Supporting Parliamentary Behaviour in European Union Affairs: 
The Power of Parliamentary Bureaucracy

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Abstract
This paper aims to analyse the role of parliamentary committee secretariats in the emerging multi-level system of European Union (EU) scrutiny. It argues that variations in administrative traditions, the parliamentary parties' resources as well as the networking ambitions of parliamentary staffs influence how parliamentary administrations may support EU scrutiny. The paper compares parliamentary committee secretariats in the German Bundestag and the Swedish Riksdag and shows their different support patterns for EU scrutiny. In Germany, the committee secretariats comply in their support of EU scrutiny with a central EU unit in the Bundestag administration, which is strongly focused on the parliamentary parties. In contrast, the committee secretariats in Sweden support EU scrutiny by collaborating with each other, without the parliamentary parties. As a result, German MPs get a rather centralized and partisan support in EU scrutiny whereas Swedish MPs receive a rather decentralized and neutral support.
1 Introduction

Since the 1990s, the scholarly debate on the Europeanization of parliaments is interested in whether, and if so, how national parliaments in the EU member states manage to maintain their legislative rights when facing the shift of competencies towards Brussels (Raunio 1999). In the early times of this literature, a rather dominant de-parliamentarization thesis stated that European integration can be seen as one cause for the declining relevance of national parliaments. The subsequent constitutional and political developments weakened the power of the legislatures whereas national executives were identified as the winners of the integration process as a zero-sum-game (Moravcsik 1994). Yet, member state parliaments responded by strengthening their formal scrutiny structures, putting a re-parliamentarization thesis forward in the debate whereby national parliaments start to fight back (Raunio/Hix 2000). Former 'losers' (Maurer/Wessels 2001) became 'gatekeeper' (Raunio 2011) of the integration process and hold their governments accountable in EU policies. As a consequence, conceptual and empirical research focused so far on newly established institutional structures, most notably the European affairs committees (EACs), and the formal scrutiny rights of national parliaments for EU affairs, including the participation of permanent committees in these EU scrutiny schemes (Raunio 2005, Karlas 2012).

But 'formal rules do not suffice' (Hegeland/Neuhold 2002: 12) and the formal privilege to receive all EU documents does not imply a proper scrutiny. Instead, it is plausible to assume that the existing filter- and priority-systems to differentiate between more and less important EU documents is equally if not more relevant to assess EU scrutiny and the dynamics of re-parliamentarization. In addition, the current literature reduces the standing committees' participation in EU scrutiny to whether committees other than the EAC are involved and in which frequency (Karlas 2012: 1101). However, also the de/centralization of EU scrutiny matters, i.e. the involvement of other permanent committees in day-to-day Europeanization. Such dynamics may be less governed by formal rules and may rely more strongly on intra-parliamentary and committees' opportunity structures and resources.

One of these resources of assemblies and individual Members of Parliament (MPs), namely the parliamentary support staff, has not been discussed heavily in the scholarly debate on EU scrutiny so far. This is surprising, as the increase of support staff is a seemingly common response to information asymmetries between legislatives and executives (Campbell/Laporte 1981; Ryle 1981; Jann 1983; Webb Hammond 1985; Mair 1994; 9; Schnapp 2004). Yet, the capacity of these support staffs to reduce information asymmetries and to channel information differs, not just in EU issues: The personal assistants of MPs conduct a wide range of tasks but are primarily focused on the partisan and constituency duties of individual MPs. They are thus less able to compensate for the general information deficiency of parliaments vis-à-vis the EU level. Likewise, the staffs of parliamentary parties, designated to support the collective party-political role of parliamentarians, vary in their ability to keep track of the information in EU-affairs; those assisting the governing parliamentary parties having a general advantage over those working for the parliamentary parties in opposition due to their direct contacts with the member state bureaucracy. Finally, the parliamentary administrations can be regarded as particularly relevant for their legislative assistance, also and especially in EU issues.
This paper focuses on a particular type of parliamentary staffs, namely the secretariats of permanent committees. Compared to other elements of parliamentary administrations such as scientific services or libraries (e.g. Quaritsch 1976; Backhaus/Maul 1990; von Winter 2006), we know very little on permanent committee secretariats (e.g. Neunreither 2006; Winzen 2011). This paper seeks to fill this gap and addresses their role in supporting the EU scrutiny activities of parliamentary parties and individual MPs. We argue that the member state administrative traditions, the alternative support structures as determined by parliamentary parties' resources, and the ambitions of parliamentary administrations in the emerging networks of national parliaments in the EU influence how permanent committee secretariats support EU scrutiny. Empirically, the paper compares the secretariats of parliamentary committees in the German Bundestag and the Swedish Riksdag, which are both regarded as 'working parliaments' with powerful committee structures. In addition, Germany and Sweden have by far the largest committee secretariats in Western Europe (Harfst/Schnapp 2003: 23). More importantly, both countries reorganized their parliamentary administration of European affairs recently and are rated as strong scrutinizers in EU affairs (Raunio 2005; Karlas 2012). Our findings are based upon document analyses and 21 semi-structured expert interviews with committee secretariat staff members, MPs, and ministry officials that have been conducted between March 2010 and April 2012 in both countries.

