

# **Swiss and Norwegian regions in Brussels:**

How and why do the regions of associated member-states of the EU mobilize in Brussels?



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## **Abstract**

Why do the regions of Norway have regional offices in Brussels while the Swiss regions do not? The research done in the thesis features one of the first analyses done on regional mobilization from countries currently not member of the EU. This thesis starts with the assumption that there is some combination of full-member/associated member axis and the federal unitary axis that makes this difference in outcome. In using original interview data collected from eight regional offices from four states collected in Brussels. The interviews are then analyzed using comparable case analysis with MSSD. The conclusion suggests that it is the Norwegian membership of the EEA and Switzerland's bilateral treaties which produce the difference in outcome and further that the Norwegian offices are operating identical to the offices of EU member-states when viewed from a functional perspective.

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# Contents

- Abstract ..... ii
- Acknowledgements ..... iii
- 1 Introduction..... 1
  - 1.1 What makes this topic interesting?..... 1
  - 1.2 Motivation for the thesis..... 3
  - 1.3 Definitions ..... 3
  - 1.4 Historical background..... 4
  - 1.5 Summary of findings..... 5
- 2 Theories of European integration and regionalization ..... 7
  - 2.1 Liberal Intergovernmentalism ..... 7
  - 2.2 Multi-level governance..... 8
    - 2.2.1 Alternative regional categorization ..... 10
  - 2.3 Constructivism..... 11
  - 2.4 Mobilization..... 12
- 3. Variables of regional offices and literature review ..... 15
  - 3.1 Objectives ..... 15
    - 3.1.1 Information gathering ..... 15
    - 3.1.2 Policy influencing..... 16
    - 3.1.3 Promotion of region ..... 18
  - 3.2 Channels ..... 18
    - 3.2.1 Commission ..... 18
    - 3.2.2 EU Parliament (EP)..... 18
    - 3.2.3 Their own government..... 19
    - 3.2.4 Bypassing the government ..... 20
  - 3.3 Co-operation with other regions..... 20
  - 3.4 Office type ..... 22
    - 3.4.1 Public/Private partnerships ..... 22
    - 3.4.2 Administrative offices..... 22
  - 3.7 Independent Variables ..... 23
- 4 Research design..... 24
  - 4.1 Theory on interviews..... 25
  - 4.2 The interview process ..... 25
  - 4.3 The comparable method using Most Similar Systems Design ..... 28

4.4 Common issues with all types of research .....	29
4.5 Measuring influence .....	30
5. Case Selection.....	34
5.1 Norway .....	37
5.2 Switzerland .....	38
5.3 Sweden .....	40
5.4 Austria .....	41
6 Analysis.....	43
6.1 The countries.....	43
6.1.1 Switzerland .....	43
6.1.2 Norway .....	50
6.1.3 Austria .....	59
6.1.4 Sweden .....	66
6.2 Summary of analysis.....	73
6.3 Testing the hypotheses .....	75
7. Final discussion and conclusion.....	82
7.1 Conclusion and implication .....	83
8 References.....	88

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 What makes this topic interesting?

The idea of a “Europe of the Regions” has not come to fruition as was foreseen in the eighties and nineties. On the other hand the reality of today is that the regions of the EU states have become an integrated part of the policy process of the EU, where the number of regions that are represented in Brussels has grown steadily since the first offices were established in the middle of the eighties with the count in 2007 being about 250 (Moore, 2008, p. 520).

That the regions from member-states are represented with offices in Brussels makes sense because they have in most cases some political powers and if one thinks of the EU as a political union, makes EU just another venue for regions to exert influence, acquire funds and gather information, this leads to the first question. Why do the regions of Norway have regional offices in Brussels considering that Norway is not formally a member of the EU? And in extension of the last question why do the Swiss regions apparently not have regional offices, especially considering how independent they are? This thesis will try to understand what the reasons for the discrepancy between expectations and what one observes. To achieve that goal the thesis is using a comparable case analysis based on data gathered from interviews and text sources. This leads to the main puzzle of the thesis

*Why do Norwegian regions have Brussels offices while the Swiss regions don't have Brussels offices?*

Even though Switzerland and Norway are not full members they are still heavily involved with the EU economically, politically and culturally which is an effect of their geographical situation in Europe. But it appears that only the Norwegian regions have regional offices in Brussels and the Swiss regions don't, but if one looks at the regions of both countries one would expect the opposite because the regions of Switzerland could almost be mistaken for states in their own right, while the regions of Norway are administrative in nature with substantially fewer competencies and less self-rule. The reason why the thesis will focus on just Norway and Switzerland as the non-member states is because of the countries that

everyone would consider being “true” European states; these are only two that have fully developed regions.<sup>1</sup> This brings us to the three research questions.

*R1 does formal membership in the EU by the states influence if and how regions mobilize in Brussels?*

*R2 does the placement of the state on the federal/unitary axis influence if and how regions mobilize in Brussels?*

The third overarching question the thesis will have a look at, is trying to understand to what degree the Norwegian and Swiss offices are an integrated part of the regional community in Brussels and if there are possible different rules they have to operate under and what possible unique challenges that entails, and this leads to the third research question.

*R3 how do the Norwegian regional Brussels offices operate in the EU considering that Norway is not a formal member?*

To get an answer to these research questions the thesis will use a comparative case analysis on a sample of regional offices from the four countries of Norway, Sweden, Austria and Switzerland, with eight regional offices in total. The comparative analysis will be conducted on two axes. The first is the member/non-member axis with Sweden and Austria in the member category and Switzerland and Norway in the non-member category. The second axis is the placement of the state on the federal/unitary axis, with Switzerland and Austria as federal states and Sweden and Norway as unitary states.

The main reason for the use of qualitative method is because there has been done very little research on the topic of how and if the regions of Norway and Switzerland chosen to establish regional offices in Brussels, which has the effect that there is probably not enough data to do any meaningful statistical analysis. The little research there is, shows that lobbies from the associated member of the EU operating in Brussels (Gullberg, 2015, p. 2), which can include the Norwegian and Swiss regions. But there has been conducted a lot of research on the regional mobilization from existing member-countries of the EU where that research will serve as the empirical basis for the thesis. Further there does not look like anyone has

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<sup>1</sup> One could make the case that Iceland should be included, but there are two reasons not to, the first is that Iceland has very low population compared to Norway and Switzerland with only about 320 thousand inhabitants. The second reason is that Iceland does not have regions besides for statistical purposes.

explored if formal membership in the Union by the parent state is a necessary condition for regions of any state to make and maintain diplomatic relations with and within in the EU.

## **1.2 Motivation for the thesis**

The motivation for this thesis is twofold but intertwined, the first reason being a fascination for the European Union as an organization which I have had since my teen years, the other being my fascination for the Norwegian love/hate relationship towards the EU. Something that is almost fascinating to observe considering that the EU in some policy areas has an immense importance in the lives of the average Norwegian citizen, but at the same time is mostly ignored.

## **1.3 Definitions**

Like any other large scale organization the EU operate with a lot of terms and abbreviations, in the following sections most terms that will be used in this text are explained.

*Region* is in this text defined as a second tier administrative territory with a fixed border and at least some degree of self-rule, in the thesis this includes the Norwegian Fylke, Swedish Län, Austrian Länder and Swiss Cantons.

*Local authority* is defined as the lowest tiers of government like municipalities and cities that in most cases are within the regions.

*Associated member* is defined as countries that are not full members of the EU but are closely tied through different treaties like the Swiss bilateral treaties or the EEA which has Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein as members.

*Directorate-General (DG)* are the different divisions of the Commission, one could consider it to be the civil service of the EU.

*European Free Trade Association (EFTA)* was established in 1960 as an alternative to the EEC (predecessor to the EU),

*European Economic Area (EEA)* is a treaty that was concluded between EFTA and the EU in the beginning of the 1990s that would allow EFTA members full access to the inner market of the EU. The main provision of the treaty is that the EFTA states are obliged to adopt EU law for continued access to their inner market (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2012, p. 64)



Paradiplomacy is the shorthand for parallel diplomacy that is based on the idea that regions have a different territorial policy preference than their parent state and use the international forum as a means to change policy to fit better with their stance (Rowe, 2011, pp. 42-43).

*Structural funds* are the three funds the EU uses to finance its regional policies, The Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which is used to develop the regions to promote economic growth, The European Social Fund (ESF) which goes to the development of the workforce, and the Cohesion Fund which is used to promote environmental and infrastructure needs of the poorer regions.

#### **1.4 Historical background**

The regions of Norway and Switzerland do not operate in a vacuum and are in reality taking part in an already vibrant community of regions that have offices in Brussels. To illustrate this fact here follows a short historical synopsis of the development of regional mobilization in the EU.

Birmingham opened what was to be the first regional Brussels office in 1984 and the same year other British and German regions followed suit and opened their own offices (Marks, Haesly, & Mbaye, 2002, p. 1). There they met the triple challenge to fight for their right to stay by their own parent state, to find their niche in the EU system, which at the time had been around for 25 years and how to cooperate with other regional offices (Rowe, 2011, p. 48&50). In the quest to become a part of the EU-system the German regions had a leading voice and with the help of their own government paved the way for the recognition of regions in the EU policy-making (Jeffery, 2004, p. 605).

In some countries the first regional offices were met with irritation and gave the states an uneasy feeling because regions were creating a presence in Brussels. In Spain and Italy the governments even went so far to constitutionally challenge the offices; the result was a legal framework for the regions to operate in where they got some leeway to operate in Brussels on the condition that they did not contradict the foreign policy of the parent state (Moore, 2008, p. 519). The reason for this initial hostility was that the states viewed themselves as the ones who traditionally conducted foreign policy, and they feared that the regional offices would present a form of competing foreign policy (Kettunen & Kull, 2009, p. 120). This was further complicated by some regionalist who hoped that the EU would become an ally for the regions against the parent state, giving regions the option of outflanking and go directly to the EU

(Rowe, 2011, p. 4). One could say that the initial fears of the states were not completely unfounded.

Another view on the mobilization by the regions that was prevalent in the beginning was the idea of a federal Europe, where the new Brussels offices were a sign of how the power shifted from the states to the regions (Rowe, 2011, p. 17) and the regions would become the basic building block of the EU together with the states (Jeffery, 2004, p. 606).

British and German regions were the vanguard of the mobilizing regions in the EU and based their strategies on the experiences they had made while trying to get their voices heard in the domestic arena. In contrast today's new regions who want to establish a presence in Brussels have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of the regions that have an office, and with the added pressure that every regions should be represented in Brussels in some capacity (Moore, 2008). Because the states historically have not tried to stop regional representation, makes the apparent lack of Swiss regional representation strange.

The situation today is that the regionalization has gained a lot of momentum since the first regions appeared. Not all regions in the EU have an office in Brussels, with the total being about 2/3 (Tatham & Thau, 2013, p. 10) there is a lot of agreement among researchers that regions have become an integrated part of the political system of the EU, while there is less agreement on what are the consequences for the regions are (Fleurke & Willemse, 2007, p. 70).

### **1.5 Summary of findings**

The findings of this thesis are twofold, which is that it is neither the placement on the unitary/federal axis or if the parent state is full member or associated member that explain fully why Norwegian regions have Brussels offices and Switzerland don't.

What the federal/unitary axis tells one about regional mobilization is only what type of office a region chooses to have. A region of a unitary state will choose a type of public-private partnership consisting of multiple regions and levels with some private and half-private organizations as partners. Regions from federal states will have administrative offices, one region one office, where the Brussels office almost is what one could consider to be some kind of embassy staffed with civil servants from the region that has the office.

The question of being a full member country and being an associated member country is not straightforward because there are at least two types of associated members, Norway who is

associated through the EEA agreement and Switzerland being the other type which is the bilateral approach.

From a functional perspective there is most likely little difference for regions of a country if the parent state is a full member of the EU or an associated member through the EEA, considering that the Norwegian regional offices operate more or less the same way as the Swedish and Austrian regions, while the Swiss regions don't even have regional offices besides a representative of the Cantons in the Swiss Mission to the EU.

In conclusion, the original two independent variables, placement on the federal/unitary axis and full-member or associated-member are most likely incorrect. The correct independent variable which explains why the Norwegian regions have regional offices and the Swiss regions don't have, is that Norway is a part of the EEA and Switzerland doesn't.

### **Chapter summary**

In this chapter there has been given a short presentation of the research puzzle, historical background and a summary of the findings made in the thesis. The next chapter will give an introduction to three overarching integrations theories that are used in the analysis; this will help to put the regional mobilization into a broader EU context when doing the analysis.

## **2 Theories of European integration and regionalization**

The three main theories that will be used in the thesis to explain how the regions of the four countries are fitting into the EU are Liberal Intergovernmentalism, Multi-Level Governance and Constructivism and will be presented in detail in the following section. This section will also have a section discussing how to define mobilization from a more theoretical perspective.

### **2.1 Liberal Intergovernmentalism**

The most defining trait of Liberal Intergovernmentalism is that the states are treated as the most important political actor, and the EU is seen as the result of rational states who have decided to work together for their own benefit. The decision to form international institutions is first done internally inside the states through what is called “the will of the state”, which is then executed by rational leaders whose choice is constrained and formed by the interaction of different interest groups inside of the state which also includes regions (Moravcsik, 1998, p. 18). The internal debate in the EU countries come to a “will of the state” that says that the most beneficial action for the state is to cooperate with other states in a political union.

In more detail the process that leads to the establishment of institutions like the EU is considered to be driven by a three stage process; the first stage is the formation of preference of the state, where the preference of the state will change according to outside pressures in the form of political, economic and cultural influences. One important thing to remember is that state preferences are not static but will always change over time with every new treaty between the states creating a new equilibrium in which the states operate (Moravcsik, 1995). In the second stage, the states formulate strategies to bargain with other states when a state preference is better realized with cooperation with other states than going solo, in the third stage the states decide if the securing and implementation of the decision will be done by an international institution, like the EU (Moravcsik, 1998, pp. 20-21). In the Liberal Intergovernmental view there is little room for regions doing politics in Brussels, but evidence show that many regions are having offices and are having diplomatic channels. One way to explain this paradox is to argue that trying to influence through representation is not equal to actually influencing the EU (Tatham, 2008, p. 494), which means that all the effort by the regions could be considered fruitless, because the states are the ones who have any real power. The problem with that explanation in my opinion is that it would be strange if the regions continued their efforts in having an office the EU capital if it is the case their efforts would not bear any real fruits, but it gives the presence of said offices could be interpreted as

evidence for the case that the regions think the cost-benefit of their efforts of having offices in Brussels are good enough to continue.

Influencing policy outcomes are not the only reason for regions to send representatives to Brussels, the offices also do information gathering, where they try to find out what new policies are in the pipeline (Marks et al., 2002, p. 6). From a Liberal intergovernmental perspective this makes sense, because the regions can take the gathered information back to their country, and use it to influence the parent state to shape policy outcome towards their own preferences.

In my view the most important aspect of Liberal intergovernmentalism, is as a reminder that the states of Europe are still the most powerful actors in the EU, even though some of their power may have been lost to the regions or the EU (Marks et al., 2002, p. 19 & 22).

## **2.2 Multi-level governance**

Power cannot disappear because the nature of politics abhors a vacuum; there it will tend to dissipate to other states and tiers. And in the context of the EU, power will either go up to the EU or down to the regional and local authorities when the state loses powers. One possible reason for moving power from the state to other governmental tiers for is to catch all the variation in the territorial scope of policy outcomes (Hooghe & Marks, 2010, p. 17). There are few good reasons for a state to directly administer, for example, the garbage collection or other utilities, but it could successfully be argued that it is a job best done by local authorities like municipalities, who in most cases will have a much better grasp on how things have to be done in an efficient way. On the other hand one has environmental cases like clean rivers, there it is potentially more efficient to let a supranational body do the forming of policy and implementation, because many rivers flow through multiple countries and may also function as borders, where in some cases it can be difficult for single states to care for the river as a whole.

Hooghe & Marks (2010), identify two types of multilevel governance which they call type 1 and type 2. Type 1 is more relevant for the thesis and will therefore get more attention than type 2.

Type 1 is derived from federalism and it is concerned by the power sharing between the state and non-overlapping regions. The decision-making power is spread across general-purpose

geographical jurisdictions, where the higher tiers tend to be more elaborate in the scope of competences but are more or less organized in the same way as the lower tier governments.

The memberships of type 1 jurisdictions are discrete units on the same level where the jurisdictions in a lower tier of governance are fully inside of a jurisdiction of higher tier governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2010, p. 19). As an example, in Norway the municipalities are always member of a single county. This fits well into the Westphalian principle of exclusive power inside the borders of your polity. Further the numbers of tiers in the government are limited in Europe where the number varies between two in the case of Malta to six for Germany, and the other countries are in the middle of these outliers (Hooghe & Marks, 2010, p. 19).

Type 2 jurisdictions are not based within fixed borders and jurisdictions, but are formed as a reaction to a specific need or task that has to be fulfilled. The memberships are nested and overlapping where the tiers don't fit neatly inside each other as a Russian doll. They are considered more flexible and often have a limited life time.

In Europe they are quite common on the local level, especially in Switzerland. But that could be a result from that the Swiss municipalities are often very small, the smallest have a population of less than a 100 (Swiss Statistics 2014). In those cases it would be impossible for a municipality to provide the services the modern citizen expects.

The conclusion of (Beyers & Donas, 2014) is that the EU system has two spheres of territorial representation, the dominant state-centered and a smaller regional. This finding gives credence to the MLG approach, it is not only the administration of the states that gets devolved down to the regions, but the foreign policy cooperation has gotten a new level with the states working together with their regions. It is not a regional level that competes with the state level, but regions that will make some sort of foreign policy in the policy areas that they think is important, and the states just have other priorities (Tatham, 2008, p. 503).

MLG is not a theory that predicts that states are about to become irrelevant in Europe, but rather a way to show that the EU is not an exclusively state driven entity, but shares its power with regions and supranational bodies (Marks, Hooghe, & Blank, 1996). At the same time it cannot explain if the observed increase of participation of the regions in the policy process of the EU translates into the regions being a part of the governance of the EU (Rowe, 2011, p.

19). In other words, will the presence of the regional Brussels offices give the regions a way to contribute in the policy forming of the EU?

### **2.2.1 Alternative regional categorization**

Categorizing sub-national actors based on their tiers in the system, has been the typical method for many years (Callanan & Tatham, 2014, p. 189). This method of categorization makes a lot of sense at first glance, one reason being that it is easy to assume that regions are regions and municipalities are municipalities, but the danger with this train of thought is to falsely assume that all states have organized their regional and local authorities the same way, where one runs in to the risk of comparing apples to oranges.

A possible better typology for regions is to divide them into strong and weak regions, as done by Callanan & Tatham (2014). The classification of a strong region, are the regions that have legislative powers, these regions also have financial autonomy and are embedded in the decision making proses of the parent state.

The same classification scheme is also used on municipalities, where municipalities who are involved in the implementation process and are giving information, through association who are linked with the state, can be considered strong. The local authorities of Sweden fit into this category. In the states where the municipality associations are fragmented and only have weak or informal cooperation with the state, they are classified as weak (Callanan & Tatham, 2014, p. 190).

If the municipalities organize and are a part of the decision making proses of the parent state and the EU, should one consider the municipalities equal to the regions in states where the regions are classified as strong? This again touches on the point that it can be difficult to do one to one comparisons across nations because of the huge variety on how the states have chosen to organize their tiers of government.

