The Europeanization of Swedish Alcohol Policy

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To Lasse and Ella
List of articles

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APPENDIX I  Chronology

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Contents

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................. ix
Abbreviations ....................................................................................................... xi

INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................... 13
Purpose of this dissertation .................................................................................. 14
Outline of the dissertation .................................................................................... 16

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ........................................................................ 17
What is Europeanization? .................................................................................... 17
Different ‘logics’ within Europeanization ......................................................... 18
Europeanization as a two-way process ............................................................... 20
Europeanization in this study ............................................................................. 23
   Framing ............................................................................................................. 26
   Narrative theory and analysis ......................................................................... 28
   New modes of governance & soft law decision-making ................................ 29

METHODS AND DATA .......................................................................................... 33
The case study method ......................................................................................... 33
Process-tracing vs. a process study approach .................................................... 34
Sources and material ........................................................................................... 35
Interviews as data and method ........................................................................... 36
Delimitations ......................................................................................................... 39

ALCOHOL POLICY ................................................................................................ 41
Alcohol policy and policies affecting alcohol ................................................... 41
Previous research ............................................................................................... 42
Swedish alcohol policy ....................................................................................... 46
The EU and alcohol issues ................................................................................ 50
   The ECJ and alcohol-related court cases ..................................................... 50
   The increased interest in public health on the EU level .............................. 53
   Alcohol taxes ................................................................................................. 56
   Alcohol advertising ....................................................................................... 58
Summing up ......................................................................................................... 59

SUMMARY OF ARTICLES .................................................................................. 60
Article I ............................................................................................................... 60
A colleague at the political science department told me in a pep-talk about a year ago that writing a dissertation is like a pregnancy, and now that I was “with dissertation” I had no choice but to continue writing and to deliver. Surprisingly enough, I was rather encouraged by this and started to see the end of a previous endless effort. However, the analogy has its flaws. Having given birth I can’t recall being so frustrated, bored and tired when I was expecting my daughter as I have been during this academic endeavour. On the other hand it might not be fair to compare five years struggle with nine months expectancy, but I’m compelled to agree more with Robin when telling me (also in comparison with writing a dissertation) that the good thing with a pregnancy is that you know when to deliver. Now when the delivery date is finally set and looking back at my dissertation period I have to admit that this period has also been an extremely rewarding time in my life. So, sitting here writing up the last few words, there are a lot of people that I have had the privilege to know and work with, and that have supported me academically and privately during all these years that I wish to thank. Without them there would not be a dissertation.

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*Jenny Cisneros Örnberg*

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Abbreviations

DG  Directorate-general
DG SANCO  Health and Consumer Protection Directorate General
CEPS  The European Spirits Organisation
EC  European Community
ECJ  European Court of Justice
EEA  European Economic Area
EEC  European Economic Community
EFTA  European Free Trade Area
EPHA  The European Public Health Alliance
EU  European Union
EUROCARE  European Council for Alcohol Research Rehabilitation and Education
GATT  General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GATS  General Agreement on Trade in Services
IOGT  International Organisation of Good Templars
MEP  Member of the European Parliament
MLG  Multi-Level Governance
NGO  Non-governmental Organization
NMG  New Modes of Governance
NPHI  National Public Health Institute
OAS  Oberoende Alkohol Samarbetet (Independent Alcohol Cooperation Committee)
OMC  Open Method of Coordination
QMR  Qualified Majority Rule
SoRAD  Centre for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs
STAP  National Foundation for Alcohol Prevention in the Netherlands
VAT  Value Added Tax
WHO  World Health Organization
WTO  World Trade Organization
INTRODUCTION

Major Strasser: What is your nationality?
Rick: I’m a drunkard.
Capt. Renault: That makes Rick a citizen of the world.
Casablanca

Alcohol. The associations are endless. Champagne at a wedding, red wine with a nice meal, a drink with joyful friends. But also the drunkard on a bench, the fights outside the bar, or the drunk driver. How we drink, when we drink and why we drink depend on cultural views and attitudes, historical and individual circumstances, but also on how the society has chosen to deal with alcohol and alcohol-related problems. Sweden has, together with Finland and Norway, a long history of restrictive alcohol policy with the overall purpose of reducing the total consumption and thus the alcohol-related harm in society. The Swedish policy has rested on three basic pillars: restricted availability, a high price policy and an absence of private profit (see for example Holder et al., 1998). This has included, among other things, state monopolies, limitations on private import, restrictive rules on restaurant serving, age limits, and preventive programs. However, Swedish alcohol policy, traditionally a part of what could be interpreted as a national project connected to a Nordic welfare state model with deep historical roots, has been subject during the last decade to great changes. The Swedish adherence to the EEA-agreement and later its EU membership led to a closer association with Europe, and many questions previously handled on the national level are now treated on a European level. The possibilities for national decision makers to conduct a divergent policy on their own are therefore assumed to be limited.

