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(CES)**

THE MEPS OF THE EPP AND THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

Voting to serve Europe, the nation or themselves?

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Bachelor thesis:	15 credits
Programme:	European Studies Programme
Level:	First Cycle
Semester year:	Spring 2020
Supervisor:	Ettore Costa

Abstract

The initiative of the European pillar of social rights was supposed to bring the European Union one step closer towards a more social Europe and the European Parliament (EP) approved the final resolution in January 2017. However, the result of this resolution revealed some interesting voting behavior of the European people's party (EPP). This thesis will examine how the decisions made by the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) can be understood based on the self-interest of the politician and what trade-off they make when operating under the influence of both their national party and their party group in the EP. The thesis treats the MEP that represented Sweden — voting against the EPSR and Ireland — voting for the EPSR during the EP debate and the arguments they gave for the position they took on the EPSR. The arguments will be used as indicative of the MEPs motivations with use of the decision-making theory and agency dilemma as theoretical framework. This qualitative research offers empirical information on the decisions of the individual MEPs.

Keywords: Decision-making; election-seeking; policy-seeking; office-seeking

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1. Introduction

In November of 2017, the European Commission (EC) adopted the amendment to align the guidelines of the European Employment Strategy with the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The aim of adopting the EPSR within the European employment strategy was to support an upward convergence for employment- and social rights. The EC argued that EPSR as a framework would help to close existent gaps in the European Employment Strategy and social legislation of the EU (European Commission, n.d.). The European Parliament (EP) voted in favor of the EPSR. Even though this outcome shows that the majority of the member states were positive towards the EPSR, some interesting voting behavior within the parliamentary groups emerged. The outcome revealed that some of the Members of the European Parliament (MEP), belonging to European People's Party (EPP) and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE), decided to vote against the EPSR which was the opposite of the agreed voting strategy of their parliamentary party groups.

Previous research on the EPSR has mainly succeeded in explaining why this particular voting behavior occurred during the resolution of the EPSR by looking at traditional conflict lines, such as, "left versus right" and 'GAL versus TAN'. Vesán and Corti (2019) have further suggested that new tensions between 'creditor versus debtor countries' and "high-wage/high-welfare" versus "low-wage/low-welfare" member states particularly explain the low cohesion within the parliamentary groups of EPP and ALDE. Previous research has mostly been based on quantitative methods and therefore requires more qualitative research. This study will therefore focus on this phenomenon at the micro level within the parliamentary group of the EPP, by analyzing the statements made by the MEPs from the national delegations representing Ireland — *voting in line with the instructions of the EPP* and Sweden — *opposing the given instructions of the EPP*. The interest lies in the clarification of *how* the statements are connected to respective voting behavior.

2. Background

2.1 The European Pillar of Social rights

Originally based on articles from the Maastricht Treaty, the Treaty of Rome and the fundamental rights of the EU, the EPSR are represented by three main areas divided in to three chapters in the following order; '*Equal opportunities and access to the labour market*', '*Fair working conditions*' and '*Social protection and inclusion*'. The main areas represent in total 20 principles.

Chapter I Equal opportunities and access to the labour market	Chapter II Fair working conditions	Chapter III Social protection and inclusion
The right to education, training and life-long learning	Secure and adaptable employment	Childcare and support for children
Equal treatment between men and women	Fair wages	Social protection
Non-discrimination regarding gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation	Information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals	Unemployment benefits
Active support to employment	Social dialogue and involvement of workers	Minimum income
	Work-life balance and safe and well-adapted work environment	Old-age income and pensions
	Data protection	Health care

		Inclusion of people with disabilities
		Long-term care
		Housing and assistance for the homeless
		Access to essential services

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en

The 12th preamble of the paper on the EPSR explain the aim of the pillar to be the following:

12. The aim of the European Pillar of Social Rights is to serve as a guide towards efficient employment and social outcomes when responding to current and future challenges which are directly aimed at fulfilling people's essential needs, and towards ensuring better enactment and implementation of social rights (European Parliament, Council of the European Union & European Commission 2017:8).

The 17th and 18th preambles further states that the EPSR is a *shared* political responsibility and commitment, and further, that the pillar should be implemented at both the EU level and National level within their respective competences. This is in consideration of the diversity of national systems, including the role of social partners, differences in socio-economic environments and in line with the agreements of subsidiarity and proportionality (European Parliament et al., 2017:9). The Commission et.al also states that the implementation of the EPSR on the EU level do *not* intend to entail extension of EUs power and tasks with reference to the existent treaties. The implementation should instead be within the framework of these powers (ibid.).

2.2 The origins of Christian democracy in the European Union

Christian democracy has been a major contributor to the development of contemporary EU. The original six members of the EU and its constellation have assisted the development of some path dependencies related to the western European integration, important for the cohesion among the parties and actors sharing the Christian democratic ideology (Kaiser, 2010:85). The beginning of these path dependencies was in the 1950's when the Coal- and steel community was established, together with the strong commitment to integration and supranationalism. Thus, these strong commitments formed a basis of tensions affecting the future EPP. The most important tension concerned the inclusion of potential and new member states outside the continental Christian democratic tradition (ibid.). However, have an early diligent cooperation among both collective and individual actors within different informal networks connected to the EPP, the European legacy of the Christian democracy has successfully been kept (Kaiser, 2007:322). According to the constructivist approach European parties has the capability to influence the decisions of the members through socialization. This means that actors will adopt the behavior considered appropriate in the organization they belong to (Checkel, 2001:553-88; Schimmelfenning, 2005:61-82).