One slightly different way to look at this phenomenon of strong and weak regions is to look at them as either being guaranteed by the constitution as exemplified by the Swiss Cantons or regions that have an administrative origin and can be changed by the legislative process of the state without changing the constitution which can be exemplified by Norway. Typical for the constitutional regions is that their work in Brussels as done by the offices is political in nature and helps the regional ministries to influence the policy creation in the EU (Moore, 2008, p.

525). Another unique feature of the constitutional regions that differentiates them from the administrative is that they are allowed by the EU treaty to support and facilitate with members of the Council of Ministers, together with their own state governments (Moore, 2008, p. 526).

Because the Brussels offices from administrative regions tend to be cooperative between two and more regions and municipalities the decision process about goals and strategies are often done by a board, with the decisions taken often being an apolitical compromise. Thereby the focus is on the development of the whole region by building business links and securing funding.

The purpose of showing these different ways of categorizing regions is to highlight that when one discusses regions, one has to keep in mind that one often talks about entities that are quite dissimilar in policy scope and independence from the parent state.

### **2.3 Constructivism**

Constructivism is not a single theory, but rather a family of similar theories who build on the assumption that the world we live in, including states and regions, are social constructs and not something that is material and fixed as the rational-choice theories do (Saurugger, 2013, p. 890). Since the world is a social construct, then nothing in it will be fixed. But will rather be always changing driven by the actors, who are always constrained by the choices of the people who came before, i.e. path dependency. The actors will through social interaction influence the direction of how the new structures are made (Rosamond, 2000, pp. 171-172).

Explained in a different way, the actors don't change their goals based on how their resources and position change, but rather a change in the world around the actor changes how the actor perceives the world and this changes their priorities (Saurugger, 2013, p. 891).

Constructivism can be sorted into three conceptual perspectives that all focuses on different parts of the policy process; "sociological institutionalism", "socialization and learning" and "discursive institutionalism".

The first conceptual perspective is "social institutionalism" which contains three elements: Logic of consequentialism, which is the idea that an actor will always maximize its own goals and preferences, second, the logic of appropriateness which is the idea that people will try to follow the rules that their role or position mandates them to follow, because it is the "right" thing to do. Third, isomorphism which explains how rules and practices diffuse and are emulated by policy makers, this can be done by coercion by outside organizations, which is



done mostly by giving out or withholding funding, and the last process which is having people coming from other organizations and learn from their ways and normative pressures (Saurugger, 2013, p. 891 & 893).

“Socialization and learning” looks for the socialization of the European integration process that happens when norms worldviews and collective understanding are internalized, and are then made into formal rules by a group of actors. Based on this assumption the research done on this topic tries to find the point when an idea by some individuals becomes formal rules. The main drawback of this line of thinking is that it does not explain the reasons for why this process happens sometimes and doesn’t happen in other cases (Saurugger, 2013, pp. 894-895).

“Discursive institutionalism” is the idea that new ideas become norm by discussion and negotiation, where one traces the process from emergence of the idea, through the discussion and finally their legitimization. This is done to explain how worldviews can result in policy outcomes by using the discourse as carrier for the spread of the worldview.

The problem shared by the already mentioned three approaches is that they don’t consider the strategies used by the actors to make the ideas and worldviews into policy outcomes. The question is how do ideas frame interests? This can be done by looking at ideas as something malleable that can be used for strategic purposes.

It can also be stated that if wants to understand how far reaching an idea is, one first has to understand the agenda setting power of the actor who initiate it. In other words, important people make ideas important just because they already are important people with an idea.

## **2.4 Mobilization**

Mobilization in this text is defined as the process where the regions in the EU have started to conduct politics on the EU level, together and without involvement of the parent state. The concept is tricky to pin down because there are few clear definitions in the literature on the subject. The reason for including this bit is to give some theoretical and empirical background on what the motivations for regions are to mobilize and how to best understand the concept.

The regions started to mobilize as a result of the expansion of the competences that the EU has had over the years, especially with the introduction of the Single European Act (SEA) of 1986. Which made the EU into a polity that would affect the regions because they would often have the responsibility to implement the new laws which originated from the EU (Rowe,

2011, p. 50). The Brussels offices are the material manifestation of the mobilization, where a lot of research was conducted to find out why the regions organized offices and what forms these organizations had (Rowe, 2011, p. 16).

Regions have never been more numerous and involved in the policy forming of the EU as they are today, even though Europe of the regions or the idea of a federal Europe never truly materialized. To explain this paradox, one has to understand that a Europe of united regions is almost impossible because of the huge diversity between the individual regions and their interests (Rowe, 2011, pp. 53-54).

This assumption has only been a part of the picture, because many regions have much more to gain and have more influence on their parent state than was expected, making cooperation an often used strategy (Callanan & Tatham, 2014, pp. 194-195). For example the situation in today's Germany the regional offices are working together with the federal government while they try not to infringe upon the federal level and in many cases work together with the federal government to reach common goals (Kettunen & Kull, 2009, p. 121). This fits within the broader issue that the more independent regions tend to have a greater influence on their own governments and have less reason to bypass them (Jaursch, 2013, p. 190). The same situation should be true for both Switzerland and Austria. At the same time it could imply that the Norwegian and Swedish regions are more interested in bypassing and working together with CoR.

Having a presence in Brussels these days has become the norm for regions from member countries with about 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of the regions having an office in Brussels (Tatham & Thau, 2013, p. 18), but there is a difference between the east and west where almost all west European regions have an office and the eastern European states lagging behind (Blatter, Kreutzer, Rentl, & Thiele, 2010, p. 173), the situation that can be explained by that the eastern regions are newer and have fewer resources than their western equivalents because they were established after the fall of Communism. Regions from new member-states are aware that the regions have become an integrated part of the EU policy process to the point where it seems natural to have their own presence in Brussels (Moore, 2008, p. 520), which can imply that there is a socializing factor involved at some stage of the process in which outside regions also want to be a part of the community.

Based on the truism that no rational actor will waste resources in the form of time and money on something they don't think will give a tangible return, all this mobilization must be giving

something back that the stakeholders consider being well worth their time. Then again this notion is based on the idea of the rational actor having good evidence to base their decisions on.

In summary one can say that the main motivations for establishing regional offices in Brussels which is a need for information, lack of attention from the parent state and a wish to directly influence the policy making of the EU (Kettunen & Kull, 2009, p. 120).

### **3. Variables of regional offices and literature review**

The goal of last chapter is to give an overview of the larger overarching theories to help placing the regional mobilization in a bigger context to show that the regions inhabit a small part of the political system of the European Union. The goal of this chapter is to take a closer look at the research done on regions and their regional offices in Brussels to help formulate hypotheses which will be tested in the analysis chapter.

A fair amount of research has been conducted on the presence of regional mobilization in Brussels, but it seems all to be focused on the regions of full member EU countries while there is almost nothing that includes Norway and Switzerland. Keeping this in mind, in the following part there will be a literature review that which will be used to formulate hypotheses that later in the text will be used test how the regions of Norway and Switzerland fit in with the EU28 regions. To achieve this, the text has been sorted into multiple broad variables that can be affected by either membership status or placement on the federal/unitary axis which broadly fall into the four categories that Marks et al. (2002) have identified, information gathering, networking, liaising between the region and the EU and influencing policy in the EU.

#### **3.1 Objectives**

In this section there will be given an overview over the different objectives the regions have to establish regional offices in Brussels, which are information gathering, policy influencing and promotion. One example that Callanan (2010, p. 20) gives that can serve as an example for the motivations behind the objectives, is the EU environmental legislation which has a huge economic and administrative impact on local and regional authorities and therefor the regions have to go to the EU which is the source of the legislation to influence the legislation that is being made and secure funding for the implementation.

##### **3.1.1 Information gathering**

The offices of many regions try to keep up with the political process in Brussels, especially in being up to date on new possible laws that are in the pipeline a process that is both complex and hard to follow, they then use this information to mobilize towards their parent state to influence policy or to adapt their programs which makes them eligible to receive EU funding (Blatter, Kreutzer, Rentl, & Thiele, 2008, p. 468). This information is often not transmitted through the news, and therefore the regions have to conduct their own information gathering (Marks et al., 2002, p. 4), another description is being an antenna which can receive and transmit information (Jaurisch, 2013, p. 192). Another reasons for why the gathering of

information is highly important for regions is that regional and local governments are often responsible for the implementation of EU law, with one estimation gives the number that 60-80% of the laws that the regions have to originate from the EU, the reasons become very clear (Moore, 2008, p. 518).

Another way to look at information gathering is that many Brussels offices see themselves as information exchanges or liaison between Brussels and their home region. Where one often finds that the offices help the home region in how to use the information that they have gathered in the policy creation of the home region (Marks et al., 2002, p. 5). Using the regional office for information gathering is a task that many regions do and can be the only real area where the regions directly undermine the gate keeper role of the state (Blatter et al., 2008, p. 483).

Considering that the associated members of the EU don't have access to the formal decision making process of the EU, also means that the regions don't operate with the same opportunities in Brussels as the regions from member states, because the regions don't have the access to the formal institutions will make them focus on the gathering of information, this leads to the first hypothesis.

*H1 the offices from associated member states are mainly information gathering offices.*

### **3.1.2 Policy influencing**

Regulatory influence is the process where the regions attempt to influence the outcome of policy making of the EU. This can be done through different channels that include directly influencing EU institutions or actors, private consulting firms, members of the EU parliament, through the parent state or through some pan-European or geographical network (Callanan & Tatham, 2014, p. 191). Flipping H1 and make the assumption that having access to the formal policy creating processes will compel the regions from member states to take an active part of the process one gets to the next hypothesis.

*H2 offices from member states will have a greater focus on influencing EU policy than offices from associated-member states.*

Findings suggest that the stronger regions tend to focus on influencing the policy making, directly, via a network or through cooperation with the parent state. This differs from the weaker regions where the goal is mainly to collect information and influence officials with goal of attaining funding. Weak regions tend to be more interested in getting funding using a

network than going the direct route (Callanan & Tatham, 2014, pp. 199 - 200). The strong regions that the federal states have are trying to get the EU to recognize the special status they have to differentiate them from the weaker regions the unitary states have. This can be illustrated with that the work the strong regions do in Brussels are much more political in nature, where they will directly try to influence the EU and arrange meeting between the regional ministers and high officials of the EU (Moore, 2008, pp. 224-225). Considering this one can make this hypothesis.

*H3 offices from federal states have a greater emphasis on influencing policy than the offices from unitary states.*

The regions in Europe vary greatly in size of the population, using the four countries in this study the population spans from 16,000 inhabitants for Appenzell Innerrhoden in Switzerland to 1.8 million for Vienna in Austria. Then you have the example of North-Rhine Westphalia in Germany with its 17 million inhabitants which make it larger than most countries in Europe. Considering the differences in population it is no surprise that the bigger regions have a much larger success at attaining their preferences in lobbying (Tatham, 2015, p. 9). The population size also influences the probability for a region to have an office where the larger regions have a higher probability. paradoxically the same effect does having a relatively low population density (Tatham & Thau, 2013, p. 10 & 12). This leads to hypothesis H4 which is.

*H4 the more populous regions will have a greater emphasis on exerting influence than lesser populated regions.*

Taking a closer look at the population density factor one can start by pointing out that the population density for Switzerland is 20 times higher than the Norwegian, this should make it more probable for the latter having regional offices. One possible reason for why less densely populated regions are having offices is that they tend to be situated in states that have a low overall population and having a low population will make the government have less power in the Council of Ministers compared to the larger countries. This will compel them to lobby directly at the EU level to compensate (Dür & Mateo, 2012, p. 974).

*H5 population density of the region is a general predictor for regions to have a regional office.*

### **3.1.3 Promotion of region**

Promoting the region one comes from is especially important from the new member-states because the sheer number of regions in the EU has grown to such a large amount that makes it difficult for the EU to listen to everyone and recognizing the names of the regions. The lack of name recognition is one of the reasons why many regions from the same parent state share the buildings (Moore, 2008, p. 528). It could be that would be a known problem for the Norwegian and Swiss regions because none of those states are full members of the EU. The Norwegian regions would experience a further problem because of their administrative nature of their regions could make them almost invisible outside of Norway.

*H6 Promotion of the home region is more important for regions from non-member states than for regions from member states.*

## **3.2 Channels**

In the previous section there was given an overview of what the objectives the regional offices have to achieve in Brussels, this section will go through the different channels the regional offices use to reach their objectives.

### **3.2.1 Commission**

The main channel for regions to influence policy in the EU is the Commission because it has the sole right to initiate policy and once the policy process begins it almost always ends in a policy outcome (Mahoney, 2007, p. 39) which makes it the natural starting point if one wants to tell one's position on a subject but also to get information on the issues that are discussed, the other reason is that the Commission is very open to input from interested groups including regions because it mostly wants to consult as many as possible to get a good solution as possible (Tatham, 2008, p. 502). The Commission also has need for information because the Commission is chronically understaffed and is therefore not able to collect the necessary information by its self and seeks it from affected actors (Klüver, 2012, p. 1118). The Commission is further seen as an impartial player in the EU, to what degree this is correct will most likely depend on how much you agree with the policy outcome.

*H7 the commission is the main focus for both information gathering and policy influencing for all types of regions.*

### **3.2.2 EU Parliament (EP)**

The EU parliament has become more powerful and makes it natural that it will be targeted by lobbying influences by the regions (Rowe, 2011, p. 52).. Considering that the EP has full co-

decision with the Council of Ministers on almost all EU legal matters will make the EP a very powerful player in EU politics (Parliament, 2015) and should therefore make it an open for influencing by the regional offices and getting information. Further the co-decision power of the EP makes its member a part of the policy pipeline of the EU which could make it a source for information. Preliminary findings show that MEPs have the same open door policy that the Commission runs, but without the right to introduce new policy it makes it a less obvious choice for lobbying attempts, this will most likely have the effect that it will get information at a later stage than the Commission. Both those issues will most likely make the EP less interesting for the regional offices, this leads to hypothesis H8 which is.

*H8 the European Parliament is targeted less for influence and information gathering by the regional offices than the Commission.*

### **3.2.3 Their own government**

Having in mind that the states are still very powerful actors in the EU today and that the citizens of the regions also vote in national election, one can assume that regions using their own government for information gathering and influencing policy which is a strategy that most likely will be to the benefit of both sides of the equation.

Even though gathering information is the main goal of many offices, some offices do have the goal to influence the policy making in the union. This is often done by the offices by informing the policy makers on how things are and to make sure that they don't make laws based on false premises (Marks et al., 2002, p. 6).

Working through the member state has two dimensions, the first is to use the parent state as a means for the regions to have decision making in the EU. The second dimension is to use the power of the parent state to keep the EU from regulating into the political domains of the region (Jeffery, 2004, p. 608).

The main strategy for strong regions is cooperation with the parent state. Bypassing is the strategy used by the weak regions, because those regions that are not constitutionally defined. Maybe most important is that conflict is not a strategy, which supports the notion that the states have not lost their importance (Callanan & Tatham, 2014, pp. 201-202).

The occurrence of direct conflict between regions and states in the EU sphere does appear to be quite rare and cooperation and bypassing seems to be the normal *modus operandi* in the



relationship between the regions and their parent state in Brussels (Tatham, 2012, p. 21) and (Callanan & Tatham, 2014, p. 201)

*H9 offices from federal states are more inclined to use their own government for information and policy influencing than regions from unitary states.*

### **3.2.4 Bypassing the government**

Related to the last section where regions use and cooperation with their own government to further their cause in the EU is this opposite, where in the regions go directly to the EU and bypass their own government, this was seen as the goal of Europe of the Regions idea (Rowe, 2011, p. 4) which was discussed in the Historical Background section in Chapter 1.

There has been an idea that the EU is an arena for regions to bypass their own state in policy areas where the regions have a different view on a particular issue or the region thinks that the state does not give enough attention to a matter. There have been identified two forms of bypassing. In the first type, the bypassing leads to open conflict between the region and the state. And in the second type the bypassing is either overlooked or ignored (Tatham, 2012, pp. 2-3).

Bypassing by regional actors seems to happen rarely and is only happening if there is no chance for agreement, as is the case for the local level in the UK, or it is entrenched in an already existing national interests organizations as it is in Denmark (Callanan, 2010, p. 29), which are two centralized unitary states. The same pattern has been shown in the strong regions of the federal states (Beyers & Donas, 2014, p. 21).

*H10 There is no difference between the offices of the member states and the associated members when it comes to bypassing their own government*

### **3.3 Co-operation with other regions**

Networking, as in joining other regions in an ad-hoc fashion or some other permanent regional network, is another *raison d'être* for regional offices. One sees regions with similar economic profiles and geographical proximity, including across state border from to other states, working together and exchanging information in Brussels and is a much larger predictor of cooperation than regional independence (Beyers & Donas, 2014, p. 11 & 18). The majority of offices will tend to focus their cooperation on intra-state, with 80% of offices having two or less foreign contacts, where this is the most significant predictor for whom regions cooperate with (Beyers & Donas, 2014, p. 12 & 19). Another interesting point about the regional offices, are that they often share offices with regions across borders. The North

Norwegian office shares its office with North Sweden Brussels office and the office of North Finland (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2012, p. 537). North Sweden has since moved to the building next door, but they can still be considered fairly close by.

*H11 Geographic proximity is the main predictor if two regions will have an official cooperation*

### **The Committee of the Regions**

The single permanent regional network that will be studied in this thesis is the CoR which was established in 1994 and has today about 350 members regions and local authorities from all over Europe (Committee of the Regions, 2015). It is one of the two advisory bodies that is explicitly mentioned in the Treaty of the European Union (TEU), the same treaty that establishes the Commission, EP and Council of Ministers (Hönnige & Panke, 2013, p. 452).

To what extent do the regions cooperate with other regions, the CoR is a cooperation agency for the regions, and working together is often useful for every region (Kettunen & Kull, 2009, pp. 130-131). There should be an amount of cooperation and alliances between the regions, and maybe across borders of the states that are cases in the thesis. I would not be surprised if there would be a lot of cooperation between Norwegian and Swedish regions, and between Austrian and Swiss regions.

The establishment of CoR was done after pressure by the stronger regions of the EU and the Commission and was opposed by the Council and EP. The idea behind CoR was to create a way for regions to get a greater influence in the decision making process of the EU and be used as a way to bypass the states (Hönnige & Panke, 2013). And whose members today are proposed by the member states via the Council of Ministers and are considered experts on regional matters (Greenwood, 2011, p. 438). This implies that the appointment process of today was a result of a compromise to allow CoR existence.

CoR can access the policy process in three ways. It will get consulted in the relevant policy areas. Where the EP, the Council and the Commission can request to get opinions in matters that they consider to be important and lastly the CoR can make opinions on matters they consider to be important, the important part is that the opinions are not binding (Hönnige & Panke, 2013, pp. 454-455). This shows that access more or less guaranteed for CoR and in extension the regions, but the pure consultative function brings the risk of making it toothless. It is shown that CoR has influence on policy but a lack of binding recommendations results in

that CoR's advice is often ignored. Unsurprisingly the effectiveness of CoR is higher the earlier in the policy process they make their comment (Hönnige & Panke, 2013, p. 467).

