

Issuing reasoned opinions: The effect of public attitudes towards the European Union on the usage of the “Early Warning System”

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Abstract

This study examines those factors that influence the issuance of reasoned opinions within the European Union’s ‘Early Warning System’. It is posited that greater aggregate public Euroskepticism results in the issuance of more reasoned opinions. This expectation is tested using data derived from the European Parliament, the Commission’s platform for European Union Interparliamentary Exchange, and longitudinal data from the Eurobarometer survey series. It is found that greater aggregate public Euroskepticism is associated with the issuance of more reasoned opinions. This study has important implications for our understandings of policy processes, political responsiveness, and democratic governance in the European Union and its member states.

Keywords

Early Warning System, Euroskepticism, responsiveness, representation

Introduction

With the introduction of the ‘Early Warning System’ (EWS) in 2010 as part of the Lisbon Treaty, European Union (EU) member state parliaments were officially

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brought into European policy processes. The EWS is a novel approach to addressing member state concerns surrounding the principle of subsidiarity in the EU. In essence, each chamber of each national parliament,¹ through the issuing of a reasoned opinion concerning a European draft legislative act within the EWS, has a partial veto of European policies (see Leifeld and Malang, 2014). When the number of reasoned opinions issued concerning a particular draft legislative act reaches a certain level, a 'yellow card' (or in some cases an 'orange card') is triggered, requiring review of the draft legislative act by the institutions of the EU. This study quantitatively examines the factors that influence the issuance of reasoned opinions by national parliamentary chambers. Specifically, it seeks to understand the role of public attitudes towards the EU as a determinant of the issuance of reasoned opinions by member state parliamentary chambers.

The triggering of the EWS twice in the first three years of its existence, leading to the EU abandoning one of these proposals, indicates that it has had a decided, if limited, direct influence on European policy.² However, the EWS has also had an indirect effect on European policy with much of the substance of reasoned opinions, regardless of whether a 'yellow' or 'orange' card has been triggered, being adopted into the language of European legislation (Cooper, 2012). Therefore, it is clear that the issuing of reasoned opinions within the EWS has affected European policy and has the capacity to continue to influence it. Thus, developing a clearer understanding of the determinants of the EWS' usage by member state parliamentary chambers, and in particular the relationship between public opinion and the issuance of reasoned opinions within the EWS, has important implications for the study of European policy processes and integration.

Understanding the effect of public opinion on the issuance of reasoned opinions also has implications beyond European policy processes and integration. It addresses the issues of policy responsiveness, political representation, and democracy in Europe. Democracy is predicated on the assumption that the provisions of public policy are related to the wishes of the citizens and that policy changes are linked to the changing preferences of citizens (Dahl, 1971; Pitkin, 1967; Powell, 2000). The EWS was put in place, partially, to increase democratic legitimacy in European policy processes. If public attitudes affect the usage of the EWS, this indicates that member state governments are responding to the public on issues concerning European policy and integration. This further implies that the EWS may be increasing democratic legitimacy in Europe as it was intended to and, therefore, that it has served to reduce the European democratic deficit (for more on the democratic deficit, see Føllesdal and Hix, 2006).

Studies have suggested a number of factors that may influence national parliamentary engagement in European policy processes and the EWS. The overwhelming majority of this research has focused on the role of parliamentary capacity, finding that parliamentary resources (Fraga, 2005; Paskalev, 2009), the existence of sectoral committees (Neuhold, 2011), short time periods to issue reasoned opinions within the EWS (Knutelská, 2011; Neuhold, 2011), and difficulties with inter-chamber coordination (Neuhold, 2011; Cooper, 2012, 2013) are important factors

determining national parliamentary engagement in European policy processes and the EWS.

Leifeld and Malang (2014) extended existing research on member state parliamentary usage of the EWS, examining how member state parliamentary homophily influences engagement with and activation of the EWS. Using a network approach, they find that similarities between parliamentary chambers regarding the party family of parliamentary ruling parties, the year that the countries in which chambers exist joined the EU, and the political system of the countries in which chambers exist (i.e. bicameralism and presidentialism) do in fact influence the likelihood that a chamber communicates with the EU through the EWS. Leifeld and Malang further find that member state parliamentary chambers' communications with the EU through the EWS cluster around policies in similar dimensions. Importantly, it should be noted that Leifeld and Malang did not restrict their sample to only reasoned opinions objecting to draft legislative proposals, but rather examined all parliamentary communications with the EU through the EWS.

