

The timing of EU membership and its effect on
national legislative oversight of European affairs¹

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Abstract: This paper explores the effects of European integration on national level legislatures in European Union member states. Many economic and political decisions previously made by democratically elected national legislatures are now decided at a supranational, or European, level. National legislatures have responded to this change by increasing their oversight of European affairs in order to impose more democratic accountability and transparency into the opaque decision-making process of developing European legislation. While all national legislatures of European Union member states have established European Affairs Committees to help strengthen oversight of European affairs, there is considerable variation in the institutional strength and political control invested in these committees. I argue that the more recently a country joined the European Union, the more likely its European Affairs Committee will have the power to issue binding recommendations to the government. Cross-sectional statistical analysis shows a strong correlation between the timing of membership and a legislature's approach to parliamentary oversight of European affairs.

Prepared for presentation at the Biannual Meeting of the European Union Studies Association.
Montreal, Canada. May, 2007.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago, IL. April 2007.

As the European Union has integrated more deeply politically and economically, it has grown to include joint decision-making across an expanding amount of policy space. This development has made it increasingly difficult for citizens to hold decision makers accountable for policy decisions made at the European level. Cabinet ministers negotiate on a member state's behalf at the Council of Ministers meetings at the European Union, but it can be difficult for voters or members of parliament to know what is being discussed at Council of Ministers meetings and to know that their interests are being adequately represented. National parliaments have set up European Affairs Committees (EACs) in order to increase their influence over policies that have moved from the national level to the supranational (European Union) level by holding executives accountable for their negotiations at the Council of Ministers meetings. Ideally, these EACs will inject more transparency and democratic accountability in the area of European affairs. However, there is significant cross-national variation in how much political and institutional strength have been invested in the EACs. Why does one legislature establish an EAC with the power to bind the government in its negotiations at the European level? Why does another legislature set up an EAC but withhold from it the authority to really monitor the behavior of the government at the European level or withhold the staff and funding necessary to read and evaluate all the documents produced at the European level?

Legislatures vary in the degree of control they attempt to exert in their oversight of European Affairs. In general, national legislatures in the European Union member states fall into two broad categories: those that try to exert control over the government with a mandating oversight approach and those that use a non-mandating oversight approach. Legislatures that use the mandating approach can use a systematic or a non-systematic approach to the oversight of European affairs, but in both cases the EAC has the power to issue binding instructions to the

government for its negotiations at the Council of Ministers. Within the non-mandating approach there are also two different categories: informal oversight and document-based scrutiny.

This paper will begin by describing previous efforts to measure the cross-national variation in EAC strength. Next it will explain a procedure-based method of measuring the cross-national variation in EAC strength and introduce the candidate explanations for this variation. The candidate explanations include the timing of membership, the center-periphery cultural divide, postmodern values, public support for the EU and the concentration or diffusion of power within the national parliament. Finally, the paper will use statistical analysis to evaluate the candidate explanations and will demonstrate that the timing of membership is the most significant explanations for the variation in EAC strength.

1. Measuring the cross-national variation in EACs

There is strong cross-national variation in the strength and procedures of parliamentary oversight of European Affairs. The literature includes several different ways of sorting out the variation into ordinal categories. These categories have been based on the binding nature of an EAC's instructions, on policy influence of EACs and on the oversight procedures employed by EACs. One popular way to sort EACs is by their ability to influence the government in its policy-formation at the European level. Studies that take this approach commonly sort parliaments into strong, medium and weak, based on the "bindingness" of the committee's instructions² or based on the involvement of specialized standing committees.³

In his 1997 article, Torbjorn Bergman sorts the EACs into an ordinal variable of low (I), medium (II) and high (III), based on his subjective estimation of their strength, which he formed

² Bergman 1997 and Bergman 2000

³ Raunio and Wiberg 2000

by reading everything available in 1996 about the EACs. Bergman's initial categorization of EACs includes the following factors: Which actors participate in the process (MPs, MEPs, Länder)? Which of the EU's policy pillars are covered by parliamentary scrutiny?⁴ Does the scrutiny process involve the whole parliament (plenary session) or is it monopolized by the European Affairs Committee? If the parliament is bicameral, do both chambers participate in parliamentary scrutiny of EU affairs? If so, is there a difference in how they participate? How binding are the EAC's recommendations on the government?

This final question has developed into an interesting dependent variable that several scholars are attempting to explain. The EU member states for which there is data on this topic (the EU-15) fit into three basic categories. The first category (weak parliamentary scrutiny) contains parliaments where the EAC oversees an informational exchange. The government sends representatives on occasion to report on negotiations at the Council of Ministers and on the development of EU legislation. The second category (medium parliamentary scrutiny) includes parliaments where the EAC makes recommendations to the government regarding its negotiations at the European level. The government is not required to follow these recommendations, but in practice it usually does. The third category (strong parliamentary scrutiny) involves the committee holding an *ex ante* veto over the government's negotiating position at the European level. If the government needs or wants to deviate from the instructions it was given by the European Affairs Committee, then it must obtain permission from the committee. Subsequent studies by Bergman and others have continued to fine-tune the rankings, but the categories have remained largely stable. In 2000, Bergman refined his measure by

⁴ Pillar I includes European Community legislation, Pillar II is Common Foreign and Security Policy and Pillar III is Justice and Home Affairs. Within the framework of decision-making in the Council of Ministers, Pillar I falls under Qualified Majority Voting, while the other two pillars use a unanimity rule for voting. This means that it is more difficult to veto an unpopular bill if it falls under Pillar I than if it falls under the other pillars.

reorganizing it into a ranking from strongest (1) to weakest (15), based on his subjective estimation in 1999. There was some reorganization between 1996 and 1999, with Finland and Sweden listed stronger in the second measure than they were in the first. Raunio and Wiberg (2000) also devise a subjective ordinal variable based on 1999 information and it matches closely to Bergman (2000).

Another approach is to sort EACs by their policy influence. The strongest category is “‘policy-making’ parliaments which can reject government policies and substitute them with their own.” The middle category includes “moderate ‘policy-influencing’ parliaments which are able to reject or amend government policies but not substitute them.” The weakest category includes “weak parliaments with ‘little or no policy effect.’”⁵ Maurer combines three major elements in his classification of EACs: (1) the scope of scrutiny, (2) timing and management of scrutiny, and (3) impact of scrutiny.⁶ In his measure of EAC strength, Rozenberg combines the impact of the EAC with resources available to the EAC (number of clerks, etc.), committee’s level of activity (frequency of meetings, size of committee), and involvement of other parliamentary committees.⁷

Ana Fraga points out that the prior categorizations are not measuring what they claim to measure.⁸ The prior models claim to compare actual parliamentary influence over governments, but this is nearly impossible to measure. Instead, the categorizations have been based on potential influence more than effective influence. A true measure of effective influence would need to examine the oversight process with European legislation as the unit of analysis.

⁵ Kiiver 2004, describing Norton 1995 and Maurer/Wessels 2001

⁶ Maurer 2001

⁷ Rozenberg 2002

⁸ Fraga 2000

However, a cross-national study would be very difficult to organize at this level of detail and I find no evidence it has been attempted.

Fraga proposes sorting parliamentary oversight committees based on their oversight process rather than oversight effectiveness. Fraga's three categories are: "information and informal influence, systematic scrutiny and mandate."⁹ Fraga describes the first category, information and informal influence, as "parliaments influence[ing] the national position through meetings with members of government during which a two-way communication is established (the government explains what is the subject in question and the parliamentarians express their opinion)." The scope of this oversight approach is narrow. The EAC would only focus on highly salient issues as they come to the parliament's attention. Fraga describes the second category, systematic scrutiny, as a "parliament giv[ing] its opinion in a systematic way upon all subjects (or those included in the parliamentary reserved competence) through the adoption of a report or a resolution."¹⁰ The parliament also follows up with the government to find out if the government followed the parliament's suggestion during negotiations at the Council. Fraga describes the third category, the mandate, as an arrangement where the parliament tells the government what negotiation positions it must take at the Council.

The Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees (COSAC) appears to have followed Fraga's lead in its third biannual report,¹¹ which surveys the oversight processes of the 34 EACs that have been established in the 25 current member states of the European Union.¹² This COSAC report divides the 34 European Affairs Committees into three broad

⁹ Fraga 2000, 2

¹⁰ Fraga 2000, 2

¹¹ COSAC 2005

¹² The third biannual report was prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and presented to the XXXIII Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union, 17-18 May 2005 Luxembourg. COSAC is an organization that brings together representatives of national parliaments and the European parliament. Since the spring 2004 Irish Presidency, COSAC has been issuing biannual reports with each

categories of oversight approaches: (1) informal channels of influence, (2) document-based scrutiny, and (3) mandating systems. Mandating systems are divided into two subcategories to distinguish between systematic and non-systematic mandating systems. In addition to describing three main categories of oversight approaches, the COSAC report also includes self-reported information from representatives of the 34 EACs on the approach that their committee uses for its oversight of European Affairs. This information forms the basis for the dependent variable in this paper.

2. Dependent variable: degree of control in parliamentary oversight approach

This paper's dependent variable is the degree of control the legislature attempts to exert in parliamentary oversight of European Affairs. The data in this variable comes from the third biannual report of the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees (COSAC).¹³ COSAC is an organization that brings together representatives of national parliaments and the European parliament. When a country occupies the EU presidency, the COSAC meeting is one of the many meetings that the presidency country hosts as a part of its 6 month term. COSAC describes its founding and mission in these terms:

COSAC was created in May 1989 at a meeting in Madrid, where the speakers of the Parliaments of the EU Member states agreed to strengthen the role of the national parliaments in relation to the community process by bringing together the European affairs Committees. The first meeting of COSAC took place in Paris in November 1989. COSAC was formally recognized [sic] in a protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty that was concluded by Heads of State or Government in June 1997. The protocol came into force 1

meeting. These reports give information from all COSAC members on their methods of parliamentary oversight. The third biannual COSAC report is "based on information provided by national parliaments of the EU-25 in responses to a questionnaire which was distributed in March 2005. Parliaments were requested to send in their responses by 4 April 2005, and this report takes account of developments up to that date" (COSAC 2005, 3).

¹³ This report was prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and presented to the XXXIII Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union, 17-18 May 2005 in Luxembourg.

May 1999. According to this protocol, COSAC is allowed to address to the EU institutions any "contributions" which it deems necessary.¹⁴

Beginning with the Irish Presidency in Spring 2004, COSAC has been issuing biannual reports after each meeting. These reports give information from all COSAC members on their methods of parliamentary oversight.¹⁵ As explained above, the third biannual COSAC report divides the 34 European Affairs Committees into three broad categories of oversight approaches: (1) informal channels of influence, (2) document-based scrutiny, and (3) mandating systems. Mandating systems are divided into two subcategories to distinguish between systematic and non-systematic mandating systems. The next two sections describe the non-mandating oversight approaches that are used by EACs. These are informal channels of influence and document-based scrutiny. The next two sections after that describe the systematic and non-systematic mandating oversight approaches. Finally, Table 1 indicates the oversight approach used by each of the 34 EACs in the EU-25 countries in 2005.

2a. Informal channels of influence

The informal influence oversight approach is a non-mandating oversight approach. It is “characterised by the absence of a systematic examination of EU draft legislative acts and other EU documents.”¹⁶ These EACs work to inform the parliament about legislative proposals being developed in the European Union and may organize debates on some of these topics. They can ask the government for explanations for its actions, but the government is not necessarily required to answer the questions or follow the committee’s suggestions.

¹⁴ <http://www.cosac.eu/en/cosac/> [accessed 23 September 2006]

¹⁵ The third biannual COSAC report is “based on information provided by national parliaments of the EU-25 in responses to a questionnaire which was distributed in March 2005. Parliaments were requested to send in their responses by 4 April 2005, and this report takes account of developments up to that date” (COSAC 2005, 3).

¹⁶ COSAC 2005, 14

Insofar as these parliaments wish to exert influence over EU policies, they do so via more informal or political channels rather than via systematic or formal mechanisms in parliamentary committees. Parliamentary committees on European affairs in these parliaments therefore have a primary function of initiating or generating debate on important general European issues inside the parliaments as well as in relation to the public.¹⁷

The countries that have legislatures that use an informal scrutiny system are Belgium, Cyprus, the German Bundestag, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain.

The Belgian Federal Advisory Committee on European Affairs provides a concrete example of an informal scrutiny approach. The Belgian committee describes its role in terms of its relationship with the parliament and with the government.¹⁸ For the parliament, the EAC coordinates parliamentary action, monitors national legislation as it relates to European Affairs, delivers opinions on EU treaty negotiations and European affairs in general, manages inter-parliamentary cooperation among the various national, regional and European level legislatures, and informs standing committees in the Belgian parliament of developments at the European level. As it relates to the government, the EAC listens to the federal government's agendas before European Council meetings and results after those meetings. The EAC also evaluates the Government's reports on the transposition of European laws into Belgian law.¹⁹ The Belgian EAC is not collecting information in an exhaustive and systematic way, as in a document-based oversight system. The Belgian EAC is also not trying to direct the government in its activities in the European Council. Instead, the Belgian EAC's main roles are to inform the parliament about European Affairs, to coordinate parliamentary activity in European Affairs, and to listen to the government's description of its activity at the European level.

¹⁷ COSAC 2005, 14

¹⁸ http://www.senate.be/doc/eu/fedadv_en.html [accessed 23 September 2006]

¹⁹ http://www.senate.be/doc/eu/fedadv_en.html [accessed 23 September 2006]

2b. Document-based scrutiny

The document-based scrutiny system is a non-mandating oversight approach that examines documents from the European Union institutions. In each parliament that uses this approach, the European Affairs Committee scrutinizes EU documents as early as possible in the European decision making process. “Typically, the responsible committee will report to its chamber on the political and legal importance of each EU document, determining which documents require further consideration.”²⁰ The EACs that use a document-based approach do not seek to control the government’s negotiations at the European level or even follow the “proceedings at individual Council meetings.”²¹ Their focus is on systematically examining the information flowing from the European Union and informing the rest of the legislature about developments in the European legislative process. The legislatures that use a document-based scrutiny system are in the Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands Senate and United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee illustrates the differences between the informal oversight approach and document-based scrutiny. The European Scrutiny Committee describes its role in the following way:

The Committee assesses the legal and/or political importance of each EU document, decides which EU documents are debated, monitors the activities of UK Ministers in the Council, and keeps legal, procedural and institutional developments in the EU under review.²²

This committee is not trying to tell the British government what it can or cannot negotiate at the European level. Instead the committee’s goal is to gather information, evaluate the importance of

²⁰ COSAC 2005, 10

²¹ COSAC 2005, 10

²² http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/european_scrutiny.cfm [accessed 23 September 2006]

that information, and guide parliamentary debate on the relevant information. There is a “scrutiny reserve” that stops the government from making any decisions or taking any decisive action on proposals that the committee is still considering or that are waiting to be debated by the parliament. Even though document-scrutiny systems do not usually monitor the proceedings of individual Council meetings, the House of Commons’ EAC does use parliamentary questions and interviews with government ministers to monitor developments in the Council. Sometimes the EAC “conducts general inquiries into legal, procedural or institutional developments in the EU.”²³ In this approach the EAC scrutinizes as much of the documentation from the EU as possible, but does not necessarily try to sway the government’s negotiations at the European level.