2.3 Structure of the National Labour market

2.3.1 Sweden

The labour market in Sweden is regulated by collective agreements which decide for a universal minimum wage and offer security through insurances. This structure is well known and called the Swedish model. Trade unions and employers negotiate on wages and working conditions and agree together on a common collective agreement. The collective agreements seek to strengthen the employees, protect working people from discrimination and provide the employees with more money when experiencing illness, death or accidents at work (LO, 2018). The collective agreements provide employees with benefits by giving them secure and similar conditions regarding competition which prevents different companies from out-competing each other by offering lower wages and unsatisfactory working conditions. The cooperation between the trade unions and the

employers is based on the willingness to negotiate between the parts, with the purpose to adapt the regulations of the collective agreements to meet important challenges of the society. In the event of failure regarding cooperation the Swedish model will be exposed to risks, which implies political decisions regulating the labour market by law (ibid.).

2.3.2 Ireland

The health and safety policies in Ireland regarding the workplace are implemented on a legal basis. The existent legal principles cover all workplaces and the act of 'Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005' consists of 16 parts including the body of law on the area, followed by regulations, statutory instruments and codes of practice. The main purpose of the act is to minimize, avoid, identify and prevent risk factors in all workplaces. This further requires all employers to ensure the safety, health and welfare of their employees, as much as possible. The role of the employer includes therefore consulting and informing the employees. This is meant to work as a consulting process, meaning that the employees, often represented by a Safety representative, also have the right to bring forward information on safety, health and welfare at work to their employer (Irish Congress of Trade Unions, n.d.). The Health and Safety Authority (HSA), represented by a board including representatives from both government, employers and trade unions, are together responsible for the administration and law enforcement of health and safety at work (Health and Safety Authority, 2020). The Irish system is thus less corporatist in relation to the Swedish system, since employers and trade unions have a smaller role in drafting regulations through trilateral negotiations.

2.4 The National Parties of Ireland and Sweden

2.4.1 Fine Gael and Séan Kelly

Fine Gael has been the second largest party in Ireland ever since the founding in 1933. Even though many of the Irish national parties claim to represent a pro-European attitude, Fine Gael carries the title of being the most pro-European one (Benoit & Laver, 2005; Laffan & O'Mahony, 2008). When

the membership of, at the time, the European Economic Community (EEC) came into question Fine Gael was one of the strongest advocates in favor of membership (Reidy, 2009). Through the first enlargement of EU, Ireland together with Denmark and the United Kingdom became a member of the EEC. The early pro-European attitude of Fine Gael has been continuous until the present day, which in the long-term has been very beneficial related to the party's success within both the EPP and EU. For instance, during both 2004 and 2009 Fine Gael won the largest number of seats in the EP and has also been praised for its contribution to the EU both at the national and European arena (ibid.).

Seán Kelly was during the 8th parliamentary term elected to the EP to represent the district of southern Ireland which covers 12 of 32 counties. Kelly's has had a very successful career in the EP so far, for instance, missions including the position as rapporteur for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2013. Kelly did also receive the title of "MEP of the year" in the same year for his contributions to the GDPR, in more specific terms, including Kelly's work against cyber bullying, for data protection and the promotion of the education initiative of computer coding for the youth (Fine Gael, 2020).

2.4.2 The Swedish Moderate Party and Anna Maria Corazza Bildt

As early as 1961 the Swedish Moderate party advocated for a membership in EU. From the beginning the represented ideology consisted of conservative and nationalistic ideas but today their ideology also include elements of both internationalism and liberalism. The party describe it self to stand for a conservative view on society with liberal ideas (Nya Moderaterna, 2019a). The Swedish Moderates see high value in international collaboration and consider, therefore, the EU-membership to be beneficial as a platform for the establishment of these connections. Apart from this, the Swedish Moderates carry a quite skeptical view related to increased supranationalism, especially in areas related to taxation, labour market and family policy (Nya Moderaterna, 2019b).

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt was first elected to the European Parliament in 2009. Her missions have included the position as vice chair of the committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection during the 8th parliamentary term. Corazza Bildt have also been a member of several

committees, such as, the Committee on Women's Rights and the Special Committee on Terrorism (European Parliament, n.d.a).

2.4.3 The Swedish Christian Democrats and Lars Adaktusson

In general the Swedish Christian democrats represent a positive attitude towards the membership of EU and do especially cherish the fundamental purpose of the EU to maintain peace, strengthen democracy and prosperity. They want cross-border challenges to be solved together, with respect for the differences among the member states, with reference to the principle of subsidiarity (Kristdemokraterna, 2019). In areas of safety, environment, migration and trade the Christian Democrats would like to see a closer cooperation between the member states. Except from this they would prefer EU to take a step back in other areas related to, for instance, gender quotas and parental leave (Kristdemokraterna, 2020).

Since 2014 Lars Adaktusson has been a member of the European Parliament. His most prominent mission has been the position of Vice Chair of the Delegation for relations with Afghanistan. He have also been a member of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Committee on Foreign Affairs during the 8th parliamentary term (European parliament, n.d.b).

3. Previous Research and Theory

The first two sections of this chapter will present the small range of existent research related to the conflict lines within the EP concerning social issues and the EPSR. Thereafter, this chapter will mainly focus on relevant theories which aim to clarify the position taken by the MEPs representing Fine Gael, The Swedish Moderates and the Swedish Christian democrats during the EP's voting of EPSR based on the individual interests of the MEP.

