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Resolutions of National Parliaments in EU affairs: The Crucial Role of Issue Entrepreneurs

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Abstract: This paper analyses the activity of national parliaments in EU affairs in the form of resolutions. Covering the time period from the late 1990s until the present, the paper examines parliamentary motions and resolutions on EU affairs in six West European countries: Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom. Differences in the frequency of resolutions between countries as well as between party groups with regard to motions are examined. Moreover, all motions and resolutions were hand coded to establish the valence of the texts, i.e. the extent to which they are supportive or critical of the government. Formal scrutiny powers in EU affairs do not seem to have an impact on the frequency with which resolutions are issued. The activity of national parliaments in the form of resolutions is mostly driven by ‘issue entrepreneurs’, parties which are critical of the European Union and which see it as a salient issue. Motions initiated by issue entrepreneurs are very critical of the government’s policy and of the European Union. Moreover, Motions by issue entrepreneurs tend to have a longer preamble and a shorter operational part compared to motions by mainstream opposition and government parties. The reason for this is most likely that issue entrepreneurs use motions to express their opinion on the EU in general instead of formulating a targeted criticism of the government’s policy. The parliamentary activity brought about by issue entrepreneurs might thus not lead to an increase in actual democratic control and accountability in EU affairs.

1. Introduction

This paper analyses the determinants of activity of national parliaments in EU affairs in the form of resolutions. Resolutions can be seen as the most important expression of the government-related scrutiny function of national parliaments in EU affairs. Analysing the factors driving parliamentary activity in the form of resolutions on EU affairs is thus an important step in the evaluation of the overall activity and effectiveness of national parliamentary scrutiny in the European Union. Besides a quantitative analysis of the frequency of resolutions, the valence of the resolutions was evaluated. Thus, the paper tries to find out whether the resolutions are critical or supportive of the government’s position. For this purpose, resolutions for six countries (Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain and the

United Kingdom) covering the time period from the late 1990s until the present were hand coded and then analysed quantitatively.

The findings of this paper show that issue entrepreneurs (Euro-sceptic parties for which Europe is salient) are a driving force with regard to the activity of national parliaments in the form of resolutions. When issue entrepreneurs are strongly represented, more resolutions are issued by parliament especially if the public is Euro-sceptic. Moreover, resolutions tend to be more critical in this context. The formal powers of parliaments only have a limited impact on the activity in the form of resolutions: They influence the valence of resolutions, but not their quantity. Moreover, this paper shows that resolutions initiated by issue entrepreneurs generally have longer preambles and shorter operational parts – arguably a sign that these parties pay more attention to general political points instead of technical scrutiny. This might indicate that a trade-off exists between activity, assertiveness and effectiveness with regard to the government control function of parliament in EU affairs.

The next section provides a definition of resolutions in parliamentary scrutiny of EU affairs and explains how resolutions are issued in the different scrutiny systems. The third section describes the chosen method and case selection. The fourth section presents the theoretical framework and the hypotheses tested in this paper. In the fifth section, the data and statistical models employed are described, while the seventh section contains the analysis. The final section discusses the results of the analysis and its implication.

2. Defining Resolutions

In contrast to other parliamentary activities such as parliamentary questions or plenary debates, defining what constitutes a ‘resolution’ is not straightforward. There is considerable variation regarding this form of activity between parliaments with different parliamentary traditions and different scrutiny systems for European affairs. Black’s Law Dictionary defines a resolution as ‘The determination or decision, in regard to its opinion or intention, of a deliberative or legislative body (...)’ (Black’s Law Dictionary, 2014). Therefore, on the most basic level, a resolution is the formal expression of the opinion of parliament on a particular matter. For the present purpose, proposals for resolutions suggested by particular party groups will also be counted as resolutions, even though they might not finally be agreed on by the committee or parliament as a whole: ‘[A resolution is] [a]lso a motion or formal proposition offered for adoption by such a body’ (ibid.). Resolutions can be binding or non-

binding in character (*ibid*). Generally, resolutions are thus defined for the present purpose as relatively short written statement in which parliament, a committee or a party group expresses its opinion on an EU legal act (which may be both primary and secondary law, binding and non-binding) and/or the government's treatment thereof as well as suggestions for future treatment of the legal act.

The exact form a resolution takes (in terms of its length, level of detail, technicality, structure and the extent to which they are binding) differs significant between parliaments. The extent to which they can be compared is therefore admittedly limited. However, despite these differences, resolutions in EU affairs are arguably functionally equivalent in the six cases analysed in this paper. They are the most direct and formal way in which parliament or a party group (or even a group of MPs) can express their opinion on an EU legal act and/or the government's treatment of and position on the latter. This form of activity can be contrasted with the less formal avenue of expression in parliamentary debates, which is arguably first and foremost addressed to the citizens (Raunio, 2011, 306). Resolutions are therefore the form of activity which is most clearly an expression of the 'government control' (p. 307) or actual 'scrutiny' function of parliament in EU affairs. By contrast, parliamentary debates are the most important venue for parliaments to fulfil their communication function in EU affairs (p. 306). Resolutions are thus especially well-suited to analyse the extent of activity of national parliaments in EU affairs with regard to the scrutiny function as well as the extent to which parliaments generally support the government or are critical of its actions.