While there are big differences between how the EU (and its other member states) and the Nordic countries define and think about alcohol, the possibilities to initiate public health-oriented policy decisions and programs within the EU have increased considerably during the last decade. During the 1990s, the EU has developed from being an organization based solely on economic grounds to being a political union expressing ambitions to create social rights on a supranational level (Blomqvist, 2003). However, from a general point of view the differences between the Swedish and the European way of looking at alcohol have remained strikingly differentiated. While
Sweden has handled alcohol foremost as a public health question, EU has treated alcohol like any other commodity in the market and in agriculture. Within the European project today there is therefore an apparent conflict between a market/economic perspective and a perspective focusing on social policy and public health, with Sweden in the forefront of the conflict.

When discussing European integration in general and Swedish alcohol policy in particular, the focus has been mostly on adjustments to and national implementation of EU directives (see for example Holder et al., 1998; Ugeland, 2002). Already in 1982 Pekka Sulkunen discussed alcohol and the integration process and argued that “It is of interest to see in what way the existence of the Community limits the autonomy of its members in the area of social and public health policy in alcohol control” (1982:76). However, member states are also part of the creation of new norms and regulations on the EU level (Britz, 2008), and it is often unclear what changes are required to adapt to the EU (Mörth, 2003). There is therefore a need to focus more on the interplay and interconnectedness between the member states and the EU. The swift development of the alcohol policy area, both on the Swedish and on the EU level, opens up the possibility of new insights and analyses.

Swedish alcohol policy is not only of immediate interest nationally, but also a good example of what the Europeanization processes look like for a country which has strong historically and culturally based positions in a particular area. Furthermore, the development of a common European alcohol policy brings the question of a possible European social model and the limitations of national self-determination to a head. Finally, most studies of Europeanization focus on policy areas dominated by “hard law” (Mörth, 2003) at the same time as the “soft law” arena of recommendations and resolutions is increasing in scope and importance at the EU level. To gain a broader understanding of processes of Europeanization, the alcohol question is therefore an excellent area to study, since it is influenced by both hard-law regulations and soft-law recommendations.

Purpose of this dissertation

The overall purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the Europeanization of the Swedish alcohol policy area from 1995-2006. The analysis is based on a reconstruction of the diverse aspects of the interplay between two policy processes, the Swedish and the European, with the following main research questions: How has alcohol policy developed on the national and the EU level during this period? What are the Swedish alcohol policy initiatives on the EU level? What does the interplay between Swedish and European policy processes look like? Another focus in this dissertation is also how the more restrictive Swedish view on alcohol policy has been received on the EU level.
The articles in the dissertation analyze how the Swedish government and its authorities have reacted to the direct and indirect pressures on Sweden’s restrictive alcohol policies, how Sweden has tried to influence the EU-level when it comes to alcohol questions, and the possibilities and limitations of that work. The development of and policy-making on the alcohol question is therefore studied on both a national and a European level. The focus is on Swedish alcohol policy and the structures that surround and frame it, but another part of the dissertation is also what has happened in the European arena within the public health field, and the possibilities of Sweden, as a member state, to influence this development.

The dissertation studies both formal and informal processes of change, i.e. both changes in legal terms – in laws and regulations - and changes in how alcohol is perceived politically on the Swedish and European levels. It is argued that the formal and informal levels are interlinked, where normative views on what are considered to be the problem and how this ought to be solved will be reflected on the formal level. Whereas the formal level mostly covers areas like court decisions from the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and Commission directives and recommendations and their impact on Swedish alcohol policy, the informal level is about how alcohol is talked about, which actors are permitted to take part in the discussion and how they formulate problems and solutions. It is also about changes in behaviour and attitudes towards alcohol.

The dissertation is made up of four sub-studies, with Swedish alcohol policy in a European context as a common subject. Article I explores the history of negotiations between Sweden and the EU on the traveller’s allowances question. This is probably the case, along with the abolition of the production and wholesale monopolies, that has been discussed the most and that has had the biggest impact on Swedish alcohol policymaking in the last decade. Articles II and III deal with how Swedish authorities, first through research and later through formal policy-making during the Swedish Presidency, tried to reframe alcohol on the EU-level. Finally, Article IV is a comparative analysis of the Nordic retail monopolies, analyzing how the monopolies have developed and reacted to national and international pressures on their activities. The different articles in this study follow a time line, where first a policy divergence between Sweden and EU is discovered, and Sweden reluctantly chooses to follow the EU line (Article I). Sweden tries then to influence the EU by altering the problem perception among different actors within the EU (Article II) and affect the EU by political handling in different institutions (Article III). In Article IV, the policy development on the still remaining main pillar of Nordic alcohol policy, the retail monopolies, shows a trend of increased need of market adjustment and service orientation to fulfil their purpose.
Outline of the dissertation

This introductory chapter presents an overall framework for the different articles and consists of seven main parts. In section two below, I will discuss how the Europeanization literature can help us analyze the recent developments, and the interplay between Sweden and the EU on the alcohol question. Section three discusses the methods used in this study. This is followed by a review of the relevant empirical material, including a brief exposition of previous alcohol policy research with a Nordic focus and a discussion of the development of alcohol policy decisions on the EU level. In section five an overview of the different articles in the dissertation is presented. Finally, conclusions and a discussion about future research are provided.
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section provides a theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding Swedish and European alcohol policy development during 1995-2006. It begins with a discussion of previous research on Europeanization and continues with a description of the meaning and content of the concept in this particular study.

