitudes of parliamentarians in different EU member states towards their own role in EU affairs. He finds notable cross-national differences. A longitudinal analysis of German parliamentarians also suggests that differences persist over time. Despite these important findings, Wessels does not link attitudes to institutional choices.

Country studies point to the seeming inefficiency of formal mandating rights in national parliaments. In the Austrian parliament, mandates are rarely issued, and if so, they are often very general and leave much discretion to the government (Pollak and Slominski 2003). Parliamentary resolutions that tightly constrain the government are often at odds with the preferences of the parliamentary majority sustaining the government (see below; Auel 2007; Holzacker 2002). From the Danish case, it has also been reported that the EU affairs committee refrains from imposing severe formal constraints on the government (Damgaard and Jensen 2005). However, on the basis of these studies we cannot easily dismiss the argument that mandating rights induce the government to anticipate parliamentary preferences in order to prevent being constrained by a mandate (cf. Raunio 2005).

Strong information rights can be both a blessing and a curse for parliaments. The EU produces a large amount of information that is only useful to parliaments if they introduce effective sifting procedures (e.g. Hegeland and Neuhold 2002; Pollak and Slominski 2003; Raunio 2008). The potential for information overload has been another reason for scholars to stress the limitations of only looking at formal rules. Very extensive information rights can give a misleading picture if not considered alongside the practice of making use of information.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of various formal rules as indicators of parliamentary control see, for instance, Raunio (2005).

Neuhold and de Ruiter (2010) compare the scrutiny of the REACH directive in the Dutch and British legislatures. The formally weaker British parliament appears to do a better job because its parliamentarians sought control. However, the British parliament did rely on the formal rules and structures commonly discussed in the literature. Hence, while this case highlights the limits of looking at formal rules without taking into account motivation, it also points to the importance of formal rules if parliamentarians are motivated. In a large-N study of parliamentary involvement in the implementation of EU directives, it appears that formal prerogatives facilitate parliamentary involvement if parliamentarians are motivated by intra-executive conflict (Franchino and Hoyland 2009).

At present, this debate cannot be considered settled, but it gives reason to look closer at the dynamics of parliamentary control within the legislature. It has already been mentioned briefly that the use of some formal rules may be in conflict with party political incentives. The next section explores in more detail which role different actors play in parliamentary control and which methods they use.

### **Intra-parliamentary politics**

It is certainly not fair to say that all studies mentioned so far are agnostic regarding intra-parliamentary politics. However, conjectures regarding who does what in the parliamentary control process mostly serve as the theoretical context. Empirical analysis then often focuses on *the parliament* as a single body rather than on actors within parliament. A distinct strand of the literature, however, also directly addresses the intra-parliamentary politics of control.

Recall this paper's earlier assertion about legislative-executive relations in general. Conflict lines normally run between government and opposition rather than between the executive and legislative branches of government (King 1976). In this conflict, the majority in parliament focuses on sustaining, protecting and managing the (coalition) government (Laver and Shepsle 1996; Martin and Vanberg 2004, 2005). The opposition criticises and opposes the majority, and presents an alternative government and policy agenda (Dahl 1965; Helms 2008).

Do we witness similar political constellations in EU affairs or does integration change the strategies of actors in parliament? Following Holzacker (2002), it is useful to sub-divide this question into the basic goals of parliamentary actors, on the one hand, and the methods they use or would prefer to use to achieve them, on the other. The second aspect reconnects this strand of literature to the debate over the validity of formal rules as indicators of parliamentary control.

Let us begin with the basic goals or strategic considerations of actors. The literature suggests that by and large the same logic of government-opposition conflict that we observe domestically also transcends EU affairs – there are, however, several additional constraints and incentives for government and opposition actors. Moreover, government-opposition conflict is crosscut by a second conflict between Europhiles and Eurosceptics. Departing from this conflict, scholars arrive at slightly different empirical expectations. I begin with literature on the first conflict.