Resolutions on EU affairs can fulfil different functions and take on different formats depending on the formal scrutiny system of a parliament. In EU affairs, a basic distinction has been made between so-called document-based and procedural models of national parliamentary scrutiny in EU affairs (COSAC, 2007). In practice, most parliaments employ a mix of both approaches to scrutiny (*ibid.*). In document based systems, the appropriate committee(s) examine legislative proposals from European institutions and report their opinion to the chamber as a whole and to the government (COSAC, 2007, p. 8). Many of these systems have a 'scrutiny reserve', which means that the government cannot vote in the Council unless the parliament has agreed beforehand (*ibid.*). The extent to which the opinions of parliament are binding for the government varies (*ibid.*). The UK, France Germany, Ireland and Spain are examples of these document-based systems (*ibid.*)

In procedural systems, the European Affairs Committee can in principle give a binding mandate to the government for negotiations in the Council (p. 9). Of the countries analysed here, only Austria falls, in theory, in this category (p. 14). Other examples include

famously the Danish Folketing and the Finnish Parliament (*ibid.*). However, arguably the distinction between these two categories is not crucial for the present purpose. Resolutions that vary in the extent to which they bind the government are issued in both types of systems. The quantity of resolutions as well as the extent to which they are critical of the government is also equally important in both types of systems. In both document based and mandating systems, only critical resolutions can induce the government to change its position.

A further distinction has to be made between centralized and decentralized scrutiny systems. In some countries, parliamentary scrutiny of EU affairs is concentrated in a European Affairs Committee (Austria, France, Spain and the United Kingdom in the present study). In other countries (Germany and Ireland among the countries studied here) the sectoral committees in which a proposal falls are responsible for scrutiny, with the European Affairs Committee focusing on ‘horizontal’ and institutional questions. Indeed, an increasing number of countries seem to follow this approach, a phenomenon some authors have termed the ‘mainstreaming’ of EU affairs (Gatterman et al., 2013, p. 5). Arguably, this is the consequence of the increased breadth of competences and complexity of the EU and changes introduced in the Treaty of Lisbon (p. 10). There are thus some parliaments in which EU matters are centralized in the EAC, whereas in others they are decentralized in sectoral committees (Raunio and Wiberg, 2010, p. 79).

These institutional differences make comparisons between parliaments with different systems difficult. Thus, while in centralized systems only the activities of the EAC have to be collected, in decentralized systems also the EU-related activities of other committees have to be analysed. A potential difficulty would be to distinguish between the EU related and non-EU-related activities of these committees (Raunio and Wiberg, 2010, p. 87). However, the search functions and committee websites of the parliaments analysed here allow collecting the EU-related resolutions of the sectoral committees. The different instruments classified as resolutions are summarized in Appendix 1.

Another form of parliamentary activity which has been introduced with the Lisbon Treaty is the so-called early warning system of subsidiarity control (EWS). The opinions and reasoned opinions offered by parliaments will not be analysed in this chapter. The reason for this is twofold. The EWS and the political dialogue relate to national parliaments’ control of the Commission, and not of their national governments. Thus this form of activity is not relevant in explaining difference between the formal powers in the national context and actual activity. Moreover, influencing the government is arguably a much more powerful tool than the EWS (Corbett, 2014). The EWS is only concerned with the question of whether the

matters falls into the realm of EU competencies and does not aim to substantively influence the proposal (*ibid.*). Moreover, the procedure is used very rarely, as mentioned above, even though some parliaments are very active in issuing reasoned opinions. However, there are strong differences between parliaments (Gattermann and Heffler, 2013). This leads to the second reason why the EWS and the political dialogue are not covered here: they relate to the collective role of national parliaments, and not to their individual influence (Cooper, 2013, p. 532; Sprungk, 2013, p. 552; Raunio, 2011, p. 307). This form of activity does not thus relate directly to either the government-control or citizen-related function but rather to a ‘networking function’ of national parliaments in EU affairs (Leifeld and Malang, 2014, p. 3), and is therefore not relevant for the question of how (domestic) formal powers and actual activity relate to each other.

3. Method and Case Selection

Three properties of parliamentary resolutions in EU affairs are analysed in this paper. As a first step, the quantity of resolutions is examined i.e. the number of resolutions according to the above definition in a given month. This number allows comparisons of the overall activity of the parliament in EU affairs in the form of resolutions, changes over time and differences between different party groups (especially between issue entrepreneurs and mainstream parties) in issuing resolutions. As a second step, the content or ‘quality’ of resolutions is analysed. More specifically, the extent to which the resolutions are critical or supportive of the government is investigated. A critical resolution by the opposition or even a government party can be more appropriately considered as ‘real’ scrutiny or government control, whereas resolutions which just support or endorse the position of the government might not justifiably qualify as such. The analysis of the valence of the resolutions can thus give a valuable assessment of the extent to which the result of the ‘quantitative’ assessment of sheer activity are a realistic indicator of parliament fulfilling its role with regard to the scrutiny function in EU affairs.