More recent research (Gatterman and Hefttler, 2015) has moved beyond these previous studies and has begun to examine how economic and political factors within member states and parliamentary chambers influence the issuance of reasoned opinions within the EWS by national parliamentary chambers. Gatterman and Hefttler (2015) argued that, beyond issues of institutional capacity, members of national parliaments are motivated to issue reasoned opinions by their interest in influencing policy and ultimately achieving re-election. They found that political party contestation in a national parliamentary chamber over issues of both EU integration and the left–right dimension, the salience and urgency of draft legislative acts, and in some instances economic recession influence the issuance of reasoned opinions by national parliamentary chambers.

These findings indicate that the issuance of reasoned opinions is not simply a matter of chamber capacity or bureaucratic development, but that it is a political decision made by the members of national parliamentary chambers. As Gatterman and Hefttler (2015: 323) write, 'it is MPs' incentives and awareness which encourage proactive scrutiny in the EWS'. This, of course, begs the question, what additional political factors influence the issuance of reasoned opinions within the EWS? It is contended in this study that public attitudes towards the EU are an important factor influencing the decision of member state parliamentary chambers to issue a reasoned opinion.

Building on this recent research concerning the EWS (see Gatterman and Hefttler, 2015; Leifeld and Malang, 2014), as well as research that has found responsiveness to public attitudes concerning the EU in member state governance (Williams, 2015), European governance (Bølstad, 2015; Toshkov, 2011), and political party positions (Arnold et al., 2012; Steenbergen and Scott, 2004; Williams and Spoon, 2015), this study tests the relationship between aggregate public attitudes towards the EU and national parliamentary chamber participation in the EWS. By utilizing data concerning the issuance of reasoned opinions by national parliaments from the EWS' inception in 2010 through 2014, the results of this study

suggest that public opinion concerning the EU is taken into account by national parliamentary chambers when issuing reasoned opinions within the EWS. Specifically, when aggregate public opposition to the EU (Euroskepticism) is higher, more reasoned opinions are issued by national parliamentary chambers. These findings support Gatterman and Heffler's (2015) study, indicating that national parliamentary chamber usage of the EWS is, at least partially, a political decision. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that there is a degree of democratic responsiveness to public attitudes in member states regarding European policies and integration. This indicates that the EWS may be achieving its original goal of increasing democratic legitimacy in the EU and further implies that the European democratic deficit may not be as pronounced as previously believed.

Public attitudes towards the EU and the EWS

Following Gatterman and Heffler's (2015) finding that the issuance of reasoned opinions within the EWS is motivated by policy-makers' interests in influencing policy, and ultimately being re-elected, it stands to reason that activity in national parliamentary chambers regarding the issuance of reasoned opinions will be influenced by other factors that policy-makers believe will affect their likelihood of re-election. One such factor may be public attitudes towards the EU.

Multiple studies have examined policy responsiveness to public opinion (e.g. Bartle et al., 2011; Bevan and Jennings, 2014; Bølstad, 2015; Casillas et al., 2011; Eichenberg and Stoll, 2003; Erikson et al., 2002; Miller and Stokes, 1963; Page and Shapiro, 1983; Soroka and Wlezien, 2004; Stimson et al., 1995; Wlezien, 1995, 2004), finding that governments, in general, tend to provide the public with their preferred policy (see Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, 2010; Stimson et al., 1995; Wlezien, 1995, 2004). The overarching theoretical theme within this literature rests upon the idea that the public controls governments and parties through the threat of electoral retribution and/or the promise of electoral victory (see Erikson et al., 1993; Ferejohn, 1986; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008; Manza and Cook, 2002; Stimson et al., 1995).

In essence, governing parties strive to win re-election. Leaders of governing parties, as the main drivers of legislative activity in the EU member state legislatures, attempt to adopt policies that appeal to the public's desires and provide the public with policies they prefer in the hopes of gaining public support in the next election. This, in turn, is expected to increase a government's likelihood of re-election.

This theoretical framework can be applied to understand the relationship between aggregate public attitudes towards the EU and the decisions of national parliamentary chambers to issue reasoned opinions within the EWS. Research has suggested that higher aggregate public Euroskepticism indicates a public preference for less integration exists in a country (see Bølstad, 2015; Toshkov, 2011).³

This conceptualization is bolstered by research that suggests, in line with the thermostat theory of representation (see Wlezien, 1995), that public attitudes do react to public policy outputs (see Eichenberg and Stoll, 2003), and more specifically, that aggregate public attitudes towards European integration respond to European policy outputs, with the public becoming less supportive of unification as policy output at the EU level increases (Franklin and Wlezien, 1997).