The paper is structured as follows: The next section identifies the central explanatory factors for parliamentary administrators’ support in EU affairs, i.e. administrative culture, parliamentary parties’ support resources provided to MPs and the network ambitions by parliamentary staffs. The third section describes the emergence, functions and capabilities of German and Swedish permanent committee secretariats. The fourth section analyses how secretariats support their committees in EU scrutiny. The final section compares and discusses our findings, concluding that parliamentary committee secretariats are relevant for understanding the strength and scope of EU scrutiny by national parliamentary committees, albeit their support patterns may differ.

2 Explaining the role of parliamentary committee secretariats in EU affairs

In general, permanent committee secretariats are elements of a parliamentary bureaucracy and although the EU member states differ with regard to their formal status (integral part of the ministerial bureaucracy or distinct bureaucracy in its own right, comparable to the diplomatic services), it is very reasonable to regard them as bureaucrats. Their role and mandate as well as their individual attitudes are shaped by the bureaucratic organization they work in as well as the more general administrative values and culture (Högenauer/Neuhold 2015). The comparative public administration literature discusses the origins and defining elements of administrative culture at length (e.g. Painter/Peters 2010; Yesilkagit 2010, Meyer-Sahling/Yesilkagit 2011) often interchangeably with 'legal entrenchment' (Knill 2001: 105-6) or 'legal origins' (e.g. Schnapp 2004). As a result, though, some confusion exists about what administrative culture comprises and how it works (Yesilkagit 2010, Meyer-Sahling/Yesilkagit 2011). Most authors seem to agree that administrative culture entails 'an historically based' set of 'structures and relationships with other institutions that defines the nature of appropriate public administration within society' (Peters 2008: 118). In turn, they
refer to legal scholars and distinguish a Common Law, a Roman-French, a Roman-Germanic, and a Roman-Scandinavian tradition, often abbreviated as Anglo-American, Napoleonic, Germanic, and Scandinavian tradition respectively (e.g., Schnapp 2004). In addition, the scholarly debate implies that these four ideal-types of administrative cultures and traditions are rather stationary and neglects potential dynamics over time (but see Peters 2008: 119-20; Meyer-Sahling/Yesilkagit 2011). We expect that these different administrative traditions of member state administrations also affect parliamentary administrations and the formal rules and responsibilities that they may emphasize in pursuing their mandate. Likewise, it influences the dynamics and patterns of cross-secretarial activities and collaboration.

Moreover, parliamentary administrations are one crucial actor providing support to all MPs. However, legislatures differ not only in their resources and organisation of this cross-legislative support. They also differ with regard to additional support provided to MPs by personal staff and by their parliamentary parties. Some MPs have personal assistants at their disposal paid by the parliament. In addition, some MPs rely on staff provided by the parliamentary party. However, in some legislatures MPs lack these additional support structures entirely (Harfst/Schnapp 2003). We assume that committee secretariats existing alongside a well-equipped support structure available to MPs by their parliamentary parties perform their role in supporting EU scrutiny differently than those existing as the only source for support. In fact, this dynamic may work in two ways: Firstly, MPs can rely upon their alternative support structures and thus e.g. leave the less politically salient support tasks to the committee secretariats. Secondly, a plethora of support resources may motivate parliamentary parties to expand their influence on staffing etc. also towards the parliamentary bureaucracy or rather committee secretariats, thus turning them more into the same partisan support like those support structures that they provide themselves.