3.1 Conflict lines related to social issues within the European Parliament

Previous research identifying conflict lines within the EP has mainly been focused on supranational or territorial cleavages between the party groups, where most of the existent research shows that the supranational cleavage is the most prominent in relation to the EP. Furthermore, the classic left versus right division has also been considered to be one of the most important conflict line, while national legacy regarding voting-behavior tends to be of less importance (Hix and Høyland, 2013; Hix, Noury and Roland., 2007). Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) Further highlights the its importance, especially when research aims to explain more context-sensitive issues and also that new tensions alongside the traditional lines of conflict mainly is derived from cultural values. Other research has pointed out the importance of new lines of conflict, such as Crespy and Gajewska (2010), who analyze the conflict that occurred during the parliamentary debate and the decision-making related to the Service directive¹ and its socio-economic impacts. Their research shows that neither the classical cleavage of left versus right or a territorial conflict between old versus new member states can fully explain conflicts regarding socio-economic issues. According to Crespy & Gajewska (2010) the conflict is instead derived from the clash between liberals and regulators i.e the combination between ideological positions and economic interests. Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002), have further noticed that Social democratic parties especially representing Sweden, Denmark and Germany often disfavor initiatives that initiates deeper integration with the argument that this prevents the existence of higher standards.

3.2 Conflict Lines During the Resolution of the European Pillar of Social Rights

Vesan and Corti (2019) have contributed with the only existent research related to the conflict that occurred at the EP during the debate on the EPSR. The research of Vesan & Corti (2019) aims to test the possibility of predicting voting behavior among MEPs. They do so by using existent data collected from Chapel Hill Expert Survey, which includes all of the member states of EU and their positioning on political ideology, European integration and policy positions. (Bakker et al. 2015). This combined with their own dataset including the all of the 644 'MEPS that voted in the

¹ 2006(COM)0123: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32006L0123>

resolution of EPSR. As a whole this methodological approach succeeds in predicting voting behavior for most of the parliamentary party groups. The interesting part of their findings is the identification of the so-called 'rebel voting'; The MEPs from some of the national delegations within EPP and ALDE who voted against the EPSR. Vesan and Corti (2019) further try to explain the rebel voting that occurred within EPP and ALDE through existent conflict lines, such as GAL versus TAN, regulators versus liberals and territorial distribution of the rebel votes. The first of the two conflict lines fails to explain the position taken by certain Christian democrats and liberals. However, related to the territorial distribution of the votes, three different groups of rebel votes concentrated on ALDE and EPP emerge. The first group of rebel voting MEPs can be identified by the Northern states (DE, NL, DK, SE and FI), the second by the Visegrad states (PL, CZ, HU and SK) and the third by the Baltic states (EE, LT and LV). Considering these votes in percentage: 100 percent of the MEPs representing CZ, DE, EE and SE within ALDE and EPP did not follow the political line of their groups. This was also the case for ALDE MEPs representing NL, DK, UK, AT and FI. High percentage of rebel voters did also occur among MEPs representing DE (83%), PL (96%), HU (91%) and LT (75%) which voted against or abstained. These votes show that almost all of the MEPs of the EPP representing Northern and Eastern European states opposed the EPSR (ibid.).

The votes in favor of the EPSR belonged primarily to Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) representing the left-wing parties (GUE/NGL, GREEN/EFA, S&D), while the votes against or abstained belonged to the five right-wing parties (ENF, EFDD, ECR, EPP, ALDE). The positioning seems at first glance connected to the basic interest of the left - requesting further EU integration in social- and employment policies versus the right - opposing further regulations correcting the free market (ibid.). Vesan & Corti (2019) argue that the voting behavior of the MEPs represented in the parliamentary groups of ALDE and EPP is only partially explained by the traditional conflict lines and that the behavior for the MEPs voting against the EPSR instead is derived of the combined conflict between high wage/high welfare versus low wage/ low welfare countries and creditor versus debtor countries which Ferrera (2017) have identified as the "clash syndrome".

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 The Decision-Making Theory in the Context of the European Parliament

The decision-making theory is a way to understand an actor's choice in a cooperative structure. The decision theory can be defined by two different paths. The first has a normative character focusing on the outcomes of decisions depending on given pressures and assumptions. The second path is descriptive, addressing how the agents make the decisions they do (Steele & Stefánsson, 2015). This thesis will focus on the descriptive path.

By applying this model in the decision structure of the European Parliament it can be assumed that a MEP is striving to achieve the main goals usually associated to the politician: winning elections, securing policy and extending the mandate. The MEP's voting intentions can therefore be related to the interest of attracting voters, promoting a particular policy or to securing a certain parliamentary office (Hix, 2004). Beside the personal political interests of the MEP it can be assumed that the MEP operate under the influence of two principals; their national party and their European party group. According to Hix (2004) the heaviest influencer of the two principals is the national party, since the European elections are performed at the national level. The popularity of the national party is therefore of high importance for the MEP's electoral chances to the EP. Further on, the European Party group of the MEP plays a crucial role when it comes to the accessing influence over setting policy goals and future office. Regarding the influence of the European party groups, previous research has contributed with evidence showing that cohesion among the European party groups increased in proportion to the national parties' capability to control policy outcomes and offices within the EP (Hix, Noury, & Roland, 2005). Even though the national party can be seen as a strong influencer over the MEP related to the generalized interest of the politician alone, the European party group and the leader positions within it possess control over the areas related to distribution of committee assignments, reports on legislative missions, speaking time, the parliamentary agenda and the access to leadership positions and offices within the EP and party groups. Hence, the European parliament has more influence over the MEP's chances of securing their interests through policy and chances of advancing inside the EP (Hix, 2004).