Auel (2007) argues that the basic difference in incentives for the majority and opposition transcend EU affairs as well. She distinguishes monitoring and political scrutiny. Whereas the

majority does have a need to monitor the behaviour of government, they will not normally oppose the government publicly but rather seek to manage disagreement informally behind closed doors. The opposition, in turn, has reason to publicly differentiate its preferred policy from governmental strategies. In support, the involvement of parliaments in the implementation of EU directives appears to follow logics similar to those theorised for domestic parliamentary involvement (Franchino and Hoyland 2009). Holzacker (2002) shows that parliamentarians in Germany and the Netherlands pursue goals that can be considered analogous to their domestic political strategies.

The multi-level context of the EU creates five additional constraints, most of which apply mainly to the majority:

First, as mentioned recurrently, information about and access to EU policy making is more difficult for parliamentarians than in the domestic political arena (Sprungk 2010). Therefore, both the majority and opposition are more dependent on alternative sources of information. Even intra-party monitoring of EU affairs elites appears to be difficult (Carter and Poguntke 2010).

Second, because the parliament is no longer the final rule making authority, majority deputies cannot easily rely on their veto power as a measure of last resort. Instead, they have to seek strategies for early involvement (Sprungk 2010; Benz 2004; Auel and Benz 2005).

Third, majority parliamentarians who have the votes and the will to tie the government closely to their preferences (for instance, by issuing a mandate) have to consider that this might undermine the effectiveness of EU-level negotiations (Benz 2004). On the other hand, a tight mandate might sometimes help the government to justify why it does not enter a compromise at the EU-level, as interviewees of Holzacker (2002) mentioned.

Fourth, Holzacker (2002) also shows that parliamentarians may want to control the government to ensure a smooth implementation process. By preventing delay, they protect the country's ability to make credible commitments at the EU-level (Martin 2000).

Fifth, while the opposition may have incentives to publicly criticise the government, it risks being blamed for undermining the representation of national interests in the Council (Auel 2007; Auel and Benz 2005). Therefore, it has to weigh the advantages of public scrutiny against the potentially negative appearance public critique may convey.

In terms of the methods preferred by government and opposition parties, it has been argued that the majority prefers intra-party mediation whereas the opposition is more in need of formal rules to ensure access to information, time and opportunities to engage with government actions (Auel 2007; Holzacker 2002). This finding is only partly in line with the more general argument that the legislative arena – notably committees – is a key site for coalition management of the parliamentary majority (Martin and Vanberg 2004, 2005; Martin and Depauw 2009).

As a matter of fact, it appears that there is little intra-party control of EU affairs elites (Poguntke et al. 2007; Carter and Poguntke 2010). In Sprungk's (2010) view, the strategic context of EU affairs reduces the differences in methods between government and opposition. Because EU affairs are more

difficult to access or monitor, she argues, majority backbenchers have a greater need for formal information rights. Since they do not have the veto as a last resort, they also need more publicity to put pressure on the government to respect their preferences in EU-level negotiations. While the former position casts more ambiguity over the use of formal rules as measures of parliamentary control, the latter would seem to justify optimism.

Analysing debates on the EU budget in the Netherlands from 1992-2005, De Wilde (2008) sheds further light on the meaning of publicity, understood as media coverage, for government and opposition and in relation to formal rules. He argues that institutional rules lose importance as media coverage increases. At a high level, media coverage strengthens the opposition, giving them information, opportunities and motivation to present their views, and to put pressure on the government. However, lower levels of coverage empower government actors because they are worthier of coverage. The evidence supports the conclusions, though, some caution is justified since the absolute number of claims de Wilde analyses is relatively low and some differences not very pronounced.

When it comes to empirical evidence, most of the aforementioned arguments are backed by case studies or anecdotal evidence from descriptive analyses. There are large-N studies on the effect of parliamentary involvement in implementation that are discussed below in the context of the consequences of parliamentary control (König and Luetgert 2009; Borghetto and Franchino 2010). Carter and Poguntke (2010) and Poguntke and colleagues (2007) present a survey of political party actors and provide extensive interview evidence, respectively. Presumably, one reason why we mostly have case study evidence lies in the difficulty of getting at intra-parliamentary and inter-party dynamics in the first place.