2c. Mandating systems

The mandating scrutiny system is the most controlling approach to parliamentary oversight of European Affairs. There is a key distinction in terms of how systematic the mandating system is; however for all mandating systems, “the European affairs committees in these parliaments have the capacity on behalf of their parliaments to adopt positions which are binding for their governments.”²⁴ The EACs that use non-systematic mandating systems use their mandating power infrequently, but the EACs with a systematic mandating system use their mandating power on a regular basis.

2.c.i Non-systematic mandating systems

²³ http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/european_scrutiny.cfm [accessed 23 September 2006]

²⁴ COSAC 2005, 12

EACs that use a non-systematic mandating system have the authority to tell the government what its negotiating positions should be at the Council of Ministers, but they use this authority infrequently. Sometimes the EAC's mandating authority only extends to a narrow range of policy areas, other times the authority is wide-ranging but rarely used. It is common in non-systematic mandating systems for the EAC to be given information about the government's position on European affairs only if specially requested by the committee, usually at the prompting of a government minister or a member of the European Affairs Committee.²⁵ Countries that use a non-systematic mandating system are Austria, the German Bundesrat, Hungary, and the Netherlands House of Representatives.

The Netherlands House of Representatives' (Tweede Kamer) Standing Committee on European Affairs illustrates the non-systematic mandating system, describing its role in the following way:

In 1986 the House of Representatives established a committee on European Affairs, which is now known as the Standing Committee on European Affairs. The committee's task is to play an 'initiating, signalling [sic] and coordinating' role for the purpose of parliamentary control of decision making in the European institutions, and particularly the Council.²⁶

The Standing Committee on European Affairs is in place to coordinate parliamentary control of European decision-making. This legislature includes sectoral committees in oversight of European Affairs and stresses the need to control the government in this area. The strongest area of parliamentary control over European Affairs is that of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA):

In general the scrutiny system in the Netherlands is not one that is based on a mandate. However, on issues relating to Justice and Home Affairs both the Senate and the House of Representatives have special rights as regards controlling the position taken by the Dutch government in the JHA Council. The Government cannot agree to a European

²⁵ COSAC 2005, 12

²⁶ http://www.houseofrepresentatives.nl/the_tweede_kamer_present_and_past/dossiers/dossier1.jsp [accessed 23 September 2006]

decision, to be adopted in the area of Justice and Home affairs, intended to bind the Netherlands until both Houses of Parliament have given their assent. A special committee on Justice and Home Affairs prepares the assent of the House of Representatives.²⁷

While the Netherlands delegates the oversight of “broader, more general and horizontal developments in Europe” to the European Affairs Committee, the sectoral committees in the area of Justice and Home Affairs are the most assertive and have the most control over Government behavior at the European level.²⁸ The mandating power of parliamentary oversight in the Netherlands is limited to Justice and Home Affairs.

2.c.ii Systematic mandating systems

Systematic mandating oversight EACs can use their mandating power over many different policy areas of European legislation. It is common in systematic mandating systems for the government to be required “to present a negotiation position – in writing or orally - to the committees on all pieces of draft legislation to be adopted by the Council.”²⁹ The volume of information flowing from the European Union to the national parliaments can be overwhelming, so parliaments have to develop methods of sorting through the information to identify the most important issues and determine which parts of European legislation merit further scrutiny and which do not. Effective filtering of information is critical because time is scarce in national parliaments and budgets for support staff are usually small. The EAC has to be disciplined and organized to focus its attention on the most important issues.³⁰

²⁷ COSAC 2005, 59

²⁸ COSAC 2005, 58

²⁹ COSAC 2005, 12

³⁰ COSAC provides some examples of the filtering mechanisms employed by various EACs with systematic mandating oversight: “Whereas the Danish European affairs committee mandates ministers on all proposals of “greater importance” to be adopted by the Council, the Lithuanian Parliament has asked its sectoral committees to divide the different EU-proposals into three categories: “very relevant”, “relevant” and “moderately relevant.” These are normally referred to as “red”, “yellow” and “green” issues. On “red” and “yellow” issues the government is obliged to submit its negotiation “position” on all EU-proposals to the Seimas within 15 days from the receipt of the

In contrast to the Dutch parliamentary oversight system, there are no formal limits on the scope of parliamentary oversight in a systematic mandating system. Instead, the limits are practical and relate to the capacity of the legislature to process the large amount of information produced by European-level bureaucrats, analyze the impact of pending legislation while it is still being developed at the European-level and hold national executives accountable for their negotiations at the Council of Ministers.

It would be very difficult for a single committee to process the large volume of information coming from the European Union, much less possess the expertise to effectively scrutinize such a wide range of policy areas. One powerful institutional tool that some European Affairs Committees wield is the power to delegate scrutiny of particular policies to other, more specialized committees. EACs that have this institutional power are able to save energy for scrutinizing “big picture” policies as they are being developed at the European level without being bogged down in very technical discussions. These EACs can also tap into the policy expertise that the more specialized parliamentary committees possess.

The countries that have legislatures that use a systematic mandating scrutiny system are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden. Denmark was the first country to develop a systematic mandating approach to the parliamentary oversight of European Affairs. The Danish EAC was described by Mr. Jacob Buksti, a Danish member of parliament, as “a sort of mini-parliament” which “acts on behalf of the parliament.”³¹ The Danish EAC coordinates debate in the plenary chamber, but continues the parliamentary discussion within the committee. The committee is designed to competently represent the larger

proposals. “Green” issues are those classified by the committees as being of minor or no interest to the Parliament” (COSAC 2005, 12).

³¹ Excerpt from the minutes of an Irish Joint Committee on European Affairs meeting (19 January 2004) when visited by the delegation from the Danish European Union Affairs Committee. <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/DDebate.aspx?F=EUJ20040119.xml&Node=9#N9> [accessed 10 October 2006]

parliament because the votes of committee members are weighted to reflect each party's strength in the parliament as a whole.³² The committee "is responsible for general scrutiny of all EU matters. This responsibility includes mandating the Government before Council votes on all directives as well as regulations of a greater importance....The mandate is politically binding and is very strictly observed by the government."³³ The Danish systematic mandating oversight approach has a wide scope and also a high degree of control over government behavior at the European level. Table 1 lists each EAC from the twenty-five EU member states, along with its oversight approach. The oversight approaches are listed from left to right ordered from the least assertive to the most assertive.

[Table 1 about here]

The oversight approach an EAC uses is determined by a legislature when the European Affairs Committee is established. Sometimes EACs are reformed later to use a different oversight approach, but this is rare. Usually reforms to an EAC make changes to procedures or intensity of oversight, but the overall oversight approach stays the same. To account for changes in the oversight approach over time, wherever possible, the independent variables that vary over time represent the year that the EAC was established or last reformed. Even if the overall oversight approach did not change after an EAC was reformed, it could have changed, so in effect the legislature has chosen the current oversight approach again.

3. Explanatory variable: Timing of membership

³² COSAC 2005, 29

³³ COSAC 2005, 29

A legislature's decision regarding the oversight approach used by an EAC is influenced by the way most legislators evaluate the effects of Europeanization on legislative effectiveness. If most legislators view Europeanization as undermining legislative effectiveness, then the legislature will set up a more assertive parliamentary oversight mechanism in European Affairs. If the most legislators do not view Europeanization as a threatening trend at the time that the EAC is established, then the EAC will use a less assertive approach to oversight. Factors that can influence the oversight approach most legislators prefer for overseeing European affairs include the country's relationship with the EU and the priority that legislators place on the oversight of European affairs. These two factors are explained below.