Thus, in a desire to win more votes and secure re-election, governing parties in EU member state parliamentary chambers should respond to public attitudes concerning the EU by attempting to provide policies which lead to either less or more integration (whichever is the public's preferred policy). In fact, previous research has suggested that policy-makers do react in this manner to aggregate public attitudes towards the EU (Bølstad, 2015; Toshkov, 2011; Williams, 2015).

Gatterman and Heftler (2015: 308) find that the degree of political contestation regarding the EU in national parliaments influences the issuance of reasoned opinions as policy-makers hope to gain the political support of Euroskeptical voters as a reward for 'their EU scrutiny'. Thus, it follows that policy-makers (i.e. governing parties) in national parliamentary chambers use the issuance of reasoned opinions as a policy tool to appeal to public attitudes regarding European integration.⁴ The issuance of reasoned opinions within the EWS requires member state parliamentary chambers to make a public claim that a draft legislative act violates the principle of subsidiarity. This is, essentially, a policy decision that attempts to maintain policy-making power in the member state and to impede the centralization of policy-making power in the institutions of the EU. Regardless of its success in doing so, the issuance of a reasoned opinion is resistance to European integration and Europeanization.

The theory rests upon the assumption that governing parties within member state parliamentary chambers are attempting to appeal to domestic political interests by issuing reasoned opinions within the EWS in order to secure re-election. This does not preclude policy-makers in parliamentary chambers from having additional motivations, such as a desire to alter European policy or to be decisive in Europe. Rather, governing parties in member state parliamentary chambers are all concerned with gaining re-election and are therefore reacting to domestic pressures by issuing reasoned opinions within the EWS in an attempt to appease the public, with the possibility that some governing parties in parliamentary chambers have additional motivations.

Based on this understanding, I expect that when public opposition to the EU is greater, in an attempt to provide the public with their desired policy concerning European integration, the chambers of national parliaments will be more prone to issue reasoned opinions within the EWS.⁵ Thus, I hypothesize

H1: Higher levels of aggregate public Euroscepticism in a member state result in the issuance of more reasoned opinions by the chamber(s) of that state's national parliament.

Research design

The dependent variable of this study is the number of reasoned opinions issued by each national parliamentary chamber by European semester from January 2010 through November 2014. These data were provided by the Legislative Dialogue Unit of the European Parliament and by European Union Interparliamentary Exchange (IPEX). Gatterman and Heffler (2015) originally collected the data through and including 2013. The unit of analysis used in Gatterman and Heffler's (2015) study was the legislative draft-parliamentary chamber dyad — that is one observation existed for each draft legislative act transmitted by the European Commission to the member states for each EU member state parliamentary chamber. Therefore, the dependent variable of Gatterman and Heffler's study was a dummy variable denoting, with a value of 1, whether a parliamentary chamber issued a reasoned opinion within the EWS on a draft legislative act. These data concerned all draft legislative acts transmitted by the European Commission with a deadline to issue a reasoned opinion between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2013. In total, these data contained 411 draft legislative acts.

For the below analysis, the original data were restructured to have a unit of analysis of the parliamentary chamber-European semester, resulting in the dependent variable becoming a count of the number of reasoned opinions issued within the EWS by a parliamentary chamber in a given European semester.⁶ Additionally, the data were augmented to include counts of reasoned opinions by parliamentary chamber for the two European semesters ranging from December 2013 through June 2014, and July 2014 through November 2014. The range of the dependent variable in the data is 0 (numerous chambers in multiple European semesters) to 17 (the Swedish *Riksdag* between November 2012 and May 2013), with a mean of 0.75 and a standard deviation (SD) of 1.58 (see Figure 1 for a graphical depiction of the data).

The above theory is based on the idea that policy-makers will respond to higher aggregate public Euroskepticism by issuing reasoned opinions in an attempt to appeal to the public and secure re-election. Research suggests unelected bodies are responsive to public opinion, but for reasons other than the desire to achieve re-election (see Casillas et al., 2011). Including these non-directly elected chambers into the analysis would not provide the clearest test of the theory as one may expect a similar relationship between public opinion and the issuance of reasoned opinion within the EWS in both directly elected and non-directly elected chambers. However, the theoretical reasoning will vary for these cases. Consequently, I exclude the chambers that are not directly elected from the dataset.⁷ The data used in the analysis, therefore, include 32 parliamentary chambers in 27 member states (Croatia is excluded as it only joined the EU in July 2013) across 10 European semesters for a total of 320 observations. As each parliamentary chamber appears multiple times, the data are treated as panel data (see Steenbergen et al., 2007).