In the course of the developing scrutiny rights, national parliaments in the EU member states managed to get in touch, exchange experiences, and simply to learn from each other (Buzogány 2012). Over the years, several forums came into existence that facilitated inter-parliamentary exchange. Already in 1989, the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the EU (COSAC) was founded. At this forum, members of the EACs of the national parliaments meet twice a year, exchange information, and discuss ongoing scrutiny issues. Furthermore, almost all parliaments have their own representative in Brussels. They meet regularly and inform each other on the political developments in the member states (Riksdagsförvaltningen 2010a: 43). Since the treaty of Lisbon came into effect, one major issue is the information exchange on subsidiarity matters and the possibilities for cooperation in these issues. Linked to that, but without the need to meet personally, the Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange (IPEX) enables the national parliaments to electronically stay in contact on issues under scrutiny. It is reasonable to assume that the varying ambitions of parliamentary administrations in these inter-parliamentary networks shape their support of EU scrutiny, being more or less able to foresee important dynamics.
3 The emergence and capabilities of parliamentary committee secretariats in Germany and Sweden

The formal regulation of parliamentary committee secretariats differs in Germany and Sweden, even though their tasks and functions are rather similar. The emergence of the German parliamentary committee secretariats dates back to the small support staff for the committees of the Economic Council (Wirtschaftsrat) and the Parliamentary Council (Parlamentarischer Rat) that had been created after the Second World War (Schneider/Zeh 1988: 842). Following these experiences, the first German Bundestag had secretaries for those committees with heavy workload, while other secretary staff served two or more committees simultaneously. A decade later, each parliamentary committee had a support staff of at least one secretary, an office clerk, and two typists (Schramm 1966). Today, German parliamentary committee secretariats have over 100 staff members (see Harfst/Schnapp 2003: 23), totalling less than 10% of the Bundestag administration.

When the Rules of Procedures of the German Bundestag were stipulated in 1951, no provisions were laid down concerning the role or number of committee secretariats. Yet an internal Letter of Direction by the then President of the Bundestag Ehlers in June 1951 described the distinct duties of committee secretariat officials and elaborated on their dual function, i.e. supporting the President of the Bundestag in their subordination as part of the parliamentary administration and simultaneously assisting their respective committee chairman (printed in Schramm 1966).

Over time, the mandate of committee secretariats in the German Bundestag consolidated without further formalisation, eventually coming to incorporate the following tasks (Jekewitz 1969: 516-7; Blischke 1982; von Oertzen 2005: 226-30): To assist the committee chairman in the preparation and conduct of committee meetings; to present proposals for the agenda, the appointment of rapporteurs, and for the selection of experts in formal hearings; and to formulate committee decisions and opinions that were given no final form during a session. They have to put the necessary materials together, must inform the committee members about the consultation results in other committees involved, and create the committee’s official printed submissions and oral and written reports to the plenary. In cases without verbatim transcripts, they make short reports about the substance of the committee deliberations and the conduct of the negotiations and ensure their correct inclusion in the formal minutes. For expert hearings they provide a list of qualified participants, coordinate the questions, and send the charges to the stakeholders, informants and experts.

Until the Swedish Riksdag became a single chamber parliament in 1971 the committee system has been organized alongside parliamentary functions. Next to a committee on the constitution there have been three law committees, a tax committee and a budget committee (Riksdagsstyrelsen 2005: 32). But at that time committee secretariats (kanslier) have been a mature institution tracing back to the end of the Riksdag of the Estates in 1867 (Tingsten 1934). Today, the Swedish Riksdag Act specifies that parliamentary committees shall be 'assisted by secretariats which form part of the Riksdag Administration' (Riksdag Act 9/2). The instructions for Riksdag's Administration (Act 2011:745) inform on the main tasks of the parliamentary administration, including to assist committee meetings, to deal with the
parliament's international contacts, and to ensure the resources and services needed by the chamber, the committees and other parliamentary organs at hand. Regarding EU affairs, the only task stipulated by law is to inform about the Riksdag's work and questions linked to the EU (Act 2011:745). A survey of the secretariats carried out by the Riksdag administration revealed that they mainly engage in preparing committee meetings and hearings, i.e. assisting members in drafting their reports with proposals for decisions, supporting MPs with their follow-up motions and evaluation of decisions, choosing and inviting experts for hearings, but also preparing information on key issues and, less frequently, submitting proposals on further important questions (Riksdagsstyrelsen 2005: 76). In addition, a report on the 'Riksdag in the light of the 21st century' mandates that the heads of the secretariats to play a central role in planning the committees' daily work: 'If necessary', they shall advise the committee by gathering information on certain policies, e.g. through summary reports written by the secretariat, study visits, or expert hearings (Riksdagsstyrelsen 2000: 20).