4.2 The Agency Dilemma within the European Parliament

The agency dilemma explains the relationship between actor and principal. It is necessary for the understanding of the voting behavior in general within the EP. The theory of the agency dilemma is an empirically valid perspective and gives access to a unique insight into information systems, outcome uncertainty, incentives and risk. Therefore it is well applied in studies which focused on problems related to cooperative structures (Eisenhardt, 1989). The present thesis treats the individual MEP as the actor and the MEP's national party and the MEP's European party group as the two principals. Specifically, the dilemma in this situation occurs when the two principals give conflicting instructions to the MEP. The conflict occurs first when the majority of the European party group has decided how to vote; yes, no or to abstain. Thereafter each MEP receives information about the decision and the European party group is at this stage aware that their decision can be in conflict with some of the national delegations within the group. The national parties can therefore only recognize a conflict between its position and the position of the European party group first when the European party group has decided on their position. If the national party decides that its position is not in line with the European party group it will instruct its MEPs to vote against the European party groups strategy (Hix, 2004). Since the conflict first is identified by the national party after the European party group has decided on their position, it is also assumed that the European party group does not send out strategical information to the conflicting national parties (Hix, 2004). On the other hand, the national party has the possibility to act strategically and may do so. The strategy adopted by the national party is dependent on whether the national party is unsure or not on how the representing MEPs will act. If the national party is sure about the MEP voting against the European party group it will send out its instructions. If the national party is unsure about the MEP following given instructions it may decide to not put out its instructions to the MEP in the first place (ibid.).

4.2.1 Consequences of the Agency Dilemma

As mentioned earlier by the "Decision-making theory" the national party tends to have more influence over the MEP's voting behavior which further correlates with the interest of the actor in being loyal to their national party, since the MEP tends to have more at stake in their personal career. Regarding this, it also means that possibly the national party can impose some consequences

for the MEP who do not follow the instructions of their national party. How the national party chooses to approach the MEP in this situation is according to Hix (2014) related to the degree of centralization regarding candidate selection to the EP within the national party. If the leadership of the national party has more influence over the candidate selection it also seems to be more capable to limit the MEP in their future career. This happens regardless of the size of the MEP's electoral district or the configuration of the national electoral system. By contrast, from the MEP's perspective the effects of these limitations are dependent on the size of their electoral district and the configuration of the national electoral system. Specifically, the MEP who is elected under a more candidate-centered electoral system or in a more sizable electoral district will suffer less consequences from the limitations imposed by the national party, since the MEP may have developed a more independent identity separated from the national party Hix (2004). On the other hand, the European party groups also have the possibility to implement certain limitations for MEPs who do not follow its policy lines, for instance through removing MEPs from offices or withdraw them from policy benefits i.e reducing the MEPs influence at the European level (ibid.).

4.3 Combining Rational Choice and Agency dilemma

According to Hix, Raunio and Scully (1999) it is possible to divide the behavior of the politician into three different dimensions of goals; (1) re-election-seeking, (2) *policy-seeking*, and (3) *office-seeking*. The first category, re-election-seeking, will be assigned to the politician that pursues actions that will promote the interests or wishes of their national party, since the national party control the chances of the MEP to be re-elected to the EP (Hix et al., 1999). The second category, policy-seeking, will be assigned to the MEP who act with the purpose to promote policy and the legislative outcomes based on their ideological- or personal goals, regardless of their alternatives and national parties (ibid.). Office-seeking, the third category, will be assigned to a politician who strive for promotion within the EP, for instance, as rapporteur on an important legislation issue or as leader for a EP party group or national party delegation (ibid.).

5. Aim & Scientific question

This study aims to provide greater understanding of the different positions taken by the MEPs representing the Swedish Christian democrats, the Swedish Moderate party and Fine Gael related to the individual interests of the politician, assuming that the politician will be loyal to its national party (Hix, 2004). Even though the previous research has explained the voting of the European Parliament on the issue of the EPSR through quantitative measures, the explanation of how the outcome occurred in relation to the interests of the MEPs lacks depth and details. The interest of this study lies in the clarification of the statements made by the MEPs' representing a party being in favor of the EPSR (Ireland) versus two parties opposing the EPSR (Sweden), and *how* these statements further are connected to the theory of decision-making in the context of the EP on the issue of the EPSR.

The scientific question of this thesis reads as follows :

How can the theory of decision-making explain the positions taken on the European Pillar of Social rights by Swedish and Irish Members of the European Parliament belonging to the European People's party?

6. Method and Material

6.1 Method

To answer the scientific questions, the methodological approach for this study is based on a functional idea analysis which will focus on the factors affecting the outcome of ideas (Vedung, 2018:226). The idea analysis is further suggested to be suitable when the interest of the study is to analyze the logic within political arguments with the goal to clarify what has been stated in a debate (Bergström and Boréus, 2012:146). According to Vedung (2018:201) the idea analysis offers width and seeks to either describe, test the validity, explain or construct political ideas. For this thesis the category of explanation is used, in line with the aim of the study, to *explain* the given statements of the MEPs representing Sweden and Ireland within the EPP group. The manifestos of the national parties are used to connect the statements they gave to the views of the national parties, with the purpose to *clarify* how the statements they gave are interconnected with the national party to which the MEPs belong. The explanatory purpose of the idea analysis in this thesis does *not* aim to criticize the given statements or the connections being made. Such an approach would be more in line with the ideology critique (Borevi, 2002:73).

6.2 Material

6.2.1 Statements

The Swedish Moderate Party and the Fine Gael held speeches in the debate over the EPSR. I will use them as material. The Swedish Christian democrats did not give any explanatory statement during the debate and the material consist instead of an article by the MEP Lars Adaktusson providing an explanation for the vote on the EPSR. The material collected from this article is admittedly written within a different context and meant for a different audience compared to the speeches held during the resolution of the EPSR in the EP. The article still expresses the opinions on the EPSR, but may be perceived as less formal.

The disadvantages of using this particular article first emerged during the analysis, since Adaktusson, compared to the other MEPs has not pointed out the specific areas of the EPSR that he perceives as problematic. However, the overarching reason for his position is possible to gather. This article is also originally written in Swedish but has been translated into English, with the purpose to facilitate the reader.