The independent variable used in testing the hypothesis is aggregate public Euroskepticism in the member state of each parliamentary chamber.

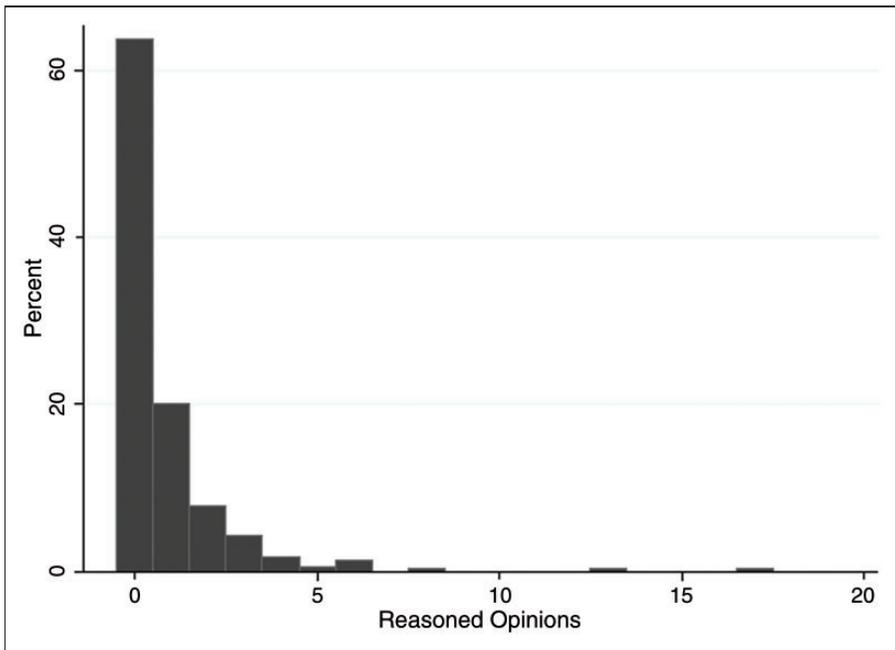


Figure 1. Distribution of the number of reasoned opinions. This figure shows the distribution of the dependent variable.

I operationalize this variable using the following question from Eurobarometer surveys of 2009–2014: ‘in general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?’⁸ Aggregate public Euroskepticism is measured as the percentage of individuals in each member state who have either a fairly negative or very negative image of the EU. Note that this measure of public opinion is relatively general. However, one would expect that parliamentary chambers would be more responsive to more specific public policy preferences. Therefore, this measure of aggregate public Euroskepticism should provide for a more conservative test of the above theory.

The main independent variable, aggregate public Euroskepticism, is measured using the most recent Eurobarometer survey prior to the deadline to issue reasoned opinions for a draft legislative act.⁹ For example, draft legislative acts with deadlines for issuance of reasoned opinions in the European semester running from June 2012 through November 2012 were matched with public opinion from the Eurobarometer survey that was completed in May 2012. Theoretically, this variable can range from 0 to 100. The range for aggregate public Euroskepticism in this dataset is 5.69 (Estonia in November 2009) to 59.64 (Cyprus in May 2013), with a mean of 21.99 and a SD of 10.30.

In addition to the main independent variable, a number of control variables were included in this analysis. In order to account for each member state’s

experience working within the EU's bureaucratic system, I include a variable denoting the length of time the country of each parliamentary chamber has been a member of the EU. This is measured in months using January 1957 as the inception date of the EU. Additionally, to control for economic factors that may influence both public attitudes towards the EU and the number of reasoned opinions issued by parliamentary chambers, a measure of the GDP/capita of the state within which each parliamentary chamber exists is included. I operationalized this measure using data derived from the World Bank which is normalized to 2015 US Dollars, and I lagged it by one year. To address the possibility that the proximity of elections influences the relationship between public attitudes towards the EU and the issuance of reasoned opinions, a dummy variable, indicating with a value of 1, whether an election for the specific chamber occurred during a European semester is included. Additionally, a variable concerning the number of draft legislative acts issued in a given European semester is also included in the analysis. Finally, to control for differences between lower and upper houses, a dummy variable indicating if a chamber is an upper house was also included.

