Scandinavia and European integration from 1945 until today: a complicated relationship

Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 2

Scandinavia’s relationship to European integration in the first two decades following the Second World War .................................................................................................................................... 3

From the first EEC applications to the late 1980’s ........................................................................ 4

From the late 1980’s until the present ........................................................................................... 5

Main determinants of the Scandinavian relationship to European integration ........... 8

Security and economic considerations ....................................................................................... 8

National Identity .............................................................................................................................. 9

Euroscepticism ............................................................................................................................... 11

Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 15

References ........................................................................................................................................... 16
Introduction

In much literature dealing with the question of the Scandinavian’s countries relationship to European integration, it has frequently been characterized as one of reservation or reluctance. Indeed, the Scandinavians have often been described as ‘reluctant Europeans’. This predicate is based on the fact that the Scandinavian countries have traditionally been quite sceptical towards supranational integration on the European level. (Olesen 2000: 147) There have certainly been reluctance among the Scandinavian countries towards the European project and especially towards some of the more political parts of the integration process, but this has been at different levels and in relation to a wide range of issues and challenges that has faced the countries in the period since 1945. Furthermore, it could be argued that the present scepticism is not a Nordic or Scandinavian feature in particular but a more general trend in Europe. (Olesen 2011: 35-36) This is illustrated by the rise of Euroscepticism and right-wing nationalism throughout Europe, and by the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in two of the traditionally termed ‘core’ countries of the EU, namely France and Holland in 2005.

This paper will serve to outline the main characteristics of the Scandinavian countries relationship to the process of European integration since 1945. Furthermore, it will discuss what the main determinants have been in shaping the policies and attitudes of Denmark, Sweden and Norway in relation to European integration. It will be argued that the complexity of the issue in Scandinavia, owes to differing domestic contexts, experiences and national interests since 1945. In the first part of the paper, the historical relationship will be grasped. This part has been split into three largely distinct historical periods. The first consist of the first two decades after the Second World War until the first Scandinavian applications for EEC membership in 1961. The next period which was characterized by a split on the European issue will range from the applications in the early 1960’s and until the late 1980’s. Lastly, the period from the late 1980’s and until the present will be grasped. In the second part of the paper the main determinants of Scandinavian policies and attitudes towards

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1 Scandinavia in this context is defined as consisting of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. This is based on an understanding of the close links between the countries in terms of culture, history and linguistics. Both Iceland and Finland could be included in this definition on different terms, but instead a broader definition that includes Iceland and Finland is referred to as Norden or the Nordic countries. (See: Hilson 2008: 11-13)
European integration will be discussed. This part will be split into three main themes consisting of: security and economic considerations; national identity; and Euroscepticism. In the end, some concluding remarks will be made.

Scandinavia’s relationship to European integration in the first two decades following the Second World War

The immediate post-war period in Scandinavia left Norway, Denmark and Sweden with different experiences. Denmark and Norway had been occupied during the war, while Sweden had maintained its neutrality policy. On the other hand, they did have a common wish of modernizing their economies and expanding their welfare states that dated back to the interwar period. They were also presented with a dilemma in form of the Marshall Plan, as all three countries experienced dollar shortages and at the same time wanted to stay more or less non-aligned. In the end they all received help through the Marshall Plan and joined the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation in 1948, but Sweden which was the country that had come out of the war on the best economic terms due to its neutrality only received help in the sense of loans. (Pharo 1994: 206-7) As mentioned above, non-alignment was important to the countries in the post-1945 period. When plans for a Western security alliance was prompted by the signing of the Treaty of Brussels in 1948, the Swedes took action in order to prevent that the Danes and Norwegians would participate in such a construct which would complicate their own neutrality position. They therefore proposed a Scandinavian Defence Union (SDU) as an alternative to Western alignment. In the end the question of Western alignment split especially the Swedish and Norwegian governments, while Denmark was caught somewhere in the middle. The talks eventually fell apart, and subsequently Denmark and Norway became co-signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty establishing NATO in 1949. This Nordic intermezzo dealt a blow to enthusiasts of Nordic cooperation in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. (Ibid. 212-14)