The timing of membership both reflects and shapes a country's relationship with the European Union. Early joiners participated in designing the European Union, so they are "rule makers" in the context of European institutions. They are very influential actors within the EU and in some cases don't see a strong distinction between European interests and domestic interests. For example, the president of Luxembourg's Christian Democratic Party (the Christian Social Party, CSV) in 2005 stated that "European politics are home politics" and that many of the questions which people believe are national questions are really only answerable in Europe.³⁴

Late joiners are "rule takers" in the context of the European Union's institutions. They did not participate in designing the institutions, so they have to work harder to achieve national goals through European institutions. While it is true that the countries that joined the EU later are in many cases countries that were not invited to join until late, there some countries chose to delay joining the EU in spite of early invitations. If the timing of membership didn't influence the role of a country in the EU, then the wealthy countries that delayed joining the EU should be

³⁴ Translated from "CSV. De séchere Wee. Och an Europa." A statement by François Biltgen, party president. www.csv.lu/text/news.php/1751 [Accessed 12 March 2005]

just as influential in the EU as early joiners. However, the wealthy countries that declined early opportunities to join the EU, do seem to be disadvantaged relative to early joiners.

The United Kingdom provides a concrete example of this phenomenon. The United Kingdom has a large economy and has historically been a powerful country in the region of Western Europe. The UK had an opportunity to participate in founding the EU in the 1950s, but declined the invitation. In the 1960s, when the UK was ready to join, Charles de Gaulle blocked its membership twice. It was not until 1973 that the United Kingdom established its membership in the EU.³⁵ Because the United Kingdom missed twenty years of participating in large and small decisions that determined the course of the organization, the EU doesn't fit the UK as well as it fits Germany or France. The UK is extra vigilant in EU negotiations to protect national interests and has needed to negotiate special exceptions, such as a rebate for financing of the Common Agricultural Policy. Early joiners of the EU are less likely to need to negotiate special exceptions because the course of the organization is less likely to seriously conflict with their national interests. The UK has many characteristics of a core country, but it is at a relative disadvantage, because it joined the EU later than the other core countries.

For all of these reasons the timing of a country's membership in the European Union is likely to be a strong predictor of the assertiveness of a legislature's European Affairs Committee. The more recently a country joined the European Union, the more control the domestic legislature tries to assert over European Affairs because the EU seems more unfamiliar to domestic processes and also more difficult to change. This variable is represented by the year that each country officially joined the European Union. The range of this variable is from 1952 to 2004.

³⁵ McCormick 2005, 65-67

4. Competing hypotheses

There are several competing hypotheses that may also explain the cross-national variation in EAC institutional strength. These competing explanations are the center-periphery cleavage, postmodern values, popular support, and the economic cleavage. See Table 2 for the expected signs for each independent variable.

[Table 2 about here]

4a. Center-periphery cultural cleavage

The center-periphery distinction is used to explain relationships between societies. It draws on Immanuel Wallerstein's World-Systems theory³⁶ and Stein Rokkan's distinction between central establishment and subject peripheries.³⁷ Wallerstein considered Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Ireland and Scandinavia to be part of the global periphery.³⁸ By this definition, we find that most of Wallerstein's "core" in Western Europe coincides with the founding members of the EU and most of his European periphery coincides with the more recent members that have joined since 1973. Britain is the only country of Wallerstein's European "core" that was not a founding member of the European Union.

One of the main factors influencing a country's relationship to the European Union is its physical distance from Brussels. This factor is inspired by Rokkan's "distance from Rome" variable. Rokkan argued that distance from Rome was an important policy dimension in European politics because it indicates the degree to which the Roman Empire influenced the

³⁶ Wallerstein 1974, 1982, 2004

³⁷ Rokkan 1975

³⁸ "In my own book on the long sixteenth century, I identified three main peripheral zones – Iberian America to be sure, but also eastern Europe and "southern" Europe. One could comfortably add Ireland and Scandinavia. I specifically excluded Asia (and Africa), and even the Ottoman Empire and Russia, on the grounds that they were not part of the capitalist world-economy in that era and could not therefore be thought of as peripheral zones in the single division of labour of this world-economy" (Wallerstein, 1982, 580).

culture of each country. Countries that have a larger “geopolitical distance northward, from Rome, the fountainhead of the old Empire, the focus of Western Christendom after the Schism of 1054 and the symbolic center for the effort of legal unification through the revival of Roman law” are more likely to have a history influenced by Germanic kingdoms than the Roman Empire (Rokkan 1975, 575).³⁹ Similarly, the European Union can be viewed as a modern-day empire, which has a stronger influence on the culture of countries that are closer to its geopolitical core than the periphery. One difference between the distance from Rome and distance from Brussels is that the distance from Rome is only considered in the Northern direction. Distance from Brussels can grow in any direction, because Brussels is centrally located in Europe.

The center-periphery argument says that EU member states that are located on the EU’s periphery are likely to have stronger parliamentary oversight of European Affairs than member states located in the EU’s center. Peripheral countries work harder to have their interests reflected in European decisions, so they look to EACs as a way to boost the government’s negotiating power at Council of Ministers meetings. The more the national government can claim its hands are tied by a strong national parliament, the more inflexible the government can afford to be in its negotiations at the European level. An assertive EAC can be a way for a government to tie its own hands. If national parliaments believe that the government needs to strengthen its bargaining leverage at the European level, they will be more likely to establish an assertive EAC with a broad scope of oversight and mandate powers.

In testing the center-periphery argument, I include variables for the distance from Brussels, the percentage of external trade within the European Union, and the size of the country’s economy at the time the EAC was established. Peripheral countries tend to have

³⁹ See also Lipset and Rokkan (1967), Rokkan and Urwin (1982) and Rokkan, et al. (1987).

smaller economies, be further away from Brussels and trade more outside of the European Union than the core countries will.

One of the main factors influencing a country's relationship to the European Union is its physical distance from Brussels. Countries that are very close to the European capital will be more easily influenced by European political and cultural trends. Countries that are far from Brussels will face more significant transportation costs, higher language barriers and a psychological distance due to reduced contacts with the political and cultural trends of the European Union. For example, national decision-makers from Sweden, Ireland, Greece or Poland must fly to Brussels if they want to meet with European decision-makers. It is only a 3 hour train ride from Paris to Brussels. If French decision-makers want to attend a meeting at the European Commission, it could be a day trip. Linguistically, countries where French, German and English are the native languages usually don't have to translate documents flowing from the European Union. The farther a country is from Brussels, the more likely that EU documents will need to be translated before they can be thoroughly considered by national legislators. The farther a country's population center is removed from Brussels, the more transaction costs associated with participating in European affairs. I measure this difference between central and peripheral countries with the distance between the country's population center in 2000 and the city of Brussels.⁴⁰

Central countries also tend to be more economically engaged with the European Union than peripheral members, and this is reflected in the percentage of each country's external trade that occurs within the European Union. Peripheral countries are more likely to cultivate and maintain trading partners outside of the European Union. Countries frequently have robust trade

⁴⁰ Source: Center for International Earth Science Network (CIESN) Gridded Population of the World (GPWv3) available online: <http://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/gpw/>

with the countries closest to them.⁴¹ Countries on the far Southern or Eastern edges of the European Union frequently have a tradition of trading with neighboring states that are not a part of the European Union. Countries in the center of Western Europe are surrounded by other EU member states, so they are more likely to trade within the EU. To measure the degree of economic engagement with the European Union, I use the percentage of total exports that are sold within the European Union in 2005.⁴²

Countries with large economies are likely to be more attractive to and influential in an economic union (like the European Union) than countries with small economies. When a country with a large economy joins an economic union, the union's overall economic power can increase substantially. When a country with a small economy joins an economic union, it is less likely to have a noticeable impact on the economic union's overall GDP and ability to project soft, economic power globally. Because they are less attractive to the EU, countries with smaller economies are likely to have joined the EU later. Also, countries with smaller economies may feel more vulnerable to EU policies than countries with larger economies. If a hypothetical EU policy has adverse effects on a country with a large economy, the effects will most likely be felt by the whole EU. The EU as a whole could prosper based on a policy that has adverse effects on the small economies but benefits the large economies. This perceived vulnerability is likely to inspire countries with small economies to establish assertive EACs that can limit the range of concessions that the government can make in its negotiations at the European level. This variable