Apart from the conflict between government and opposition, intra-parliamentary politics in EU affairs are also affected by the conflict between Europhile and Eurosceptic parliamentarians. It is widely agreed that Euroscepticism manifests itself primarily and in most countries at the margins of the party political space, whereas the mainstream government and opposition parties have adopted pro-integrationist programmes (Kriesi et al. 2006; Hooghe et al. 2002). However, as the conflict over integration does not neatly align with the left-right conflict, the pro-European positions of mainstream parties mean that they internalise opposition to the EU (e.g. Gabel and Scheve 2007b).

How does the conflict over integration, including its peculiar manifestation *within* mainstream parties, affect strategies of governmental control? There is a gap in the literature as to the strategies and methods of anti-EU parties at the margins of the political space, but we do find several arguments as to the behaviour of mainstream parties. For them, intra-party divides affect the strategic considerations and methods of parliamentary control.

As to strategic considerations, party divides damage the public appearance of the party and may harm its election prospects. This can happen independently of the substance of the divide merely as a result of appearing to be in internal turmoil. Internal dissent reduces the clarity of political messages parties can convey to their electorate (Zaller 1992). Mixed messages over integration have negative effects on public approval of the EU (Gabel and Scheve 2007b; Hooghe and Marks 2005, 2008). For

both reasons, mainstream parties in government and opposition are expected to adopt strategies to contain intra-party conflict behind closed doors (cf. Raunio 2009).

This finding has implications for the methods of control we expect to find in parliaments. In contrast to the arguments of Sprungk (2010) mentioned before, parties should try to mediate conflicts within parties and in the less visible confines of EU and sectoral committees, preferably behind closed doors. In line with this, no EU parliament frequently involves the plenary in EU affairs (Bergman et al. 2003). The Danish EU committee has also been described as an arena to achieve consensus, although this has recently been challenged (Damgaard and Jensen 2005). But it also appears that in the implementation of EU directives, Danish mainstream parties vote together more frequently than in domestic politics – and this pattern withstands changes in the government-supporting coalition (Pedersen and Christiansen forthcoming).

To sum up, studies of intra-parliamentary politics considerably enrich our understanding of the dynamics of parliamentary control. They do, however, reveal new questions: how different are the strategies of government and opposition parties really? Do we see government-opposition politics as usual or cartel-building to contain intra-party conflict? It is important to stress that these two views do not seem to be complementary and so they are, in principle, open to empirical adjudication. The analysis of Pedersen and Christiansen (forthcoming) illustrates that this is feasible at least in studies of individual parliaments. There is finally a gap in empirical and theoretical terms as to the role and impact of the presence of Eurosceptic parties in parliament.

### Alternative strategies of influence

Arguably for good reasons, the literature predominantly focuses on parliamentary control of the government as a strategy of policy influence. Even so, European integration has resulted in a set of other actors involved in taking decisions on public policy at the EU-level – the European Commission or the European Parliament, for instance. Besides these institutional actors, there are also pan-European party families and party groups in the European Parliament (Lindberg et al. 2009). Hence, insofar as these actors affect policy making, influencing them could constitute an alternative strategy for national parliaments. But is this actually the case? The literature on this question is patchy and scarce but some contributions can be highlighted.

A myriad of contacts has developed between the European Parliament and national parliaments. Neunreither (2005) maps this cooperation which includes bilateral committee meetings, study visits, cooperation of parliamentary administrations, institutionalised information exchange on the state of legislative procedures and, recently, the setting up of national parliamentary offices in the European Parliament building. The European Parliament publishes a yearbook on relations with national parliaments. From consulting this yearbook, however, one gets the impression that contacts are still rather sparse and general, bringing into question their impact on policy making. The interest in changing this on either side appears to be limited, and it is not entirely clear what should be the precise purpose of inter-parliamentary cooperation. (Kiiver 2006; Raunio 2009: 324).

Within the EP, it is now well-established that national party delegations affect the voting behaviour of parliamentarians and the distribution of legislative perks such as committee assignments and rapporteurships (e.g. Hix et al. 2007; Coman 2009; Whitaker 2005). However, whether the national MEPs forming the party delegations are actually well-connected to their national parties is questionable. A survey in the late 1990s suggests rather weak links (Raunio 2000), as does the finding that intra-party control over EU affairs elites is weak (Carter and Poguntke 2010; Poguntke et al. 2007).