The selection of the particular MEPs and their statements is firstly based on selecting countries within the EPP-group - Ireland voting for and Sweden voting against. The second reason is related to which MEPs who submitted an explanatory statement during the debate on the EPSR. Since Sweden is represented by both the Swedish Christian democrats and the Swedish Moderate party I have decided to also include both of the Swedish MEPs representing these parties.

6.2.2 Manifestos

Published manifestos are an intended summary of the collective intentions, motives and views of the national parties can be seen as representative of their ideology (Robertson, 2004:295). Since the effects of the EPSR would affect the countries nationally, the national manifestos valid for the parties at the time of the resolution of the EPSR will be used with the purpose to further describe the factors behind the position the MEPs took on the EPSR.

The national manifestos of the Swedish Christian democrats were published in 2014 and 2015, for the Swedish Moderate party in 2013 and Irelands Fine Gael in 2016. They are all valid manifestos of the time of the EPSR. The scope and content have varied between the different manifestos. For instance the manifesto of the Swedish Moderate party has provided with a good range of information and descriptions on the relevant issues valuable for this thesis when mapping out connections between the statement and national party. Both of the manifestos published by the Swedish Christian democrats and Fine Gael have been less detailed when describing their intentions on how certain issues should be or are tackled in relation to the manifesto of the Swedish Moderate party. However, all the manifestos have provided with enough material for the implementation of the analysis. Since the manifestos for the Swedish parties are written in Swedish, the connections have been translated into English with the same purpose as for the statement of Adaktusson — to facilitate the reader.

6.2.3 The European Pillar of social rights - official text

The booklet on the EPSR consists of the full official text on the EPSR, its categories and subcategories, proclaimed by the European Parliament, the council and commission. To be able to understand the MEPs in their arguments, it has been necessary in some cases to also use the official text of the EPSR to insert in relation to the manifestos of the national parties. This was done in order to clarify the connection between both the arguments of the MEPs and the manifestos of their national party.

6.3 Critical review

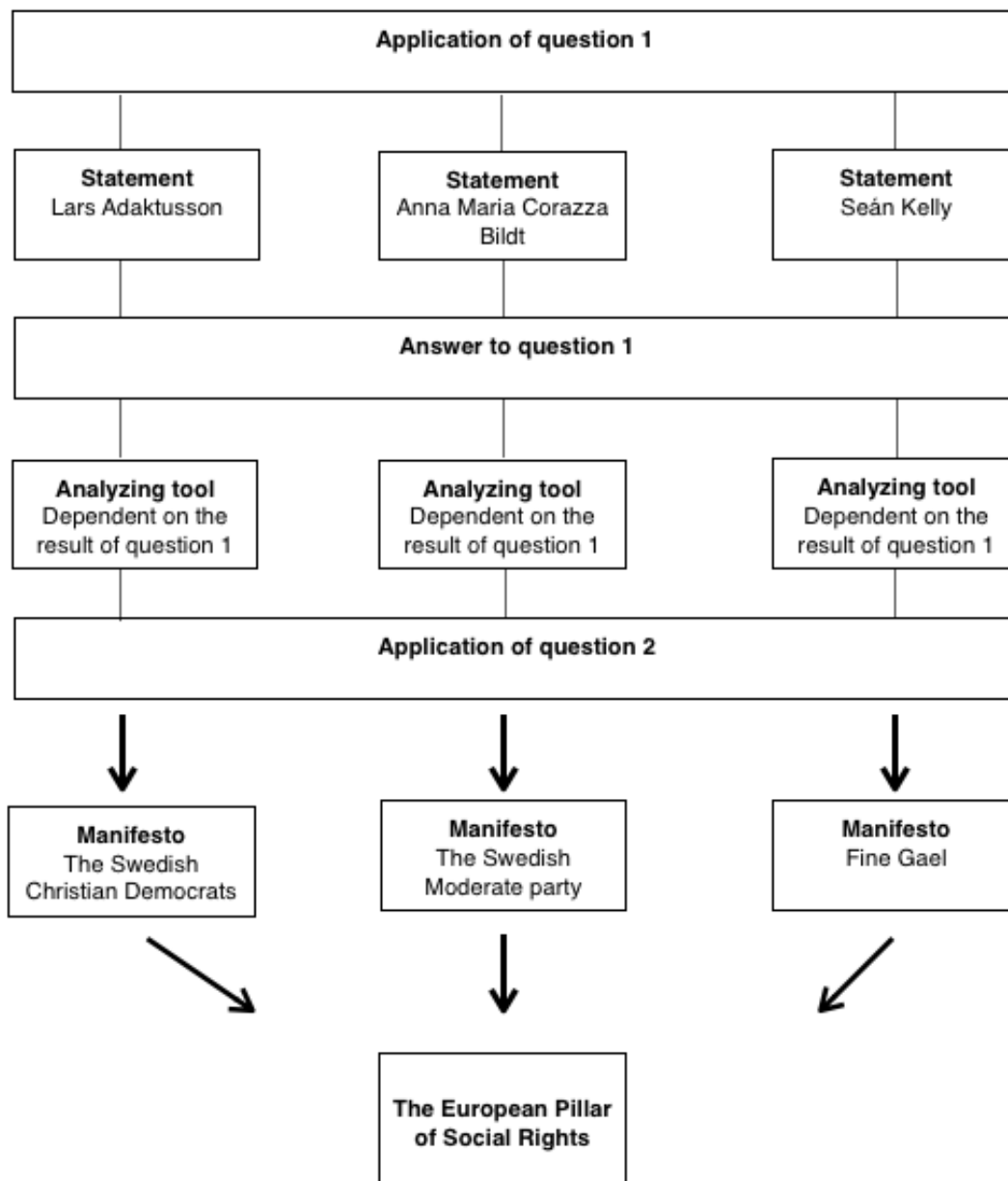
When carrying out qualitative methods, which heavily rely on interpretation, the measurable aspect of intersubjectivity applies to the presentation of the result. This can be solved by taking importance in the requirements regarding interpretations into account by presenting well-substantiated citations and commentaries (Bergström & Boréus, 2012:43). Problems associated with qualitative methods are often connected to the use of analyzing schedules, meaning that they can be hard to design and that it sometimes can be difficult to distinguish the analysis tool from the result (Bergström & Boréus (2012:166). If the designation of the analysis is more similar to the presentation of a result, it will not be classified as a valid analyzing tool (ibid.). To ensure reliability and provide a valid analysis, this study has given much focus on transparency of both method and analysis, with the goal to achieve genuine intersubjectivity and replicability.