⁴¹ Linneman 1969

⁴² Source: Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), Eurostat Yearbook 2005. Available online: <http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/>

is measured using the GDP in the year that the EAC was established, standardized for United States dollars in the year 2000.⁴³

4b. Postmodern cultural values

Economic change coincides with value change as societies transition from being pre-modern to modern to postmodern.⁴⁴ Pre-modern societies tend to have agrarian economies, while modern societies have industrial economies. Postmodern societies have post-industrial economies dominated by the service sector. Pre-modern and modern societies are both focused on survival, while post-modern societies take survival for granted and focus instead on self-expression. Societies that emphasize survival over self-expression are described in this way:

Societies that emphasize survival values have relatively low levels of subjective well-being, report relatively poor health, and are low on interpersonal trust, relatively intolerant of outgroups, and low on support for gender equality. They emphasize materialist values, have relatively high levels of faith in science and technology and are relatively low on environmental activism and relatively favorable to authoritarian government.⁴⁵

Societies that emphasize survival values are likely to have very little oversight of leaders in general and the European Union, in particular. At their most extreme, these societies encourage “people to accept their social position in this life, emphasizing that meek acceptance and denial of worldly aspirations will be rewarded in the next life.”⁴⁶ Societies that emphasize self-expression tend to celebrate diversity. They “reflect an emancipative and humanistic ethos,

⁴³ Source: United States Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/macroeconomics/Data/HistoricalRealGDPValues.xls>

⁴⁴ Modernization theorists argue that economic change causes societal change, while cultural theorists argue that cultural change causes economic change. Inglehart argues that there is a feedback effect between economic and social change (1997, 48). The one thing that all three of these approaches agree on is that social and economic change are linked.

⁴⁵ Inglehart 1997, 54

⁴⁶ Inglehart 1997, 71

emphasizing human autonomy and choice.”⁴⁷ Societies that have post-modern cultural values tend to be skeptical of hierarchy, and be preoccupied with self-expression and quality of life.⁴⁸

The more a country’s society emphasizes self-expression values, the more likely it will have highly institutionalized oversight mechanisms for domestic and international political decision-making. Postmodernization “deemphasizes all kinds of authority, whether religious or secular, allowing much wider range for individual autonomy in the pursuit of individual subjective well-being.”⁴⁹ Citizens in postmodern societies demand accountability and transparency in government, so countries with value systems relatively closer to post-modernism are likely to have EACs with mandating oversight.

Postmodern cultural values are measured using the Inglehart and Welzel factor scores for self-expression versus survival values.⁵⁰ These values are derived from a factor analysis of the answers to ten World Values Surveys questions between 1981 and 2001. The questions include the importance of God, the importance of teaching children obedience and faith rather than independence and determination, disapproval of abortion, national pride, respect for authority, a high priority for economic and physical security (materialist values), feelings of unhappiness, disapproval of homosexuality, abstaining from signing petitions and distrusting other people. The last five questions are weighted the heaviest in the factor analysis for survival versus self-expression values.⁵¹ The range for this variable is from -2 (survival values) to 2 (self-expression values).

⁴⁷ Inglehart 1997, 54

⁴⁸ Inglehart describes cultural change as a “shift in survival strategies. ... With the transition from Modernization to Postmodernization, the trajectory of change has shifted from maximizing economic growth to maximizing the quality of life” (1997, 66).

⁴⁹ Inglehart 1997, 74-75

⁵⁰ Inglehart and Welzel 2005

⁵¹ Inglehart and Welzel 2005, Internet appendix (p. 8-12). For the factor scores, see Table A-1, “Predicted and Observed Value Systems (64 societies’ locations on 1999-2001 cultural map, predicted from model based on data from first three waves of surveys)” on p. 27 of the internet appendix.

Postmodern values are associated with postindustrial economies. Postindustrial economies are dominated by the service sector and have much smaller agricultural and industrial sectors. The percentage of a country's gross domestic product (GDP) that is produced by the service sector can serve as a proxy for the degree to which a country is experiencing postmodernism. This operationalization of postmodernism is measured using data from the World Development Indicators for the year that an EAC was established or last reformed. The range is from a low of 55 (United Kingdom in 1974 when its EAC was established and Ireland in 2002 when its EAC was reformed) to a high of 73 (Latvia in 2004).

4c. Popular support for European Union

Democratically elected leaders must maintain the support of the public in order to stay in office. This fact of democratic life gives decision makers a strong incentive to track and respond to the demands of the public. Two tactics that legislators use to maintain public support include credit claiming and position taking.⁵² If legislators sense that the public is skeptical of European integration, they are likely to produce signals to the public that national interests are being protected and that the national-level democratic infrastructure is working to provide accountability and transparency in European Affairs. Legislators will try to claim credit for popular policies at the European level, either through supporting the government in its negotiations at the Council of Ministers or by holding the government accountable for its negotiations. Even if it's not possible for backbenchers to really influence decision-making at the European level, they can still use the EAC as a forum for taking positions on European

<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/publications/humandevlopment.html> [accessed 20 February 2007]

⁵² Mayhew 1974, Budge and Laver 1986

issues. This position-taking shows constituents that their legislators are actively representing national interests at the European level, regardless of the effectiveness of the representation.

If party discipline is weak, the strategic calculation is made by individual MPs and this trend will be more visible at the party level than in the behavior of individual legislators. If it is strong, the calculation is made at the party level. Parties can encourage their MPs to use legislative committees as a platform for signaling the party's influence over European Affairs if the issue is salient to the electorate. Regardless of the decision-making level, the strategic calculations follow a similar pattern. The strategic calculation involves two elements: the saliency of the issue and the level of popular support. If saliency is high and public support is high, then MPs want to take credit for good things that the public approves of. If saliency is high and public support is low, then MPs may want to take visible positions against the unpopular issue. If saliency is low, then there is little incentive for MPs to take prominent positions or provide a high level of transparency, regardless of the popularity of the issue.

When applying these principles to the issue of European integration, we see the dynamic playing out in the design and functions of the European Affairs Committee. If the public is uncomfortable with European integration, there is a strong incentive for the parliament to invest a lot of resources in the oversight of European Affairs. On the other hand, in a country with a permissive consensus for European integration, the public is less likely to look for strong accountability mechanisms in European Affairs. European decision-making will be less salient in countries with broad support for European integration therefore politicians will not get much attention for their credit-claiming or position-taking behaviors in European Affairs.

Legislatures in countries with weak public support for EU membership are more likely to establish an EAC with a mandating oversight approach than in countries with low levels of

Euroscepticism. If the European Union enjoys a permissive consensus from the electorate of a country, there is less incentive for members of parliament to invest resources in a robust oversight mechanism in European Affairs. Instead of setting up an EAC with mandating oversight, parliament will focus on providing other public goods that the public is demanding.

Public support for EU membership is measured using a survey question that is regularly asked in the Eurobarometer survey. Prior studies on the cross-national variation in the strength of EACs examine the relationship between public opinion and EAC strength and they do find a correlation.⁵³ The main difficulty with relying on public opinion for an explanation for committee strength is that public opinion develops in response to particular events and experiences and it is strongly influenced by values and historical narratives.

The first public opinion variable is derived from the Eurobarometer question asking, “Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY’S) membership of the European Union is a good thing?” The data represents the percent of respondents giving a positive answer to the question.⁵⁴ The “good thing” Eurobarometer question has been the question most frequently used in the literature on this topic.