Whether national parliaments make use of direct contacts to the European Commission has not been the subject of scholarly attention. The Commission sustains a so-called “political dialogue” with national parliaments who are invited to submit opinions on legislation or policy initiatives in various stages. The 2009 annual report states that the Commission has received 618 opinions between September 2006 and December 2009. Given that there are 40 national parliamentary chambers, this does not seem to amount to a very active dialogue. However, this conclusion is difficult to prove without deeper analysis of the nature of parliamentary opinions and Commission responses. Analysis of why some parliaments are more active than others might also be worthwhile to understand what purposes are served by alternative strategies of engaging in the EU policy process.

Since the Amsterdam Treaty, national parliamentary rights to be heard on the compliance of EU legislation with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality have been recognised. The Lisbon Treaty has further strengthened the formal rights of parliaments. Whether this will have any substantial impact remains to be seen. Cooper (2006) suggests that the changes create new incentives and possibilities for national parliaments to influence EU policy making. Raunio (2009: 325) argues that parliaments can raise their concerns over subsidiarity violations more effectively with the national governments, which have a more powerful voice at the EU-level (see also Fraga 2005).

In the past years, the promises and pitfalls of inter-parliamentary cooperation among national legislatures have also been discussed relatively frequently. A chapter on the topic is included in most edited volumes on national parliaments in the EU (e.g. Knudsen and Carl 2008; Bengtson 2007). However, the literature is primarily descriptive and it remains unclear whether this cooperation has any substantial policy impact. In fact, after initial high hopes, it appears that meetings of national parliaments only serve the exchange of general information on how to organise parliamentary control. Specific policy questions are less commonly addressed. Although the issues dealt with at parliamentary meetings seem to have become more specific over time, Raunio (2009: 322-5) argues that inter-parliamentary cooperation cannot be expected to move beyond its informative and advisory purpose.

In sum, existing studies cast some doubt as to whether national parliaments really use new institutions and opportunities created by European integration. However, there are rather few studies to bolster this conclusion. The way national parliaments interact with the European Commission, the European Court of Justice or, perhaps, other national actors involved in EU affairs (such as independent agencies, for example) is also unclear.

## Consequences of parliamentary control

The question of how European integration affects parliamentary control of the government guided the preceding sections. The literature examines this question focussing on the parliament as a whole, on individual actors, and alternative strategies looking at formal rules, behaviour and attitudes. We now turn the tables to ask how parliamentary control affects policy making in the EU. This is understood generally as the way the process of making and implementing authoritative policy decisions of the EU works.<sup>5</sup>

This definition of EU policy making distinguishes between two types of relevant effects or dependent variables. On the one hand, we can examine effects of parliamentary control before a decision at the EU-level is taken. On the other, we can study what happens to this decision in the implementation process, which falls within the obligations national governments have assumed with EU membership. One could introduce further divisions such as agenda-setting or policy formulation, which are now subsumed in the first phase. However, for structuring this review a dichotomous division between negotiation and implementation suffices.

The main reason why this is so can be found in our knowledge of the effects of parliamentary control on EU-level negotiations. Systematic research of this intersection is hardly available. On a theoretical level, Martin (2000) argues that parliamentary control constrains the range of compromises to which governments can agree. They will stick to parliamentary preferences to ensure their commitments are not undermined in the implementation phase. Empirically, however, she focuses only on the implementation process rather than the negotiation phase (see below). Recalling the interviews of Holzhaecker (2002), governments might refer to domestic constraints to strengthen their negotiation position – for instance, to justify why they do not accept a compromise (see also Pahre 1997). Empirical tests that go further would be valuable, but it is surely also a challenge to collect the necessary information for a significant number of negotiation processes and up to 27 parliaments.

The relationship between parliamentary control and implementation has received more attention. Theoretically, the aforementioned contribution by Martin (2000) suggests that governments that are well-controlled only accept choices at the EU-level which are acceptable at home. On the other hand, studies focussing on explaining differential implementation (most commonly implementation delay) have expected theoretically that parliamentary involvement delays the process because it is an additional veto player, or at least poses a procedural obstacle (König and Luetgert 2009; Borghetto and Franchino 2010).