One of the first demonstrations of the limited European ambitions of the Scandinavian countries after the war was in the negotiations to set up the Council of Europe. Here the Nordic countries played an important role in forming the institutional set-up, and did indeed succeed in close cooperation with Great Britain in securing the
institution as an intergovernmental organisation with limited authority when it was founded in 1949. This demonstrated the countries rather sceptical position towards European cooperation in supranational terms at the time. (Olesen 2000: 149-50) At the outset of the 1950’s Europe and European integration became ever more present as a topic that the Scandinavian countries had to consider, especially after the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. It was signed by ‘The Six’, namely France, West Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries. This cooperation was furthered when the Rome Treaty was signed by the same countries in 1957, which established the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euroatom. (Ibid. 150) The response to this development from the Scandinavian countries was that they joined Great Britain, Portugal and Switzerland in founding the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960. EFTA was in contrast to the EEC an intergovernmental organisation without any supranational aspirations. An important point in understanding the subsequent developments of the early 1960’s is that EFTA did not include the agricultural sector, and that it left the Western countries split into two trading blocs. (Olesen 2009: 133-34)

**From the first EEC applications to the late 1980’s**

When Great Britain and Ireland applied for membership of the EEC in 1961, Denmark and Norway followed suit. For the Danish government the prospect of being in a trade bloc with the two main Danish export outlets of Great Britain and West Germany was in addition to the fact that the EEC included an agricultural policy, simply too good not to consider. Similarly, for Norway the fact that Great Britain would apply for membership triggered an application. In furtherance the issue of neutrality did not carry the same weight in Denmark and Norway because of the NATO membership, as it still did in Sweden who did not apply along with its Scandinavian neighbours. The application process was complicated by vetoes in 1963 and 1967 from the French President Charles de Gaulle. (Hilson 2008: 137-8)

When De Gaulle left office in 1969 it opened up for a new dynamism in the EEC, which led to the signing of accession treaties followed by Norwegian and Danish referendums on the matter in September and October 1972. The Norwegian electorate voted against with 53.5%, whereas the Danish referendum ended with 63.3%
in favour of EEC membership. (Olesen 2000: 152) When Denmark formally acceded to the EEC in 1973, this left Scandinavia divided. Furthermore, in the late 1960’s and the beginning of the 1970’s there were actual negotiations in an effort to establish a Nordic Common Market, but this so-called NORDEK plan was scrapped when Finland left the negotiations in 1971. The NORDEK idea came from Denmark, and when the Finns realized that it was meant as a stepping stone towards EEC integration, they had to leave the negotiation table because of their relationship to the Soviet Union. Thus, another ambitious Nordic cooperation scheme fell apart. (Laursen & Olesen 2000: 75)

The period from 1973 to the middle of the 1980’s in the EEC was characterized by international monetary instability, a recession following the international oil crisis in 1973, a budgetary crisis in the EEC and in general a stagnation of the integration process. There were however a few developments in form of the first European Parliament elections in 1979 and Greek membership in 1981. (Olesen 2000: 152-3) In the mid-1980’s the integration process gained new momentum with the signing of the Single European Act which was accepted at a referendum in Denmark in 1986 and with Jacques Delors as the new head of the commission leading attempts to create a platform for renewed European Political Co-operation (Laursen & Olesen 2000: 85)