To assess the workload of these committees' secretariats in both countries, we contrast the number of documents considered by their respective parliamentary committees. A comparative analysis reveals several important similarities and differences across Germany and Sweden and their EU and permanent committees (see table 1). First, the total number of EU documents is rather similar in both countries (approx. 3,900).1 However, the number of EU documents sent to the Swedish permanent committees increased by approx. 50% compared to the previous legislative period (Riksdagsförvaltningen 2010b: 31). In contrast, the number of EU documents submitted to German parliamentary committees is rather stable.

Second, the workload in EU-related issues is distributed across the permanent committees in both countries, signifying their strong involvement in EU scrutiny (Riksdagsförvaltningen 2010a: 56–7). A closer analysis of these sectoral differences shows that the committees with the highest and the lowest EU workload are rather similar across both countries, i.e. the EU Committee considers the highest number of EU-related documents and the Cultural Affairs and Defence Committee respectively the lowest number of documents. The second highest workload differs, i.e. the Industry and Trade Committee in Germany versus the Agriculture and Environment Committee in Sweden. However, if we combine the numbers of EU documents in the German Agriculture Committee and the German Environment Committee, to compare it to the Swedish committee, the added number of EU documents is as well the second highest as their Swedish counterparts.

Lastly, the analysis reveals that the workload of parliamentary committee secretariats differs slightly between documents related to EU affairs and governmental initiatives, especially with regard to those committees with a higher workload. Whereas the Justice Committees and the Committees of Finance and/or Budget experience the highest workload with regard to governmental initiatives, the Defence Committees are among those committees with the

1 This similarity is very likely to change when comparing the past legislative periods, i.e. in Germany the number of EU documents decreased to approx. 1,800 due to the constant application of the prioritization procedure throughout the whole 17th legislative period (DIP 2013).
lowest workload on governmental papers. Put together, the Defence Committees face in EU affairs and in domestic initiatives the lowest workload as number of considered documents. Those committee secretariats experiencing the highest workload in handling EU documents, i.e. the Industry and Trade Committee in Germany and the Foreign Affairs Committee in Sweden, are also rather strongly occupied with governmental initiatives.

Due to the introduction of the prioritisation procedure in the German Bundestag, the workload decreased also during the analysed period of time, i.e. between the first and the second half of the 16th legislative period, by approx. 16% per committee (on average). However, a closer comparison shows that only the workload of the Defence Committee increased (marginally). All other committees diminished their workload rather equally (standard deviation: 10%). From those committees, the two committees with the highest and the lowest workload maintain the same before and after the introduction of the prioritisation procedure. Yet, the committees differed in their accomplished workload reduction due to the new procedure. The lowest workload reduction was experienced by the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid (-2%) and by the EU Committee (-4%), whereas the Committee on Education and Research (-38%) as well as the Committee on Finance (-31%) had the strongest workload reduction. Lastly, the two committees with the highest share of the overall reduction of EU documents before and after the introduction of the prioritisation procedure were the Committee on Industry and Trade (18%) as well as the Committee on Education (13%), whereas the aforementioned Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid (1%) as well as the Committee for Labour and Social Affairs (2%) had the lowest share of the overall workload reduction. These findings suggest that the introduction of the prioritisation procedure had relevant effects on the workload across and within parliamentary committees in the German Bundestag. They also show that the overall trend during the whole period is valid, i.e. the parliamentary committees with the highest and lowest EU-related workload did not change due to the introduction of the prioritisation procedure. More importantly, the workload analysis during the first and the second half of the 16th legislative period reveals that the EU Committee did not reduce its workload, to the contrary.