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) has not evolved from being an expert board to something that could function as the official representation of the regions in Brussels it made some of the offices expand their competencies and made them focus more on influencing the EU (Greenwood, 2011, p. 442). This can be illustrated that for the federal Germany, CoR does not have a high priority for the regions (Jeffery, 2004, p. 616), which can mean that federal countries in general don't use CoR. Even with all these faults the regional offices from unitary states are still so small that being a part of a regional network like the CoR is more or less a necessity to have real influence.

*H12 CoR is more important for the office from unitary states than offices from federal states.*

### **3.4 Office type**

In the same way that there is a fairly large variety in the regions that are mobilizing in Brussels there is also some variation in the types of offices these regions chose to have

#### **3.4.1 Public/Private partnerships**

There are different kinds of public-private offices, where one kind are a pragmatic creation where the main goal is to attract partners, promote the region or to seek funding. A different model is to have membership organizations with regional authorities, local authorities, businesses, trade unions, universities and other third party organizations, with the Brussels office performing a wide range of services for its members. These offices are also often a result of historical controversies in the establishment and have been a preferred model for the offices in the Nordic countries (Greenwood, 2011, p. 440).

Another point that is made by Greenwood (2011) is that having public/private partnerships is something medium strength regions like the regions from the unitary states Norway and Sweden tend to prefer, further evidence for that one could call the regions from those countries medium strength is given in the Case Selection chapter in the discussion of the RAI index by Hooghe, Marks, and Schakel (2010), this leads to the next hypothesis.

*H13 Regions in unitary states tend to prefer public-private offices.*

#### **3.4.2 Administrative offices**

Looking at the offices from federal states with strong regions one can use the German regions as an example. The German offices are staffed by personnel that are directly employed in the

Ministries of the states, which make the employees civil servants (Kettunen & Kull, 2009, p. 125). Because Austria and Switzerland both are federal countries one could assume that the regions of those countries use the same way to organize their Brussels offices, this leads to the next hypothesis.

*H14 regional offices from federal states are a part of the civil service of the region*

### **3.7 Independent Variables**

In the last sections the sixteen hypotheses of the text were presented, in the last section of this chapter the focus will be on the two independent variables.

The first independent variable is membership status of parent state; this is used to explore to which degree membership of the parent state in the EU matters for a region towards the EU. To compare this, one has to make a comparison between regions in states that are formal members Austria and Sweden and the regions from states that are not formal members, called associated members, Norway and Switzerland.

The second independent variable is to explore to what degree the placement on the unitary-federal axis of the parent-state will impact on the type of office. The first reason is that the regions in federal states have in most cases more competencies and independence than a comparable region of a unitary state which should make them more active in the EU. Further many studies make the assumption that there has to be a pre-existing territorial and legal structure for regions to make use of the opportunities the EU can give (Tatar, 2011, p. 381), like the constitutional guaranteed independence regions of federal states have. Another probable important difference is that in the unitary states the gate-keeper role of the state dictates the access the regions have towards the EU. On these points, one should expect that regions of federal states will have committed more resources and therefor have more influence in the EU, compared to similar regions in unitary states.

After having presented the fourteen hypotheses and the two independent variables in this chapter, the next chapter will feature the research design of the thesis where there will be given a discussion what are the best methods for gathering the data and a more in-depth methodological reason for the choice of independent variables.

## **4 Research design**

Last chapter presented the hypotheses which will be used to explain which of the two possible independent variables is the best choice to shed an empirical light on how the regions of Norway and Switzerland mobilize in the EU, to understand if it is either the member/associated-member axis or the federal/unitary axis that can explain the presence and absence of regional offices. And in addition test the findings on the three theories of integration and see if and how they can be used to explain how the regions from countries those are not full members but associate members of the EU fit into the EU system. It should be noted that there are other modes that regions can use to mobilize besides regional offices (Tatham & Thau, 2013, p. 18), but they fall outside the scope of the thesis.

The text will then use the empirical findings using a comparable analysis to compare the regions from Norway and Switzerland to regions from other countries that are full members (Yin, 2014, pp. 40-41). The data that is used to test the hypotheses in the thesis is gathered from interviews done in Brussels on a sample of offices that serve as the representation of mobilization in Brussels and are the main source of data which is also combined with documents as an additional source of data.

The primary reason for the choice of these methods is that there has been done very little research on the regional mobilization of Norwegian and Swiss regions in Brussels and the little research that has been done, is for the most part in the native languages of those countries, which seems to render research “invisible” to the world of political science which primarily uses English. A secondary reason is brought forth by Moore (2008, p. 522) which states that the gains the regional offices make in Brussels are often “soft” and imprecise which makes it difficult to measure the topic with quantitative statistical methods.

### **Operationalization of variables**

To measure the regional mobilization of regions the thesis uses the presence of regional offices as the operationalization of the concept. This is then applied as the unit of measurement in a dichotomous scale, a region is either mobilized and has a regional office or the region is not mobilized and does not have a regional office in Brussels. This is the first step in answering the original puzzle of the thesis, why are regions from Norway as a non-member of the EU having offices in Brussels and why is does this not apply to Switzerland?

## **4.1 Theory on interviews**

Before starting to collect data through interviews one first should research about the different challenges that can occur when interviewing people.

The two great challenges that follow using interviews are sampling bias and measurement error. Sampling bias is the problem of knowing if the people that are interviewed are a representative reflection of the population, In this case of the thesis, if the people from the offices that I collect my data from are actually representing the whole picture of regional mobilization (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 131).

The second challenge of interviews is the problem of measurement error with interviews which has three dimensions, the first being asking the right questions, the second is making sure that the person one interviews understands the question asked and last, asking the question in a way that ensures one gets the same answers every time (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 132).

## **4.2 The interview process**

The establishment of contact with the sources was done by direct e-mail in the beginning of January 2015 with the aim of getting interviews in the week of February 2<sup>nd</sup> and February 6<sup>th</sup>. The goal was to secure 10 to 15 interviews between the four countries chosen for the study. The selection of cases in Norway, Sweden and Austria was done by trying to get as large of the geographical spread as possible. Getting interviews for Switzerland was trickier than the other countries because the apparent lack of regional mobilization. The solution was to send an e-mail to the Konferenz der Kantonsregierungen (KdK), the official association of the all the 26 Swiss Cantons, and secure an interview with their representative in Brussels as the representative.

By using earlier studies and the directories provided by EU institution a list was compiled, which is presented in the chapter 5, case selection. In total there were sent request to sixteen offices chosen by with as large as possible spread in geographical location, with the end result was having secured an interview with nine offices in the week between February 2<sup>nd</sup> and Thursday 6<sup>th</sup>. There were fewer interviews that fist planned for, but after completion it became clear that the amount of data was large enough. The interviews were conducted in Brussels with the Director of the office in most cases with the location being in the offices of the regions and the interviews being between 20 to 70 minutes in length; with an average of about one hour.

From Norway the interviews were done with West Norway Office, South Norway European Office, North Norway European Office and Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, the last interview has not been used because it was outside the scope of the thesis. The Swedish offices interviewed were North Sweden European Office and Central Sweden European Office. From Austria the interviews were done with EU-Representation Office of Carinthia and the Lower Austria – Brussels Liaison Office. And the Conference of Cantonal Governments at the Swiss Mission to Brussels. The reasons for why these offices were chosen is discussed in detail in the Case Selection chapter.

To avoid the issue of measurement as discussed in the Theory on Interviews section, one plausible strategy is the art of asking the questions that gives you the answers that one needs, but not necessary the answers one wants. All of the respondents were given the option of reading through the questions before the interview, but only two elected to do so, North Norway Office and the Carinthian Office. Doing good research is trying to get the story of what really happens, not confirming the preexisting notions so one can make the data match the used theory perfectly. There is of course no good way to make good questions, especially on the first pass, the only way is to let them evolve, which was an issue that was experienced during the round of interviews, with some questions disappearing and some other questions being added during the week.

### **The structure of the interview questions**

In this section will be a presentation of the type of questions that were asked in the interviews to understand how the offices operated in Brussels. The interviews started by asking what their main task as an office were and what role the respondent had. The next part of the interview was asking questions to categorize the office to find out if the main mission was lobbying, information gathering or promotion, which was done by asking three related questions. The first was; what were the tasks they had to do during a week, second; what is the main mission of the office and last; was having them sort the different tasks the office had from most important task to the least important task. In some interviews the follow up question was asked on how much time that was spent on the different tasks.

To understand with whom and how the offices cooperate with other regional offices, the question was answered directly by asking how they cooperated and with whom. This was done to get a better understanding if the regions did use the regional networks like the CoR.

On what type of office they had the questions were mostly asked directly on how they were organized and how they were funded, with some instances on how the salaries were handled. This was done to understand if the offices were either public-private partnerships, a part of the administrative structure of the regions or some other way to organize that was not captured in the literature review.

By asking how the offices usually were received by the EU system the question was simply; “In your opinion how well is your office received by the EU?” This was asked to see if there were any differences between the full-member states and the associated member states.

In an effort to measure the motivations for why the office was started and is maintained the interview used two separate questions, the first was to ask on the history of the offices, when they were established and what the motivations for it was. The second question was asking to what the degree the region had to implement legislation that originated by the EU. This was done to understand if the reasoning was to gather information, influence policy or promotion of the region.

Two questions that was only asked to the offices of Norway and Switzerland was what challenges they had not being a member and what would happen if the parent state would become a full member of the EU. The aim of the question was to have a way to gauge the importance of the membership. These kinds of counter-factual questions are of course at best guesstimates of what would actually happen if this would happen.

### **Translation issues**

In an effort to get the most precise answers possible from the respondents, most of the interviews were done in the respondent’s native language whenever possible which should help make the answers more nuanced, but English was used in two of the interviews. The languages used in the interviews were Norwegian, Swedish, German and English and translated into either English or Norwegian by the author as a part of the transcription. This gives rise to the possibility that there could be some smaller misunderstandings in the translation that could have an impact on the more subtle points which could affect the data; this of course could negate the gains that were made by having the interview in the respondents’ native language. Further some of the regional offices asked to read through the material used from them before finishing the thesis, which some did and gave a little feedback



and corrections. In a more ideal setting there would have been someone to have a second look at the transcription to make sure that the translations would have been correct.

### **4.3 The comparable method using Most Similar Systems Design**

After having collected the data using interviews, the results will be analyzed using the Comparable Method by Lijphart (1975, p. 159) also called Multiple-Case Design by Yin (2014, p. 56)

The main purpose in using the comparable method is test empirical hypotheses to either confirm or falsify them (Lijphart, 1975, p. 159) on cases where one knows the outcome (Yin, 2014, p. 62), if a regions has an office or not. The main methodological problems with using the comparable method is having few cases and many variables (Lijphart, 1971, p. 685). But it is to be said that there are ways to avoid that. The first one is to make an effort to get as many cases as possible, this can be done expanding geographically and through time, i.e. measure the same case at different times, this will give you additional data. The second choice is to reduce the number of variables, by focusing the question or attempt to combine some of the variables (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, pp. 133-134). The way those methodological problems have been solved in this thesis done by including more cases by adding the offices from Sweden and Austria and thereby going from just one independent variable, which was the federal/unitary axis because neither Norway or Switzerland are members, and having a second independent variable which is the member/non-member axis. The reasons for why those two countries were chosen are because this thesis uses replication logic where one has to choose one's cases because one thinks they can be used to predict similar or contrasting results, if one had used sampling logic one had to make a statistical selection of all regions in Europe (Yin, 2014, pp. 55-56). The logic of the choice of regions for this thesis is explained in detail in the Case Selection chapter.

The method that Yin (2014) is explaining above is quite similar to Most Similar Systems Design which is to quote from Lijphart (1975) *“The investigator takes two ‘groups’ that differ in outcome (dependent variable) and attempts to locate differences in conditions between them (independent variables). In deviant case analysis, one ‘group’ is comprised of the deviant case itself, and the other by the majority of cases expressing the general finding”*

Or explained with other words the strategy is to compare cases that are as similar as possible, this will transform many of the variables into constants and one can then focus on the

variables that one needs to explain the phenomena in question of the study (Lijphart, 1971, p. 687).

Mill's method of agreement is closely related to Most Similar Systems design, in where one tries to find all instances of a phenomenon, and tries to find which of the causal variables are common among all the cases (Ragin, 1987, p. 37).

In this method one first identifies all the instances where dependent variable was caused by the independent variable and if they do, then one looks for cases where there is an absence of the dependent variable and researches if the independent variable is lacking in those cases. One can use a 2 x 2 table to give an better overview (Ragin, 1987, p. 39).

In using the most similar systems design or Mill's method of agreement, there is the problem that no two cases are alike when one starts to look more closely, when using the state as the unit of comparison one can overlook the often big differences between regions inside the country (Hooghe et al., 2010, p. 2). This can make it challenging to make sure that on really compares the correct states with each other when doing Most Similar Systems Design. In other words are the regions of Norway similar to the Swedish and how are we sure that the regions of Switzerland and Austria are so different that it so real comparison. The counter argument is that if one does not try to compare mostly similar cases like states, there is no science to be done. If one remembers that one's cases are similar in the areas that matter and not identical in every conceivable way, then there it is still possible to use the comparable method to great success. The way this has been solved in this thesis was to identify the "twin" state of both Norway and Switzerland who are members of the EU, which are Sweden for the former and Austria for the latter, which is discussed in great detail in the Case Selection chapter.

To tie this up with the unit of analysis used in this text, the regions of Europe, there are hundreds of regions with their own history, language and economics, but the one feature they all have in common is being a region in a country that is either member of the EU or a region in a country that is closely tied with the EU.

#### **4.4 Common issues with all types of research**

Here there are presented some issues that crop up in all types of research and how these issues have been addressed in this thesis.

##### **Construct validity**

Something often criticized in case studies in general is the construct validity, in which the researcher fails to adequately develop the set of measurements, often called operationalization, that will be used to describe the state of things or the change that one tries to observe (Yin, 2014, pp. 46-47). Because the study uses interview data where many of the questions have been asked directly there is in many regards not much to make precise operationalization because many of the answers have been directly answered by the respondents. Further the offices have been set to be the operationalization of regional mobilization.

### **Internal validity**

The main challenges to internal validity are spurious causal relationships and making wrong inference for events that are not directly observed. The first problem can become an issue for this thesis because one is trying to make conclusions on why the offices and states are the way they are (Yin, 2014, p. 47).

The second challenge of making wrong inferences can be trickier to avoid because it will most likely be some need to make some inferences to why certain things are like they are, especially in regards to the motivations of the EU who have not been asked directly which makes the possible reasons they would have interference.

### **External validity**

The external validity deals with the issue if the finding made on phenomena that is under study is generalizable outside of the specific case that is looked at, no matter which method is used. To heighten the external validity it is recommended to include “how” and “why” into the research questions (Yin, 2014, p. 48). This has been done in the thesis because the thesis looks at why the offices exist, and in some cases don’t exist and how they are doing their work in Brussels.

## **4.5 Measuring influence**

The next part the theory section will be about how to measure influence empirically.

Influence, understood as an actor’s ability to shape the outcome of a decision to match its preferences, is a concept that is very hard to measure because there is no obvious unit that can represent influence. As an example, one cannot say that politician A has four more units of influence than politician B (Dür, 2008, pp. 560-561).

Another viewpoint many researchers have about influencing is viewing it as a zero-sum game, with one clear winner and one clear loser. Where in reality the result of lobbying tend to be compromises, non-zero-sum games, with one side gaining some and the other side not losing as much as they could have. The consequence for research is that one has to carefully understand what has been gained and what has been lost (Mahoney, 2007, p. 37).

Dür (2008) identifies three main challenges to measuring influence. The first being that there are different channels, besides direct lobbying, groups can try to influence politics by swaying public opinion, outside lobbying. They can influence the selection of public officials, or they have structural power where the group has so much gravitas, that the politicians make sure that a decision is to the groups liking.

The second challenge is the amount of influence the counter-lobby exerts, in the case where a group has not managed to get an outcome to fit their preferences, it is not because it lacks power, but because some other groups have more power.

The last challenge being that influence can be exerted at many points of the policy process. An influence group can submit a proposal, give its input in committee, influence the politicians before the vote or influence how the implementation should be done.

There are of course methodological techniques to overcome these challenges, process tracing, the “attributed influence” method and assessing the degree of preference attainment.

Process tracing is trying to identify all the steps of the causal chain to identify what causes affect an outcome. In the case of regional offices it will involve finding the region’s preferences, which decision makers they had access to and how the decision makers reacted to their preferences, and in the end to what degree the region’s preference translated into tangible policy (Dür, 2008, p. 562).

The strengths of the method are firstly if you have a small-N it is unproblematic to have a good enough overview of all the factors to have several rival explanations for the outcome to be able to demerit if it was a specific region that had an influence on the outcome. The second strength of the method is the possibility to rely on interviews that potentially gives one access to information that is not available through document analysis (Dür, 2008, p. 563).

The main pitfalls of process tracing are false conclusions based on lack of information, this may be overlooking a step in the process, overstating the impact one region had on a policy

outcome because someone thought; “I wanted this outcome and it happened, ergo it was me who made it happen”, and in other words it could be someone else. Related to the last point, it is possible to understate the impact someone has, because it happened “behind closed doors”. The last major possible hurdle is that one is confined to a small-N (Dür, 2008, pp. 563-564).

The “Attributed Influence” method consist of making surveys for influence groups to assess the influence they have or ask peers to assess the influence other similar organizations have. There is also the option of inviting experts to them to make an educated assessment of different groups influence. The main advantage is its simplicity where the challenge is to get enough respondents, and it is able to capture most channels of influence when asking influence groups.

The drawback of the method is overestimation and underestimation of the ability of groups to influence policy. This is something that can affect group’s assessment of their own success, groups about other group’s abilities and experts (Dür, 2008, pp. 565-566).

The last method is assessing the degree of preference attainment, the goal of this method is to take the ideal position in an area and compare it with the position of the responsible department at the start of a policy process, and then compare the difference in the distance between the groups ideal position with the official position of the polity at the end of the policy process (Dür, 2008, p. 567).

The main advantages with the methods are the ability to measure the influence of a group that apparently does nothing because one just has to look at the result. The method gives one the ability to have a large sample size and in contrast to process tracing gives you the ability to determine degrees of influence, where the latter only can tell if a group has had any influence or not.

There are some challenges too with this method, where the first challenge is the problem of finding the underlying preference, in interviews the subject will often, conscious or not, tell you the strategic preference. A second challenge is the problem of seeing the difference between actually influencing someone and by luck attain ones preference without actually doing something (Mahoney, 2007, p. 44), and the last challenge is to capture the full scope of influence. Because a group can have preferences in wide area of policy fields, but only really have an interest in a small portion of those fields, and there it will pool all its resources and gain a lot of success there (Dür, 2008, pp. 568-569).

Here I will use the method of “Attributed influence”, because in this study I will ask the respondents to directly assess their own influence and the two other methods are outside of the scope to correctly gauge. One possible problem that one could encounter when using “Attributed influence” is that the respondents in the interviews oversell their successes and downplay their failures and thereby giving the impression that the office is more successful in changing the outcome of the policy process than they in reality were.

After having explained that the thesis will be using a Comparable case analysis using interview data to explain the presence of associated member mobilization of regions in the EU and some of the issues that could crop up using those methods, the next chapter will be about the selection of the Cases which are used.

## 5. Case Selection

The origin of the research question was; why do Norwegian regions have Brussels offices, even though they are not a member of the EU, and where the follow-up question was on the apparent absence of Swiss regional offices. Common for both countries are that they are the only bigger European country that are a non-members, therefore the selection of Norway and Switzerland as in the category not members.