In empirical terms, the picture is favourable from the perspective of national parliaments. At the aggregate level, stronger parliamentary control in a country correlates with higher implementation rates (Bergman 2000; Martin 2000; Saalfeld 2005). But given the wide range of factors affecting national implementation records, the inferential value of these correlations has been met with scepticism (Bergman 2000). The

<sup>5</sup> Note that this brackets the effects of parliamentary involvement in treaty reform. In line with the scholarly literature, this review focuses more on policy making. However, several important studies highlight that national legislatures play a significant role in treaty reform (Hug and König 2002; König and Hug 2000; König and Slapin 2004).

very high level of aggregation of the data also risks foregoing a good understanding of what takes place in individual implementation processes.

A different literature on the implementation of EU directives is valuable here (for a review, see Toshkov 2010). Although this literature is quite broad, we can focus on two recent contributions which take up most variables commonly used in earlier studies relying on larger and more comprehensive datasets for more countries (König and Luetgert 2009; Borghetto and Franchino 2010). They analyse the reasons for timely or delayed transposition of individual EU directives benefitting from large datasets automatically collected from the EU website. Although this is not their main concern, they assess the share of implementing legislation adopted by national parliaments for each directive (König and Luetgert 2009); or, focussing on each implementing measure individually, whether the parliament was involved or not (Borghetto and Franchino 2010).<sup>6</sup> As mentioned, they normally expect parliamentary involvement to contribute to delay. However, they find the opposite effect. The involvement of national parliaments reduces the likelihood of transposition delay (König and Luetgert 2009). In the event-history model of Borghetto and Franchino (2010), parliamentary involvement does not have an effect at first, but as the deadline approaches the “risk” of successful transposition is increased.

Why do we observe this effect? Possibly governments anticipate parliamentary involvement in implementation in line with Martin’s hypothesis. At least we know that it follows predictable patterns – legislatures are more involved when there is discretionary scope in the directive, when there is intra-executive conflict, and when the parliament controls its agenda (Franchino and Hoyland 2009). One of the interviewees in Holzhaacker (2002) claims that parliament pressures the government to implement EU legislation in time, which matches especially well with the findings of Borghetto and Franchino. Concerns for timely transposition are, for instance, reflected in recent activities of the French and German parliaments (Sprungk 2007; Siritzky 2008).

To conclude, there is an imbalance in the research on the consequences of parliamentary control to the detriment of the pre-decision making phase. Notwithstanding practical reasons for this, it is theoretically unfortunate on two counts. First, implementation generally works rather well in the EU. While delay seems to be common, long delays and non-implementation are rare given the policy scope of the EU. Consequently, in a sense, variation in transposition, albeit important for many debates in the study of international organisations, seems not to be the most urgent question in EU studies. Unsurprisingly, most criticism of calls for a stronger role of national parliaments in the EU has been concerned with the complexity and functioning of decision making rather than implementation. In this context, future studies should prioritise addressing why there lacks systematic research on the effects of parliamentary involvement on EU-level negotiations.

<sup>6</sup> Each directive adopted at the EU-level has to be transposed into national law. The number of implementation measures adopted by governments differs. Therefore, one option is to focus on the directive measuring the number of implementing measures and how often the parliament adopted them. Alternatively, one can focus on each implementing measure.

## In sum

There is now quite a large body of literature on the legislative function of national parliaments in the EU. This section has sketched the literature pertaining to the general de-parliamentarisation thesis as well as to the actors and strategies within parliament, alternative strategies of parliamentary influence, and consequences of parliamentary control. Although there are many ways by which the literature could be further developed, our understanding of how parliamentary control is affected by and affects the EU is increasingly sophisticated. If a general gap should be pointed out that applies to many of the strands of the literature reviewed so far, it would be empirical testing. There are many hypotheses that are supported by case studies, but relatively few test with more than two or three cases. In some instances, the data situation is admittedly difficult. Even so, more conclusive empirical analysis is, nonetheless, one of the few relatively unaddressed issues in the literature.