**From the late 1980’s until the present**

With the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989, the question of European integration gained a new relevance in the North. Sweden was in a deep economic crisis in the early 1990’s, which saw falling growth rates, production costs on the rise, rising unemployment levels, increasing state budget deficits and investments that were fleeing the country. This made the government led by the Social Democratic Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson announce their intention to join the EU while presenting an economic austerity package in November 1990. (Olesen 2000: 161) In Norway the electorate as well as the political spectrum was still deeply divided on the EU issue. Nevertheless, the government in consideration of the changing security environment as well as the possibility of a Nordic bloc inside the EU tried with yet another accession negotiation and subsequent referendum. (Hilson 2008: 138)
Meanwhile, the EEC was also undergoing changes in the beginning of the 1990’s. The Maastricht Treaty were being negotiated in 1991 and eventually signed in February 1992. Among other things, the new treaty introduced a new European Monetary Union (EMU) project and thus laid the foundations for the Eurozone cooperation of the present. Despite this new impetus there were a few bumps on the road to ratification. On the 2nd of June 1992 the Danish electorate rejected the treaty with just 50.7% against, and thus defied a relatively broad political consensus for a ratification of the treaty. (Kelstrup 2006: 388) This forced the Danish politicians into negotiating an acceptable ‘national compromise’ that eventually comprised four reservations. These four reservations or ‘opt-outs’ stipulated that Denmark: would not take part in the third part of the EMU; that they would not be part of the EU defence policy; that they could not accept the supranational aspects of the Justice and Home Affairs area; and that they were not willing to substitute national citizenship with a European one. It was agreed with the other EU member states in 1993, and at a referendum this new Edinburgh Agreement was accepted along with the Maastricht Treaty by the Danish voters with a comfortable 56.7% voting for. (Ibid. 376, 388)

In 1994 the moment came where Norway and Sweden along with Austria and the fellow Nordics in Finland, was to decide whether they should be members of the EU or not. One interesting detail is that since Norway, Sweden and Finland were all opting for membership this meant that for the first time the ‘yes’ side in the debate could argue that European integration was a precondition rather than an impediment to Nordic cooperation in the future. (Laursen & Olesen 2000: 70) This among other things, however, was not enough to convince the Norwegian voters and once again they rejected membership with 52.5% voting against. (Ingebritsen & Larson 1997: 208) In Sweden, on the other hand, the economic prospects of joining coupled with the new security setting in the post-Cold War period was enough to secure a narrow majority for membership which did however illustrate the division on the issue in the country. (Hilson 2008: 139) Thus, Sweden, Finland and Austria formally acceded to the EU in 1995. If the Danish membership in 1973 left Norden divided, the fact that now three of the Nordic countries were members of the EU left the Nordic alternative as an almost utopian idea.
After the enlargement in 1995, the subsequent developments have on the one hand demonstrated the contended and divisive nature of European integration in especially Denmark and Sweden, and on the other hand Norway has posed limitations upon themselves by not being a member of the EU. (Olesen 2000: 155) But still, Norway is cooperating rather closely with the EU in some areas. They are members of the European Economic Area and quite ironically they are more integrated than Denmark in the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, since Denmark has an opt-out on defence. (Olesen 2011: 46-7) Denmark was increasingly active in the period after the rejection in 1992, and played an important part in the process leading up to the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997. After this positive involvement, the rejection of the Euro in a national referendum in 2000 once again illustrated the divisiveness of the European issue in Denmark. It especially illustrated a gap between the political elite and the general electorate (Kelstrup 2006: 386) Like in the Danish context, the Swedes also had a referendum on the single currency in 2003 and it similarly resulted in a rejection showcasing the contested nature of the issue in the broad populace. (Hilson 2008: 139)

In the latter half of the 2000’s, the EU has had ever more challenges to cope with. Since the Amsterdam Treaty failed to prepare the EU for eastward expansion in 1997, the Nice Treaty was negotiated to deal with this problem. The ratification process once again caused some problems, but this time it was Ireland that turned it down at a referendum in 2001. The Scandinavian ‘tendency’ had now been proved in another country as well. Furthermore, after the ‘big bang’ eastward enlargement of 2004 where 10 new countries entered the union, there has been talk of ‘enlargement fatigue’ in response to the immense challenges that such a large-scale widening of the union poses. This debate has been further intensified after the 2007 enlargement, where Romania and Bulgaria joined the union. In 2005 when the Constitutional Treaty were to be ratified, it was turned down in two of the traditional core countries of the EU, namely France and Holland. Lastly, the Irish voters also turned down the Lisbon Treaty in a 2008 referendum. (Olesen 2011: 45) After the 2007 breakout of the global financial crisis, the Eurozone has been challenged by widespread economic problems which has been felt all over Europe and has prompted the head of the commission José Manuel Barroso to call it the EU’s ‘deepest ever crisis’. (Spiegel Online 2011)
Main determinants of the Scandinavian relationship to European integration