Since the resolutions are generally short (often around 250 words) and use a rather formal language, using automated procedures such as Wordscores or Wordstat might be difficult (Klemmensen et al., 2007, p. 750). Moreover, the relevant dimension (support or criticism) might not be clear enough to use automated methods (Proksch and Slapin, 2014, p. 132). The application of automated methods to parliamentary oversights is thus rather

difficult (Proksch and Slapin, 2014, p. 134). The use of a traditional sentiment analysis dictionary might equally be questionable for linguistic reasons – comparable content sentiment dictionaries for all languages covered in this project are not available.

For these reasons and given the relatively small number of resolutions issued by each parliament per year and month, hand coding of debates is the preferred option. To cross-validate the results, ten per cent of the resolutions will be coded by a second coder and Krippendorff's Alpha, an index of inter-coder reliability, will be calculated (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 221). Moreover, the length of the resolution/motion, the length of the operational part (in which the actual mandate for the government is included), the length of the preamble/explanation (in which the reasons for the mandate are elaborated on) as well as the proportional share of these two parts of the documents could be included. Following Huber and Shipan, the length of a document is used here as a proxy for how detailed the mandate for the government is (2002: 73). Moreover, motions initiated by issue entrepreneurs tend to have longer preambles and shorter operational parts since they do not focus on technical scrutiny but rather on simple messages which are related to general points on European integration. Comparing the ratio of the preamble to the operational part of the resolutions thus allows to assess the extent to which the resolutions by the different party groups are detailed and can thus be considered 'effective' or 'serious' scrutiny (Huber and Shipan, 2002: 178).

The following countries were chosen as country cases for both the analysis: Austria, Germany, France, Spain, Ireland and the UK. The ten 'new' member states which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 were excluded because of the historical perspective of the study. Given the timeframe of the study from 1992 to present, the short length of membership of the new member states would make a meaningful comparison across time impossible. Moreover, the countries were chosen because they represent an excellent institutional spread and the highest possible variation regarding the independent variables of the study. The aim was thus to select a diverse set of cases (Gerring, 2000, p. 97). Thus, the analysis includes countries with a very Eurosceptic electorate, such as Austria and the UK, as well as countries with generally more pro-European voters such as Ireland. Moreover, countries with strong formal scrutiny powers, such as Austria, and those with rather weak formal scrutiny powers, such as Ireland, are included. There is also strong variation regarding the average dissent within parties on European integration, with Austria and Germany showing very low values and the UK with very high values. The same holds true for the presence of Euroscepticism in the party system and the salience of the EU, as expressed by the issue entrepreneurship score.

4. Theory and Hypotheses

The present paper draws on the Principal-Agent Approach (PA), which was originally applied to the US Congress (Mayhew, 1974, Ferejohn, 1986, Fiorina, 1979, McCubbins, Noll and Weingast, 1987). The major problem identified in the relationship between principal and agent is that there are almost always conflicting interests between the two, so that agency loss can occur – the agent does not fulfil what the principal wants him to do (Kiwiet and McCubbins, 1991, p. 5). The potential for agency loss is larger in EU affairs than in domestic politics, since the government has informational advantages vis-à-vis parliament. The government is involved in Council negotiations and is thus better informed on the position of other member states. To make matters worse, the parliament cannot control what its own government is actually doing in the Council (Moravcsik, 1994). The parliament thus has to actively use all the oversight mechanisms at its disposal to alleviate the informational asymmetry.

Among the first to apply PA systematically to parliamentary democracy were Strøm, Bergman and Müller in an edited volume (Strøm, Bergman and Müller, 2003). They point out that parliamentary democracy, in its simplest form, represents one continuous chain of delegation (*ibid.*). The ultimate principal in this chain is the electorate. On Election Day, voters delegate to legislators, who are thus the agents of the voters (Strøm, 2003, p. 63). At the same time, legislators act as principals of the chief executive and the cabinet, whom they in turn elect (*ibid.*). The cabinet ministers are thus the agents of the legislators. In the opposite direction to this chain of delegation runs a line of accountability (Auel, 2007, p. 496).

The preferences of the ultimate principal, the citizens, are logically the first step in the chain of delegation and determine what positions the actors in the chain of delegation have to comply with. The underlying rationale is that parliaments in countries with a Eurosceptic electorate might be more inclined to be active in scrutinising the government. Eurosceptic principals expect their agents to be more assertive on EU affairs. In contrast, where there is a permissive consensus in favour of the EU, MPs might have fewer incentives to invest their time and resources in scrutiny (Bergman, 1997). Arguably, this might also hold true for the number of resolutions issued per month. Moreover, it can be hypothesized the resolutions tend to be more critical if the public is Eurosceptic.

H1a: Parliaments issue more resolutions on EU affairs per month if the public is Eurosceptic.

H1b: Parliaments issue more critical resolutions on EU affairs if the public is Eurosceptic.