## Political Integration and the Electoral Function of Parliament

It is a fundamental principle of representative government that authority is vested in an assembly of elected representatives (e.g. Manin 1997). There should be a process of delegation from voters to parliamentarians and a reverse chain of accountability (Strom 2000). This section asks how European integration affects the links of parliamentarians and voters in different areas and whether these links affect European integration. The discussion is structured around three broad themes of common concern in legislative studies more generally:

- ◆ Publicly visible parliamentary activities: Does the EU affect parliamentary activities that voters have a chance to observe?
- ◆ Policy congruence and responsiveness: How different are voters and parliamentary elites when it comes to integration preferences? Did the relationship change over time?
- ◆ Electoral choice: Does European integration matter in national elections?

### Publicly visible parliamentary activities

Goetz and Meyer-Sahling (2008: 12) recently stated that

we still know little about the EU impact on interpellations, questions, plenary debates, party cohesion and discipline, delegation patterns to committees, processes within committees or parliamentarians’ relations to their constituencies.

Four points they mention (interpellations, plenary debates, questions and constituencies) are relevant activities for the question at hand and little needs to be added to Goetz and Meyer-Sahling’s diagnosis of the literature. Even so, two additions can be made. One the one hand, there are a few recent studies that mainly focus on plenary debates. On the other hand, there are a few contributions on the role of parliamentarians in public debate on the EU more broadly conceived.

Three types of questions have recently been asked about the parliamentary plenary. First, how often is it involved in debating EU affairs? In general, this is difficult to say because the plenary can address EU issues on occasions not necessarily formally designated for this purpose (e.g. De Wilde 2008: 9). An expert survey conducted by Bergman and colleagues (2003) shows rare

involvement in general. Raunio (2009: 319-20) suggests two reasons. On the one hand, the work done by EU affairs committees might render the plenary unnecessary. On the other, parties might not want to expose intra-party divisions. The last point contrasts with some studies of intra-parliamentary politics emphasising the interest of opposition (and possibly also majority) parties in publicity (see above). Since plenary time is generally scarce (cf. Cox 2006), one should also take into account the relative salience of policies dealt with at the EU-level compared to in domestic politics (Moravcsik 1998).

Second, why is the plenary involved more or less? Systematic analysis of this question for all EU parliaments does not exist. Two recent case studies conceive of publicity more generally as a compensation for difficulties of controlling the government in different ways. So, for instance, the United Kingdom parliament might have compensated its limited formal powers and relatively weak committee structure with more emphasis on publicity (Auel 2008). Sprungk (2010) argues that even the majority has to use publicity in EU affairs to strengthen its control over government because it cannot threaten to block the policy decided on at the EU-level.

Third, there is also a recent advance as to understanding the nature of plenary debates on the EU. In a study of parliamentary debates of three EU financial perspectives in the Netherlands and Denmark, De Wilde (2009) differentiates plenary debates along two dimensions: whether they are small or large in scope; and whether they are about partisan preferences or about the defence of the national interest. He argues that although from a normative point of view, large and partisan debates would be ideal, there is a trade-off depending on the organisation of parliamentary scrutiny. A legislature that engages early with governmental behaviour at the EU-level has partisan and small debates whereas late involvement triggers large debates over the national interest.

Even though the focus on the plenary as a visible public activity makes sense, it should be noted that meetings of European Affairs Committees are not by definition private settings. A recent report of the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the EU (COSAC 2009) reveals that they are open to the public in a range of legislatures. Even if not, several parliaments at least document parts of a committee's activity.

Finally, we can understand publicly visible parliamentary activity more broadly as the relevance of parliamentary actors in the media. In a study of claims making in seven European countries, at three points in time based on four newspapers per country, governments dominate, but parliamentarians also generate a substantially important number of claims (Koopmans 2007; Statham and Koopmans 2009). The reasons why parliamentarians in some countries receive more attention are not the focus of this study, but Koopmans (2007: 207) hypothesises that parliaments with policy influence could be more interesting to media actors. De Wilde (2008) suggests that this is only the case if coverage is sufficiently high to compensate for a media bias towards an intergovernmental depiction of the EU.

Summing up, recent research points towards a broader set of questions of publicly visible parliamentary activity than just the frequency of plenary involvement. Apart from the deficits mentioned in the beginning, De Wilde raises interesting

questions about the nature of plenary debates, while Koopmans and Statham's study draws attention to the role of parliamentarians in a wider public sphere.