Denmark, Norway and Sweden have all had different historical experiences as well as geostrategic and economic preconditions in their relationship to the world surrounding them. When this is said, it does not mean that there are no similarities in the approach to European integration. But explanations generalizing and applying the same yardstick to the approach of the Scandinavian countries in relation to European integration, will run into problems when the countries are compared to each other. Thus, the following chapters will seek to address the differing national contexts and interests among the Scandinavian countries in terms of attitudes and policies related to the EEC and the EU. It will do so in three separate chapters covering different aspects of the issue, namely: security and economic considerations; national identity; and Euroscepticism.

Security and economic considerations

In terms of security considerations, the Scandinavian countries were split on the issue in the post-war period. As we have already seen in the historical outline, especially the neutrality issue caused problems. Thus, the Swedish effort to create the non-aligned SDU collapsed on exactly this issue. In Sweden the issue of neutrality were much stronger than in Denmark and Norway, and it continued to be so until the end of the Cold War after which it gradually waned. This is fundamental in understanding why Sweden did not join NATO when Denmark and Norway did, as well as explaining some of the reasons as to why Sweden did not apply for membership of the EEC/EU until after the end of the Cold War. The issue of neutrality had an almost ideological odour to it, and it was closely connected to the Swedish welfare state and the idea of ‘Folkhemmet’ or the ‘People’s Home’. It was believed that the neutrality policy had been a fundamental part of the development of the Swedish welfare state, and it was feared that joining the EEC would mean that they would have to lower their welfare ambitions and maybe even abandon their successful economic model. (Olesen 2011: 42) Security policies were therefore one of the weightier determinants of Sweden’s relationship to European integration until the end of the Cold War. After the Cold War the security situation changed and the Swedish economy was experiencing some serious problems. When they applied for membership of the EU in 1991, the argument was
therefore economic as in the Danish and Norwegian cases in 1961. In the Danish and Norwegian contexts on the other hand, security only played a minor role and instead economic considerations were the main determinants. In Denmark economic arguments were used successfully in the 1972 and 1993 referendums, which illustrate the consistency of economic considerations in the Danish relationship to European integration. (Laursen & Olesen 2000: 71) Similarly, the Danish professor of political science Morten Kelstrup, has argued that Denmark’s EU policies has been defined by a strong drive to participate in the European open economy and in a European framework that is mainly intergovernmental in character. (Kelstrup 2006: 386)

In Norway it has been slightly different. Norway did follow Denmark in applying for EEC membership in 1961, prompted as in Denmark by the British application because of the importance of this market to the Norwegian economy. But there were a very important difference between the Danish and Norwegian domestic contexts. In Norway small-scale agriculture and fishing were strongly against membership as they feared reduced protection, rising competition and foreign access to their fishing territories. (Olesen 2000: 160) Furthermore, when the Norwegian economy after their 1975 entrance into the energy market became increasingly dependent on oil revenues, this meant that another powerful agent entered the discussion. The petroleum industry was not particularly fond of EU membership, as they were already selling to the EU market. On top of this, the agricultural and fishing sectors became increasingly sceptical of European integration, as they were heavily subsidized by the Norwegian state and their oil revenues, and thus feared a liberalization of subsidies if they were to join the EU. Therefore the Eurosceptical forces in society had some powerful allies, as well as some quite effective arguments as security was dealt with in NATO and the economy was well bolstered because of the oil reserves in the North Sea. (Ingebritsen & Larson 1997: 212-13)