In general, in European democracies, the impact of political parties has to be taken into account (King, 1976). MPs of Eurosceptic parties have a strong interest in being perceived as active on Europe (De Vries and Edwards, 2009, in Auel and Raunio, 2014b, p. 16). We can thus expect scrutiny activity to be high if Europe is salient for the parties in the party system and if they are sceptical about it – in other words, if issue entrepreneurs are present. Issue entrepreneurship is defined as ‘a political strategy with which parties mobilize new policy issues that have been largely ignored by the political mainstream and adopt a position on the issue that is substantially different from the current position of the mainstream’ (Hobolt and De Vries, 2012, p. 3). Usually these are ‘challenger parties’, i.e. parties which have not held political office before (ibid.). However, in the present context all parties which display a combination of perceiving the EU as highly salient and negative can be considered issue entrepreneurs. Parties which adopt such a strategy have a lot of electoral benefit from being perceived as active in EU affairs but face very little cost. We can thus assume that if issue entrepreneurs feature strongly in the party system, more Euroscepticism would lead to more resolutions on EU affairs. For them, there would be higher benefits from scrutiny activity relative to costs. If parties do not care deeply about Europe or are generally accommodating of it, but are faced with a Eurosceptic electorate, MPs might want to be perceived as active in EU affairs by issuing resolutions. They face potentially high costs by investing time and resources in an issue on which they diverge from their voters. On the party level, it is thus hypothesized that parties which are issue entrepreneurs initiate more motions/resolutions on Europe. Given their negative position on the EU, these resolutions are also likely to be very critical.

H2a: Parliaments with a high collective issue entrepreneurship score issue more resolutions in a given month.

H2b: Parties which are issue entrepreneurs issue more resolutions on Europe in a given month.

When MPs as agents of the voters and principals of the government have diverging preferences, intra-party dissent is the result of a conflict between the interests of the MPs principals, voters and the party leadership, according to Competing Principals Theory (CPT) (Carey, 2007, Sieberer, 2013). It is in the interest of parties, or more precisely, the party leadership, to present a coherent position to the electorate (Auel and Raunio, 2014b, p. 16). MPs can be expected to manage their function as principals and agents of the government in EU affairs in such a way that their interests in the different functions are not put at risk (Auel, 2007, p. 10). Thus, party cohesion, which is in general a very important factor in comparative politics, also seems to play an important role in how much parliaments scrutinise their governments in EU affairs (Auel and Benz, 2005, p. 383). Under certain conditions, defecting from the party whip can be beneficial for both the party and individual MPs, since it enables the party to appeal to a wide array of voters (Kam, 2009, p. 131). However, in general, being perceived as divided on an issue clearly harms a party's prospects in the next elections (Kam, 2009, p. 134). This logic might be especially pronounced in the case of European affairs, when voters are Eurosceptic and perceive EU affairs as an important issue. Thus, if parties are divided on a significant issue such as European integration, they are likely not to issue resolutions on the issue (Auel, 2007, p. 492). This holds true for both government and opposition parties. Parties thus channel how MPs react to the position of the electorate in EU affairs. In the present framework, parties or party cohesion are thus seen as an additional factor MPs have to take into account in their costs-benefit calculation of whether to become active in EU affairs. Parties, or more precisely their leadership, are the second principal of MPs, after voters (Auel, 2009, p. 22). We can thus speak of a situation of 'multiple principals' (Lyne, Nielsen and Tierney, 2003, p. 7).

If parties are divided over Europe, the MPs are likely to be more reluctant to be active scrutinisers. Parties might want to prevent these divisions to become apparent, since their position on the EU has a significant effect on the propensity of voters to vote for them, as De Vries and Tillman have shown (2011, p. 10). There is thus 'issue voting' with regard to the EU (see Downs, 1957). Whether to be active in scrutiny then becomes a question of when the rewards of being perceived as active outweigh the costs of presenting an incoherent party image. At the party level, it is thus suspected that parties which are internally divided issue fewer resolutions on Europe per month.

H3a: If parties are collectively divided on Europe, their parliaments issue fewer resolutions on EU affairs

H3b: Parties which are internally divided issue fewer resolutions on Europe in a given month.

Finally, with regard to the content of resolutions, it can be argued that issue entrepreneurs will focus more on general criticism of the European Union instead of actual scrutiny in the form of detailed policy suggestions. This measure was inspired by the work of Huber and Shipan who use the relative length of legal documents as a proxy for the level of discretion a bureaucratic agent has in the implementation of the laws (Huber and Shipan, 2002, p. 73). As a proxy for the relationship between general statements and actual policy prescriptions, the ratio between the preamble and the operational part of resolutions is employed, as explained above.

H 4 Resolutions initiated by Issue entrepreneurs will have a lower ratio of the operational part to the preamble.