### **Policy congruence and responsiveness**

In the normative analysis of the relationship of voters and parliamentarians, it is a major question whether the latter should act as they think is best or whether they should follow voter preferences as closely as possible (e.g. Pitkin 1984; Rehfeld 2009; Andeweg and Thomassen 2005). In empirical research, scholars predominantly focus on testing whether the latter is the case – whether the preferences of representatives are congruent with those of citizens (e.g. Golder and Stramski 2010). Responsiveness is the dynamics version of congruence focussing on whether the preferences of representatives follow changes in voter preferences. How much congruence and responsiveness is present in regards to preferences for European integration between voters and national parliamentarians? Few studies address this question, presumably because data on elite preferences for integration are rare. Nonetheless, two points can be made.

First, there is incongruence. However, the extent varies depending on whether it is about integration in general or specific policy areas. Using a 1996 survey of national elites (including but not confined to parliamentarians) Hooghe (2003) finds that the gap is greater concerning preferences for integration in general. At the policy level, elites are more ready than citizens to integrate areas of high politics, whereas citizens are more supportive of market-flanking policies. Both sides are most critical of integrating spending policies. It would be interesting to know what produces cross-national differences in congruence. The electoral system is a prominent explanatory variable in the wider debate (cf. Golder and Stramski 2010). The ability of citizens to vote for parties with matching preferences is only seemingly an obvious candidate as few voters make use of their vote in this way (see the following section).

Second, there appears to be a trend towards more responsiveness. Analysts argue that the early years of integration were characterised by a "permissive consensus" (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). Parliamentary elites could pursue European integration with little regard to public opinion. Today, we witness growing conflict over and party political mobilisation based on European integration. In this context, actors primarily argue that integration threatens national identity, autonomy and culture (Hooghe and Marks 2008; Kriesi et al. 2006). However, whether parties react to increasingly concerned citizens or whether increasingly Eurosceptic parties raise awareness in the public is unclear (e.g. Steenbergen et al. 2007). Based on recent analyses, the issue of whether voters and the parties they elect to parliament have, indeed, converged can be discussed further in the context of electoral behaviour.

### **Electoral choice**

A prominent perspective on the linkage function of national parliaments focuses on the role of EU affairs in elections. This literature originates from research on the different avenues and manifestations of public contestation of the EU and the process of European integration (e.g. Hobolt 2009; Hooghe and Marks 2008; Mair 2007).

In contemporary democracies, voters and parliaments are most directly connected through voting. Studies of national parliamentary elections are interested in a phenomenon known as “EU issue voting” – the extent to which individuals cast their votes on the basis of their integration preferences. If this was the case, one of the central normative and practical problems facing the EU would be less severe than normally thought: namely that the public has few opportunities to express its integration preferences (Mair 2007). It would also suggest increasing congruence between citizens and parliamentarians regarding European integration. Studies of EU issue voting focus on the linkages of political parties and their voters rather than parliament as a whole. Two questions are discussed here: First, does the distance between party and voter preferences on European integration drive vote choice? Second, what are the mechanisms that lead to voter-party proximity?

The first question was superfluous as long as the public was passively permissive of the integrative choices of elites (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). This picture appears to have changed in the post-Maastricht era (Eichenberg and Dalton 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2008). Carruba (2001) and Gabel (2000) provide evidence that public integration preferences affect the electoral fortunes of elites. This is also supported by results for particular countries – such as Austria, Finland and Sweden at the time of their accession (Tillman 2004), the UK (Evans 1998, 2002) or Denmark (de Vries 2007). But one also observes cross-national differences. In a study of several elections in Denmark, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany, de Vries (2007) concludes that EU issue voting mattered in the former two countries but not in the latter two. The two factors of relevance are party competition over integration and public salience. Parties seem to mobilise the integration issue strongest in countries in which publics are attentive to the issue (Kriesi 2007). Plausibly, events such as referenda could enhance public salience and party competition in subsequent elections (de Vries 2009). Parties that have a clear, salient and extreme view on the EU attract more issue voting just as do parties at the margins of the left-right divide (de Vries 2010). In sum, the distance between voter and party preferences on integration increasingly affects national parliamentary elections, but its impact differs across countries and parties. The party and parliamentary mainstream is affected only to a limited extent – with few exceptions it remains predominantly pro-EU (Kriesi et al. 2006; Statham and Koopmans 2009).