Looking more closely at the two non-members states one quickly realizes that they are not easily comparable because of one possible very important trait. Norway is a unitary state with a very strong central government and fairly weak regions, but Switzerland has a weak central government with very strong regions. This begs the question, why does Norway with the weak regions have regional offices while the strong regions of Switzerland do not have any offices? The opposite outcome should be the one would observe considering the regions of Switzerland in theory will have a lot more leeway to have an office than the Norwegian regions. This implies that there are some other unknown factors that are a part in producing this outcome.

The method chosen for the thesis is a comparable-case analysis using a Most Similar Systems Design where the comparison will be done on two axes to find discover what makes the different outcomes on the two countries. The first axis is if a country is a full member of the EU or not. The second axis is to see if the being a unitary state or federal state will have an impact on the outcome. To get all the possible combinations of these traits the choice fell on Sweden and Austria, both are full members of the EU. The difference is that Sweden is unitary while Austria is a federal country.

Table 1 below shows the classification of the states in the two dimensions, the federal/unitary axis and the member/non-member axis.

<i>Table 1</i>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Non-member</b>
<b>Unitary</b>	Sweden	Norway
<b>Federal</b>	Austria	Switzerland

Besides the similarities between the states mentioned above, there are also other important reasons for why these countries are good candidates for comparisons. Norway and Sweden are both unitary states in that their regions are not something that is guaranteed in their constitution, making them weak regions using the (Callanan & Tatham, 2014) typology which

was discussed in the theory chapter. De jure the governments of Sweden and Norway could decide to abolish their regions tomorrow if they wished to do so, which of course de facto would be almost impossible. This is different from the situation in Austria and Switzerland where the regions are guaranteed their independence and rights to co-decision in the constitution and the central government does not have the de jure power to abolish it's regions.

Sweden has almost 10 million inhabitants and Norway slightly above 5 million, but this difference in citizens should not have any real impact on the results in the other variables are more or less alike. Austria and Switzerland both have above 8 million inhabitants. Both country pairs have of course other similarities, similar and mutually understandable languages, proximate geographical position in Europe and culture.

All four states were among the founding members of EFTA in 1960, which Norway and Switzerland still is members of today.

*Table 2*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number regions</b>	<b>Pop. mean</b>	<b>Pop. median</b>	<b>Pop range</b>
<b>Norway</b>	19	266,030	238,748	74,535 – 623,966
<b>Sweden</b>	21	459,291	277,349	57,161-2,163,042
<b>Austria</b>	9	947,470	723,494	287,470-1,775,843
<b>Switzerland</b>	26	313,761	228,120	15,788-1,424,895

As one can see from the table above, there is a huge span in inhabitants between the regions in the countries under study.

**This table shows the Brussels offices of the various regions.**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Employees per million</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Carinthia</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Lower Austria</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2,5</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Styria</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4,2</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Upper Austria</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2,1</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Salzburg</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Burgenland</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3,3</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Vorarlberg</b>	<b>No office</b>	<b>No office</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Vienna</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2,2</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Tyrol</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1,4</b>



<b>Norway</b>	<b>Mid-Norway</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>North-Norway</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>Oslo region</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1,7</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>South Norway</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6,6</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>Stavanger/Rogaland</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>West-Norway</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3,75</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>West-Sweden</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2,7</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Central Sweden</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>East Sweden (defunct)</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>Na</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Malmö</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Mid-Sweden</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12,5</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>North-Sweden</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>South Sweden</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0,4</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Stockholm region</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5,5</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>Swiss Cantons</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0,1</b>

By using R (statistical tool) one sees that the employees per million is 5.3 for Norway, 5.5 for Sweden and 3.5 for Austria. Using the t-test in all the possible combination shows that there are no statistical significant differences in how many employees there are per million between the countries, which gives no reason to follow up on that possible difference. Switzerland has not been included because of only one entry.

Seeing that the countries are good for comparison on just descriptive terms, there is also a good scientific rational for choosing them by using the analysis done by Hooghe et al. (2010) where they compare 42 states in the period between 1950-2006 in eight different measurements of regional authority, in the categories *self-rule* and *shared rule*. Self-rule is measured by four variables; the range is in parenthesis, *institutional depth* (0-3), *policy scope* (0-4), *fiscal autonomy* (0-4) and *representation* (0-4). Shared rule is also measured by four variables *law making* (0-2), *executive control* (0-2), *fiscal control* (0-2) and *constitutional reform* (0-3). These measurements are then aggregated for each state to a Regional Authority Index score (RAI) with a maximum score of 24.

Sweden and Norway both have a score of 10 of maximum 24 for their regions on the regional RAI where every point is from the self-rule category, which could make them a medium strength regions using Greenwood (2011) typology of weak by Callanan and Tatham (2014) typology. This shows that Sweden is most likely the best choice for an EU member-state to compare to Norway. Looking at the scores for Austria and Switzerland the scores are 18 for the former and 19.5 for the latter on the regional RAI with regions from both states having a

high degree of autonomy and fair amount of shared rule with the federal government, which makes them good candidates for a comparable analysis.

Now that it has been shown that the countries are good candidates for a comparable analysis the thesis will continue with a more in-depth presentation of each country to point out some unique differences that may have some impact on the end result.

## **5.1 Norway**

Norway can be considered a non-member of the EU but it is more correct to classify it as an associated member through the EEA. The result is that Norway and its regions do not have direct access to the governing institutions of the EU, but paradoxically Norway is still almost as integrated into the EU system as many EU states are (Gullberg, 2015, p. 3).

There have been two non-binding referendums in Norway on joining the EU, the first in 1972 and the second in 1994 which were the no-vote won with a slight majority, so the Norwegian parliament elected not to join. The result for Norway's relationship to the EU was that the EEA agreement which everyone believed would be a temporary instalment when it was introduced in 1992, but is today the main treaty in force which regulates the relationship between the EU and Norway. The Norwegian government states the number of treaties that Norway has with the EU is 74 (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2012, p. 35). While the EU states that the total number of treaties that the EU has today with Norway today regulate different aspects of politics between the polities is 172, the difference in numbers is explained that the EU counts every third party treaty that both polities have signed, like the United Nations (European External Action Service, 2015). Not all treaties are equally important, but it shows that Norway is interconnected with the EU in many policy areas besides the EEA.

The greatest changes for the regions by Norway joining the EEA agreement have been the EU-ban on using public money to directly and indirectly to subsidize private enterprise, the rules on public purchase and the four EU freedoms (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2012, pp. 513-514).

The ban on subsidies encompasses any sort of use of public money that will give an advantage to some businesses, this includes direct subsidies, tax breaks, lower prices on public utilities, preferring public owned businesses before others and selling public properties at lower price (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2012, pp. 520-521). (This ban is something that the EU is trying to make law in Switzerland).

The EU rules on public purchase were a strict departure from how things used to be. Many Counties and Municipalities had had fixed contractors for many years, and the new rules forced them to put new contracts of for bid. The bidding contest have been hard strains on the smaller municipalities who often don't have the know-how and time to learn the difficult rules that this change brought (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2012).

All of Norway's 19 counties are members of one of the 6 Norwegian Brussels offices, which makes the country then only one of the four where all the regions are having a presence in Brussels. The municipalities in the Scandinavian states have a rather strong position in the national setting, and comparably weak regional administrations (Kettunen & Kull, 2009, p. 121). The Brussels offices of the Norwegian and Swedish regions don't have many employees; the reason may be that they don't have many resources available to them.

## **5.2 Switzerland**

The relationship between Switzerland and the EU is quite different from the Norwegian relationship with the EU. Switzerland can be seen as a quasi-member of the EU, or as pragmatic bilateralism by politicians and more negatively by other politicians Switzerland as a quasi-colony of the EU (Lavenex, 2009, p. 548), in the context of the thesis Switzerland will be considered to be an associated member as Norway.

The most striking difference in the context of regional mobilization is that none of the Swiss regions have a presence in Brussel in the form of an office which could indicate a lack of regional mobilization but one could argue that the presence of the delegate from the Conference of Cantonal Governments (KdK) who is stationed in the Swiss Mission to the European Union, is the representation of the mobilization by Swiss regions.

Swiss-EU relations today are based on sixteen core bilateral agreement and hundreds of secondary agreement in various discrete areas without any central coordination institutions, concluded in two packages made in 1999 and 2004 (Lavenex, 2009, p. 551). The reason for these bilateral treaties is that the Swiss voters said no to the EEA agreement in 1992, which the other EFTA countries at the time joined. Besides the bilateral treaties, Switzerland has joined the Schengen accord.

The main difference between the Swiss bi-lateral treaties and the EEA agreement is that EU acquis do not automatically become Swiss law and there is no obligation for Switzerland at any point to adopt EU law in any form. The monitoring of the bilateral agreements is done

independently by the Swiss in Switzerland and by the EU on the other side of the border. Switzerland is still obligated to adapt Swiss law to the EU law in the scope of the bilateral agreements, a work that is done by the mixed committees that are a part of most of the bilateral agreements. They consist of people from both the EU and Switzerland who are responsible for the implementation on both the political and technical side and function as a place to settle disputes and monitoring (Lavenex, 2009, p. 551).

In the Swiss constitution (article 42) it is stated that the federal government has the reserved powers and competencies given through the constitution. And the Cantons have all the residual competencies that are not directly belonging to the federal government as stated in article 43 (Swiss Confederation, 2014).

Article 54 states that foreign policy is the prerogative of the federal government, but they have to consider the impact the foreign policy has on the Cantons. There seems to have been some dispute on this article, so in 1999 the Swiss constitution was revised and article 55 was added. This article guaranties the right of the Cantons to be consulted in foreign policy matters where the Cantons competences are involved (Dardanelli, 2007, pp. 20-21). Based on this one could expect that the Cantons have to be included in almost every foreign policy matter, considering the scope of EU law and policy.

As already mentioned above, foreign policy is the domain of the federal government, but article 56 gives the Cantons the right to make foreign policy with regional and local powers outside of the Swiss border and make treaties within their own competencies, as long as the federal government is informed. Foreign policy with other states and supranational entities has to be conducted via the federal government. There is probably a historical reason for the differentiation of the foreign policy fields between the regions and federal government, where one possibility can be that it is a product of pragmatic thought, to have a central government to represent all cantons towards the large and strong countries Switzerland shares its borders with.

Article 1 says that the Swiss confederation is made up by the Swiss people and its 26 Cantons, where the equally important part is that the Swiss federal government is not mentioned. Article 54 says that foreign policy is the responsibility of the Confederation, and article 55 states that the Cantons are to be consulted on foreign policy decision that affect their powers or their essential interest.

Based on this one can say that the cantons don't see the need for any concrete regional representation because in their view the state of Switzerland does not really exist in its own right, but is viewed as an extension of the will of the Cantons. Combined with that the constitution is very clear on the point that the cantons have to be consulted on every matter that will affect them, it can be argued that it is unsurprising that the cantons have come to the conclusion that it is their interests that are represented by the Swiss confederate mission in Brussels, because they are the confederate mission in all but name.

If this world view is shared by the confederate government of Switzerland that is elected by combined citizens of the Cantons is not known. One could expect that the confederate government view themselves, at least slightly more independent than the cantonal governments do.

This shows that the Cantons have a limited right to conduct foreign policy. Considering the thesis where the focus will be region-EU relation, it is important to understand that the Cantons have to work together with the federal government to conduct politics on the EU level.

### **5.3 Sweden**

Sweden was a member of EFTA before it joined the EU in 1995 after the referendum voted yes to join. This was the same round of referendums where Norway voted no.

The situation that is described in Sweden with weak regions and strong local authorities This makes them more independent if one compared them to municipalities in for example UK or France (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2010, p. 8). And are in a European perspective rather big in territorial scope, have their own taxation, are responsible for most of the implementation of policy, from which 60-70% originates from the EU (Berg & Lindahl, 2007, p. 22). Another line of research has looked what percentage of the meeting agenda is influenced by the EU which they concluded was about 50% (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2010, p. 39), having the regions spending such a large amount of time and resources on the issues that are coming from Brussels, one could easily assume that regional politicians would become very interested in what kind of issues the EU would send them, and therefore have much interest in influencing those issues before they came to the implementation stage. Most of the Swedish regions and municipalities are involved in a Brussels office and Swedes are involved in CoR (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2010, p. 7).

Until the spring of 2014 there used to be some more offices than there are today, for example the West-Sweden Brussels office was closed because its leader was involved in a scandal where it was shown that he used public money on alcohol and expensive dinners (Editorial, 2011), and some other offices are temporary and run on one-time funding. The only thing that can be said for certain is that it seems like most but not all Swedish regions are having a permanent presence in Brussels.

One of the offices was closed down for the time but should get up and running again later, this is a rather peculiar approach to having a permanent representation. My guess is that is a budgetary concern that is the main issue. This is a rather bad way to do business as it has been shown earlier in the text that having an office is a long term commitment where the fruits of one's work can take years to arrive.

A news article talking about involvement in Brussels by the city Gothenburg, the mayor of the city stresses that the main reason for the offices is to be in the know because about 60% of Gothenburg's legislation has its origin from the EU. The mayor counters the critics who say that too much of the tax money is wasted by stating that without the offices in Brussels. It would not be possible for the city to get EU funding (Rydholm, 2014). The article shows that there are two aspects with the Brussels office that are important for Gothenburg, information and funding. The question is what is most important for the public officials, the information or the funding? It could be that the information is the real goal for the officials and the funding is the excuse they use to placid the voters.

#### **5.4 Austria**

Austria joined the EU in the same round that also made Sweden a member, and was like both Norway and Sweden a member of EFTA before that.

Of the nine Länder of Austria, eight of them have their own office in Brussels, the only one that does not have an office is Vorarlberg which is the second least populated region of Austria, which shows that there is some other reason than just the population that has made that they have chosen not to spend resources on an office.

The Länder of Austria are allowed by the constitution to conduct foreign policy limited to the states that border to Austria and the regions of those states that share an Austrian border. The other limit is that the treaties have to be approved by the federal government (Blatter et al., 2008, p. 470), giving the Austrian länder almost the same right to conduct foreign policy at.

On the other hand, the Länder have a lot of influence on the competences of the federal government ability to conduct foreign politics. The Länder have the right to voice their opinion on all foreign matters that can affect their competences. Further the federal government has the duty to inform the Länder on all EU matters that can have an impact on their competences or be to an interest to them and the Länder have the right to present their opinion. And lastly, in the case where the Länder have jointly made a comment on a topic that affects their competences in legislative matters, the federal governments have to include that position in any negotiation and voting in the EU (Blatter et al., 2008, p. 470). The rights of the Austrian Länder are very similar to the rights of the Swiss Cantons, this makes the differences on how they chose to represent themselves in Brussels even more puzzling. Is it the membership issue that is the reason or is there some other compelling reason for their apparent differences?

Having presented the countries that are featured in the thesis in this chapter, the next chapter will be dedicated to analyzing the offices.

## 6 Analysis

In this chapter the thesis will first analyze each country in the order of Switzerland, Norway, Austria and Sweden, by looking at the interviews from the regional offices and discuss which integration theory that best explains them. As a part of the analysis of each country there will be done a comparable analysis between the countries to determine which of the independent variables, member/non-member or federal/unitary, that best explains the presence of the regional offices. The last part is the testing of the hypotheses.

Which questions and the order they were asked vary between the countries and to a lesser degree between the interviews in the same countries. This has two reasons, the first is that not all questions would fit the interview; the second reason is that some of the questions were dropped during the week of interviews because they did not add any useful information.

### 6.1 The countries

After looking at the four countries in the case selection chapter one can create this cross table which shows the preliminary findings. Table 4 shows that it is the combination of not being a member of the EU and being a federal state which makes a country not having regional mobilization in the form of Brussels offices.

<i>Table 4</i>	Member	Non-member
Unitary	Sweden (has regional offices)	Norway (has regional offices)
Federal	Austria (has regional offices)	Switzerland (does not have offices)

Having identified what the apparent factors are that determine the presence and absence of regional offices in Brussels it is time to take a closer look at the offices of the four countries to see more in detail why it seems that being a unitary state makes the regions have offices in Brussels even though the parent state is not a member of the EU and gives the opposite result in federal states. This is intriguing because regions in federal states are usually considered to be much more independent and therefore it would make it more likely that the situation should be the other way around. It could be a coincidence from the collected data, but a more reasonable possibility is that there is some other factor that explains this discrepancy.

#### 6.1.1 Switzerland

The findings shown in the text below are taken from the interview with the Cantonal representative who resides in the Swiss Mission to the EU in Brussels. The main difference



between Switzerland and the other three countries is that the interview respondent represents all of the regions of Switzerland, while the respondents from the other countries in all cases represent a sub-set of the regions.

### **Interview findings**

The interview started with the respondent talking about the office and how the Cantons fit inside the Swiss Mission in Brussels, where he got into an explanation for the apparent lack of Swiss regional representation in Brussels with this quote *“Participation of Swiss Cantons in foreign policy is not just in the air, it is written in the federal Constitution”*, he then continued with talking about article 1 of the Swiss constitution and highlighted the following sentence from the article, *“The people and the Cantons (list of all 26 Cantons) form the Swiss Confederation”* (Swiss Confederation, 2014). Here is evidence for what was discussed in the Case Selection chapter on Article 1 of the Swiss Constitution where it shows that the Cantons also regard themselves as the building blocks of the Swiss federal state. One reason for why this was surprising when found could be that I as an observer come from a rather centralized top down country as Norway is having trouble seeing the world from the Swiss perspective.

As mentioned in the case selection chapter, the Swiss electorate voted against joining the EEA agreement in 1992, the same agreement that regulates Norwegian-EU relationship today. The decision compelled the Swiss federal government to search for alternatives. The representative of the Swiss cantonal governments described how the Swiss federal government viewed their situation after the no vote in 1992 with the quote; *“We are in the middle of the EU, north Germany, south Italy, east Austria, west France, we are surrounded by the European Union”* and further *“Not like Norway or even Iceland which is even more on the periphery, we are in the middle of the cake. So we can’t just say “look, we don’t care about you (EU), just do what you want, we stay among us, and we don’t care about you”*. But I stress that later in the interview he underlined that the situation is not that they don’t want to have good relations with the EU. The EU simply exists and Switzerland has to live with that situation no matter what they think about it. The Swiss viewpoint on the EU has many parallels to the Norwegian, though the latter is geographically more on the outside of the EU, but one can make the case that it is not the same culturally and economically. The gist of the last quote is that it does not matter if either country wants to join the EU or not, the EU is just too big to ignore or to wish away out of people’s lives. And this statement from the Swiss

delegate has a high probability to explain much of the existence of the Norwegian offices in that they “have” to be in Brussels.

As mentioned earlier the 26 Swiss Cantons formally have one common office with one employee, which is the smallest of all the offices from all the regions which are presented in this thesis, the respondent did state that this was not a problem, which is contradictory to the findings done by Kettunen and Kull (2009) in an Estonian office where there was only one employee who thought it was not enough manpower to do the tasks. On the other hand, one has to remember that the position of the representative of the Cantons inside the Swiss Mission makes the *de facto* amount of manpower much larger.