7. Research design

The analysis will proceed in two parts. The first part aims to *identify* the arguments the MEPs made, showing how they connect with the national manifestos. In the second part, the theory of *decision-making* be applied with the purpose of describing how the MEPs behave when they are forced to make decisions between the competing goals, striving for re-selection, securing policy or accessing office.

7.1 Mapping connections

To answer the Scientific question of this thesis, the first part of the analysis has been structured around two specified questions. The analysis proceeds as illustrated in Schedule 1:



The following questions have been asked to the material in order to help sort out the relevant pieces of the material:

1. *What are the main arguments the Members of the European Parliament gave for the position they took on the European Pillar of Social rights?*
2. *How can the manifestos of the national parties represented by Ireland and Sweden in the European people's party be connected to the main arguments or concerns of the Members of the European Parliament?*

As illustrated in Schedule 1, the answer to question 1 will provide the tools needed to answer question 2. Hence, the answer to question 1 will be given by mapping out the key arguments the MEPs made in their statements. The answer to question 1 will thereafter serve as a tool to provide an answer to question 2. The outcome of question 1 will result in different answers for each MEP since they represent different parties. Therefore we assume that they will have different key arguments for their positions. The different key arguments they gave will further decide where to look for connections. The arrows illustrated in Schedule 1 aim to clarify that this step of the analysis is implemented at the same time.

7.2 Decision-making

In part 2 of the analysis, the theory of decision making will be applied. The purpose is to describe how the MEPs behave when they are forced to make decisions between competing goals and what trade-off they make between the three imperatives that the theory of decision making include: striving for re-selection, securing policy or accessing office. By this theory I will explain how these three imperatives interact with each other by showing the connection between the three levels of arguments: arguments of the individual MEP, arguments of the national manifesto and arguments of the EPSR. The three levels are individual, national and supranational. By showing the agreement

and tensions between the three levels, I will reveal which strategy the MEP is following and which trade-off they make. The following schedule have been created based on the theory of decision-making in the context of the EP (Hix, Raunio & Scully, 1999):

Schedule 2

	Lars Adaktusson	Anna Maria Corazza Bildt	Seán Kelly
<i>MEPs must pursue actions that promote the interests of the sections of their domestic party that control the re-election process (Hix, Raunio & Scully, 1999).</i>			
<i>MEPs must secure outputs from the EU policy process that promote these interests or the value orientations that these social groups hold (Hix, Raunio & Scully, 1999).</i>			
<i>MEPs must secure positions of authority and prestige within the EP party group, leader of the national party delegation, or Vice-president or President of the EP (Hix, Raunio & Scully, 1999).</i>			

Schedule 2 will be used to clarify the connections between the statements, the background of the MEPs and the national party to which they belong. As previously described, the first part of the analysis will describe the reason and main arguments the MEPs pronounced for the position they took and how these arguments are connected to the views of their national party. Part 2 of t the analysis will therefore be applied on the findings Part 1 has provided.

8. Result

8.1 Mapping connections

8.1.1 Anna Maria Corazza Bildt and the Swedish Moderate party

Corazza Bildt expresses above all a positive attitude towards many parts of the EPSR, such as the recognition of the shared responsibility between men and women in childcare, and in general the focus on gender equality. The problem is here is concentrated on the risk of *increased supranationalism* on certain areas of the social policy, specifically related to *wages, working time, pensions, parental leave and unemployment benefits* (Corazza Bildt, 2017 april 26).

[...] I welcome that you made it clear that subsidiarity is your guiding principle. Why? Because wages, working time, pensions, parental leave and unemployment benefits are a national competence. Why are they a national competence? Because family law and labour law are better dealt with nationally[...](Corazza Bildt, 2017 april 26)

By looking into the manifesto of the Moderate party on the areas related to wages, working time, pensions, parental leave and unemployment benefits we can further understand the connections between the views of the Swedish Moderate party and the statement of Corazza Bildt on these areas.

In the manifesto of the Swedish Moderate party, unemployment is primarily identified as a problem for young adults and migrants, and seen as one of the biggest problem in the Swedish society and therefore the integration of it. This problem, is according to the Swedish Moderate party, is connected to the current high thresholds into the labour market. To solve this the Swedish Moderate party refers to the *Swedish model* where the all parties of the labour market are responsible for pay- and condition setting (Nya Moderaterna, 2013:6).

When it comes to unemployment benefits, The Moderate party wants work to be profitable and for this reason prioritizes lower taxation for those who work and the ones retired. They want the existent unemployment insurance (A-kassa) to be *available for those who are active on the labour market* and the unemployment insurance should further require a person to engage in an active search for work during the time being covered by insurance. They also want the amount given by unemployment insurance to decrease the longer a person has been unemployed. The Moderate party positions in favor of the insurance being obligatory, but the same time it argues that this has shown to be difficult to implement, meaning that the qualification requirements needed for the function of the insurance will not be able to work in the suggested way. The insurance would by this instead work as a basic income, which the Moderate party argues will imply heavily negative effects for employment, such as higher thresholds and marginal effects for groups far from the labour market. The Moderate party also says that a obligatory insurance can be interpreted as a *major intervention into the Swedish model* (Nya Moderaterna, 2013:7).