4 German and Swedish parliamentary committee secretariats and EU scrutiny

4.1 The centralized and partisan support of EU scrutiny in Germany

The German EU Committee has been established in 1994 and exercises a cross-sectoral responsibility to deliver opinions on the behalf of the whole Bundestag. Especially the encouragement of the German Constitutional Court has provided incentives for the Bundestag to further strengthen its involvement in EU affairs (Beichelt 2012). Just recently, in July 2013, the Act on the Cooperation Between the Federal Government and Bundestag in EU Affairs (EUZBBG) was renewed, stipulating that 'the Bundestag shall participate in the decision-making processes', 'shall have the right to state its position' and shall be notified by the German government 'as early as possible' (Section 1 § 1 EUZBBG). The standing committees shall be part of the deliberations and can forward their recommendation for decision to the plenary in order to vote over a decision that has to be taken into account by the Federal Government. Yet, in the majority of cases, 'the consultation procedure ends with a mere
acknowledgement, rarely with a substantive recommendation to the Parliament' (Bundestag 2013).

Since 2005, the Bundestag strengthened the support of its permanent EU committee considerably. Next to the EU Committee secretariat, consisting of one head and five members, including three higher civil servants trained as lawyers (Gerlof 2006), a special unit for EU affairs (PA1) was created as a part of the Bundestag administration. More precisely, it was located inside the subdivision that traditionally hosts all committee secretariats. Thereby, it was organised alongside the pre-existing committee secretariat supporting the permanent EU committee. Its task was to increase the Bundestag’s ‘EU-ability’ and to decrease its information and control deficits (Calliess/Beichelt 2013: 26).

In June 2007, the Bundestag introduced a new so-called ‘prioritization procedure’, one year later also formalized into its rules of procedure, in order to cope with the continuous increase of EU documents. The new procedure aims to focus parliamentary consideration towards important EU initiatives and to facilitate and streamline the transfer procedure of EU documents. It states that only EU documents of a particular document type are, in general, eligible for consideration in the parliamentary committees and should give priority (§ 93 para 3 GOBT). More importantly, the decision on which of these EU documents is submitted to which parliamentary committee(s) is delegated to the aforementioned section on EU affairs inside the Bundestag administration, which takes these decisions only after an explicit guidance by the parliamentary parties. Put differently, only those EU-related documents are transmitted and considered by parliamentary committees that had gained the interest of at least one parliamentary party, issuing its request by the prioritization procedure that is managed by the Bundestag administration. Overall, this change in procedure led to a significant concentration of the parliamentary consultation processes, reducing the number of EU documents that are eventually passed to the parliamentary committees (Bundestag 2010: chap. 10.8).

As a ‘bureaucratic consequence’, the EU unit in the Bundestag administration was extended in 2007 by opening a Bundestag liaison office at the European Parliament (EP) as a direct link towards the EU institutions, facilitating the information and knowledge transfer and supporting the crucial role of the Bundestag administration unit in the prioritization process, thus enhancing its capabilities to anticipate the relevant and prioritized EU initiatives. These anticipation objectives covered also a partisan perspective, i.e. the Brussels office was also regarded as a mean to enhance the contacts to the German parliamentary groups in the EP, as exemplified by its composition of staff members directly selected by the parliamentary parties (expert interviews DEPA1, DESC2).

Recently, in 2013, the EU unit in the Bundestag administration was extended into a full-fledged subdivision of the Bundestag administration (PE). The new subdivision entails six sections. One of them is the secretariat of the EU Committee, which is therefore no longer part of the subdivision containing all committee secretariats. However, its influence on the selection and prioritization of important proposals from the EU institutions is supposed to continue (Bundestag 2013a: 37). In practice, though, a new section inside the subdivision has been created for ‘analysis, counselling and prioritization’, being responsible to transmit the EU
documents to the permanent committees (ibid.). It is assisted by the Bundestag liaison office. The office is connected and assisted by the German Permanent Representation (Section 11 § 2 EUZGGB). To sum up, the Bundestag enhanced the status of EU affairs inside its administration from a single unit – the EU Committee secretariat – into a subdivision within less than a decade. Today, members of the parliamentary administration are largely responsible for the prioritization of EU documents in conjunction with the parliamentary parties. In contrast, the EU Committee secretariat is largely excluded from these tasks. The centralization makes the subdivision the crucial actor in EU affairs within the Bundestag administration (DEPA3, DEEC4) – in conjunction with the staff members from the parliamentary parties, thus also weakening the previously existing stronger separation of different support actors in EU affairs, most notably between the Bundestag administration and the parliamentary party staffers. In the future, parliamentary committee secretariats expect that the growing interactions between the aforementioned actors may interfere into their core functions and mandates, in a sense diminishing their administrative and executing role further (DEPA3, DEPA7).