The role of the cantonal office is to gather information on the EU that touch upon their competencies where they piggy-back on the information gathering apparatus of the federal Swiss mission to get the needed information as can be shown by this quote “*The Cantonal governments decided to install this post inside the Swiss mission, because this is where their representative would have the best access on information relevant for them*”. The Swiss delegate further stated that it was the best decision from a practical point of view, and that “*I exchange information with the colleagues here from the Swiss mission, the diplomats that collect the information from their field of subject. Normally, I get all the reports on topics relevant for the cantons*”. Organizing the cantonal Brussels office the way they have chosen could be seen as a much cost efficient way to do it. Considering how comparably rich Switzerland is, it should not be a huge ordeal for the regions to finance their own office if they wanted to. Trying to explain why this happened involves some speculation considering the available amount of evidence, but there are two likely explanations; on the one hand it could be that the Cantons don’t believe having an office would bring them any information that they would not get from the Swiss mission. On the second hand the reason could be political, wherein it is not tangible for any cantons to establish any offices because of pressures from the electorate; this is further complicated by the most likely fact that an office would require approval from not only the cantonal governments but also from all the 26 cantonal parliaments to pass if they wanted a common office. But the latter reason does not exclude the possibility for a single Canton to have an office or for some Cantons working together. Speaking on the topic of why Cantons don’t have opened their own office the Cantonal delegate had this to say; “*There have been thought from certain of them to open a representation here in Brussels, but it has never been finalized. This has to be decided by the governments of the Cantons, but also the parliaments. This would need a budget to pay for*

*expenses and that would need approval of the Cantonal Parliament.*” From this quote the best guess would be that there is no desire to spend the resources necessary from none of the 26 Cantons to have an office. In other words the cost-benefit analysis does most likely not favor establishing an office.

Because Switzerland is not part of the EEA it doesn't have to implement all the new EU laws as Norway is obliged to do. The bilateral approach makes all new treaties a home battle in Switzerland because if the competences of the vital interests of the cantons are concerned, the federal government must take the position of the cantons into consideration in the negotiation of the treaty. This would of course negate much of the need for any representation except for information, which is the explanation given by the Swiss representative with this quote, *“Don't forget that Switzerland is not a member of the EEA or the EU, so we are in another situation than EU member state regions. We are in another situation than Norway who is member of the EEA, who has to take on board all new EU acquis, this is not the case for Switzerland, we decide normally in common with the EU what new acquis that we take on board the bi-lateral agreements that we have negotiated. But there is no formal obligation to take on new acquis; this is a fundamental difference with the EEA member-states.”* The comment that Norway does have to take on every new acquis because of the EEA agreement is technically incorrect, because the EEA treaty has an opt-out clause for laws, but it has never been utilized which makes it possible to argue that the Swiss delegate is *de facto* correct.

Probable reasons for the lack of Swiss cantonal offices is that Switzerland is not a member of the EEA or the EU which gives them the right not having to adopt EU laws, but the Swiss laws are quite similar in general to the EU laws because they chose to voluntarily adapt their own laws as explained by the Cantonal delegate, *“After the ‘no’ to the EEA, there was a big exercise of adaptation of some of our laws to the EU acquis, This exercise was called Swiss-Lex, if we agreed to join the EEA. As we did not vote for the EEA, we did not have to go through this exercise in full, as we wanted to be in good relationship with the EU which is our main trading partner, we tried to make laws “EU compatible”, (...), this was very dynamic, very big exercise, of course the industry, the economy was pushing very strongly for that”* This quote shows that even though there are no direct political obligations to follow the laws and standards of the EU there have been large economic pressures that most likely also forces other states to adapt event though they are not full members. This pressure is still felt today and is addressed with a process called “Autonomous Adoption” and is explained by the Cantonal representative as, *“...we make laws in a euro compatible way, this means that the*

*Federal Parliament would vote on legislation which is compatible with the EU acquis. This means that we look at how the EU law is, we copy it more or less before adopting it (...) so the EU should consider that our laws are equivalent*". One could argue if Switzerland had not gone through the Swiss-Lex reform and today still is continuously adapting to EU laws, one would maybe see Cantonal offices in Brussels being established with pressure from the business. At first I got the impression that the Cantons view the Federal government of Switzerland as an extension of themselves a notion that could imply that the federal government is doing the will of the Cantons, but later the Swiss respondent told that impression was not correct. But still, considering the rights the Cantons have in the constitution in regards to information sharing and having their say on any EU matter, one could conclude that the present situation is not very surprising, because why would the regions spend resources on something they don't need?

It should be noted that the Swiss delegate did believe that in the possible case Switzerland would join the EEA or the EU at some point in the future, some of the Cantons would most likely establish their own offices which would not compete with the Swiss mission because they would have different interests. I see this as more evidence that the membership status of the parent state has a huge impact on the need and willingness of regions to establish offices in Brussels. The office model the Cantons would chose in the event of Switzerland becoming an EU or EEA member would most likely mirror the ones of Austria for two reasons. The first reason is that Switzerland has almost the same regional RAI score<sup>2</sup> that Austria has, as was discussed in the case selection chapter which indicates that they both have a high degree of independence together with the fact that they are constitutional regions a view that was shared by the Cantonal representative as shown in this quote *"If you would compare the Swiss Cantons with the others here in Brussels, the German and Austrian Länder would be the more similar"*. The second reason is that being in the proximity of both Germany and Austria makes it plausible that they would learn from their neighbors.

To summarize the finding from Switzerland, one first has to show that the assumptions that were made in the original puzzle which the whole thesis is based on<sup>3</sup> is rather imprecise because the Swiss Cantons have a representation in Brussels as a part of the Swiss Mission to

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<sup>2</sup> The score is 18 for Austria and 19,5 for Switzerland from a maximum of 24

<sup>3</sup> *Why do Norwegian regions have Brussels offices while the Swiss regions don't have Brussels offices?*

the EU, but no dedicated regional offices like the regions of Norway, Austria and Sweden have. This also makes the operationalization that was presented in chapter four, which stated that only the presence of a regional office in Brussels should indicate that the region is mobilizing and the absence means that the region is not mobilizing rather imprecise. The reason is that the Swiss Cantons themselves seem to be of the opinion that they are mobilized, which they also are, but to a more narrow degree than the regions from the other states. This means that the main question of the thesis is about what makes Switzerland elect not to have offices while the Norway chose to have, and not about the question of mobilization.

The work done by the regional representative is to large degree collecting and filtering information for the various regions of Switzerland, with less emphasis on influencing and promotion. The lack of offices is most likely a result of the bi-lateral approach the Swiss have followed in their relationship with the EU after their no to the EEA agreement, with the possibility for some Swiss regions getting offices in Brussels if Switzerland would join the EEA or the EU.

### **Switzerland and integration theories**

How do the Swiss cantons fit in with the theories of European integration? Looking at Switzerland from a liberal intergovernmental perspective the country almost looks like a text book example of said integration theory, with the federal government and the cantons having an internal discussion which forms the preference of the Swiss government. These preferences of the state are then executed in the best ways possible, sometimes in the confines of the EU and other times outside. The role of the regions is to take part in the forming of the state will, and let the state do all the talking (Moravcsik, 1995).

The theory can also neatly explain the presence of the regional representative in the Swiss mission to the EU, where his main task is to collect information that he sends back to the Cantons. This information can then be used to form the will of the state and then be brought to the negotiation table.

Using the MLG perspective it is possible to say that the Swiss regions don't really need the EU to pressure for power diffusion in Switzerland, because the Cantons are already very powerful compared to almost the regions of almost any other country. From this uniquely powerful position the cantons have the potential power to make the Swiss government to focus on the issues that are important for them, instead where the regions of other states have

regional offices in Brussels because the parent state does not have the same interest in the same issues as the regions are. This all means that the Cantonal need for the EU level does not exist and makes Multi-level governance a bad fit in explaining how the Swiss regions are operating in the EU. One possible problem with this explanation is that it assumes that all the Cantons have more or less the same interests and amount of political power. If one considers the huge difference in population size and economic muscle among the Cantons does make this seem unlikely. In other words, some of the Cantons like Zurich will most likely have much more power than many of the smaller Cantons like Appenzell Innerrhoden which only has about 1% of the population of Zurich.

Looking at the issue from the Constructivist perspective one could make the case for that the reason for Switzerland staying on the bilateral path is lack of official contact between the citizens of the EU and Switzerland. One of the reasons for why the EU agreed to the bilateral approach was that they thought it would be a way to ease the Swiss into the EU, getting Switzerland so close to the EU that full membership would only be a small step. But the opposite happened in that Switzerland got what it wanted, more or less free trade with the EU so the view today is that there is no reason to join because of that. One reason for why this approach did not work is that most of the functional needs for joining have been removed and having bilateral treaties has kept the Swiss from all the socializing settings that the EU institutions are and the occurrence of having Swiss citizens internalizing the norms and values of the EU does not happen, and may have reinforced the whole “us” and “them” dynamic that will undeniably occur if people are not allowed in. One example of this resistance against foreigners can be shown with the 2014 Swiss “initiative against mass immigration”, which was accepted by a majority of Swiss voters and the Cantons (Swiss Statistics, 2014).

If the Swiss had joined the EEA agreement in 1992 things may have been different, with the Swiss government and its members having been forced to have more socializing with the EU than it happens today. There is also the possibility that one would get the same situation one has in Norway today that has joined the EEA there is still a large opposition against joining the EU in the population, but from the interview in this thesis the impression is that people who work on and with the EU tend to be fairly positive in their attitude towards the EU.

Summarizing the discussion regarding where to fit Switzerland in the integration theories of the EU, the conclusion has to be that Liberal Intergovernmentalism is the best fitting theory. While MLG and Constructivism in the best case can explain some points more in detail.

### 6.1.2 Norway

The findings discussed below are collected from interviews conducted with the three Norwegian regions which are the West Norway Brussels office, North Norway European office and the South Norway European office. All three interviews lasted about one hour, in the cases where the offices have given more or less the same answer to a question, the thesis will only quote what one of the offices have said to keep the analysis chapter at an acceptable length.

#### Interview findings

All the Norwegian interviews started by asking the respondents to describe what kind of tasks they had and have them sort the tasks in the order of importance and where the West Norway office said, *“I would say that measuring in time, we spend a lot of time on information, and we also spend a fair amount of time on education.”* The need for relaying information is probably tied to the problem that there is often no news about EU legislation in Norway before it is about to be implemented, i.e. at the point of the process when it is no longer possible to make any changes, as was discussed with an informal interview<sup>4</sup> done with an employee at the International Office of Hordaland Municipality County. The South Norway office did also have a large emphasis on gathering information, but they were quite clear that the goal was to use it to secure EU funding for their region.

Related to the point about education is what the West Norway office called ‘Knowledge about Projects’ which was explained to be, *“Knowledge about Projects is about showing what kind of projects that are interesting for our counties and municipalities. We also spend a lot of time conveying information back home about project partners who wish to have partners for their projects that contact us. We also send out information on the behalf of projects that are ongoing in our regions. Education is important to keep people in the know about how the EU works and how the EU is working in their specific field.”* Here we get to an issue that may be a larger issue for the offices outside the EU than inside, the lack of knowledge of the EU by the citizens in the regions they represent.

Talking about how the West Norway Office works with other regional offices the representative had this to say, *“We are having a more or less firm cooperation with some regions on the ‘Open Days’, (...) regions that we have cooperated with a number of years.”*

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<sup>4</sup> Had a short impromptu meeting there in the fall of 2014 while researching the Norwegian Brussels offices, did not do any recording.

Then goes into detail on what the cooperation entails and why they choose to cooperate, *“cooperation in connection with ‘Open Days’ will be that we cooperate to organize a common seminar (...) the goal is to put important issues on the agenda that are important for the EU, but also are important for us, so last year we talked a lot about Smart Solutions (...) We are not obligated to do Smart Specialization, but European [EU] regions do, they have to have Smart Specialization strategy to have access to the structural funds and have to deliver this for their regions or countries. Usually it would be a challenge Norway to join and consider the issue, but Smart Specialization is open for countries outside the EU (...) some counties in Norway have elected to do things this way”* Here one gets the impression that the Norwegian regions are happy to join the different programs the EU has to offer and the EU is happy to let them take part. Norwegian regions are eligible to receive money from some of the EU programs because of the membership fees Norway has to pay for being a part of the EEA, especially the South Norway office did explain that they were trying to secure Smart Specialization funding.

The North Norway office was also quite positive about cooperation with other regional offices also with offices from EU countries which was formalized with their membership in the Northern Sparsely Populated Areas (NSPA) network and gave a rationale for joining networks which included EU countries, *“This is about how one should present the region towards the EU and stand together as a unit. If we group together with Sweden and Finland, then we may have a greater chance to influence matters in topics that are of interest to us”*. Here one can get the impression that the regions of member countries have greater weight in the EU than non-member countries.

The CoR has almost not been mentioned at all in any of the interviews with the Norwegian regions but the South Norway office did speak very much on the subject of all the regional networks the region is member of, going into the reasoning behind being a member of the networks the representative had this to say *“Running an office in Brussels is all about facilitating and support the players<sup>5</sup>, that is keeping everyone informed about everything from politics to knowing what funding is available (...) We have a much less clearly defined position than say the North Norway has (...) we work in a completely different fashion, we look for to a greater degree what we believe the region needs and sell them the networking opportunities.”* The main goal of the office as shown in the quote and is stated a couple of

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<sup>5</sup> Regional governments, the university and local businesses in the home region



more times in the interview, is to support the business development in the home region using the possibilities that come directly of the EU and the regional networks that are operating around the institutional infrastructure of the EU.

Getting into the topic of lobbying by asking where in the policy process they preferred to lobby the West Norway office had this to say, *“We don’t do enough direct lobbying at the present time to give an answer to that, but of course if one has to do it, one has to be as early as possible. We are a part of the Foreign Ministry’s Early Warning group<sup>6</sup> together with the other regional offices. It is important for all of us, including Norway as a country, to take part as early as possible in the processes. And it is in reality when the rumors are coming that there is about to be done some measure of politics in a policy area.”* The quote tells us three important things, the first is an indication that the West Norway office doesn’t do very much lobbying, most likely because of Norway’s non-member status and because it is highly centralized unitary state. The second reason is that the office has knowledge about lobbying and they agree with the other interview that it is most effective to take part in the policy process as early as possible.

The last and most interesting thing that the quote can tell us is that there is some indication that the country of Norway also is not very included in the EU policy process considering that one can get the impression that they try to get help from the all Norwegian offices to get a clearer picture of what is really happening in the EU. There is no reason to believe that the regional offices don’t gain on this arrangement, but the Foreign Ministry will most likely have much more resources available than all the regional offices combined, considering that they have 54 employees at the Norwegian Mission to the EU (EU-delegasjonen i Brussel, 2014), where the regions have a combined total of 18 employees in Brussels. This is in stark contrast to the German regional offices which have 400 combined employees to the only 150 in the Permanent German Representation (Greenwood, 2011, p. 440)

Not being a full member of the EU does apparently not hinder access to the EU institutions for the regions according to the West Norway representative *“The Commission is a very open organization (...) It is a building that has contact points on the outside and the inside their doors. We have experienced having meetings on behalf of clients and that is not a problem. Many people expect having meetings on the highest level, but it is also my experience that it is*

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<sup>6</sup> Established in 2013 and consists of the Norwegian Brussels Mission, all the regional offices and labor associations. They have about four meetings every year where they exchange information about issues that often still are on the level of rumors. (From the interview with the West Norway Office)

*not necessarily those who are at the highest level, because it is the case workers who work the cases before the cases get higher up in the system.” And “Citizens are Citizens. Letters that arrive will be logged and one has a deadline to respond to requests. In my time<sup>7</sup> there was no sorting on if the question came from Norway or EU countries” In the day to day interaction with the EU, there does not seem to be any obstacles of the non-member offices and seem to be treated in the same way as the offices from full-member countries. Interaction with the EP is characterized with the same kind of openness. If Switzerland had regional offices, it is very likely that they would be treated with the same openness that the Norwegian offices are experiencing.*

On the working together with the Norwegian government besides the “Early Warning Group” mentioned earlier, it seems like that the cooperation is going splendid for all the Norwegian regions with the West Norway office saying this, *“The cooperation is very good in my opinion. It is important though while we sit here in Brussels to remember that we represent the region. Those who sit in this building<sup>8</sup> represent the government of Norway (...) in theory we can submit a reply on a consultation which says something completely different than the reply of the Norwegian government.”* and further answering if there is some form of coordination between the regions and the Norwegian government on opinions, *“No, there is no reason for it, but it can be if one wants it to be. If one has some special issue which one knows won’t get much attention in a reply from the Norwegian government, then one also has the option to submit something (...) I will say that the cooperation is for the most part very good and there is much agreement on many issues.”* The most interesting part of the quotes is that direct disagreement seems to be a rare occurrence which supports the finding in (Tatham, 2012), and the work that is done by the office is more a supplement in the topics where the government has less of an interest. This mirrors the relationship between the regions and government in Germany, where one of the main rules is that the regions never directly go against the position of the federal government on EU matters because that would hurt both parties on the EU stage (Jaursch, 2013, p. 202). Asking the respondent about this comparison the response was *“In light of what I said earlier, we don’t do that kind of political work for it to become a real risk for us very often to go against an issue [the position of the government] with guns blazing. But I always say when one sends a reply to a consultation then one should consider what will help to further the cause in which it is not always wise to send in ten*

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<sup>7</sup> The West Norway respondent has previously worked at the EU as a foreign expert

<sup>8</sup> Both the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the West Norway Brussels Office have offices in the Norway House in Brussels

*different replies on a consultation, but rather to coordinate with other partners, the more people behind a reply, the better it is*". This strategy is also found in different variations at the other offices, one of the main strategies is to get as many allies as possible to show that a special interest is a European interest.

The respondent from the West Norway office mentioned something else that would change if Norway became a full member, "*...it would maybe have more options of contact with the parliament because one could get a politician from Bergen voted in as a member of parliament and would gain the ability to promote some of the opinions that were important for Norway, but maybe especially for our region because she would be predisposed by it*". Here one can make the case that not much would change in the relationship with the Commission, because they already are quite open for non-member regions, but it seems like the MEP's are more geographically oriented so they will not have much interest in other regions besides their own when it comes to special interests.

The North Norway office did agree that it was easy to gain and maintain contacts with especially the Commission as an associated member, but did also talk about the main difficulty which was, "*Unique difficulties, are the formal channels, that we are not able to vote on new legislation must be the greatest challenge. One does have informal influence, which is also what we do. We don't have any MEPs for example. We do have the national experts and they are involved early in the legislative process.*" A counter argument to the last quote could be that because the Norwegian regions don't get much as much funding as full members there would be less need for direct formal representation.

It is worth mentioning there are some political domestic issues than most likely have an impact on the work the regions do in Brussels which is that EU matters are to a fair degree a non-issue in Norwegian politics of today, where politicians are avoiding having to talk about it and rather use other international organizations as a sort of stand in, as is discussed in this editorial from Alstadheim (2015) in Dagens Næringsliv. Having this lack of political interest in EU matters is most likely impacting how much the media in Norway is reporting about the EU. One could argue this is a normative statement, implying that there is too little reporting from the EU in Norwegian media, but one has to remember that about half the legislation originates from the EU. The South Norway Office also addresses this political problem when it comes to get people willing to use the opportunities that exist in the EU system for Norwegians as shown with this quote, "*...but there is a lot of politics that are getting in the*

*way here, because people are so hung up on what they think about Norwegian membership in the EU that they cannot see the forest for the trees. So they don't manage to take the strategic view of 'this election cycle we are stuck with the EEA, we have rights, we have obligations how can we use this?'*” This is their main reason for why they have to inform of what is going on in the EU.