The literature on national parliaments has recognized that formal scrutiny powers do not necessarily mirror their actual activity in EU affairs (Auel and Benz, 2005; Pollack and Smolinski, 2003; Sprungk, 2007). Formal scrutiny powers mostly concern the extent to which parliament receives information on EU affairs and the extent to which it can issue binding mandates to the government (Winzen, 2012, p.660). A. The role of formal rights will thus be included as a control variable in the analysis. Moreover, the extent to which Europe is topical in a particular country at a given point in time might have an impact on the extent to which motions and resolutions on Europe are issued. This might for example be the case when a country currently holds the Council Presidency, which is included as a control variable. Finally, the average left/right position of the parliament as a whole and of particular parties is included as control variables, as well as the government/opposition status of individual parties.

5. Data and Model

All in all, 4062 resolutions were collected covering the time period from the mid-1990s until the present, even though for France, Ireland and the United Kingdom data for the entire time period are not available or could not be coded for reasons of feasibility (see Appendix 1). For the analysis at the parliamentary level, the resolutions are aggregated by month. Given the distribution of the number of resolutions which follows a poisson distribution, a multilevel-count model was applied to assess the overall number of resolutions by month (see Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2012, p. 696) (Model 1). In order to analyse the overall valence of the resolutions issued by a parliament in a given month, all resolutions were hand coded for their valence on a Likert-type scale from -2 to 2. The mean of the valence scores for all resolutions issued was used as the dependent variable for a multilevel linear regression (Model 2). To account for autocorrelation, a lagged dependent variable was included (Becks and Katz, 1995).

As predictor variables, the issue entrepreneur score of the parliament was included, operationalized as the difference between the mean party position on Europe of all parties in parliament and the party position of each respective party, multiplied by the salience score of each party (Hobolt and De Vries, 2012, p. 256). For the analysis at the parliamentary level, the sum of the issue entrepreneur scores all parties represented in parliament in a given month was calculated. Popular Euroscepticism is operationalized as the number of respondents stating that membership of their country to the European Union were a 'good thing' minus those stating that it was 'a bad thing' in the Eurobarometer survey pre-2011 (Eurobarometer, 2015). As control variables, the mean left/right position for all parties in parliament and the mean internal party dissent were included, all based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES, 2014). Moreover, the strength of formal scrutiny powers based on Winzen (2012) and whether a country held the Council presidency in a given month were included. Data on the composition of parliament were derived from the ParlGov databased (Parlgov, 2015). Missing values were filled in using linear interpolation.

For the analysis at the party level, the number of resolutions per party and month was aggregated (Model 3). As for the analysis of resolutions at the country level, a multilevel poisson regression was employed for the analysis of the number of resolutions. For the analysis of the valence of the resolutions, the monthly mean was calculated and a multilevel linear regression was applied (Model 4). The individual issue entrepreneur scores were calculated following Hobolt and De Vries (2012, p. 256). As in the country level analysis, the

left/right position and internal dissent were included as control variables. Information on the government/opposition status of a party was retrieved from the ParlGov Database. The model also includes random intercepts for the different countries and party groups. A lagged dependent variable was included to deal with autocorrelation. For the analysis at the party level, Ireland and the UK were excluded since resolutions are issued by the committee as a whole.

In model 5, the ratio of the length of the preamble of a resolution and its operational part is specified as the dependent variable for a multilevel linear regression. In this model, the individual resolutions serve as observations. A lagged dependent variable and random intercepts for countries and parties were applied. The same predictor variables as in models 3 and 4 are included. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 1 below:

Model/ Dependent Variable	Model 1 (Number of Resolutions by Parliament/Month)	Model 2 (Valence of Resolutions by Parliament/Month)	Model 3 (Number of Resolutions by Party/Month)	Model 4 (Valence of Resolutions by Party/Month)	Model 5 (Ratio Preamble/Operational Part by Resolution)
Issue Entrepreneur (Parliament)	.20 (.05)***	-.12(.05) **			
Mean Dissent	.02 (.05)	.18 (.08) **			
Mean L/R	.05 (.11)	-.34 (.08) ***			
Issue Entrepreneur (party)			.03 (.00) ***	-.04 (.01) **	-.07 (.03) **
Party Dissent			-.04 (.02) **	.04 (.04)	.04 (.06)
L/R			-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.02)	-.06 (.04)
Eurocepticism	1.98 (.47) ***	.50 (.34)	-.65 (.28) **	.14 (.37)	1.21 (.62) **
Eurocepticism *Issue Ent.	.58 (.18) ***	-.36 (.18) **			
Formal Powers	.69 (.64)	-.33 (.09) ***	.33 (.21)	.50 (.15)***	-.18 (.23)
Presidency	.27 (.07) ***	-.20 (.16)	-.05 (.09)	-.04 (.15)	-.38 (.28)
Government			-.90 (.05)***	1.4 (.09) ***	
Constant	-.65 (1.34)	1.24 (.55) ***	-1.68 (.40) ***	-1.45 (.37) **	2.3 (.94)
Observations	933	361	1910	431	1225
Individual					
Observations	6	6	4	4	4
Country					
Observations Party			22	19	20

Table 1: Results of the statistical analysis. Models 1 and 3: Multilevel poisson regression. Models 2, 4 and 5: Multilevel linear regression. Random intercepts at the country and party level respectively. Country dummies and lagged dependent variable are omitted. Standard errors in parentheses. ***=significant at the .01 level, **=significant at the .05 level, *=significant at the .1 level.