**National Identity**

From a constructivist perspective national identities are understood as historically grounded constructions that are based on myths and stereotypes, and which produce meaning and helps demarcate the boundaries of national communities. (Stråth 1995: 39)
This is also important to have in mind in the Scandinavian context. Norway had not gained independence until 1905, and had been under Danish rule until 1814 and after that they were part of a Swedish controlled union until they gained their independence. This had created a suspicion of foreign domination, which left its heritage in the national narratives. It fostered the creation or revitalization of national identity and created strong feelings about national independence. This was mirrored in the debates on EEC and EU membership in 1972 and 1994. The EEC and the EU were seen as threats to the Norwegian way of life and the debates were often more concerned about what it meant to be Norwegian than about the EU as such. (Ingebritsen & Larson 1997: 215-16) The debates over EU membership revealed some divisions in Norwegian society between the center and periphery, the urban and rural areas and between the left and the right in the political spectrum. Furthermore, the anti-EU campaigns claimed that European integration threatened national traditions and Norwegian state sovereignty. (Ibid. 216) State sovereignty in the sense that the EU threatens the ‘way of life’ and ‘values’ of the Nordic countries as in the Norwegian case, is also a concept that has featured richly in anti-EU campaigns in both Denmark and Sweden.

According to Kelstrup, we can help explain why Denmark has been more open to economic and intergovernmental than political and supranational aspects of European integration, with what he calls the Danish experience from the 1950’s of: “...a coherent, small nation state that opened itself successfully to world markets...not least because of its internal coherence and its practices related to democratic corporatism and the welfare state...” (Kelstrup 2006: 381) Interestingly, he seems to be maybe a bit too keen about the particularity of the Danish ‘experience’ as what he mentions in the sense of the opening up of the economy, internal coherence, democratic corporatism and the welfare state could basically be said about Norway and Sweden in the period as well. He touches upon some of the basic tenets that are often described in both national and Scandinavian/Nordic narratives, as something unique and particular to either the country or the region. Therefore it connects both to narratives of national- as well as Scandinavian or Nordic identities. At the same time the wartime occupation by Germany in the Danish and Norwegian cases, the social democratic political dominance, the redistributive welfare state and the perception that Protestantism had been especially important in the development of Scandinavian societies, made some
anti-EEC elements in the late 1950’s argue against becoming member of what they referred to as the Europe of the three C’s: Catholicism, Christian Democracy and Capitalism. (Laursen & Olesen 2000: 65-66) As I have already mentioned above, in the Swedish case neutrality and the idea of the Swedish welfare state as ‘Folkhemmet’ had created a very well grounded national narrative in Sweden in the first couple of decades after World War II. It was connected to the welfare state, which as in Denmark and Norway was an important constitutive element of national identity. In Sweden this was such a powerful narrative that the economic possibilities that the EEC had to offer, was not enough to abandon the policy of neutrality during the Cold War.

Euroscepticism

The Scandinavian and Nordic relationship to European integration has often been described as being particularly reserved and sceptical which in some cases has resulted in the branding of the Scandinavian and Nordic countries as ‘reluctant Europeans’. This often described reluctance has contributed to a narrative that refers to the Nordic relationship to European integration as one that has been characterized by Euroscepticism and sometimes it has been described as a specifically Nordic Sonderweg to Europe. This, at least in its general meaning, has been refuted by the Danish historian Thorsten Borryng Olesen as there have been quite differing and contradictory approaches among the countries to European integration, which I have also tried to show in the foregoing pages. (Olesen 2011: 35) This being said, he does suggest that there have been something that could be described as a Sonderweg in the period between the 1930’s and until the early 1960’s. What is referred to here, is the similar experiences in the 1930’s where at least in Denmark, Sweden and Norway there were broad agreements between workers and peasants or workers and the urban middle-classes in an attempt to deal with the economic challenges facing the countries in the wake of the depression of the 1930’s. This meant that they were able to deal with the crisis in a more effective way than in other countries, and it also helped keep right- and left-wing radicalism at bay in contrast to in other parts of Europe at the time. The consensus on creating a new social policy that laid the foundations for the Nordic welfare state model, were the direct result of this. (Ibid. 37-39) Adding to this were the
critique and suspicion of joining the Europe of the three C’s in the late 1950’s and beginning of the 1960’s that was mentioned above, which was also a Nordic phenomenon.