Promoting the region towards the EU seemed to be more important for the North Norway European office than for the West Norway office and South Norway office as shown with this quote, *“It is done through different events that we have, as we had last week. This spring we have organized a trip where I bring some MEPs to North-Norway”*. Here one can draw parallels to the North Sweden office that will be discussed more in detail in the analysis for Sweden, which talked about the difficulties of becoming and staying visible as a region in the EU. Asking how much time is spent on the promotional work towards the EU versus informing about the EU, this was answered *“Then there is possibly more focus on informing towards Europe (...) I would like to say that we spend more time on that...”*. One reason here can be that there is the same periphery effect affecting North Norway as the representative of North Sweden mentioned. It is also possible that this effect is even greater for the Norwegian regions as they are for the Swedish regions because Norway's non-member status. Asking the West-Norway office on the issue of being on the geographical periphery the respondent had this to say *“There are many regions that are in the geographical periphery in some respect. We do notice that issue of periphery is an issue we share with many, in such a way that it is not a problem that is specific for Norway, but it can be useful being in Brussels to do something about it (...) we also have to remember that the EU some years ago in the Lisbon Treaty managed to include Cohesion Policy, it should no longer be just be social and economic cohesion, but also geographical cohesion.”* The respondent continues to talk about that there are a lot of advantages of being the periphery, but it would also be nice to be closer to the center of the EU. One could make the point that the whole periphery issue is rather unimportant all things considered since the South Norway office did not say anything about that topic. One could say that the periphery issue is more important the further north one gets.

The last topic in the interviews with the Norwegian offices touched upon was more directly on how it is to represent a region from a country that is not a full member, *“Not as a regional office (...) If every matter that the Commissioner brings up is relevant for us, is not certain because they use a lot of time on the structural funds. Cohesion Policy is interesting for us, but the Cohesion part that of course not very interesting. It can be interesting to know where*

*they plan to spend the money so that we can know what we have to compete or cooperate with (...) I don't see it as a problem not being a member of the EU.*" Even though the regional office is welcomed to all the events, one can get the impression that the scope of involvement and interest is restricted because the lack of access to the structural funds that the regions from full members are eligible to receive. That situation would most likely change if Norway either became full member or the regions could receive structural funds through some change in the EEA.

### **Analysis of findings**

After having gone through the interviews to find out what each of the three Norwegian offices do and how they operate that are appearing in the thesis. This next section will analyze what is common and what is different for the regions to come to a general conclusion on how the Norwegian regions work and what they do in Brussels. This will then be compared with the other states later in the general analysis sub-chapter.

All three offices are operating as a more or less privately structured company that are mostly owned and run by cooperating counties with some municipalities, universities and in the case of West Norway some private businesses as partners which confirms the finding done by Greenwood (2011) which states that regions from unitary states prefer this kinds of offices. They all have a rather small staff which most likely has an impact on the amount of work they have the capacity to do, this is a trait that is shared with the regions from all the other countries so that it will most likely not have an impact on the end result. But one difference is that the Norwegian offices do have slightly different agendas and goals, which is a finding that is interesting in its self.

Each of the offices says that the Commission is very open and is their preferred choice of contact channel directly with the EU. This confirms earlier research that the DG's of the Commission of the EU are considered as more open and accessible than Norwegian ministries for Norwegian business lobbies (Gullberg, 2015, p. 7), there is a possibility that the business partners are joining the regional Brussels offices because of those experiences, but there is little evidence for this found in the interviews.

The offices have some contact with the EP, but it seems to be rather rare, one possible reason for why they don't have much contact with the MEPs is that the MEPs don't have any interest

in them because they are not part of their constituency (Gullberg, 2015, p. 9). This could imply that the MEPs don't have the same pan-European focus that the Commission has.

This impression of a distant government does not seem to be shared by the regional offices and all in all have a good working relationship with the Norwegian government, through "early warning group" which is run by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry's mission to the EU together with the Norwegian regional offices. Interestingly enough the German regions and federal government have a similar arrangement, where they have a debrief after Council of Ministers and European Council meetings (Kettunen & Kull, 2009, p. 121). It is rather unlikely on the other hand that the regional offices have much contact with the Norwegian ministries, except for the South Norway office possibly who did speak of meetings directly with people from the Norwegian government, but in general from all the offices it is most likely rare enough to render the comparison with private interests moot.

None of the offices expressed any desire for using the EU as an explicit strategy for bypassing the Norwegian government, but the offices do rather serve the function of voicing opinions towards the EU on issues that the government of Norway deems to be less important than what is for the regions. Sometimes this is also used to give their own issues more weight on the domestic front because an issue becomes more important in the eyes of the Norwegian government the minute the EU gets interested. Bypassing does not appear to be the correct term; I would suggest that the regions use the weight of the EU to "highlight" issues that they think are important.

This is in contrast to earlier research that gives indications that Norwegian business interest lobby in Brussels as a means to bypass the Norwegian government, this can be shown by example that resource rich groups lobby at both places. Where there is lack of any lobbying by private interests in Brussels, is not because they are excluded by the EU in any way, but rather a lack of resources. In cases where lobbying is happening it is often done together with partners from European association and other Nordic countries (Gullberg, 2015, pp. 15-16).

Doing lobbying does not seem to be much of an issue for the Norwegian regions for two reasons, the amount of lobbying appears to be limited for one and in the cases when they do lobby the issue seems to be on a small enough scale so that attaining the preference appears to be unproblematic. Further the Norwegian government seems to be the most important arena for the regions to promote their own interests, unsurprising if one considers that the resources of the state are much larger in Brussels and that Norway is a very centralized country. Further

probable reasons are that Norway is a very centralized country which makes the government the natural target for influence work, which gives credence to the federal/unitary independent variable. But at the same time the full-member/associated-member axis can explain it because the Norwegian regions don't have any formal channels in the EU and cannot receive structural funds and therefore they have less reason to do so. There is also the possibility that it could be a combination of these to independent variables that work in tandem.

The use of regional networks seemed to be rather prevalent with all of the offices being members of multiple ones. What was lacking was any real mentioning of the CoR, it was talked about, but mentioned less than other regions. This fits with earlier findings suggest that the CoR has not become the success one hoped it would be as discussed earlier in the text and by Rowe (2011).

Considering that the Norwegian regional offices are quite similar to the offices of Austria and especially the Swedish regions one likely and how different the Norwegian offices are to the Swiss regional presence in Brussels, one can make the case for that the most likely explanation is that the EEA agreement has more importance than first believed in this thesis. Norway can in many respects be considered to be a member if one only looks at the regional offices, especially if one looks at it from a functionalistic perspective, which one cannot do with the Swiss regions. This implies strongly that the membership, alas through the EEA, is the most important independent variable in influencing how and if the regions of a country are mobilizing in Brussels.

### **Norwegian regions and theories of integration**

After analyzing to find out what kind of office the Norwegian regions have this next section will have a look at how the regions of Norway fit into the EU integration theories, Liberal Intergovernmentalism, Multi-Level Governance and Constructivism.

Multi-Level Governance seems to be the best fit in explaining the Norwegian regions in the EU. The reason for this conclusion is that the regions operate on all three levels. They are active on the regional level, within regional networks and direct cooperation with other regions. They work together with their own government on EU questions, and they also are in direct contact with the EU institutions as the Commission.

Constructivism can be used as a way to explain some of the positive attitudes that the respondents have towards the EU and to some degree the existence of the offices. But the

latter is most likely explained better with MLG because the Norwegian regions can receive some funding from the EU which pulls them into the third level of governance.

One can also make the case that some aspects of the regional offices can be explained with Liberal Intergovernmentalism, especially than in some instances the information gathering that the offices do, it to a degree used at home to form the “will of the nation” and have the national government do the interest representation in Brussels.

MLG is most likely the theory which fits best with the observed evidence on explaining how the regions of Norway have mobilized in Brussels, because the regions are active both on the national level and the EU level in promoting their interests. The constructivist approach may be the best way to explain the why the people who work at the Norwegian offices are much more positive towards the EU than most citizens of Norway, but one could of course argue that only people who are positive towards the EU would want to work in Brussels in the first place. The least useful theory in explaining the Norwegian regions is Liberal Intergovernmentalism, because the Norwegian government is not the only Norwegian actor in Brussels. This is in stark contrast to Switzerland where one can find the opposite result, with Liberal Intergovernmentalism as the best fit and MLG as the least convincing theoretical explanation.

### **6.1.3 Austria**

The findings from Austria are collected by interviews done with the EU Representation Office of Carinthia and the Lower Austrian - Brussels Liaison Office. Most of the quotes that have been used are taken from the interview with Lower Austria with quotes from Carinthia used to underline similarities or to show differences.

### **Interview Findings**

Interviews with both Austrian offices started the same way as it was done with the Norwegian offices, with the respondents telling about their position at the office and what the main missions of the offices were, here we can begin with the Carinthian office responding to the main tasks, *“Most importantly is of course the representation of the Carinthian interests, the lobbying, in a positive. This is done via the participation of our governor to the meetings of the CoR, as well in the Commission, since they have the right to propose, it is best to lobby in the Commission.”* One way to interpret the quote is that the main mission of the office is to represent the interests of Carinthia which done mainly through the lobbying towards the Commission and the Committee of the Regions.



Lower Austria's emphasis on the most important mission is slightly different than the one Carinthia has and is explained thus, *“Our most important task is to filter the information that comes from the EU. Every day there is a large amount of new proposed legislation, the process wherein the legislation goes through the policy process, what is the discussion in EP, the Council, the Commission, in the member-states, where the regions can apply for different awards, for projects that have an importance for all of Europe. But also in more secret information, what is Junker<sup>9</sup> planning for the next months? The exchange of information with informants, one first has to filter the information on what is actually relevant for our region (...) Way too much information. We filter, like a funnel, from the daily, say 60 daily available pieces of information, we filter<sup>10</sup> out the information that I know is needed at home.”* Here one gets an impression of the flip side of the EU openness, where the problem is not that one has too little information but too much, which can work as an indication that the offices are needed in Brussels to get a good overview of what is happening, and it is not good enough to do it via reading the news for example while being in one's home region. Later in the interview the more specific reason for why Lower Austria is very interested in filtering and condensing information is given as that the politicians of today don't have the time to read through hundreds of pages of often technical documents, especially since they often have more than enough work that is to be done. This is to a degree the opposite problem that the Norwegian offices have experienced. Considering how open the EU system is when it comes to sharing of information this situation is not very surprising. And being a member state will then of course be highly advantageous for all the member states because the information comes in a native language, something the Swiss can take advantage of since the EU documents come in three<sup>11</sup> of the four official languages of Switzerland, but the Norwegian offices don't have the same luxury something that could become challenge because sometimes things can get lost in translation.

On the topic of how the Carinthian office is organized it was described like this, *“We are the ‘Department for European and International Affairs’ that belongs to the ‘Competence Center Directorate General’ of the Carinthian governor.”* which is more or less the same way the Lower Austrian office is organized. That all the employees at the Austrian regional offices are civil servants is imprecise, in the Carinthian office it is only the director who is a civil servant,

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<sup>9</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, current President of the Commission

<sup>10</sup> The filtering of information is done by stripping everything they find down to make it fit one page and adding the link to the original document to anyone who would be interested in knowing more.

<sup>11</sup> German, French and Italian are official languages of Switzerland

while the other employees are employed by contract, which is the same arrangement the employees at the Norwegian and Swedish offices have.

Knowing what is going on in Brussels is also helpful in knowing where to use one's available resources at home as this quote from the Lower Austrian office shows "*... if there is a piece of legislation, in which I know that the federal government has the same position as Lower Austria and promotes that in the Council, then I don't have to do anything, because I know it already gets covered by the correct level in Brussels*" One way to interpret this that it gives the impression that Lower Austria wants to go through their Federal Government whenever possible which confirms the findings made by Callanan and Tatham (2014), further it sounds like a good strategy considering that being a member of the EU one will then have the ability to influence at the Council of Ministers and the European Council. This is quite similar to the strategy used by the Norwegian offices by going through the Norwegian government to get added pressure on an issue.

In the interview the Lower Austrian representative talks about some the successes they have had as an office in influencing the policy of the EU "*for example a TEN-T<sup>12</sup> axis that go through Austria, had lost the political backing in the countries across the border, the Poles and Czechs that there was no money for the project, and the Commission, who has limited funds, told me that this transport route to the North Sea, no longer was a European project, because your neighbors tell us that they don't want to have it any more. We did the same thing here; we invited all the regions where this Autobahn would run through to take part in an initiative to get this route back into the priority list. And the politicians said that they would like to have the route.*" On the follow up question if this was how one had to do it to get the results one wants, the representative gave this answer "*Exactly. It is not possible to do it any other way, because Europe only reacts when there is a European interest. Alone would Lower Austria never get any attention from MEPs or the Commission, I can only bring my wishes to the Commission if I can make my interest to a European interest.*" What those two quotes show, is that one will as a regions not get very far with the Commission or other EU institutions as long as the interest one has can be considered a special interest.

The importance of influencing the EU on together with other regions on projects like the construction of TEN-T corridors fits neatly into the finding from another quote in that I got in

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<sup>12</sup> TEN-T is a part of the EU infrastructure program that is responsible for road, railroad, waterway and air networks in Europe.

the interview with the office of Lower Austria where the representative repeated the comment that to influence the EU towards your position one has to make your issue into a European issue. Or to use their words: " *If I come and say 'us', and the Commission asks, 'But Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium have the same problem, but they are not complaining', and I don't know what they think, then I will out of the door before I even enter. I have to present regional interests as European interests.*" Here it shows that the Commission has a very pan-European view on the creation of policy and one could make the case that special interests don't get very much attention, forcing the regions to transform special interests into common interests. And this opens the possibility that the Commission is also interested in maintaining its output legitimacy by producing outcomes that are generally welcomed by a large subset among the citizens of the EU. One can also view that quote that one has to use networks, both formal like ERRIN<sup>13</sup> which both Austrian regions are member of, and ad-hoc networks like the one Lower Austria helped to organize, which was used when the more developed regions demanded to keep their EU funding, grouping together in that kind of network helped to transform an issue that could be seen as a special interest promoted by some of the regions and turned it into a European issue by showing the scope of affected regions.

To show why Lower Austria has an interest in getting the best information on what is happening in the EU is tied with keeping the structural funding that is coming from the EU, which can best be illustrated by this quote, "*It is not only the legislative information that is important, but also the development funds, for one reason: Money. A regional office defines its self by the amount of money it can bring home with the information it collects. For Lower Austria it is a lot for money, it has the largest agriculture sector, it is the geographically largest state<sup>14</sup>, we are also a net receiver of funds from the EU, and we get more than we pay in. This is not the situation in other regions because they don't have as much agriculture*".

The only other offices that was this forward in stating the motivations of having an offices in Brussels as a means to secure funding from the EU was the South Norway office, but that was at a smaller scale with the most likely reason being that Norway is not a full member and therefor doesn't have access to structural funding.

Maybe the best way to underline the point of how information and organization helps the regions in getting funding from the EU is by this story told by the representative of Lower

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<sup>13</sup> Which stands for European Regions Research and Innovation Network

<sup>14</sup> In Austria

Austria. In 2009 there was a non-paper from the Commission with the proposal that only the less developed regions should receive structural funds from the EU, something that was not well received by the more developed regions. This made the more developed regions mobilize and as the respondent from Lower Austria explained further “*When I first saw the paper I said ‘We cannot allow this, this non-paper has to go to the press’. Second step write a press release that states that this is an outrage. Third step, everyone who is impacted by this have to work together to make sure that the Commission understands that it would be unacceptable. In total there were 176 regions from the whole of Europe, developed regions. One year later we had the ‘march of the regions’. 143 regions presidents/leaders signed the paper in which they encouraged the Commission to also keep on giving funds to the more developed regions.*” In the quote one can see two important points that help to summarize different aspects of regions in the EU. The first is that knowledge of what is happening is most important early in the formation of the legislation, which means as early as the first internal note that gets sent around in the Commission. The second is that the money that comes from the EU is probably what maintains much of the regional involvement in EU politics.

Lower Austria looks at their MEPs as allies in politics and sees at having MEPs as an advantage as illustrated by this quote “*The big advantage that the regions have when lobbying, is that we always have our MEPs<sup>15</sup> on board. The MEP from Lower Austria knows what my priorities are, and I tell them ‘you are from Lower Austria, you are an elected representative it is in your best interest to represent Lower Austria’ (...) And when the vote comes I get a qualified majority relatively easy, because I transform one MEP vote into possibly 400 votes*”<sup>15</sup>. This quote can give an indication for two things; the first is that the full member regions do use the added advantage having MEPs gives, considering that neither Norway nor Switzerland seemed to give much heed to the EP in both information and influencing. The second indication is that one can get the impression that the Lower Austrian office sees the EP as a means to achieve political goals, which can confirm the findings in Moore (2008). One could make the case that this kind of work will not be done by the Swedish regions, but would be done by the Swiss regions if Switzerland would become a full member.

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<sup>15</sup> Austria has 18 MEPs in the current parliamentary session

Asking how the cooperation with the federal government of Austria is for Lower Austria the respondent said *“It depends. If the interests are overlapping, then I just leave it to the permanent representation of Austria who also works with the MEPs. If there are conflicting interests, I have to work with others, often with the MEPs, but I still have to inform the federal level through the federal politicians because every decision the EP makes also has to be confirmed by the Council. But I always have to make sure beforehand that the federal Austrian politicians don’t kill it later”*. This quote does not say anything about the amount of conflict there is between Lower Austria and the Federal government, but it tells a great deal about the wriggle room regions have in the case of conflict for bypassing, which does not seem to be very much because the federal government has the last word on any EU matter. This does of course confirm earlier findings that show that outright conflicts between states and regions are rare (Tatham, 2012).

One thing that stood out on the Carinthian office was that they talked a lot more about the regional networks they were a part of and saw that as a part of the cooperation with other regions as illustrated by this, *“We cooperate very well with the other Austrian liaison offices, of course. We know each other and have projects and partnerships together. We are also happy to share our building with Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Istria and the Canton of Sarajevo<sup>16</sup> in a multiregional house. (...) We also cooperate with different regions from other countries through multiple networks, for example we take part in the working group meetings of the offices of the German regions in a number of policy fields or we collaborate in the field of Research and Innovation with European regions from France, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Greece and many more through ERRIN, the European Regions Research and Innovation Network, as well as for social matters with our partners of ELISAN, the European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network”* From this quote one can get the impression that the regions have a very pragmatic view on which offices they chose to cooperate with, one could consider it strange from a historical perspective that a Bosnian and a Croatian office share building, but it should be noted that they were on the same side in the Bosnian War.

### **General analysis of the Austrian regions**

All in all the offices of Austria seems to in many respects to be the prototypical organization that highly independent regions have in Brussels, much like the ones the German regions have (Greenwood, 2011, p. 440). On an organizational level both offices that are interviewed are

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<sup>16</sup> In order the offices are from Italy, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina

branches of the public administration of the regions, while not all employees are civil servants. One could consider them something resembling embassies, but that kind of comparison is most likely not entirely correct.