6. Analysis

As the results of Model 1 show, the presence of issue entrepreneurs in a party system does indeed lead to more activity in the form of resolutions. At the parliamentary level, the coefficient for the issue entrepreneurship score is significant and in the expected direction (.20), confirming hypothesis 2a. Substantively, the effect remains small however: A three unit change on the collective issue entrepreneurship score leads to about one additional resolution being issued per month. No evidence for an effect of internal dissent on the number of resolutions (hypothesis 3a) could be found. However, as expected, an increase in public Euroscepticism seems to lead to a larger number of resolutions issued each month, confirming hypothesis 1. In this context, an interesting interaction effect with the issue entrepreneurship score of a party system can be observed (Figure 1). As figure 1 shows, when the issue entrepreneurship score of a party system is high, Euroscepticism seems to have an increasingly positive effect on the number of resolutions, i.e. the stronger issue entrepreneurs are in the party system, the more resolutions will be issued when the public is Eurosceptic. For example, at a collective issue entrepreneurship score of 2.7, one additional resolution is issued for a two per cent change in public Euroscepticism. MPs might want to signal to their Eurosceptic voters that they take the task of scrutinising the government on EU affairs seriously. If a country holds the council presidency, more resolutions will be issued in a given month as indicated by the positive coefficient (.27). Substantively, this implies that about two additional resolutions are issued per month if a country holds the presidency. As expected, stronger formal powers do not seem to have an effect on parliamentary activity in the form of resolutions.

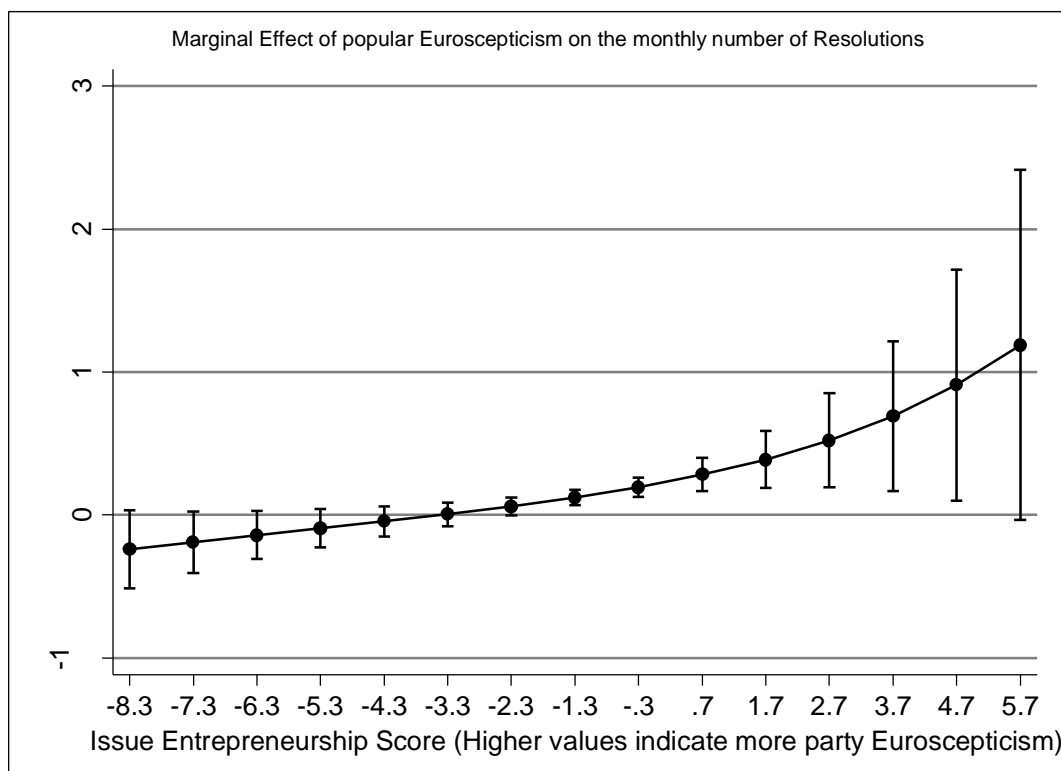


Figure 1: Marginal effects of Euroscepticism on the number of resolutions issued per month given the issue entrepreneurship score of a party system, with .05 confidence intervals

In Model 2 the valence of resolutions in EU affairs was analysed at the parliamentary level. As expected, a higher issue entrepreneurship score seems to lead to more critical resolutions in EU affairs, with the coefficient being negative, confirming hypothesis 2b. A one unit increase in the collective issue entrepreneurship score of a parliament leads the mean monthly valence of all resolutions issued by this parliament to be more negative by -.13. Interestingly, if the parliament is collectively more right wing, more critical resolutions seem to be issued. Again, an interesting interaction between the issue entrepreneurship score and public Euroscepticism can be observed, as shown in Figure 2. For high issue entrepreneurship scores (i.e. with a strong presence of issue entrepreneurs in the parliament), the effect of Euroscepticism becomes more negative, i.e. more critical resolutions are issued as the public becomes more Eurosceptic. However, this effect is not statistically significant for higher issue entrepreneurship scores. By contrast, if parties are collectively in favour of European integration, an increase in Euroscepticism leads to more positive resolutions – potentially these parties want to bolster the government position in the light of public opposition. Issue entrepreneurs thus want to signal to their electorate that they are in touch with their Eurosceptic preferences, while this is not the case for more pro-European parties. In general, issue entrepreneurs might be more topic-based parties and thus have to promote these issues.