4d. Concentration or diffusion of power in parliament

This hypothesis says that the assertiveness of an EAC depends on the concentration or diffusion of power in parliament. Some legislatures concentrate most power in the hands of the government, while others spread power out among several veto players.⁵⁵ If the government dominates the parliament, then the European Affairs Committee is likely to use a non-mandating

⁵³ Bergman 2000 and Raunio and Wiberg 2000

⁵⁴ Source: EB 64 (Fall 2005).

⁵⁵ Veto players are “individual or collective actors [that] have to agree to [a] proposed change” before a policy change can occur (Tsebelis 2002, 2).

oversight approach. This is because a dominant government will not agree to be constrained by an oversight committee with the power to issue binding recommendations. If there are multiple veto players and parliament generally has a lot of leverage over the government, then the European Affairs Committee is more likely to use a mandating oversight approach. This paper measures the concentration of power in parliament in several ways. The operationalizations are the number of partisan veto players in the year the EAC was established,⁵⁶ parliamentary agenda control, corporatism, the presence of a strong upper house, and the presence of an EAC in the upper house of parliament.

Parties in the cabinet are partisan veto players.⁵⁷ These parties have the ability to veto policies and often they can be agenda setters by proposing new policies. The more parties there are in government, the more difficult it is to make decisive policy changes. Also, with a multiparty government cabinet parties want to monitor government ministers from coalition partners to be sure that they are honoring the coalition agreement in negotiations at the European level. If the EAC is established during a single-party government, it is most likely that the EAC will have a non-mandating oversight approach. The more parties there were in government when the EAC was established, the more likely the EAC will have a mandating oversight approach.⁵⁸

Another way to measure the concentration or diffusion of power in a parliament is to examine the degree to which the government controls the plenary timetable. The way to control the agenda in a parliament is to control the plenary timetable. Time is scarce in parliaments and issues at the bottom of the plenary agenda are unlikely to be thoroughly debated. Therefore, the more the government can control the plenary timetable, the more power is concentrated in the

⁵⁶ i.e. number of parties in the cabinet the year the EAC was established.

⁵⁷ Tsebelis 2002

⁵⁸ The data for the EU-15 countries comes from *Coalition Governments in Western Europe* (2003) edited by Wolfgang C. Müller and Kaare Strøm. The data for the A10 countries comes from the InterParliamentary Union's Parline database.

government's hands.⁵⁹ If non-governmental members of parliament are able to influence the plenary timetable, power is less concentrated in the government's hands. This variable is measured using the agenda control scale developed by Döring to assess the degree to which parliament or the government has the authority to determine the plenary agenda.⁶⁰ The range of this variable is from 1 (government has all agenda power) to 7 (parliament has all agenda power).

Corporatism is another way to measure the concentration or diffusion of power in parliament. In a neo-corporatist interest group system, the government forms a partnership with "peak organizations" representing societal actors. Instead of the competition that is common in pluralist interest group systems, neo-corporatism encourages consensus-building in the process of formulating and implementing major political decisions. This corporatist pattern of shared power could translate to the government including parliamentary committees, such as European Affairs Committees in its decision-making process. In countries with a pluralist interest group system, the government is used to being lobbied by societal groups and protecting its decision-making authority from competing interest groups. The pluralist pattern of decision-making could easily lead to governments excluding parliamentary committees from the decision-making process and would coincide with an expectation of less assertive oversight committees in pluralist countries.⁶¹ This variable is based on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 being the most pluralist economies and 5 being the most integrated (i.e. corporatist). Since the data source includes data from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, I use the rating of corporatism that was taken closest to the year when the EAC was established. I expect to find a positive relationship between corporatism and mandating oversight in European affairs.

⁵⁹ Laver and Shepsle 1994 and Martin 2004

⁶⁰ Döring 1995, 224

⁶¹ Siaroff 1999, 190-193, tables 4a-4d

The last two operationalizations of the concentration of power have to do with institutional veto players, namely upper houses in a bicameral legislature. All upper houses influence decision-making in the lower house of parliament, but there is considerable variation in how strong and influential an upper chamber can be.⁶² Arend Lijphart developed a classification for the strength of upper houses between 1945 and 1996 in thirty-six democracies.⁶³ Seventeen of the EU-25 countries are included in Lijphart's analysis. Of the eight EU-25 countries excluded from Lijphart's study, five of them are unicameral. This variable ranges from 1 (unicameral) to 4 (strong bicameralism).

Another way that an upper house can influence the oversight approach used by an EAC is by setting up an EAC in the upper house before the lower house has established its own EAC. It is possible that the presence of an EAC in the upper house will make it likely that the lower house will empower its EAC to use a mandating oversight approach. This variable is a binary representation of the presence (1) or absence (0) of an EAC in the upper house of the legislature.⁶⁴ If a country is unicameral, it cannot have an EAC in the upper chamber, so it is coded as zero.

5. Quantitative Analysis

This section will discuss the methodology used to test this paper's hypotheses. First I will discuss the way the dependent variable is measured and coded. Next I will discuss the estimation method I use for testing the model and the results from the statistical tests. Finally I will discuss statistical simulations that were used to generate quantities of interest and represent the

⁶² "All second chambers exercise influence even if they are considered weak or insignificant" (Tsebelis and Money 1997, 211).

⁶³ Lijphart 1999

⁶⁴ Data drawn from COSAC 2005, 8-9

probability of a legislature using a mandating EAC over a range of possible timings of membership.

5a. Methodology

The dependent variable indicates whether an EAC uses a mandating or non-mandating oversight approach. This variable is binary, so EACs with a non-mandating oversight approach are coded as zero and countries with a mandating oversight approach are coded as one. The values and frequency for the dependent variable are reported in Table 3.

[Table 3 about here]

The binary dependent variable makes it possible to use logistic regression to estimate the models. Logistic regression uses this equation to evaluate the relationship between a dependent variable and an independent variable or variables.

$$\Pr(y=1 | x) = \exp(x\beta) / (1 + \exp(x\beta))$$

This equation expresses the probability that the dependent variable equals one, given the independent variable x with coefficient beta (β).⁶⁵

One reason I chose logistic regression instead of OLS is that logistic regression does not assume a linear relationship. Another reason is that extreme values don't affect the model as much in logistic regression as it does in OLS. A linear model assumes that a change in an independent variable always results in the same change in the dependent variable, regardless of the value of the independent variable. With the S-shaped logistic curve, the change in the dependent variable for the same change in the independent variable will depend on the value of the independent variable. If the independent value is an extreme, changing it will have less

⁶⁵ Long 1997

impact on the dependent variable than if the independent variable is near the transition point of the model (i.e. where the dependent variable passes 0.5). Finally, even if the dependent variable is coded as zero or one, the linear OLS model can give outputs for dependent variable values that are much greater than one or much less than zero. This is not sensible and logistic regression does not have this difficulty.⁶⁶

I use bivariate logistic regressions for two reasons. First, the number of observations is small, so I do not want to use up all the degrees of freedom by throwing every variable into one multivariate regression. Second, many of the independent variables tend to be correlated with each other to some extent. Bivariate regressions avoid problems of collinearity and make it possible to compare the explanatory power of each independent variable separately.

5b. Results for ordered logistic regressions

For the statistical results from the logistic regressions, see Table 4. Table 4 shows the results of bivariate logistic regressions for the EU-25, limited to EACs in the lower houses of parliament. In Table 4, the only variable that meets the 95 percent confidence threshold is timing of membership. Early joiners are likely to have non-mandating EACs while late joiners are more likely to have mandating EACs.

None of the other independent variables meet the 95 percent confidence threshold, but there are two variables that come close: popular support and agenda control. Popular support for EU membership is significant at the 0.062 level. This means I can be 93.8 percent certain that there is a relationship between public support and EAC oversight approach. The relationship is negative, which is the predicted sign. The more supportive the public is of European Union membership, the less likely the EAC will have a mandating oversight approach.