Both regions are interested in promoting their interests, with especially the Lower Austria office being quite frank in stating that their main goal is to gather funding from the EU and influencing policy of the EU which are their the main motivations behind everything they do, and the gathering of information is the means to achieve those goals. The motivation to get funding is slightly surprising because much of the literature on the subject don't mention funding directly. The literature does take a look at what are the factors that makes the regions have offices, but less on the direct motivation of the politicians of the regions. But on the other hand this could just be implicit the field of comparative politics as one definition of politics is, the process of determining who gets what, how and when.

Both regions agree that the best EU institution to lobby and gather information from is the Commission and it should be done as early as possible in the policy process. The greatest difference between the regions that could be found in the interview is that the Carinthian office seemed to have a greater emphasis on using the permanent regional networks than the office of Lower Austria had.

The regions of Austria seem to be highly integrated into the running of the EU where all but the second smallest state, Vorarlberg, have their own offices in Brussels. The main explanatory variable here has to be the membership of the parent state, where on piece of evidence for that is that all the regional offices first came to Brussels around the time when Austria joined the EU in 1995. The reasoning being that the Austrian regions have about the same amount of power in domestic politics in Austrian as the Cantons have in Switzerland, where the latter don't have any regional offices. But this could also be caused by the fact Austria is a federal state and the regions are therefore quite integrated into the policy creation process of Austria, bypassing seemed to be a rare occurrence and the cooperation with the government was the main *modus operandi* of both regions offices, this confirms the findings done by Beyers and Donas (2014). But one has to remember that the federal government has a strong gate-keeper position by having representatives in both the Council of Ministers and the European Council which gives them the option of blocking legislation they are disagreeing on with the regions, which could be said "forces" the regions into cooperation with the federal government. This is most likely also true for the Norwegian regions too.

## **Austrian regions and the European Integration Theories**

If one generalizes from the finding made in the two regions that are used in this study how can one best place the Austrian regions into the theories of European integration? The best fit would be Multi-Level Governance because both regions are an active part on both the national level and the EU level in the policy process, which resembles the situation found on the regions of Norway.

While being a federal state as Switzerland, Austria does not have the same good match with Liberal Intergovernmentalism as Switzerland does. The regions still have an active part in the forming of the official politics of the Austrian federal government and the same government does has a strong position as the main gatekeeper towards the EU for the regions since they can block unwanted politics, but the regions are doing politics directly with the EU and thereby being a part of the third level of EU politics.

Using constructivist theory is more difficult because it is hard to see any real socialization of the Austrian regions from the evidence collected for this thesis besides the offices being in Brussels and the offices socializing with the other regional offices and directly with the EU.

The best theory to use on the Austrian Regions in Brussel is MLG, but a lot can also be explained by Liberal Intergovernmentalism mainly because Austria is a federal state which makes the regions a very active part of the policy formation of that country in a comparable way to what has been observed in the analysis of Switzerland.

### **6.1.4 Sweden**

The Swedish regional offices interviewed for the thesis are the North Sweden European Office and the Central Sweden European Office with the former regional office used being used to much larger degree in the analysis because the interview was much more productive.

### **Interview Findings**

The Swedish offices are public owned organized in Brussels which are separate organizations from the governments of the regions that own the regional offices. The members of the offices are the regional and local powers, with universities and sometimes private companies as partners, which more or less the same organization type as the Norwegian offices. To quote from the interview of the North Sweden office<sup>17</sup> to illustrate the plurality of the representation

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<sup>17</sup> The interview was conducted in Swedish, the transcription was written in Norwegian and then translated into English

*“I usually tell that we represent all of the regional powers at home”* and gives an explanation what is meant by that statement in the next paragraph *“Sweden does not have completely discrete regions, we do not have states like Germany does (...) the Swedish map is slightly messy on what a regions is and what it is responsible for, but we represent two Counties, that what we call County Administrative Board (the governmental representative, a kind of governor), Municipality association and the County Councils”* The Central Sweden office is constituted by just the three<sup>18</sup> counties that it represents, but it is still the same structure. The reason for this plurality of representation is most likely an effect of the administrative nature of the Swedish administrative structure, in what called states with weak regions, where the result is that the power is distributed between a number of regional and local powers who have the same goal and therefore pool their power together into the same offices to reach the goal. There seems to be some slight difference between the typology public-private used by Greenwood (2011) and what is found in the Swedish regions, because the owners of the latter offices are almost exclusively public entities. One reason could of course be that the universities of Sweden are publicly owned, this point can also be applied to the Norway.

The information work was an important part of their daily work schedule as it was for all the other offices used in the thesis, which involved sending home news that would be for the interest of affected parties in the region which can be shown with this quote, *«We base it on which questions are relevant for our people that are back home. General information and news are the exception, often it is issues that we have worked on previously which then becomes news in its self”*. The information work also involved letting people from the home regions meet people in the EU-system.

On the topic of why the Swedish regions, and in extension the office was involved in EU politics there were given a couple of reasons. One such reason was funding, a direct money transfer from the EU which the respondent recon was the main reason any regions would spend the resources on such an endeavor which was stated directly by the respondent where the main task of the offices was making sure that the money kept coming every year, while the Central Sweden offices had more focus on regional development. This whole issue can further be illustrated with the quote where the respondent answers on why the universities are having a stake in the office, *“A part of it has to do with the structural funds and investment funds that the EU has, which is the bribe for continued regional involvement”* This quote is rather interesting because earlier research has concluded that there is *“Little or no*

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<sup>18</sup> The counties of Dalarna, Gävleborg and Örebro



*confirmation*” (Marks, Nielsen, Ray, & Salk, 1996, p. 178) found that supports the hypothesis that the money the EU is transferring to the regions is somehow “pulling” the regions into establish offices in Brussels. The reasoning behind that conclusion was that the regions who did receive the most funding did not have an office in Brussels and the offices that did exist, were not good at redirecting funding in their favor, so the regions do not see any reason for opening an office.

The article also gives two structural reasons for why the “resource pull” effect most likely does not explain regional mobilization, the first being that the EU budget is only 1% of GDP in 1996, that figure is also true for 2015 (European Commission, 2015), the second reason being that the budget is decided by the member states after a lot of bargaining and not the EU or the regions (Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996, p. 180).

There are two possible reasons for the apparent contradiction of the finding in this thesis that indicates that funding is important for regional mobilization and the finding in Marks, Nielsen, et al. (1996) that concludes that funding does not have a pull effect, besides that this thesis is looking at a different sample of regions. The first reason is that their study was done in 1996 when there were much fewer regional offices in Brussels which made them conclude what today could be considered to be rather prematurely, this becomes obvious if one takes into account that many of the regions that they considered to be missing in Brussels do have offices today.

The second reason is more an issue that begins in Marks, Nielsen, et al. (1996) premise that a region would mobilize because it would bring them more resources, where the lack of offices was evidence for that the offices were not effective in achieving that goal, and this led to the faulty conclusion that the “resource pull” did not explain the presence of the offices that where in Brussels when the study was done.

A possibly more correct interpretation of why many regions have chosen to establish an office in Brussels, can be that the funding the EU was giving out when it first started to distribute fund, became the catalyst that made the regions aware that there even was an EU level to mobilize on, which today gives the regions the necessary funding that they else would not have, giving them the ability to take part of the democratic infrastructure of the EU. Evidence for this interpretation can be found in this quote taken from the interview with the representative of the North Sweden Office talking about why the Horizon 2020 funds have to go to all the regions of the EU; *“There is this notion that the rich regions, that the EU’s*

*money only should go to the poor regions. Then one has to explain that the whole of the EU builds on the 'Europe 2020' strategy on achieving growth for the whole of Europe and that it shall build the regions and smart specialization, and whatever it is called, and that it together shall create growth in Europe, and therefore one has to have this type of bribe/incentive, else the regions will not care. In some regions this is all the money that there is for this and say that 'In this region it is not possible to tax this money'".* One way to understand the last sentence of the quote is that some regions do not have the tax basis to fund measures outside of their core competencies, like an office in Brussels, and is therefore dependent on outside funding. This “pull” effect could also be used to explain why the Norwegian regions have mobilized in Brussels since offices from Norway have told that securing funds is an important part of their work and that the transfer of money from the EU to the regions, to some degree, by accident is a contributing factor in making the citizens from non-member countries more knowledgeable about the EU because they are being “pulled” into working with the EU.

In conclusion on the “resource pull” variable, one can say that the pull is not an effect that motivates the regions to seek funding but rather works as an enabling mechanic which makes the often cash strapped regions an integrated part of the democratic infrastructure of the EU. There is no evidence that supports that this is the intention of the Commission or some other institution of the EU, which indicates that it is an unforeseen consequence of the different development funds.

Something that is unique for the peripheral regions of Sweden and Finland is the special structural funding they receive, which constitutes about half of the money the regions get, this arrangement came as a result of the negotiation conducted before Sweden joined the EU, as stated in the interview with the North Sweden office. This seems to be ample reason for especially this office to be interested in having a firm focus on getting funds considering the relative large amount they are getting.

Another important task of the offices is political lobbying, where the offices tries to influence the EU on policy decisions, one example mentioned in the interview with North Sweden was, “...a year ago the Commission proposed banning subsidies to airports. There one thinks about competing airports in Central Europe with Ryanair that shall compete with each other to achieve maximum gain. But in our regions with only a small airport, it is a necessity for the whole area and businesses to exist”. This quote illustrates some of the challenges of being a region on the periphery of the EU. In another part of the interview, replying on the how and

why of being visible in the political sphere of the EU “*One always talks about being on the map, but it is difficult for our region (...) it is easy to cut the map somewhere, usually in the middle of Sweden so that we disappear.*” The last two quotes are a good example that can answer the question of why the EU makes propositions that are negative for some of the regions; they are so far outside of the visible realm of the typical Commissioner that they are forgotten when considering the consequences of policy. Further it shows that lobbying is very important especially for the North Sweden Office with the Central Sweden offices also agreeing that it was a very important issue for them, this is most likely true for the other Swedish Brussels offices too.

The main focus for lobbying by the North Sweden office is the Commission mainly because the policy propositions originate from there, as was stated in the interview “*...the important part is getting in early. Not when the decision is up for the vote, because when it has gotten that far it has already gone through the internal process. One has to get in early to take part in that dialogue that is reason for why we are here in Brussels, to reach and get knowledge about what is happening.*” It also points to the possibility that the Commission will be the main target for any form of lobbying done by the offices in the foreseeable future even though the EP is getting more power.

Asking on the importance of the EP as a target for lobbying efforts and if they lobby towards the EP “*Yes, but not very much, but at the same time as the EP has gotten more power in more and more policy areas, makes it clear that they are an important player, (...) it is possible for the parliament to make a difference*”. And then the respondent talks about the difficulties targeting the EP to do lobbying, “*Except for some members of parliament that may come from our regions who have an interest from the beginning in our regions, then it is about reaching them when the proposal is up for the vote, because else they have too many other policy proposals around.*” This quote is in line with what the respondent from Lower Austria said which shows that getting to the right person at the right time is difficult, something that is unsurprising considering the number of representatives that the EP has.

On how the national level worked in the relationship between the EU and the regions the subject of the interview gave the impression that the EU, especially the Commission has an open door policy where the Swedish government seems to have what in comparison to the Commission could be considered a closed door policy. On answering on how their impression is of how they as an office are received by the EU, the answer was “*...It is much easier to*

*reach a high ranking civil servant in the Commission than in a Swedish ministry (...) They are much more open to new information, that's how the Commission operates, on one side it is a bureaucratic behemoth, but on the other side they don't have more employees than the county of Stockholm and they have to serve the whole of Europe, but just considering how much they have to work on all the time with everything and everyone, so are they unbelievable accommodating and open .”* This description of the Commission matches the finding of other studies that are discussed in the ‘Literature review and hypotheses’ chapter. Considering this description of the Commission, it is not very surprising that the regions want to cooperate, and may chose the EU as an ally in policy questions before their own government.

Earlier in the interview the respondent talked about the EU as a partner for policy proposals which was rather easy because the respondent thinks about the EU as a consensus democracy. If one is able to turn a regional problem into an EU problem, the region can get help from the EU on originally national issues as illustrated by this remark *“One comes as a region to the national level, to the capital then one meets the reaction ‘you are just one of the other, a special interest, you want money and they want money’ but if you come from the EU and the EU asks questions about this ‘we understand, what is your [The Swedish government] opinion on this?’ then it is not possible to ignore the issue in the same way, and one has to address the problem on the national level.”* This kind of strategy could be considered to be a way to by-pass their own government, but a better view of this strategy is more of lending a helping hand in putting issues that are important for the region on the table for national politicians.

On the last topic which is promotion of the region, the North Sweden respondent had this to say, *“That is what we do, all the time (...) we tend to have an issue that we wish to get attention on and in those cases we know who we have to contact. When we have a seminar we make sure that those who come are there to listen on just that issue. But it is not like we are in general trying to advertise for North Sweden or have people taking their vacation there. We try getting people to get up there when we see that it would be to the benefit for them and for us”*. What this quote shows is that the promotion done is focused in making opportunities for their own region, so one could look at it as part of regional development which is a goal that the North-Sweden office shares with the offices from both Norway and Austria.

## **General analysis of Sweden**

As already shown above, the Swedish regional offices are rather small with only a handful of fulltime employees with the North Sweden office and Central Sweden office not being any exceptions, from this they are quite similar in scope as the Norwegian and Austrian offices and dissimilar to the Swiss office.

Touching on the organizational structure of the regional offices they are more or less the same as the Norwegian offices which gives evidence to the conclusion that unitary states prefer this kind of organization.

The main goals of the Swedish regions seemed to be regional development where the funds seeking seems to be an aspect of that with the information gathering being the tool used to keep up to date on how best to lobby and find the funds to achieve those goals.

On where to best to gather information and influencing on policy, there is agreement with the offices from Austria and Norway on that the Commission is the best place to do so. North Sweden gave a reason for that why the Commission was targeted more often than the EP besides the reasons given by the regional offices from the other states that the Commission is the originator of legislation. The reason given was that the MEPs are hard to target because they are often not that interested in neither the topic nor the region who wants to have a favorable vote on the topic. This can be tied in with the statement made by the Lower Austria office that finding the right person in the EP is difficult.

The Swedish regions seem to just as careful not to bypass their own government as the regions from Norway and Sweden, and explained that taking an issue to the EU was a strategy to bring issues to attention to the Swedish government that they else would ignore if it would not come from the EU, this seems to be in disagreement to the finding in Callanan (2010), where bypassing was an last ditch effort by regions in unitary states.

On cooperating with the government of Sweden once can get the impression that it is not as good as the other countries, one could the impression that there is some neglect by the government. This could of course be an effect of the peripheral position North Sweden has in Sweden, one can argue that if this study had included some more central Swedish regions one could get another impression on just this topic.

The last topic that is discussed here is the one on regional promotion, where the North Sweden office told that it is quite high on their agenda. Taking what was found in the analysis about the Norwegian regions where one could get the impression that promotion becomes

more important for the peripheral regions that the North Norway office represents, and apply it on the case of Sweden, one can make the case that regional promotion becomes less important the more centralized the region is the country. One could take this one step further and compare the Sweden with Austria where none of the regions mentioned promotion to any degree.

### **Swedish regions and the theories of European integration**

Generalizing from the case one can conclude that the Swedish regions mobilization in Brussels best fits into the Multi-level Governance theories, the reason being that there direct interaction between the different levels of government, the EU level, the state level and the regional level as exemplified by this quote taken from the interview with the North Sweden office *“Well, we are part of the democratic infrastructure of the EU, we are the link between the regional democratic level and the democratic of the EU. All these different levels and actors cooperate and interact in different ways in the end create the common decisions of the EU.”*

That last quote can also be looked at from the Constructivist perspective, because one could make the case that there has been some socializing factor involved since they see themselves as a part of the EU, not working with or against the EU. For further evidence for this position one can use this quote, which is also from the North Sweden office, *“...but still many have this feeling that we work on a mission for the citizens of Europe and therefore have an obligation to get this [some policy proposal] done”*.

The Liberal Intergovernmentalism theory does not seem to be a very good fit because the regions of Sweden are active at the EU level and thereby constitution a third level that can go directly to the EU which diminishes the state’s role as the only power in Brussels.

In summary the best theoretical fit is the MLG theory which is the same as for the Swedish regions as it is for both the Norwegian and Austrian regions.

## **6.2 Summary of analysis**

In this part the goal is to compare the finding done in the general analysis for each country with the goal of discovering if the membership status of the parent state in the EU influences how and why the regions chose to mobilize or if is the placement of the parent state on the federal/unitary axis that has the most impact.

The biggest overarching difference that has showed to exist is between Switzerland which does not have a regional office, but a representative in the Swiss Mission to the EU and the other three countries where almost all the regions are involved in a Brussels office in some way. That does make it somewhat difficult to include the Swiss regions into the analysis of how the regional offices operate.

### **On sorting the importance of tasks**

There was often some reluctance by the respondents to answer the question on which tasks were the most important and how to sort them from most important to least important. This reluctance was certainly not result of unwillingness but rather seems to be more that it was something most of the respondents had not thought much about.

The information work that is done that is gathering and including filtering the relevant information that is coming from the EU this was something virtually all offices said that they did, including the Swiss office. But having the right information was not just knowing what is happening in the EU, but also knowing with whom one has to speak with to do something with the information that one has gathered. The goal of gathering the information was for the most part used to influence politicians at home and in the EU where the main underlying goal by the regions is to secure funding.

There is not much indication that the Swiss regional office or the Cantons by themselves are doing any lobbying in Brussels and it seems rather likely that any lobbying that is done is done by the federal government of Switzerland on behalf of the regions. Getting an indication of one which topics and how much is outside of the scope of the thesis.

Promotion of the regions seemed to be the least important task for all of the regions, but there seems to be some indication that there is some connection between how peripheral a region is and how interested it is promoting its self.

### **Office type**

Having public-private offices seems to be prevalent in Sweden and Norway. It could imply that the independent variable could be that both are unitary and that makes them comparable low on resources and political power. Conversely the offices of Austrian regions seemed to all be administrative with civil servants as employees. Switzerland does not have an office but rather a single civil servant employed by the KdK who has been embedded into to the Swiss federal mission to the EU.

A few possible reasons for why the regions of Norway and Sweden have joint offices and the Swiss don't have any offices could be found in this quote from the interview with Lower Austria, *"When you are regional politicians, who are mostly not versed in EU politics, they often don't want to talk about the EU because that opens them for attacks by the opposition. They know everything that happens in the municipality, but they know very little of what happens in Europe."* The whole issue of the EU seems to be touchy one on the regional level, even in states that are full members. Having joint offices can be a way to signal that one does not have greater commitment than necessary to get the job done to secure against attacks from political opponents.

One could argue that some of the same pressures are at play in Switzerland, where the safe option for the politicians is to just keep the status quo and keep the arrangement with a single employee in Brussels, this was touched upon in the interview with the Swiss delegate *"In the EU there is average 10% unemployment, big problems, the EU hasn't of its self a 'sexy image' in the last years, if you hear people in Switzerland 'Why would we join the EU, we are better outside' (...) They almost have a war on their external border, unemployment, the Euro you have to admit that the image is not very good; this does not help the debate in Switzerland."* If this is a correct description of the political climate in Switzerland then one could say it is not strange that a Swiss politician, who wants to get reelected, doesn't bring the regional involvement agenda to the table.