In contrast to the number of resolutions, the formal powers of national parliaments seem to have a significant effect regarding their valence: parliaments with strong formal powers are seen to issue significantly more critical resolutions, i.e. a one unit increase in the formal powers of a parliament leads to the mean valence of all resolutions issued in one month to be -.33 lower.

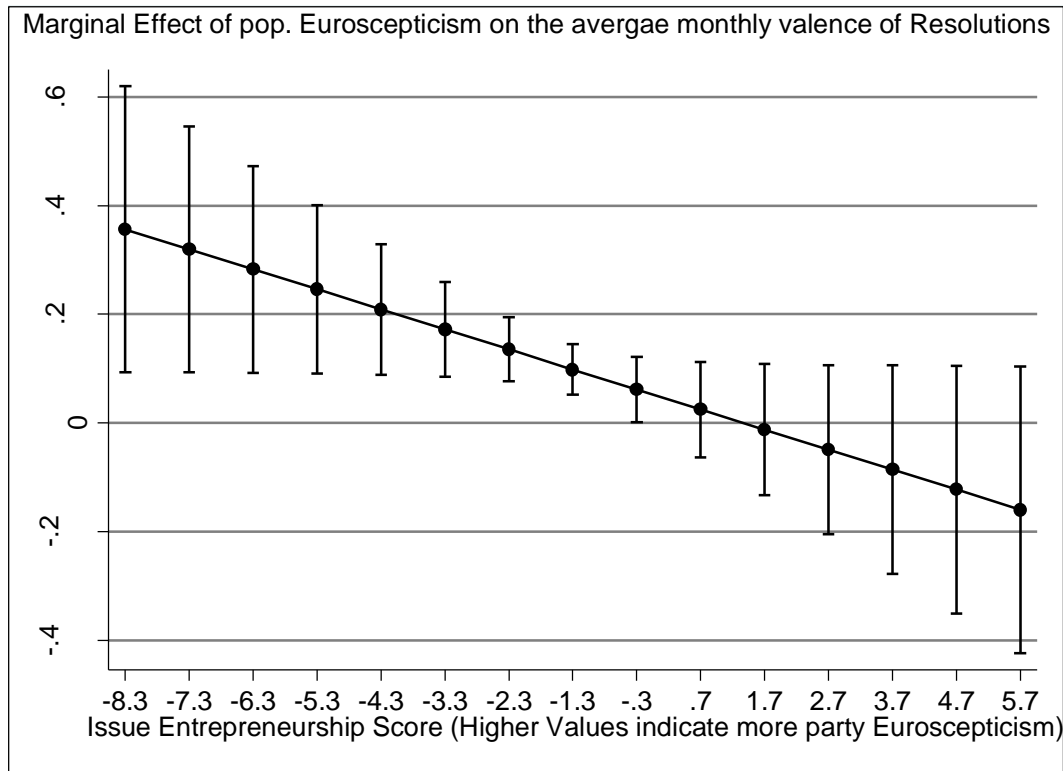


Figure 2: Marginal effect of Euro-scepticism on the mean valence of resolutions issued per month given the issue entrepreneurship score of a party system, with .05 confidence intervals.

As for the results of the analysis at the party level, Model 3 confirms that issue entrepreneurs initiate more resolutions (hypothesis 2a). A two unit change on the issue entrepreneurship score leads to one additional resolution being issued per month. By contrast, if parties are internally divided on the EU, fewer resolutions are issued (-04). This is in line with hypothesis 3b. As explained above, the reason for this might be that an internally divided party might find it hard to agree on a common position for a resolution on a given issue. A two unit decrease in internal cohesion of a party results in one resolution less being issued by the party in a given month. Model 3 thus seems to confirm the findings at the parliamentary level at the party level. However, the effect of Euro-scepticism is positive, contrary to hypothesis 1a. A possible explanation for this pattern could be the exclusion of Ireland and the United Kingdom from the subsample. It is interesting to note that government parties generally initiate fewer motions/resolutions than opposition parties (-.09).

Substantively, a government party issues about one resolution less in two months than an opposition party.