The dependent variable of this study is a count variable, and the data are time-series cross-sectional. This suggests a count model with panel-corrected standard errors is most appropriate. Given the makeup of the dependent variable, constraints placed on the conditional mean as it relates to the conditional variance exclude the Poisson regression model. That is, overdispersion of the variance can lead to a violation of the efficiency requirement of the Poisson regression model (Long, 1997). As such, the negative binomial regression model, which relaxes the assumption that the conditional variance and the conditional mean are equivalent by including a parameter estimate that allows the variance of the observations to remain independent of the means appears most appropriate. Thus, for all analyses below, random-effects negative binomial regressions with panel-corrected standard errors are used.¹⁰

Analysis

The hypothesis of this study argued that higher levels of aggregate public Euroskepticism would result in more reasoned opinions being issued by member state parliamentary chambers. The results of tests of this hypothesis are reported in Models 1 through 4. As the dependent variable is a count variable, a positive coefficient indicates that an independent variable is associated with more reasoned opinions being issued.

Model 1 (see Table 1) displays the results of the initial test of the hypothesis. The coefficient of the aggregate public Euroskepticism variable in Model 1 is statistically significant and positive. This lends support to the hypothesis, indicating that higher levels of aggregate public Euroskepticism in a member state lead to the issuance of more reasoned opinions within the EWS by the parliamentary chamber(s) in that state.

Table 1. Determinants of the issuance of reasoned opinions.

	Model 1
	Coefficient (SE)
DV: Reasoned Opinions	
Negative opinion _t	0.03*** (.01)
EU membership	-0.00004 (.001)
GDP/capita _{t-1}	0.02* (.01)
Election	-0.08 (.26)
Upper house	0.60* (.36)
European semester length	-0.04 (.15)
Draft legislative acts	0.02*** (.002)
Intercept	-2.08*** (.99)
Number of observation	320
Number of groups	32
Observation per group	10

Note: Table entries are random-effects negative binomial regression coefficients with panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the number of reasoned opinions issued by a parliamentary chamber within the EVS in each European semester.

DV: Dependent variable; SE: standard error.

* $p \leq 0.10$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$ in a two-tailed test.

As research suggests that there are differences between core EU member states and periphery EU member states in terms of aggregate public Euroskepticism (Bølstad, 2015), and previous studies have also indicated that certain countries are more active in EU public policy processes (Neuhold, 2011), there is a possibility that those countries that have a tendency to be more active in European policy in general are also more Euroskeptic, thus leading to a spurious finding. Therefore, three additional models were tested. In Model 2 (see Table 2), a dummy variable for Northern European countries (i.e. Austria, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Sweden) was included in the analysis. The result concerning the main independent variable, aggregate public Euroskepticism, remains in the same direction and statistically significant. Further, the Northern Europe dummy variable is

Table 2. Determinants of the issuance of reasoned opinions with regional dummy variables.

DV: reasoned opinions	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Coefficient (SE)	Coefficient (SE)	Coefficient (SE)
Negative opinion _t	0.03*** (.01)	0.03*** (.01)	0.03*** (.01)
EU membership	-0.0002 (.001)	0.0002 (.001)	0.0002 (.001)
GDP/capita _{t-1}	0.01 (.01)	0.02* (.01)	0.01 (.01)
Election	-0.07 (.26)	-0.08 (.26)	-0.08 (.26)
Upper house	0.70* (.38)	0.59* (.36)	0.61* (.36)
European semester length	-0.04 (.15)	-0.04 (.15)	-0.04 (.15)
Draft legislative acts	0.02*** (.002)	0.02*** (.002)	0.02*** (.002)
Northern Europe dummy	0.37 (.45)	-	-
Germany, France, UK dummy	-	-0.10 (.49)	-
Nordic dummy	-	-	0.27 (.52)
Intercept	-2.07** (.99)	-2.08** (.99)	-2.11** (.99)
Number of observation	320	320	320
Number of groups	32	32	32
Observation per group	10	10	10

Note: Table entries are random-effects negative binomial regression coefficients with panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the number of reasoned opinions issued by a parliamentary chamber within the EWS in each European semester.

DV: Dependent variable; SE: standard error.