Even though Corazza Bildt mentions that pensions along with other areas is better dealt with nationally, the manifesto of the Moderate party barely mentions anything about the elderly or pensions, but they do suggest to further lower the taxes for this group, as previously mentioned, in relation to unemployment benefits (Nya Moderaterna, 2013:7).

Parental leave is mentioned in relation to equality on the labour market. The Swedish Moderate party argues many times that parental leave, how it is used in its current form, is the source for the inequality on the labour market between women and men. The Moderate party suggest further on to enable efforts in establishment in connection to parental leave, with the purpose of promoting equality between parents when it comes to using parental insurance (Nya Moderaterna, 2013:10).

8.1.2 Lars Adaktusson and the Swedish Christian Democrats

Adaktusson (2017, April 26) writes that the initiative of the EPSR is a way for the EC to increase the powers of the EU on areas that currently is a national competence and describe it as deeply problematic. The background of the resistance towards the EPSR is according to Adaktusson above all related to the previous attempts of the EC to interfere with the social policy regarding parental leave in 2008². Adaktusson consider the plans of the EC regarding an extended social policy as very pervasive, regardless of how it would affect the Swedish legislation. Hence, Adaktusson argues that the effects of this initiative would diminish the freedom of Europe's workers and families, which further will undermine the confidence in important European cooperation (ibid.).

By this this statement we find out that Adaktusson initially states a clear rejection of the EPSR with reference to the *increased supranationalism* it would imply.

According to the Manifesto of the Swedish Christian democrats we can further understand that family and parents are seen as essential when it comes to making the best decisions for their children and therefore they oppose political forces controlling parents in their choices through public measures. The Swedish Christian democrats agree that further regulations on this area would reduce the already missing child perspective in the political decision-making (Kristdemokraterna, 2014:5).

Regarding the issue of supranationalism we already know that the Swedish Christian democrats want the differences among the member states to be respected and for Sweden this especially related to the issue of gender quotas and parental leave (Kristdemokraterna, 2019; 2020). By the Christian democrat's principle program (2015) we can further understand that the Swedish Christian democrats suggest that the member states should create conditions that promote life-long learning in order to resist the negative tendencies that might follow structural change. They argue that a flexible and entrepreneur friendly economy together will facilitate the functioning of the internal market of the EU, though, within the framework of each member state's self-determination over the configuration of their individual economic policy (ibid.).

² COM(2008)0637: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0637:FIN:EN:PDF>

8.1.3 Seán Kelly and Fine Gael

As we already know Kelly voted in favor of the EPSR, in line with the instructions given by the EPP. The main argument given shows that Kelly considers the importance of social rights in all policy making to outweigh his concerns related to the EPSR. Kelly further expresses compassion for both the member states and their citizens when urging the EPP to seriously consider their recommendations to provide for their needs.

[...] In line with my Group I voted in favour of this report, as such concerns were somewhat abated and because it is important to have social rights in mind in all policy making. However, I would urge that our EPP's recommendations be seriously considered and that further dialogue may be facilitated as we lay the grounds for a European pillar of social rights catering to the needs of all Member States and all their citizens (Kelly, 2017 january 19).

The EPP recommendations that Kelly urge to further be considered is covered by the 8th preamble in the EPSR:

a. The social partners shall be consulted on the design and implementation of economic, employment and social policies according to national practices [...]
(European commission et al., 2017:16)

So far the statement of Kelly seems to agree with the position he took on the EPSR and does not give us anything that can be connected to the national manifesto of Fine Gael. It is first when looking at the concerns he expressed that these connections emerge.

[...] in line with my colleagues in the EPP, I remain cautious of certain proposals within this report, including, but not limited to: definitions of 'worker'; certain

framework directives and financial instruments outlined; as well as calls for a binding EPSR and proposals in the sphere of social and educational investments [...] (Kelly, 2017 january 19).

Kelly has said that the importance of social rights in all policy making outweighs the concerns related to the definition of worker, issues that call for a binding EPSR related to the current framework and financial instruments and suggestions that demand changes in the educational sphere. We will need to unravel the concerns he expressed which further are understood to be connected to the outline of the EPSR. The definition of worker is in the in the ingress of the EPSR described in the following way:

Where a principle refers to workers, it concerns all persons in employment, regardless of their employment status, modality and duration (European commission et al, 2017:8).

To understand why this particular definition is considered to be problematic let us look in to the manifesto of Fine Gael. For instance the issue of social protection in the manifesto of Fine Gael suggests that *work rather than welfare are the key out of poverty* (Fine Gael, 2016: 54). The focus is therefore directed towards job creation, and that both hard work and entrepreneurship should be better rewarded, meaning that *people who work should benefit more from services than people who do not* (Fine Gael, 2016:54).

8.2 Decision-making

In this part, we will use the arguments to point out the factors that may have influenced the MEPs, in order to understand whether the MEPs are re-election seeking, policy seeking or office seeking.

8.2.1 Anna Maria Corazza Bildt

The Moderate party opposes further supranationalism related to social policies (Nya Moderaterna, 2019a). Corazza Bildt is very clear in her statement when addressing the importance of the areas *"...wages, working time, pensions, parental leave and unemployment benefits, being better dealt with nationally..."* (Corazza Bildt, 2017 april 26). The views of the Moderate party also suggest most of their solutions for the social problems on the labour market to be solved by the Swedish model (Nya Moderaterna, 2013). The EPSR also supports a minimum wage, thus it can be seen in contrast with the Swedish Moderate's program to lower the threshold for entering the labour market to reduce unemployment. Likewise, longer unemployment benefits and support for life-long learning could make it less urgent for workers to accept any job, thus making wages less flexible. The statement of Corazza Bildt together with the descriptive part of the analysis can give us evidence that in this context she has carried out actions that pursue the interest of her national party.