⁶⁶ Long 1997

Parliamentary agenda control is significant at the 0.074 level, which means I can be 92.6 percent certain that there is a relationship between agenda control and EAC oversight approach. The relationship is positive, which is consistent with the predicted sign. The more influence non-governmental members of parliament have over the parliamentary agenda, the more likely the EAC will have a mandating oversight approach.

The center-periphery explanation argues that the more marginal the country is to the EU, the more likely the government will want to use an EAC to tie its hands. Many late joiners belong to the EU periphery and many early joiners belong to the EU's core. The timing of membership is a stronger explanation than the center-periphery argument because the timing of membership influences the relationship of a country to the EU. Founding members were able to design the EU, therefore the institutional fit is better for those countries than for countries that joined more recently. While it is true that peripheral countries are the last to be invited to join, it is clear that joining later makes a country peripheral to the EU even if it has been a core country in the region. The center-periphery explanation is not supported by the statistical tests. Neither is the postmodern values explanation. This paper fails to reject the null hypothesis for each of these explanations.

The concentration of power in parliament explanation is less clear. Agenda control is a significant factor, but the presence of a strong upper house or an EAC in the upper house does not seem to influence the decision of the lower house when it comes to assigning the EAC a mandating or non-mandating oversight approach. Additionally, the number of partisan veto players does not appear to significantly influence the assertiveness of oversight of European affairs and neither does the presence of a corporatist interest group.

5c. Statistical Simulations

In addition to logistic regressions, I used statistical simulation to generate quantities of interest and their uncertainties.⁶⁷ First, I simulated the first differences, which are “the difference between two expected, rather than predicted, values.”⁶⁸ First difference simulations make it possible to answer this question: for a typical legislature, how would the probability of establishing a particular type of EAC differ if the state joined the EU in 1952 versus 2004? The probability of establishing an informal EAC decreases by 33 percent. The probability of establishing a systematic mandating EAC increases by 40 percent.

For a typical legislature, how would the probability of establishing a particular type of EAC differ if the state joined the EU in 1952 versus 1986? Compared with 1952, the probability of establishing an informal EAC decreases by 26 percent for a state that joins in 1986. The probability of establishing a systematic mandating EAC increases by 22 percent.

Statistical simulation was also used to generate Figures 4.1 and 4.2. Figure 4.1 illustrates the influence of membership timing on oversight approach used by an EAC. The length of the lines signifies the span of the 95 percent confidence interval for each value. The shorter the line, the more precise a prediction is possible. In the 1950s, there was a higher probability of a new member of the EU establishing an EAC with an informal oversight system than with a systematic mandate. By the turn of the century, it was much more likely that a new member of the EU

⁶⁷ “Statistical simulation uses the logic of survey sampling to approximate complicated mathematical calculations. In survey research, we learn about a population by taking a random sample from it. We use the sample to estimate a feature of the population, such as its mean or its variance, and our estimates become more precise as we increase the sample size, n . Simulation follows a similar logic but teaches us about probability distributions, rather than populations. We learn about a distribution by simulating (drawing random numbers) from it and using the draws to approximate some feature of the distribution. The approximation becomes more accurate as we increase the number of draws, M . Thus, simulation enables us to approximate any feature of a probability distribution without resorting to advanced mathematics” (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000, 349). Statistical simulations produced using CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results (Tomz, Michael, Jason Wittenberg, and Gary King 2001).

⁶⁸ King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000, 351

would set up an EAC with a systematic mandate than an informal oversight system. The mid-to-late 1970s appears to be the turning point. One event that occurred in the late 1970s that could account for national parliaments showing more assertiveness in European Affairs is the shift to direct elections for the European Parliament.⁶⁹ Before the late-1970s, National parliaments appointed Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and double-hatting was common between MPs and MEPs. When the European Parliament moved to direct elections, this reduced the influence of national parliaments on decision-making at the European level and produced an incentive to establish more assertive EACs.

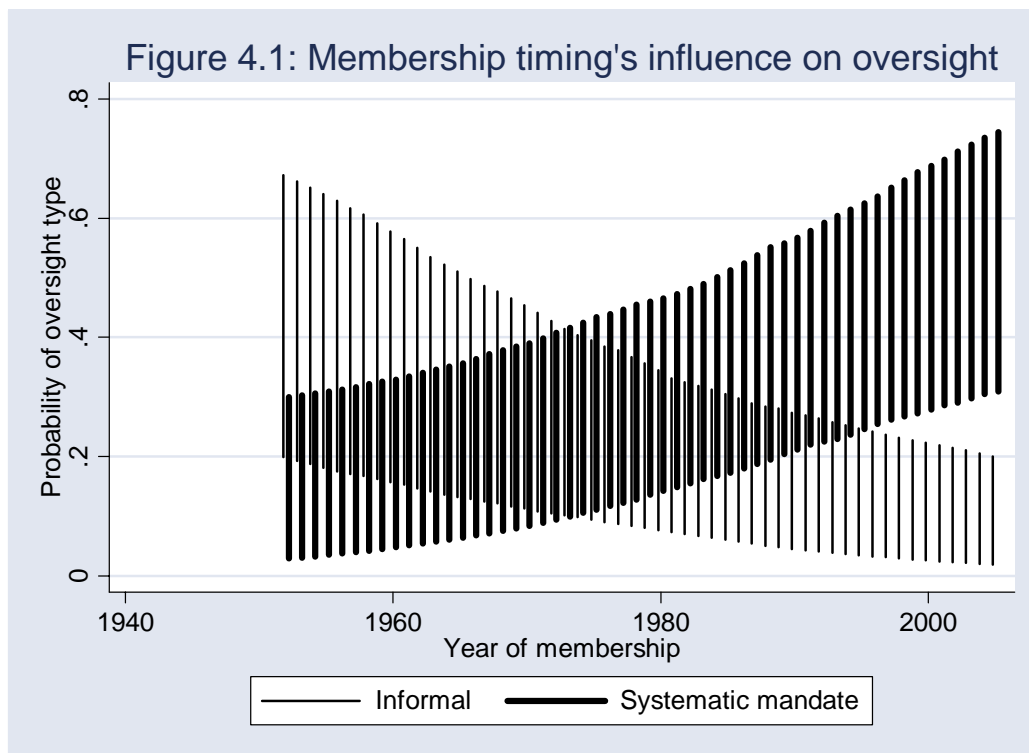
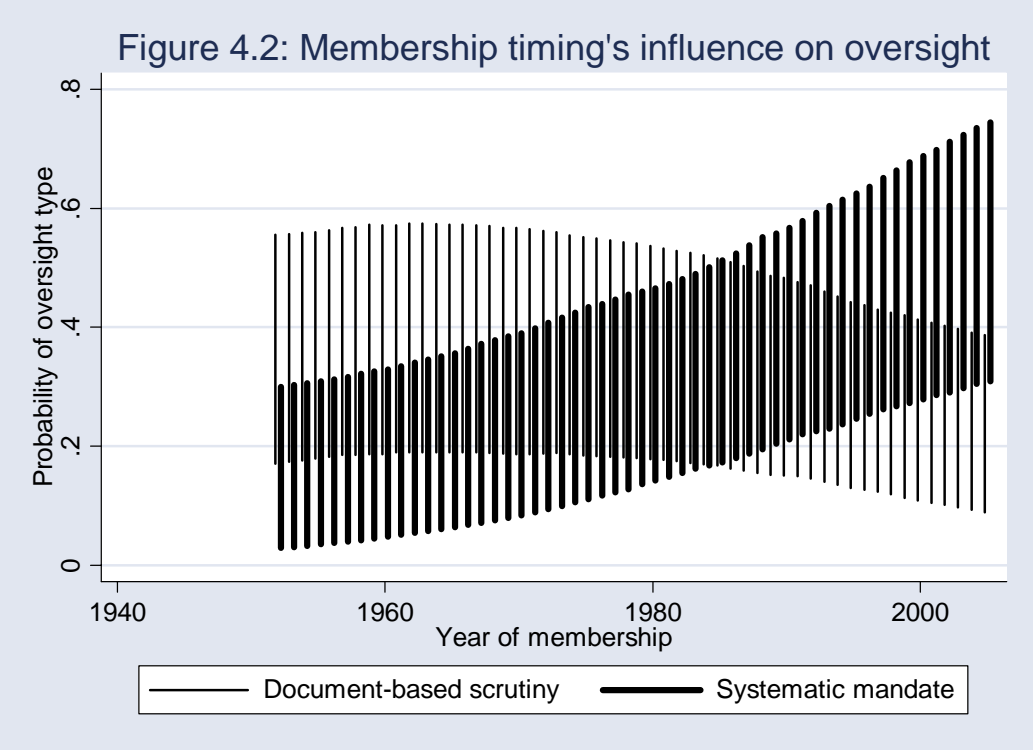