* $p \leq 0.10$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$ in a two-tailed test.

statistically insignificant, suggesting no statistical difference in the number of reasoned opinions issued between Northern European parliamentary chambers and parliamentary chambers in other EU member states.

Model 3 (see Table 2) replaces the Northern Europe dummy with a dummy variable taking a value of 1 if an observation is in Germany, France, or the United Kingdom. Again, the direction of the coefficient of aggregate public Euroskepticism does not change and remains statistically significant. The dummy

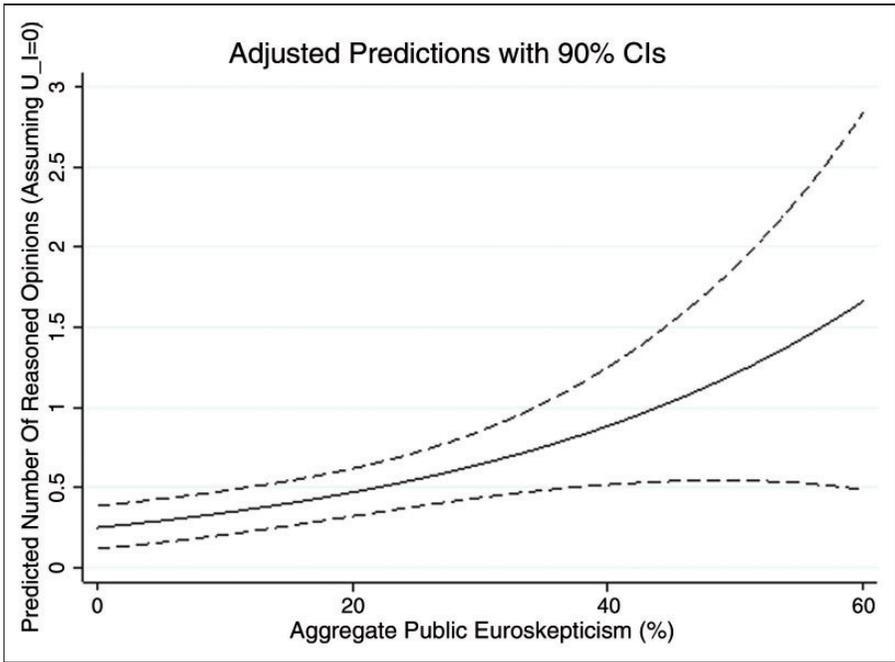


Figure 2. Predicted number of reasoned opinions issued.
Note: This figure is based on Model 1. It shows the expected number of reasoned opinions as aggregate opposition to the EU varies. The dashed lines are the 90% confidence intervals.

variable for Germany, France, or the United Kingdom is statistically insignificant, indicating that parliamentary chambers in these three countries do not issue more reasoned opinions than parliamentary chambers in other EU member states.

Finally, as research has suggested that the Nordic members of the EU are particularly more engaged in European policy processes (see Neuhold, 2011), Model 4 (see Table 2) replaces the Germany, France, or United Kingdom dummy with a dummy variable denoting whether a parliamentary chamber is in Sweden, Denmark, or Finland (Nordic countries). Again, the direction of the coefficient of the main independent variable remains the same and is statistically significant. The Nordic dummy variable is statistically insignificant.

These three models show that the relationship between public attitudes towards the EU and the issuance of reasoned opinions is not a product of those countries with a tendency to be more engaged in European policy processes also being more Euroskeptical. This indicates a high level of robustness to the finding in Model 1 and lends significant support to the above hypothesis.

Regarding substantive effects, Figure 2 graphs, based on Model 1, the number of reasoned opinions expected to be issued as aggregate public Euroskepticism varies from 0% to 60% (the top of the range for this dataset). Figure 2 clearly shows a

substantively significant effect of aggregate public Euroskepticism on the number of reasoned opinions a parliamentary chamber is expected to issue. Specifically, Figure 2 indicates that as aggregate public Euroskepticism increases from 0 to 60, the expected number of reasoned opinions increases from slightly above 0 to just under 2. In sum, this figure demonstrates that national parliamentary chambers do respond to aggregate public Euroskepticism in the issuance of reasoned opinions within the EWS and supports the previous finding of Gatterman and Heffler (2015) that national parliamentary chambers usage of the EWS is, to some degree, politically motivated.