The results are less clear, however, with regard to the valence of resolutions. As Model 4 shows, the coefficient for Euroscepticism is in the expected direction, but not significant (-.04). A one unit increase in the issue entrepreneurship score of a party thus leads the valence to be more negative by -.04, confirming hypothesis 2b. No significant effect for internal party dissent can be observed. The effect for the left/right position is in the opposite direction compared to the results at the party level – seemingly showing that right-wing parties issue more positive resolutions (.17). A similar effect can be observed for the formal rights of parliaments, as in the analysis at the parliamentary level, and their effect is significant with regard to the valence of resolution, but the sign of the coefficient is paradoxically in the opposite direction, i.e. negative (.5). A possible explanation for this could again be the exclusion of the United Kingdom from the analysis at the party level. In the UK, and Eurosceptic European Affairs Committee frequently criticizes its own government. As expected, a strong effect for government parties can be observed: they issue significantly more positive resolutions than opposition parties (1.4).

Finally, it was analysed to which extent the ratio of the preamble to the main operational part of a resolution or motion differs between parties (Model 5). As explained in more detail above, issue entrepreneurs initiate resolutions with longer preambles and shorter operational parts – arguably as a sign that they bring up more general, politicized points which are usually placed in the preamble and care less about actual ‘technical’ scrutiny which takes place in the operational part. A one unit increase in the issue entrepreneurship score leads the ratio of preamble and operational part to be smaller by .7. This result of the statistical analysis could also be confirmed when hand coding and reading the 1225 resolutions which contain both a preamble and an operational part. The fact that Eurosceptic parties are the drivers of parliamentary activity in the form of resolutions but simultaneously tend to focus on politicized points might make it questionable to what extent activity can actually be equated with effectiveness in this regard.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has shown that the presence of issue entrepreneurs and generally the position of parties on European integration play a very important role in determining parliamentary activity. When Eurosceptic parties are present, more resolutions are issued. Moreover, these parties generally tend to issue more critical resolutions. By contrast, the resolutions initiated by government parties generally support the position of the government and can thus not be regarded as scrutiny as such. Divided parties issue fewer resolutions, potentially because they cannot agree on a common position on several EU-related issues to issue a resolution on these points.

Interestingly, formal powers of national parliaments do not seem to have an impact on the quantity of resolutions issued. However, the formal powers of national parliaments do seem to have an impact on the valence of resolutions – parliaments with stronger scrutiny powers tend to issue more critical resolutions. However, this finding is not consistent across the parliamentary and party levels.

Moreover, interaction effects between the presence of issue entrepreneurs and public Euroscepticism can be observed. When issue entrepreneurs are present, public Euroscepticism leads to more resolutions being issued by parliament as a whole. This might be a consequence of issue entrepreneurs wanting to signal to their voters that they take their role as scrutinizers seriously, whereas pro-European parties do not want to antagonize their voters

In fact, the Eurosceptic parties tend to be the drivers of activity and issue a large number of resolutions. An observed increase in the activity of national parliaments in EU affairs might thus be the consequence of an increase in the strength of Eurosceptic tendencies. These parties – issue entrepreneurs initiate a large number of critical resolutions. Arguably, this could be interpreted as mirroring an increase in Eurosceptic views on behalf of the ultimate principal, the electorate. Following this interpretation, national parliaments would indeed fulfil the role as active scrutinisers by holding their governments to account in the line with the preferences of an increasingly Eurosceptic electorate. However, as both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of the structure and content of the resolutions shows, resolutions and motions initiated by issue entrepreneurs are mostly concerned with general, politicized Eurosceptic statements. The operational part of the motions and resolutions is generally short and contains little detail. Therefore, it might be argued that there is little substantive scrutiny, i.e. parliaments might fail to make an impact on the ‘bread and butter’

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issues of EU politics on which they actually could have an impact. Thus formal powers might not necessarily lead to more activity, and activity might not lead to more effectiveness if it is not concerned with actual scrutiny but rather political 'smoke and mirrors'. Thus, the hopes of those national parliaments in helping to overcome the democratic deficit of the European Union might prove to be unfounded.

Appendix 1: Resolutions in the six countries

Parliament	Committee	Resolution	Time Period
Austrian Nationalrat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hauptausschuss • Unterausschuss in Angelegenheiten der EU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stellungnahme • Antrag auf Stellungnahme 	1996-present (detailed from 2002)
German Bundestag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralized • Ausschuss fuer Angelegenheiten der Europaeischen Union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht • Antrag 	1990-present
French Assemblée Nationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission des affaires européennes (from July 2008) • Délégation de l'Assemblée nationale pour l'Union européenne (until July 2008) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Résolutions adoptées • Propositions de résolution sur des projets de directives et divers textes européens • Propositions de résolution sur des projets de directives et divers textes européens déposées par les députés • Conclusions adoptées par la Commission des affaires européennes 	1998 – present 2002 – present (Propositions de résolution)
Irish Dail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectroal Committees • Joint Committee on European Union Affairs (since 2011) • (Sub-Committee on the Fiscal Treaty) • Joint Committee on European Scrutiny (until 2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs • Annual Reports • Number of legal acts meriting further scrutiny 	2007 – present
Spanish Congreso de los Diputados	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comisión Mixta para la Unión Europea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propositiones no de Ley 	2008 -present
House of Commons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Scrutiny Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny Reports 	2005 –present

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