Kelstrup, in his analysis of Denmark’s European policies, uses the term integration dilemma to explain how Denmark has been dedicated to some negative integration areas such as the opening of markets and the creation of international deregulation, but at the same time have been more sceptical about some parts of positive integration in the form of supranational regulation in for example social and welfare policy areas. (Kelstrup 2006: 377) The main idea behind the ‘integration dilemma’ theory is that there exists a dilemma between integrating further with the risk of being entrapped, or to reject further integration with the danger of being abandoned along the way. His basic argument is that Denmark has tried to balance this dilemma for a long time in its relationship to the EEC and the EU, by being sceptical towards supranational integration and at the same time doing everything not to be left out of the economic aspects of integration. He sees the Danish opt-outs and partial engagement in positive integration as illustrations of the attempt to find temporary solutions to this dilemma. (Ibid. 393) This balancing act he argues, has had adverse effects on the Danish socio-political system by creating new cleavages in the political sphere where a new anti-EU and pro-EU axis cuts across the old left-right nexus and that it has served to undermine some aspects of the ‘Danish’ tradition of corporate democracy. (Ibid. 395) This approach could be argued against in its way of seeing Danish EEC/EU policies as being particularly Eurosceptic, as there are certain things that could challenge such a picture. This will be further developed below.

The cleavage in the political sphere that Kelstrup refers to, has to do with one of the consequences that European integration has had on the political landscapes in the North. Since the early 1960’s, when the discussions over EEC membership really took off with the Danish and Norwegian membership applications, a new political anti-EEC/EU movement has entered the political scene. The German political scientist Carsten Schymik has analyzed these movements and their implications on the political landscape. The first movement came into being in Denmark in the early 1960’s as a grass roots movement set up in response to the decision of the Danish government to
apply for membership of the EEC. In 1972, six months before the referendum on EEC membership, the local committees joined together and established the first People’s Movement against the EU. Similarly, in Norway a movement took form and secured a victory for the ‘no’ side of the discussion in 1972 and 1994. The Swedish movement did not take form until 1989, and has been characterized by being more fragmented and split over the issue than their Danish and Norwegian counterparts. (Schymik 2009: 202-4) According to Schymik there are some characteristic features that are worth noticing in relation to these movements. Firstly, they were movements opposed to both the EU and to the pro-EU policies of their respective national governments. Secondly, the debates tended to be between grass roots and elites. Thirdly, he ironically characterizes these movements, which are at the same time parties, to be at the vanguard of Europeanization as they can only exist in the context of European multi-level governance. Fourthly, as it is argued and pointed out by Kelstrup, the movements cut across the political spectrum. In contrast to Kelstrup, however, he argues that this has not seriously disrupted the political systems since the discussions take place within a new and unique context. Fifthly, the movements have been successful as they have secured that their countries are not ‘full’ members of the EU in terms of reservations and actual non-membership. In the end he compares the movements and argues that they have several things in common such as: a belief in the welfare state model; a belief in a Nordic transparent decision-making process; and that they want to shield the ‘Nordic model’ against the EU. (Ibid. 212-13)

These movements are on one level expressions of a historically relatively strong scepticism in the broad populace. On another level, they have also played an important role in shaping attitudes towards European integration with campaigns against the EEC/EU. As it has been pointed out by Johnny N. Laursen and Thorsten Borring Olesen in an article on the interdependence of Denmark’s Nordic and European policies, one of the things that the movements used in their anti-EU rhetoric was the Nordic alternative. This rested on the belief that in contrast to the EU, Nordic cooperation in the Danish and Swedish contexts was perceived not as a threat but rather as potentially strengthening national identity and the traditional ‘way of life’. (Laursen & Olesen 2000: 92) It is important to understand, however, that the use of Nordic
cooperation in anti-EU or Eurosceptical rhetoric has been much more about refuting Europe than choosing Norden. (Olesen 2000: 164)

In Norway Euroscepticism can be seen as a split between the traditionalism of the countryside and the modernism of the urban centres. Thus, it has been argued by the historian Rolf Tamnes, that there is an iron chain that restrains Norwegian European policies, consisting of the interdependence between oil revenues that enables and sustains traditionalism and the influence of this on Norwegian attitudes towards Europe. (Ibid. 161) The split between the political level and the electorate, on the other hand, can be seen in all three contexts. On a general level this has been illustrated by the negative outcomes of referendums in Denmark in 1992 and 2000, in Sweden in 2003 and in Norway in 1972 and 1994. The issue of sovereignty has been very important in all the Nordic countries in mobilizing support against EEC/EU membership and has been powerful due to historical experiences of being dominated by greater powers. In the end, the question remains as to whether the Scandinavian countries have been particularly sceptic towards European integration.