### **European integration theories**

Norwegian, Swedish and Austrian regional mobilization are all best explained by Multi-Level Governance theory, where the main reason is that the offices of Norway are functional very similar to the offices of Sweden and Austria. The way the Swiss offices have chosen to organize their regional mobilization is best explained by Liberal Intergovernmentalism, because it looks like most of the mobilization is done inside the Swiss state and the Swiss government is the one who represents all the regions towards the EU.

Constructivism has not been a very good theory to use on the cases that have been used in the thesis, because much that could have been explained with constructivism could often be explained by either of the other two integration theories used.

### **6.3 Testing the hypotheses**

In this part of the thesis the goal is to use what has been found in the analysis of the countries to test the fourteen hypotheses which were presented in chapter 3. In the next chapter the



combination of the country analysis and the hypotheses will be used to present the main findings from the thesis and discuss their implications.

The hypotheses tested serve here as the headline for the section wherein the discussion is made on if one can confirm or reject the hypothesis.

*H1 the offices from associated member states are mainly information gathering offices.*

The evidence seems to support this hypothesis, considering that the finding in the study show that the Swiss office only does information gathering and the Norwegian offices have a great emphasis on information gathering but also do funds seeking and promotion for the sake of regional development. This is most likely a result of that they are not allowed to receive structural funding which is one of the main motivators for the member-state regions to have a greater focus on the influencing to have a continued access to that funding. Further the associated member states do not have access to the formal decision making process of the EU.

In light of this evidence one can conclude that one could confirm H1.

*H2 offices from member states will have a greater focus on influencing EU policy than offices from associated-member states.*

There seems to be evidence that supports hypothesis H2, the evidence shows that both the regional offices from Sweden and Austria both have a greater focus on influencing policy in the EU than the regions from the associated member countries. Further there does not seem to be much difference between Austria and Sweden in that regard. The most probable reason for this difference is that being a formal member of the EU gives the regions of Sweden and Austria access to the decision making institutions of the EU like the EP, the Council of Ministers and European Council which the regions from associated member don't have access to, while the associated-member regions are more interested in getting information on the grounds that they are not in the official information loop of the EU as was shown in the last section.

A further reason is probably that having access to the structural funds that the EU gives out to full-member regions acts as an added incentive for the regions of Austria and Sweden to influence to keep funding that they have and in trying to secure more in the future.

Considering how time consuming lobbying is to get more resources, it will most likely have an impact on how willing the associated members are on committing resources towards the

lobbying if the possible gains are comparably lower than what one can observe in the full member regions.

In light of the evidence found in doing this study one can conclude that hypothesis H2 is confirmed.

*H3 offices from federal states have a greater emphasis on influencing policy than the offices from unitary states.*

In the evidence found the study does not show any large difference between regions if they are from a unitary state or from a federal state and how interested they are in influencing the EU, especially if one has a look at the priorities of the regional offices of Sweden and Austria. Further evidence for this is that the offices of Norway also have a focus on influencing but it is constricted by the access to policy makers in the EU because not being a full member and the lack of funding opportunities this entails.

The outlier here is Switzerland with a lack of dedicated regional offices besides the representative in the Swiss Mission to the EU and does seem to be solely dedicated to information gathering. One could assume if Switzerland would join the EEA the regional offices they would most likely do influencing to the same degree as the Norwegian regions.

Based on this reasoning one can conclude that there is little evidence in support for hypothesis H3.

*H4 the more populous regions will have a greater emphasis on exerting influence than lesser populated regions.*

The evidence from this study indicates no difference in the population size and the willingness to influence policy, one main reason being that the choice of method and the number of cases used in the thesis is not suitable for answering this hypothesis to some degree of certainty. One could look at the state of Vorarlberg in Austria which is the only region in any country that is not represented by a permanent position in Brussels, but it is not the least populated region of Austria, which is Burgenland who has an office. In other words the evidence in the thesis cannot be used to either confirm or reject the hypothesis.

*H5 population density of the region is a general predictor for regions to have a regional office.*

There is no evidence that can support hypothesis H5 found in the study, it seems like if the conditions are present any region will have an office. The only thing found is that one could build on the fact that all offices have to some degree the same amount of employees and doing a statistical test could maybe give some insight in the question if there is some connection between the population density and having an office as shown in Dür and Mateo (2012).

*H6 Promotion of the home region is more important for regions from non-member states than for regions from member states.*

There is not much evidence in support of hypothesis H6 that shows that the membership axis has much impact on the region's wish to do promotional work. What has been found is an indication between how peripheral a region is and how interested it is in promoting its self in Brussels. The evidence for this is that the North Sweden office and the North Norway office both had larges emphasis on promoting than the other more central regions.

*H7 the commission is the main focus for both information gathering and policy influencing for all types of regions.*

All the interviews, except for the Swiss, did state that the Commission was the main target for both getting information and to do lobbying efforts which should be enough to generalize for all offices. There are several possible reasons for this. The first is that the Commission is still the most important political player in the EU system because they have the sole right to propose legislation. For this reason makes is very important to target the Commission if one wants to get in as early as possible into the policy process. It could be that even though the EP have gotten a lot more power over the years, especially after the 2009 Lisbon Treaty it has not been enough to make them a natural target for the regional offices to do their work.

But the most likely reason for why the Commission is target is because of the need to get in as early as possible in the process of proposing legislation to have one's opinion listened to, this is confirming the finding done in Jaurisch (2013) on the German regional offices. The reason for this, the further into the process the more likely is that a compromise has been reached, which makes the people involved less likely make changes because this could jeopardize the final implementation.

In light of the evidence that is found in the thesis does confirm H7 which states that the Commission is the main target for all offices for both information gathering and influencing.

*H8 the European Parliament is targeted less for influence and information gathering by the regional offices than the Commission.*

There seems to be less evidence that regional offices are targeting the EP. From what the interview made with the Lower Austria office it looks like one need very good knowledge of individual MEP's to have a reason to directly target them if one wants to achieve something. From what can be gathered from the regions of Norway and Sweden, the MEP's tend to be mostly interested in the special interest of their own constituencies and one has to target MEP's on the right issue and the right time to make a real impact. Considering these difficulties and how few employees the offices in this study have one can conclude that the European Parliament is targeted by the regions a lot less than the Commission because one has to be more targeted, the MEP's are less likely to be interested and the EP will usually get their hand on legislation further into the process than the Commission does.

There is also a possibility that the offices have not yet discovered the EP as a natural venue for information and influencing in some cases. Which could imply that many of the offices are not as informed as they maybe should be.

In conclusion hypothesis H8 can be confirmed by the evidence found the thesis.

*H9 offices from federal states are more inclined to use their own government for information and policy influencing than regions from unitary states.*

The evidences so far support this notion, especially in the case of Switzerland where the Cantons use the structures of the federal government to gather the necessary information completely without having their own network. In Austria where the offices are an extension of the state government they report back home and the politicians of the state will go to the federal government to change the important issues in the EU.

The evidence collected from Sweden does not indicate much cooperation with the government on EU related issues, but on the other hand it seemed to be rather unproblematic by any of the Norwegian offices.

In summary one can say that there is some support of H9 by looking at Austria and Switzerland which are federal, but the available evidence is too inconclusive to confirm the hypothesis and therefor the conclusion is that hypothesis H9 cannot be confirmed.

*H10 There is no difference between the offices of the member states and the associated members when it comes to bypassing their own government.*

None of the offices did express any real desire to bypass their government, no matter if they were member or associated member, or unitary or federal. The Lower Austria office mentioned that it was mostly counterproductive bypassing because the parent-state had the last word in most EU matters. While the North-Sweden office said that bypassing was best used to use the EU to pressure the parent-state on issues the region considered to be important.

The evidence in the thesis supports the hypothesis H10 that there is no difference in how the regions bypass their own government. All offices try not to bypass.

*H11 Geographic proximity is the main predictor if two regions will have an official cooperation*

Findings from this study confirm previous findings that show that regions tend to have formal cooperation with regions that are in close geographical proximity. There reasons for this is most likely that being close together will make it more likely that they have the same problems and solutions to those problems.

In the case of Austria this proximity bias is likely furthered by the law that states that the states can formally cooperate with foreign regions that are bordering to Austria, so it would not be a stretch to assume that the regions are taking already established cooperation to Brussels and use those there.

The outlier here is the West-Norway Office that has cooperation based on common interests instead of common borders. But as it was stated, they discovered that they shared many of the same problems.

There is no evidence that there is a difference based on either membership status or if the state is unitary or federal so the conclusion is that hypothesis H11 is confirmed.

*H12 CoR is more important for the office from unitary states than offices from federal states.*

Evidence for this hypothesis either way is absent because the Committee of the Regions has not been mentioned to any degree in any of the interviews, in which the conclusion more or less bends towards the direction that the CoR is mostly ignored by the regions no matter if they come from unitary or federal states. This finding does confirm earlier finding that the

CoR has not fulfilled its initial expectations (Rowe, 2011) and has not stopped the more informal activities of the regions (Blatter et al., 2008, p. 468) and is today not very relevant for the regional offices, which makes it that there is not enough evidence to support hypothesis H12.

*H13 Regions in unitary states tend to prefer public-private offices.*

From the finding that I have made in the study there is definite evidence for H13. The reasons for this seem to be twofold; the first is that regions from unitary states have fewer resources which give pressure to regional governments to find partners to fund the offices, like municipalities, universities and local businesses. The second reason could be that there is less organizational know-how to do politics because of the regions administrative focus. The leaders of the constitutional regions are a sort of prime ministers, while the administrative regions are run by a mayor. Another line of evidence is that the all the regions from Austria have chosen to have administrative regions.

In light of the evidence found the thesis one can confirm hypothesis H13 which states that unitary states prefer public-private offices.

*H14 regional offices from federal states are a part of the civil service of the region*

From the evidence the offices of the federal state with regional offices, which is Austria, does follow the model that was hypothesized in H14 and the model chosen by the unitary states is discussed in H13, one can therefor confirm the hypothesis.

### **Chapter summary**

In this chapter we have first analyzed all four states in the order Switzerland, Norway, Austria and Sweden, and then we have used the analysis to test the fourteen hypotheses. In the next and last chapter the main findings will be shown and discussed, and then the implications of the findings will be shown.

## **7. Final discussion and conclusion**

### **Main findings**

The first main finding in this study is that in regards to the first independent variable, placement of the parent- state on the federal/unitary axis, does not determine if a region choses to mobilize in Brussels by establishing a regional offices, but it will determine the type of office the region chooses to have. In practice this means that the federal states will chose to have offices that are a part of the administrative structure of the regions with the employees being civil servants, while the unitary states will chose to have offices which are separate organizations which are owned by usually multiple regions and municipalities.

The second independent variable, the full-member/associated-member of the EU, has been showed to be a quite imprecise dichotomous categorizations, because the category of associated-member is more complicated than first suspected, i.e. what is important is what type of associated-member treaty the state is a part of. In the case of this thesis it means that being an EEA member like Norway can explain why the regions of Norway have established offices in Brussels, while the bi-lateral approach that Switzerland has with the EU does hinder (or is not promoting) the establishment of regional offices. The evidence for this conclusion is; the first piece of evidence is that the Norwegian regions do have offices while the Swiss regions don't. Second piece of evidence is that the Norwegian offices are functionally very similar to the offices of both Austrian and Sweden, especially the latter.

Further, there is one main difference between the EEA agreement and the Swiss bi-lateral agreements, which is that the amount of legislation that Norway has to adopt from the EU is an automatic process that involves a far greater numbers of laws than the Swiss have to adopt, which will probably give the regions of Norway a greater need for information than the Swiss regions. On the other hand a similarity is that Norway and Switzerland associated-members the regions are not eligible to receive EU structural funds, but because of their membership status can receive Horizon 2020 and other research and exchange funds (Commission, 2015). So to answer the question of what makes the regions of Norway have regional offices and the opposite for the Swiss regions, one has to conclude that the added need for information that the EEA agreement is responsible for, is the main explanation.

Summarized this means that there are two factors that pull the Norwegian regions to establish regional offices in Brussels, the first is a need for information and the second is the possibility for getting direct funding or directing funding towards projects that are advantageous for

them, which does not exist for the Swiss regions. And by that, one has found a conclusion that gives a satisfactory answer to the original research puzzle. *Why do Norwegian regions have Brussels offices while the Swiss regions don't have Brussels offices?*

The latter point about getting funding can be argued to be the second finding in the thesis, the literature about regional offices is for the most part quite vague about the base motivations for all the regions. The answer to why the regions want to have offices, as can be gathered from the interviews in this study, turns out to be “all about the money”. In addition to the last observation, it was argued in the analysis section about the Swedish offices that it seems like the possibility for funding is the mechanism that is necessary condition for the EU to have a regional level that is active in Brussels for two reasons. The first reason is that the money works as a “pull” effect where the chance for securing more funds outweighs the cost of having an office, and the second reason is that the funding that the EU gives out gives the poorer regions the financial muscle to establish this type of offices.

One can take this causal chain one step further by first stating that the regional offices from all the countries that have regional offices in this study seem to be more than welcomed by the Commission to give input on almost any issue. There are two probable reasons for this open door stance. The first is that the Commission wants to make decisions that are as popular as possible, as exemplified by the rich regions keeping their structural funds as discussed in the Austrian analysis chapter. The second reason is that the Commission is considered to be understaffed if one compares it to the tasks it is set to solve (Klüver, 2012), so it tries to get outside input on any matter to get the right information to make an informed decision. If one takes for granted that it is the member-states of the EU who are the ones who decide on the EU budget, it makes them responsible for the understaffing of the Commission.

What this means, is that the Commission is understaffed, the structural funds works as a means, most likely by accident, to “pull” the regions into having offices in Brussels which gives the Commission the necessary information they need, a need that is most likely created because they are understaffed. So the member-states of the EU have by accident created both the need and the conditions that make the regional offices a reality.

## **7.1 Conclusion and implication**

One of the lessons that can be drawn for the study is that inductively one can make the conclusion that it is not a very large practical difference between full membership in the EU and membership in the EEA where the regional offices are following the same rules of the



game and are treated more or less equally with the regional offices of member-states, a sentiment that is being mirrored in the government white paper issued by the Norwegians in 2012, where the conclusion was that Norway is for all practical purposes a member of the EU (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2012).

It is possible to speculate in what would happen to the regional offices of the Norwegian regions if Norway would withdraw from the EEA/EU family, which is a highly unlikely occurrence. Some offices would most likely be closed down and the rest would be scaled down to a degree, but they would not disappear as one can see from how the Swiss cantons operate, further the offices are already in place and in operation so there would have to be some huge shock, for the owners to just discard their investments. This point can be corroborated by the fact that 80% of Norway's exports go to the EU which is also the most important oil and gas market (Gullberg, 2015, p. 3), with the rate being 59% for Sweden as a comparison (European Union External Action, 2015) (Statistics Sweden, 2014).

### **Policy implications**

If one wants to take the finding from this study and use those to predict what will happen to the regions of a sizeable country that potentially could join the EU at some point in the future like Turkey for example. Then one prediction would be that it would not make any real difference for the regional mobilization of the country to Brussels, if the parent-state would join the EU with either full membership or having an associated membership through the EEA. In other words, either full membership in the EU or the EEA would both make it just as likely for the regions to establish offices in Brussels.

The same can be said with the British regions if the UK decides to leave the EU in the next couple of years, and then would join an agreement like the EEA in its present form. The regions of the UK would then most likely continue with their current offices like nothing really happened, except for maybe some change in focus, since they would no longer have any MEPs as potentially partners and they would also not be able to get structure funds. The last point would not be a very big loss since none of the British regions are poor enough to receive development funds that it would make a large difference to their in their regional budget.

Another implication one can possibly make from this study, is that it can give the anti-EU sentiment in Switzerland right in that the bilateral approach to the EU is the correct way if one

wants to keep Switzerland as independent as possible. Because it shows that is a strategy to use if one wants to keep the country out of *de facto* membership in the EU, which the EEA agreement in reality seems to be if one looks at the regions.

The last practical implication from the study is that, in my estimation the lack of visibility of the Norwegian and Swiss regions in the research literature on the regions in Brussels is not only a result of the two countries being outside the EU, but also because the little research that has been conducted on the topic is mainly publicized in the native languages instead of English. Had the Magnus Opus on the Norwegian relationship towards the EU (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2012) been translated into the English language<sup>19</sup>, it would most likely make the regions of Norway a more interesting topic for the researchers who work on the regions of the EU.

### **Theoretical implications**

The existing theories of European integration seem to explain both the presence of the Norwegian regions in Brussels with MLG because Norway seems to be an almost member and MLG is a good enough theory to explain those cases too, and how Switzerland is operating inside the EU system with the Liberal Intergovernmentalism because in that case the state is for the most part representing the regions towards the EU. Because the existing integration theories explain how the associated members function inside the EU one could make the case that they are sufficient, but the finding in the study show that there is one minor conceptual change one should do when doing studies on regions and states in Europe when using the dichotomous sorting of member and non-member categories. The thesis showing that from a functional perspective there is little difference for regions if the country is a full member or an EEA member, one should at least seriously consider grouping Norway together with the full member states of the EU when doing a dichotomous sorting.

### **Strength and weaknesses of the study**

The main strength of the thesis is the collection and use of new data gathered from the offices of the regions used in the study, which not only asked what they do and are organized but also made an attempt to study what their motivations were.

The first weakness of note of the thesis is that all the conclusions that are made in this text that make some attempt to generalize are hindered by the lack of cases, so all the

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<sup>19</sup> There is a short summary in English on the home page

generalizations have to be read in a way where one remembers that there is most likely a fair amount of variation within the countries that may have made a different conclusion if the thesis had used some different region. In other words the conclusions made will most likely be generalizable in a broad sense, but there may be some large variations in the details.

A second weakness of the study is that there lacks data from the state level and the EU level which would be used to get an idea of what the governments of the four states and the EU thinks about the regional mobilization of especially the associated members.

### **Suggestions for further research**

The first suggestion is to conduct research directly on a sample of the Swiss Cantons to get some insight why they don't have any Brussels offices by their own to confirm the conclusions drawn in this study.

Another possibility is to conduct research on the presence of Europe's micro-nations that are not members of the EU, for example San Marino, Andorra and Liechtenstein. To study if the findings made in this study is applicable on their relations with the EU, because in many respects they are the same size as some of the regions touched upon from the countries in the study.

A third possible study that should be done is about regions cooperating with their parent state. In this thesis the hypothesis was that regions from federal states were more inclined to work through their governments on EU issues than the unitary states. The evidence in the study was too inconclusive to confirm or reject the hypothesis. A way to rectify this, there should be a study that more directly would try to understand if there is some real differences between the regions of federal states and unitary states in their willingness to cooperate with their parent-state on EU matters.

To make an effort to confirm if the resource pull effect is something that may exist, there should be conducted a study of a qualitative design that would look at the offices from a larger set of regions from a larger set of states to determine if the connection was a spurious one. With the goal of understanding if it is necessary for some central funding mechanism to create a plural political system and in extension a plurality culture involving regional power in the EU. In other words, does there have to be transfer of funding from the EU to the regions for it to exist regional offices.

Related to the suggested research above, one could do a counterfactual study to determine if to what the degree the EU is a necessary condition for the establishment and support of the regional networks that are in Europe of today. This possible study could research if those networks besides CoR would have existed if the EU had not had a regional policy and if the EU would lose interest in having a regional policy would promise the demise of the networks that are around today.

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