8.2.2 Lars Adaktusson

As we already know Adaktusson voted against the political line of the EPP group. The outcome does not come as a surprise since previous knowledge about the views of the national party is that the Swedish Christian Democrats are not for increased supranationalism, especially on areas related to social policies and even more on family policies. These views also permeate the statement of Adaktusson which also could be seen to be derived from the requirements of acting accordingly with interest and wishes of the national party. The position he took can also be understood to be policy seeking, but since the goal of policy seeking are strongly related to the will of the supporters, i.e voters, we cannot be sure that this is the case, since this thesis has not provided any information

on why the voters have decided to vote for the Swedish Christian Democrats. What we do know is that the Swedish Christian Democrats, as preciously mentioned, do not represent the will of increased supranationalism and therefore at least some of the individuals in the electoral base will have voted for the party with the purpose to attain this views or interests. The fact that Adaktusson wrote the article for the Swedish public and not the European stage can very likely indicate that he is more election-seeking than policy-seeking or office-seeking in this context.

8.2.3 Séan Kelly

The decision to vote in favor of the EPSR along with the strategy of the EPP can in the case of Kelly be derived to the will of the national party since the national party have been heavily involved in the development of the EPP group and therefore also the development of the core values of the EPP (Reidy, 2009). Kelly himself had at the moment attained a high position within the EPP group and was at the time of the EPSR also the leader of Fine Gael in the European Parliament. In relation to the theory of rational choice, based on the speech he gave and previous knowledge about Kelly's position at the time we can say that his decision to vote in line with the party group fill the criteria of securing office within the EP - by the first paragraph Kelly bring forward the efforts of the commission over the initiative of the EPSR, also that he appreciates the direction taken by this initiative towards deeper integration of the union. But the rational action in this case can also, as earlier mentioned, be seen as in line with providing the interests of the national party. Even though Kelly argues that the including of social rights outweighs the debated issues on the definition of worker and suggestions regarding the educational sphere, there may be a reason for Kelly to bring this up in order to, at least visibly, take the interests of the domestic party and electoral base into consideration. The result of analysis in part one has given evidence of the connections between the areas of these issues, for instance, the definition of worker in the EPSR are something that differ from how Fine gael portrays the worker regarding social protection. When it comes to the educational sphere we can also understand that the suggestions of the EPSR collide with the system of Ireland and the views of Fine Gael related to the heavy focus on the prevention work and the manifesto of Fine gael does not share a positive attitude towards active support systems giving people supporting economic benefits.

9. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to describe the factors behind the positions taken by the MEPs representing Sweden and Ireland within the EPP group. The analysis has been accomplished within the methodological framework of a functional idea analysis by mapping out the arguments that the MEPs gave for their positions, to further describe the individual interests of the MEPs in relation to the theory of decision-making.

For both of the Swedish MEPs the statements can be connected to the will of their national party by linking the statement they gave with the national manifesto. According to the theory of decision-making, the statements can be understood as election-seeking actions in this specific context. Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) have put emphasis on the importance of taking national values into account when addressing issues sensitive to context, since it can be an important piece in the puzzle of the occurred conflict, beside the traditional conflict lines, such as the left-right division. For instance, the main arguments of Corazza Bildt are undoubtedly well connected to the ideas of the Moderate Party, as shown by its manifesto, but her argumentations during the vote also refer to the Swedish model, which could be considered of national value. Adaktusson on the other hand has stated a clear rejection of the EPSR with reference to the increased supranationalism it would imply. This is something that shows consistency with the manifesto of the Christian democrats since the party is also very clear on the issue of extending supranationalism on social policies. Adaktusson's objection is according to Kaiser (2007) certainly against the Christian democratic tradition of the EPP. However, the decision can be dependent on the relatively short time of membership in the EPP, compared to Fine Gael and that the party therefore are less open to supranationalism (*ibid.*). It is further very likely that the relatively short time of membership and therefore the non-participation in the development and core values of the EPP tend to make the Swedish Christian democratic politician cling to the national values when making decisions as argued by Hooghe et al. (2002). Hence, the relatively short time of membership and the lack of involvement in the early build up period for Christian democracy within the EU that still permeates the decision-making within the EPP group may be a factor in Adaktusson's decision (Kaiser, 2007), since the Swedish MEPs have resisted the socialization to adopt a position in favor of

supranationalism (Checkel, 2001; Schimmelfenning, 2005). Kelly's statement does also show connections to the manifesto of Fine Gael, but in two different ways. Taking into consideration the Fine Gael pro-European attitude and the previous missions that Kelly has attained, this can be seen as the perfect combination for Kelly to pursue actions that will increase his possibility to attain further office positions, since the national party possesses control over the re-election process to the EP and therefore also the possibility for Kelly to advance inside the EP (Hix, 2004). The fact that Kelly also represents a large electoral district also gives Kelly the conditions needed to pursue advancement in his personal carrier (Hix, 2004). In this case Kelly has already the support of the national party at the general level, which further allows him to pursue the action in line with the EPP.

The explanations given by this thesis complements quantitative analysis that focuses on general applicability with an empirical and precise estimation of the motivations of the individual MEP. Further research could offer more information on the behavior of these individual actors in the European Parliament. Thus, because of the wide range of interacting factors both within and across different lines of conflict we may require more refined theories capable of capturing these tensions.

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