If we take the Danish case there has been six referendums since 1972, of which there has been two victories to the ‘no’ side. This shows that in general terms there has actually been voted ‘yes’ in 66% of the referendums on EEC/EU matters in Denmark. Furthermore, a 1999 study showed that the Danes were less fearful of losing national identity, culture and language because of European integration than the EU average. At the same time it also showed that the Danes believed that their possibilities of influencing decision making on the EU level were relatively low, a pessimism that was only topped by the Scandinavian neighbours in Sweden. (Kelstrup 2006: 391) Another study from 2007 shows that 66% of the Danish population finds EU membership a good thing, which further illustrates that it is getting increasingly difficult to argue that Denmark should be particularly sceptical towards European integration. (Olesen 2011: 47)

In more general terms there have been eleven referendums on European questions in the Nordic countries since 1972, of which five have produced negative outcomes and six have produced positive outcomes. Olesen has suggested that maybe this makes the Nordic countries look particularly sceptical, but points to the fact that
this tendency has spread to other parts of Europe and has produced negative outcomes in both Holland, France and Ireland in recent years. Has the historical Sonderweg of the 1930’s and early 1960’s been replaced by a referendum Sonderweg? And is it spreading to Europe? (Ibid. 45-48) Generally speaking it seems more sensible to talk in terms of a general political crisis of legitimacy in the EU, which spills into politics in most European countries where right-wing nationalism and Euroscepticism is on the rise. This has to do with efforts to strengthen supranational cooperation which is difficult to sell to the European public, and with the ineffectiveness of cooperation that the widening of the union has caused. (Ibid. 48) In addition, the current crisis in the Eurozone has further exacerbated and illustrated the structural problems that the EU faces. These problems can only be solved by transferring more decision-making to the EU level in order to increase effectiveness, which it will in turn be difficult to convince the European electorates of.

**Conclusion**

As it has been shown in the historical outline and the subsequent discussion of the main determinants of the Scandinavian countries relationship to European integration, it is difficult to claim that there have been a specifically Scandinavian or Nordic approach to the question. The different national contexts and interests that have shaped this relationship have showed that Denmark, Norway and Sweden have had different roads to the relationship they enjoy with the EU today. For Denmark economic considerations have been the main catalyst for European cooperation throughout the years. In the Norwegian case, the economic incentives and security issues have not been enough to convince the broad population that membership of the EU is in the country’s best interests. In Sweden the end of the Cold War with its implications in form of security issues, as well as a troubled economy succeeded in convincing the electorate of the opportunities that an EU membership could offer.

In terms of national identity and the closely connected issue of Euroscepticism, the Nordic countries have also had different experiences which have shaped attitudes and policies vis-a-vis the EEC/EU. Of all the anti-EU movements in the three countries, the Norwegian one has been most successful by aiding in the two
‘no’s’ to EEC and EU membership in 1972 and 1994. The issue of Euroscepticism as well as national identity has revealed a decoupling or division between the political elite and the general electorate, and in the Norwegian case it has highlighted a dichotomy between the traditional countryside and the urban city centres in the country. Both the movements and Euroscepticism in general, has contributed to the shaping of attitudes in the general public although with different levels of success in the three countries. The claim that the Scandinavian and Nordic countries should be particularly Eurosceptical is becoming more and more difficult to sustain in the present state of European affairs. Right-wing nationalist parties are shooting up all over Europe and are gaining increased influence in national parliaments. At the same time, the tradition of staging referendums in the Nordic countries is spreading to other countries in Europe as well. How the current crisis in the EU will affect policy-making and attitudes in the Scandinavian countries towards the European project in the future will be interesting to follow.

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