Turning to the control variables, a chamber's status as an upper house and the number of draft legislative acts issued by the EU in a given European semester show statistical significance in all models. The coefficients of these variables are also consistently positive, indicating that upper houses of parliaments are more likely issue reasoned opinions, and that when the EU issues more draft legislative acts in a European semester, parliamentary chambers issue more reasoned opinions. Upper houses may be more inclined to issue reasoned opinions due to the relatively weak position of most upper chambers in many parliaments. As upper houses (even if directly elected) tend to have fewer competencies than lower houses, it is possible that these chambers seek to utilize any and all powers they possess, thus being more likely to issue a reasoned opinion within the EWS. It is unsurprising that parliamentary chambers issue more reasoned opinions when the EU issues more draft legislative acts, as more draft legislative acts provide parliamentary chambers with more chances to object.

Additionally, lagged GDP/capita is statistically significant and positive in both Models 1 and 3. This suggests some support for the idea that parliamentary chambers within countries with higher GDP/capita are more likely to issue reasoned opinions within the EWS. The effect of lagged GDP/capita is likely related to institutional development, with countries with higher GDP/capita also having a greater capacity to respond to draft legislative acts in a short period of time.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand the relationship between aggregate attitudes towards the EU and the issuance of reasoned opinions within the EWS by member state parliamentary chambers. It was argued that member state parliamentary chambers, in an attempt by policy-makers to bolster their likelihood of re-election, are responsive to public attitudes concerning the EU—issuing more reasoned opinions when aggregate levels of opposition to the EU are higher. The results of this analysis, following previous research that has found governmental responsiveness to public attitudes concerning the EU (see Bølstad, 2015; Toshkov, 2011; Williams, 2015), bear out these theoretical expectations. Specifically, it was found that higher levels of aggregate public Euroskepticism in a state result in more reasoned opinions being issued by parliamentary chambers in that state.

The results of this analysis have several implications for our understanding of policy processes in the EU, political responsiveness, and democratic legitimacy in Europe. First, this research informs our understanding of the usage of the EWS. To the author's knowledge, this article represents one of the first quantitative and systematic examinations of the political determinants of the issuance of reasoned opinions within the EWS, and the first to examine the direct effect of public attitudes on its usage. The finding that aggregate public Euroskepticism influences the issuance of reasoned opinions indicates that parliamentary chambers' willingness to use the EWS is influenced by the preferences of the public. This suggests, following the research of Gatterman and Heftler (2015), that the issuance of reasoned opinions within the EWS is not simply a matter of institutional capacity or bureaucratic capability, but that it is a political decision.

Second, this study adds to a growing literature (see Adams et al., 2004, 2006, 2009; Bølstad 2015; Ezrow and Hellwig 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008; Spoon and Klüver 2014; Toshkov 2011; Williams and Spoon 2015; Williams 2015) concerning political responsiveness in the EU and its member states. The above results indicate that member states respond to public attitudes concerning the issue of integration, impeding integration when the public is more negative towards the EU. As governmental responsiveness is a key characteristic of democratic governance (see Dahl, 1971; Pitkin, 1967; Powell, 2000), this indicates that the 'EWS', which was instituted in part to increase democratic legitimacy in European policy processes is, at least somewhat, effective in doing so. Thus, this finding may assuage some concerns that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit.

It should be noted that this study is only one step in developing an understanding of the relationship between public attitudes, European policy processes, and democratic legitimacy in the EU. The data used in this study cover five years (2010–2014). Although this accounts for nearly all of the available data on the issuance of reasoned opinions, future research should undertake similar analysis to that above as more data become available. Furthermore, it may prove fruitful to examine how public attitudes concerning the specific policy areas of draft legislative acts affect the issuance of reasoned opinions by member state parliamentary chambers. That is to say, if the public is supportive of more banking regulation, and a legislative act will loosen banking regulations, are member state parliamentary chambers more likely to issue a reasoned opinion objecting to that draft legislative act? Moreover, as the driving force behind the issuance of reasoned opinions in directly elected parliamentary chambers is the desire of governing parties within these parliamentary chambers to be re-elected, it may be useful to examine how public attention to the EWS conditions the relationship between public attitudes towards the EU and the issuance of reasoned opinions. This could be addressed through the examination of media attention/coverage as a conditioning factor. An additional avenue for future research is to examine whether member state parliamentary chambers are more likely to respond to the public as a whole, or to the supporters of the controlling party/parties of that chamber.