In addition, the German Bundestag administration perceived already rather early the relevance of this new forum for exchanging information and engaged rather actively in suggesting its own document storage and exchange system as a blueprint for IPEX (DEPA1, DEPA5). Furthermore, the ambition to become one of the key hubs in the emerging network of national parliamentary administrations in the EU is signified by the fact that the German representative in the IPEX board took over the role as chair from the beginning, thus gaining some leverage in guiding where the newly established platform may develop (DEPA3).

### 4.2 The decentralized and neutral support of EU scrutiny in Sweden

In Sweden, every committee secretariat consists of one head secretary and several rapporteurs and assistants. The biggest secretariats are composed of ten staff members, servicing the constitution committee and the budget committee, while the smallest committee secretariats consist of about five officials and support the committees on defence, on cultural affairs, and on the labour market (Riksdagsstyrelsen 2005: 45). In total, approx. 120 staff members work at the Swedish parliamentary committee secretariats, which is one-fifth of all officials in the Riksdag administration (Riksdagsstyrelsen 2005: 45). The secretariat of the committee on European Affairs has medium size with about seven staff members (Riksdagsförvaltningen 2010b: 38). Besides, it is possible for a committee secretariat to 'borrow' rapporteurs from other committee secretariats as well as from other units in the parliamentary administration when they are needed for special working groups or in the event of exceptionally high workloads (Riksdagsstyrelsen 2005: 45). However, there is no further direct support staff within parliamentary bureaucracy for EU issues for the committees. Furthermore, and in contrast to their German counterparts, Swedish MPs do not have distinct scientific assistants or other personnel paid by the parliament. Even the parliamentary groups do not have many resources for supporting staff. Thus, in contrast to Germany, the handling of EU-related documents is totally up to the committee secretariats. However, the chamber secretariat is the internal and external contact point for EU affairs. It gets all documents from the government and decides to which committee the issue belongs. As there is no universal code of conduct,
the subsequent information processing differs between the committee secretariats in the Riksdag. The EAC secretariat has a clear labour division along the policy lines in the Council, with about two to four policies per rapporteur (expert interview SECS1). Also in the permanent committees, the standard is that the rapporteurs go through all the documents, either a single rapporteur responsible for EU issues or several with shared competencies like in the EAC. Less often do all rapporteurs get all documents or is the EU-burden shared, organized by the head of the secretariat (SESC2).

Usually, all documents are announced in the following committee meeting by a list. But scanning the documents, the prioritization procedures differ as well between the committee secretariats. One way is that the rapporteurs decide whether or not to prioritize a proposal on their own, just backed up by the secretariats head. If so, they reprocess the documents, i.e. to break the text down into a much simpler, short Swedish text in order to make it easier for the MPs to understand its content (SESC2). Normally, these summaries do not exceed one page. Nevertheless, highly technical and complicated issues considered to be especially interesting for the committee members can cause a longer and deep-going kind of report by the rapporteurs (Riksdagsförvaltningen 2010a: 34). Sometimes, the rapporteurs explain the issues under the committee meetings. Another way which rather is tread by secretariats in less Europeanized policy fields with less EU-related documents is to simply forward all texts without any editing (SESC2). The aim of both procedures is to broadly inform the MPs on all issues (deemed to be interesting) and to give them the chance to ask for more information by or even deliberation with the government.

In general, rapporteurs from the EAC secretariat have the permission to attend at all EU-related meetings of the permanent committees and vice versa (SECS1). After deliberations with the government on EU issues, the heads of the permanent committees report to the EAC secretariat what happened in order to help to prepare the EAC subsequent meeting and the formal mandating process (expert interview SECS1). But again, there are policy differences. Due to the different EU-related workload, not all standing committees have developed a standard procedure for EU affairs so far. As an example for a very sophisticated and professional committee in EU affairs, the committee on environment and agriculture has been named. Nevertheless, a certain duplication of work has been detected (SECS1, SEMP4): The increased involvement of the standing committees forces the government to first deliberate with these MPs – facilitated by the secretariat. Due to the formal responsibility, the government gets the final binding mandate by the EAC afterwards. Even if the mandate by the EAC usually is not different from the deliberation result from the standing committee meeting, ministers, MPs and committee secretariats have to meet twice. The better the communication between the committee secretariats, the less time-consuming is the second meeting (SESC1).