As to the second question, it is not fully clear whether voter-party proximity stems from the emergence of a new structural cleavage within society to which parties react (Kriesi *et al.* 2006). This is also the idea behind Carruba’s (2001) “electoral connection”. This bottom-up mechanism suggests that there is a “sleeping giant” to be mobilised by political entrepreneurs (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004). A more top-down mechanism would be that political entrepreneurs raise the salience of the integration question first and voters become attentive subsequently (Down and Wilson 2010). The relationship might also be one of mutual impact (Gabel and Scheve 2007a; Steenbergen et al. 2007). This controversy remains open for debate, though one should note that when it comes to expectations regarding voter-party proximity and parties driving this relationship both views seem less distinct. Both expect the driving parties to come from the extremes and both expect issue voting to increase with public salience and party conflict (de Vries 2007). In addition, knowing the direction of the effect

would be important to make statements about the responsiveness of parties, but the outcome in terms of congruence at a single point in time is similar.

A last discussion concerns the evaluation of EU issue voting. It may be good that voters’ integration preferences increasingly affect parliamentary elections. This link between preferences and election results feeds back into the integration process and might lend it more legitimacy. But the two-dimensionality of national elections also bears problems because it may ease constraints on parties on the left-right dimension (cf. Thomassen 2009). In other words, if individuals sanction elites for positions on integration, elites have an increasingly free reign in socio-economic policy making *both* at the national and EU-level. Bearing in mind that inter-governmental conferences are not the main business of national governments in Brussels, this freedom of manoeuvre would be problematic as well. While national elections seem more suitable for the expression of integration preferences than elections to the EP (which has little say on constitutional questions) (Mair 2007; Mair and Thomassen 2010), using them in this way has disadvantages too.

### In sum

We know most about the electoral function of parliaments in the context of European integration concerning vote choices. In other areas, studies are fewer or, considering, for instance, the role of EU affairs in the constituency activities of parliamentarians, altogether missing. It would also be worthwhile in the future to try to combine different strands of research previously mentioned in this paper. For instance, does the media presence of parliamentarians on EU-related topics affect issue voting for their party or congruence with the party electorate? This section has said relatively little about how increasing congruence, EU issue voting, or visible parliamentary activities affect the EU. Beyond what can be inferred from the studies cited in this section, little explicit research can be found. Hooghe and Marks (2008) identify a “constraining dissensus,” but whether this also holds in policy making rather than treaty revisions is not so clear, especially if growing mobilisation does not strongly affect the parliamentary mainstream.

### Conclusion

This review has focussed on two sets of questions:

- ◆ How does political integration affect the legislative function of national parliaments? And how do national parliaments affect policy making in the EU?
- ◆ How does political integration affect parliamentary links to the public? And how do national parliaments relate to citizens in EU affairs?

Regarding the former question, it is widely agreed that European integration has had a number of detrimental effects on the legislative function of national parliaments. However, the literature contains an increasing number of insights beyond this general statement. It tells us that national parliaments have reacted differently to this challenge. But it is not only the parliaments that are affected differently. Actors within parliament also face new constraints and incentives that affect the traditional government-opposition conflict. And, indeed, there are a number of indications that these trends have consequences for policy making in the EU. Studies of

implementation suggest that involving the legislature in policy making speeds up transposition. Notwithstanding many possibilities for further research, this review illustrates many mutual effects between European integration and the legislative function of national parliaments.

Regarding the latter question, the literature is patchier. There are a few studies of publicly relevant parliamentary activities yielding various insights regarding, for instance, the timing and nature of parliamentary debates or the media presence of parliamentarians. The congruence and responsiveness of parliamentarians to citizens is also rarely studied, partly due to data limitations. The literature is most developed as regards to the links between voters and parties in parliamentary elections. Here, the general conclusion is that while the importance of EU affairs in elections has increased over time, most mainstream parties remain unaffected. If there are few effects to be found, the logical conclusion would seem to be that there are also relatively few consequences. Of course, whether this is good or bad news is debatable. After all, the problems around the different potential ways of filtering voter preferences into the EU policy process is one of the concerns of the democratic deficit debate (e.g. Follesdal and Hix 2006).

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