Finally, more research concerning how public attitudes regarding both European integration as well as other policy areas influence aspects of European policy processes other than the EWS needs to be undertaken. For example, there has been important research examining representation and policy responsiveness in the European Parliament (see Casado-Asensio and Lefkofridi, 2011; Marsh and Norris, 1997; Marsh and Wessels, 1997; Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997, 1999; Vasilopoulou and Gatterman 2013, among others), yet we still do not have a full understanding of how other institutions of the EU respond to public attitudes concerning the process of European integration, or more specific policy areas. Nor do we understand completely how changes to the institutions of the EU in recent years have influenced democratic responsiveness in the EU. Simply put, there is a great deal of future research concerning the relationship between public attitudes and policy processes in Europe that needs to be conducted.

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Notes

1. Each chamber is allowed to issue one reasoned opinions; however, reasoned opinions issued by unicameral parliaments are counted twice.
2. The two policies which were given 'yellow' cards were the *Monti II* (2012) proposal regarding the right to strike, and the *EPPO* (2013) proposal regarding the creation of a European Public Prosecutor's Office. The *Monti II* proposal was abandoned.
3. It should be noted that for the purposes of this study, aggregate public Euroskepticism refers to what Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001a, 2001b) call 'hard' Euroskepticism, or principled opposition to the EU and European integration.
4. Governing parties in member state parliamentary chambers should use the EWS as a policy tool for responding to public attitudes regarding the EU as it offers one of a limited number of tools that allow for member state parliamentary chambers to overtly and publicly engage in European policy processes.
5. Public attention to the usage of the EWS is not imperative to the above theory. Recent research has found that in Europe 'policy-makers do pay attention to what the public thinks and wants, though what they adjust may not perfectly match what the public notices' (Arnold et al., 2015: 16; also see Toshkov, 2011; Williams, 2015). In essence, whether the public is aware regarding the usage of the EWS by national parliamentary chambers is less important than whether governments understand their issuing of reasoned opinions within the EWS as an attempt at providing the public with its preferred policy.

6. A European semester is approximately six months; however, the exact length can vary, with some being five months, six months, or seven months in length. A variable denoting the length of the European semester is included in the analysis, and is not statistically significant in any model, indicating that European semester length does not have any significant systematic effects.
7. Non-directly elected chambers include indirectly elected chambers and unelected chambers. Beyond the work cited above, there is additional research suggesting that non-directly elected bodies are responsive to public opinion (Bevan, 2015; Bølstad, 2015; Moravcsik, 2002; Toshkov, 2011). Support for this point can be seen in the Online Appendix, which reports the results of random-effects negative binomial regressions with panel-corrected standard errors in which both directly elected and non-directly elected bodies were included in the analysis. When using both directly elected and non-directly elected chambers in the analysis, the results regarding aggregate public Euroskepticism do not change. Furthermore, the Online Appendix reports the results of random-effects negative binomial regressions with panel-corrected standard errors in which aggregate public Euroskepticism is interacted with a dummy variable indicating if a chamber is directly elected or not. This interaction is statistically insignificant in all models, indicating that directly elected chambers are no more responsive to aggregate public Euroskepticism than are non-directly elected parliamentary chambers. These findings comport with the literature suggesting that unelected bodies are responsive to public opinion, and contrast that literature which suggests that the electoral incentive is necessary for responsiveness. The parliamentary chambers excluded are the Austrian *Bundesrat*, the Belgian *Sénat*, the British *House of Lords*, the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, the French *Sénat*, the German *Bundesrat*, the Irish *Senad Éireann*, and the Slovenian *Državni svet*.
8. The Eurobarometer surveys used were 72.4 (Fall, 2009), 73.4 (Spring, 2010), 74.2 (Fall, 2010), 75.3 (Spring, 2011), 76.3 (Fall, 2011), 77.3 (Spring, 2012), 78.1 (Fall, 2012), 79.3 (Spring, 2013), 80.1 (Fall, 2013), and 81.4 (Spring, 2014).
9. Models using attitudes towards the EU lagged by one European semester as the main independent variable were run (see the Online Appendix). The effects of the main independent variable were in the same direction as the main models but were not significant.
10. I also conducted analysis in which I measured the dependent variable as the proportion of reasoned opinions issued by a member state parliamentary chamber to the number of draft legislative acts issued in a given European semester. As this measure is a fractional response variable, a logistic generalized estimating equation (GEE) with panel-corrected robust standard errors and a first-order autoregressive correlation structure, as recommended by Papke and Wooldridge (2008), was used. The results of these tests can be found in the Online Appendix. This suggests that the findings of this study are robust.

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