Moreover, the Swedish parliamentary administration engages in inter-parliamentary cooperation but somewhat focused on Nordic cooperation (SECS1, SEMP5). All Swedish parliamentary activities in EU affairs are at least coordinated with the Danish and mostly Finnish counterparts. Beyond that, the Swedish ambitions for gaining a crucial role in the emerging networks of parliamentary administrations are comparatively moderate. The Swedish committee secretariats, who are responsible for updating the Swedish IPEX-page,
upload information on all subsidiarity issues and their planning in a calendar, on involved committees, on documents delivered by the government and even on committee responses (SECS1; Riksdagsförvaltningen 2010a: 39). This sharing of information is motivated by the respective policy content at hand and less with the ambition to network: Interestingly, the IPEX system is almost not used by the committee secretariats in order to get information on how other member states’ committees position themselves in a certain question (Riksdagsförvaltningen 2010a: 39). This is due to the fact that many gaps remain, i.e. that many assemblies do not share their information in the same way, or that the system is still too slow and technically problematic (ibid.). Again, if information from other countries is needed, the committee secretariats at first contact their northern neighbors, and second, if still needed, other parliamentary administrations.

5 Conclusion

This paper examined the role of parliamentary committee secretariats in the emerging multi-level order of EU scrutiny. Its comparative case studies on the German and the Swedish parliamentary committee secretariats reveal that the committee secretariats in the German Bundestag execute rather the handling of EU documents as predefined by a central EU section inside the recently expanded subdivision on EU affairs within the Bundestag administration, which is strongly guided by the parliamentary parties. In contrast, the committee secretariats in Sweden redefine the handling of EU documents by collaborating with each other, without the parliamentary parties. As a result, German parliamentary committees get a rather centralized and partisan support in EU scrutiny whereas Swedish parliamentary committees receive a rather decentralized and neutral support.

Our analysis shows that the member state administrative tradition, the existence of alternative support structures as well as the network ambitions of parliamentary staffs across the EU influence how permanent committee secretariats support parliaments in scrutinizing EU proposals. The German Rechtsstaat puts a strong emphasis on formal responsibilities weakening the collaboration among committee secretariats and simultaneously facilitating the expansion of extra support staff inside the Bundestag administration. Furthermore, the additional support resources of German MPs, most notably the staff supporting the parliamentary parties, add to the comparatively easy increase of resources for employing the prioritization procedure – but also to the possible infiltration of partisan motives into the prioritization decisions. In contrast, the consensual Scandinavian administrative tradition account for the strong mutual collaboration among the secretariats of the standing committees as well as between the secretariats of the EAC and the standing committees. In addition, the different ambitions in Germany and Sweden regarding the emerging multi-level networks of parliamentary administrations suggest that the centralized support pattern in the German Bundestag is reinforced by rather bureaucratic motives of bureau-shaping and the strong willingness to play a crucial role in these networks across Europe.

More importantly, it is very likely that these different support patterns also shape the way how national parliaments scrutinise EU affairs and held their national governments accountable. Further research into their specific activities handling the EU-related documents is necessary to assess in more detail whether a centralized and partisan support pattern as in Germany
leads to different EU scrutiny activities than a decentralized and rather neutral support pattern as in Sweden. Preliminary findings from our qualitative case studies suggest, however, that the increasingly partisan support pattern in the German Bundestag leads e.g. to a stronger 'functional melange' of actors supporting German MPs that performed their roles more separately before, i.e. the support staff of parliamentary parties and the staff of the Bundestag administration interact more frequently in EU affairs, also at the expense of the committee secretariats involved in EU affairs.
References


Table 1  Workload of parliamentary committees in Germany and Sweden

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<td>19</td>
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<td>Constitution</td>
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<td>3,861</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>781</td>
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</table>

Note: The two permanent committees with the highest and lowest workload per country are grey; bold numbers signal the highest workload, italic the lowest. EU documents may be submitted to more than one permanent committee.

Source: Riksdagsförvaltningen 2010a: 19, 23, 31; Bundestag 2010: chap. 10.2; DIP 2013.