Figure 4.2 compares the probability of a legislature establishing an EAC with a document-based scrutiny system or with a systematic mandate. In the 1950s and 1960s, there

⁶⁹ Describing the motivation for establishing COSAC: “One important reason was a feeling of loss of contact with Community policies in many national parliaments after the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979. Up to 1979, delegations to the European Parliament were appointed by national parliaments, and parliamentarians could be at the same time members of the national parliaments and European Parliament.” (COSAC Secretariat. “COSAC: Historical Development”, n.d., p.1)

was a higher probability of a new member of the EU establishing an EAC with a document-based oversight system than with a systematic mandate. By the turn of the century, it was much more likely that a new member of the EU would set up an EAC with a systematic mandate than a document-based scrutiny system. The mid-1980s is the turning point between these two oversight approaches. A development that occurred in the mid-1980s is the Single European Act (SEA), which signaled the EU’s intention to spread into new policy areas, such as social policy. As European integration deepened in these new policy areas, national parliaments could expect to lose influence over even more policy areas than before. This produced an incentive for new member states to establish even more assertive EACs.



6. Conclusion

What explains the cross-national variation in the assertiveness of European Affairs Committee oversight approaches? The more recently a country joined the European Union, the

more likely its legislature will establish an EAC with the most assertive oversight approach. Other candidate explanations that were tested in this paper include the center-periphery cultural divide, postmodern values, public support for the EU and institutional strength of national parliaments, but none of these are significant explanations for the oversight approach used by the lower houses of parliament in the EU-25.

This paper began by describing previous efforts to measure the cross-national variation in EAC strength. Next it explained a procedure-based method of measuring the cross-national variation in EAC strength and introduced the candidate explanations for this variation. Finally, the paper used statistical analysis to evaluate the candidate explanations and demonstrated that the timing of membership is the most significant explanations for the variation in EAC strength.

Based on the statistical simulations in section 5c, it seems likely that institutional developments in the EU can account for the difference in oversight approaches used by early and late joiners. In future research, I plan to compare the effects of significant events in the European Union on the design of EAC oversight approach. Some of the significant events that could influence a legislature's decision to use a mandating oversight approach include the signing of major EU treaties such as the Single European Act (1986), the Maastricht Treaty (1992), The Amsterdam Treaty (1997), or the Treaty of Nice (2000). Also, the transition from members of the European Parliament being appointed by national parliaments to direct elections to the European parliament in 1979 could also influence national parliaments to use a more assertive oversight approach in European affairs.

Table 1: Oversight approach used in national legislatures of the EU-25 in 2005⁷⁰

Member State	EAC oversight approach			
	Non-mandating oversight		Mandating oversight	
	Informal channels of influence	Document-based scrutiny	Non-systematic	Systematic
Austria			X	
Belgium	X			
Cyprus	X			
Czech Republic		X		
Denmark				X
Estonia				X
Finland				X
France		X		
Germany	X			
Greece	X			
Hungary			X	
Ireland		X		
Italy		X		
Latvia				X
Lithuania				X
Luxembourg	X			
Malta		X		
Netherlands			X	
Poland				X
Portugal	X			
Slovakia				X
Slovenia				X
Spain	X			
Sweden				X
United Kingdom		X		

⁷⁰ Data from COSAC 2005, 8-9

Table 2: Expected Signs for Each Independent Variable

Independent Variables	Hypotheses	Operationalization	Expected Sign
Timing of Membership	The more recently a state has joined the European Union, the more assertive its EAC will be.	The year each country joined the European Union	+
Center-periphery	The closer a country is to the EU's core, the less assertive the EAC will be.	Historic GDP for the year each legislature established its EAC or last reformed its EAC (In billions, 2000 USD)	-
		Distance of the country's population center from Brussels (in hundreds of kilometers) in 2000	+
		Percentage of total exports sold within the European Union in 2005	-
Postmodern cultural values	The more postmodern a country's values, the more assertive the EAC will be.	Inglehart-Welzel factor scores for survival versus self-expression values.	+
		The percentage of GDP produced by the service sector in the year EAC was established or last reformed.	+
Public support for EU membership	The more the public disapproves of EU membership, the more parliamentary assertiveness in oversight of European affairs increases.	Public opinion: EU good thing, in the year EAC was established or last reformed	-
Concentration of power in parliament	The more power is concentrated in the government's hands, the less assertive the EAC will be.	Number of Parties in government in the year EAC was established or last reformed	+
		Corporatism	+
		Control of the plenary timetable	+
		Westminster parliament	-

Table 3: Dependent Variable Summary

Dependent variable	DV value	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Non-mandating oversight approach	0	18	52.94	52.94
Mandating oversight approach	1	16	47.06	100.0

Table 4: Bivariate logistic regressions, dependent variable is mandating oversight approach (1=yes, 0=no)⁷¹

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	Pseudo R-squared	Prob>chi2	Log Likelihood	Absolute z-value	P> z	Cases (N)
<u>Timing:</u> Timing of Membership	0.056*	0.0254	0.1834	0.0117	-14.133	2.19	0.029	25
<u>Center-Periphery:</u> Size of economy in year EAC established or last reformed (GDP)	-0.004	0.0026	0.1536	0.0211	-14.649	1.53	0.126	25
Distance from Brussels	0.008	0.0613	0.0005	0.8964	17.300	0.13	0.896	25
Trade within EU (2005)	0.035	0.0399	0.0224	0.3789	-16.922	0.87	0.386	25
<u>Postmodern Values:</u> Survival vs. Self-expression values (2005)	-0.627	0.4551	0.0668	0.1447	-14.857	1.38	0.168	23
Postindustrial economy in year EAC was established or last reformed	0.171	0.1111	0.0872	0.0956	-14.532	1.54	0.124	23
<u>Popular support:</u> Public opinion: EU good thing, year EAC established or last reformed	-0.082	0.0442	0.2397	0.0214	-8.392	-1.86	0.062	17
<u>Institutions:</u> Partisan veto players in year EAC was established or last reformed	0.288	0.3182	0.0255	0.3579	-16.129	0.91	0.365	24
Agenda control of Parliament	1.316412	0.7357	0.3710	0.0078	6.006	1.79	0.074	15
Corporatism	7.851235	5.8324	0.6704	0.0005	3.007	1.35	0.178	14
Strong bicameral legislature	-0.5804496	0.4433	0.0628	0.1675	-14.206	1.31	0.190	22
Upper house committee ⁷²	-1.163151	0.8367	0.0583	0.1555	-16.299	1.39	0.164	25

*= Significant at .05 level, ** = Significant at .01 level, *** = Significant at .001 level

⁷¹ EU-25, lower houses only

⁷² Was an EAC established in the upper house before the lower house established an EAC?

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