What is Europeanization?

The usage of the term ‘Europeanization’ in the social science literature has increased rapidly since 1999, and with a wide variety of meanings (Featherstone, 2003). According to Featherstone, the study of ‘Europeanization’ can be applied in four broad categories: as an historical process; as a matter of cultural diffusion; as a process of institutional adaptation; and as the adaptation of policy and policy processes. However, the Europeanization literature today is most often based on the argument that the political system of the member states is influenced and transformed by EU decisions (see for example Green Cowles et al.; 2001; Héritier et al., 2001, Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003; Olsen, 2002; Graziano and Vink, 2007). Although the Europeanization concept has been widely used across different disciplines and the views on what the concept contains are not always very clear, it could be argued that there are two major approaches when it comes to the Europeanization literature: those who see Europeanization as a result or an effect and those who study Europeanization as the interaction between European and domestic policy processes (Bulmer and Burch, 1999; Green Cowles et al., 2001; Börzel, 2002; Börzel and Risse, 2003; Featherstone, 2003; Bache and Marshall, 2004; Bache, 2008; Jacobsson et al., 2004; Jacobsson, 1999; Jacobsson and Sundström, 2006; Mörth, 2003; Eriksson, 2006; Britz, 2008).

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1 Another categorisation has been developed by Olsen (2002), distinguishing between five possible uses of the term Europeanization: changes in external territorial boundaries; development of institutions of governance at the European level; domestic impact of European-level institutions; exporting forms of political organisation and governance that are typical and distinct for Europe beyond the European territory; and a political project aiming at a unified and politically stronger Europe.

2 For a detailed review of the development of Europeanization as a concept, see Featherstone, 2003.
In the process perspective, Europe is not only an arena where the interests of different member states are played off against each other, but also an arena where these interests are formed.

**Different ‘logics’ within Europeanization**

The different focuses within Europeanization could be argued to pertain to two ideal types of human behaviour: rational or social. Although it is clear that society and social action contains both social structures and rational actors, social science research is usually focusing on one of them at a time (Danermark et al., 2003). Rationalist approaches are unified by their emphasis on material and economic factors, using states as the central units of analysis, assuming exogenous and fixed preferences of actors and rational utility maximization, with agents trying to realize their preferences through strategic behaviour. From a rationalist perspective, actors are seen as rational, goal-oriented and purposeful. Actors engage in strategic interactions using their resources to maximize their utilities on the basis of given, fixed and ordered preferences.

Following the ‘logic of appropriateness’, on the other hand (March and Olsen, 1989), actors are guided by a collective understanding of what constitutes socially accepted behaviour in a given rule structure. Rather than maximizing their subjective desires, actors strive to fulfil social expectations; the approach emphasizes social context, and the role of collectively-held understandings of subjects and social life. This perspective focuses therefore on processes of norm diffusion, argumentation, persuasion, socialization, and learning (Trubek et al., 2005).

However, Börzel and Risse (2003) argue that the two logics are not incompatible, even though ideas and interests normally give rise to separate frameworks. Both logics often occur simultaneously, or alternatively they may characterize different phases of the Europeanization process. Risse (2004) argues that there are several advantages to this double approach, since it enriches the understanding of the EU; the study of both agency and structure gives a much deeper understanding of Europeanization, emphasizing the constitutive effects of European law, rules, and policies. This enables us to study how European integration shapes social identities and interests of actors, and a focus on communicative practices permits us to examine more closely how Europe and the EU are constructed discursively and how actors try to come to grips with the meaning of European integration.

In this study, the division between the two logics is not meaningful. Although Sweden pursues a certain policy on the national and the EU level, it is at the same time part of a bigger context. In the dissertation there is therefore no distinct contradiction between the strategic behaviour and the context, but the focus will be to contextualize action. The focus will thereby be
on an actor that generally operates based on prevailing conventions, norms and structures, but within the limits of these conventions is capable of decision-making. The challenge then becomes to find a way to ascribe the actors some space for action within the structured context, including illustrating the limits for action (Hollis, 1996). Europeanization becomes thus a reorientation of both talk and action. “This re-orientation can be explained by preference change within socialization, but can also be the result of more rational calculation and anticipated reactions” (Radaelli 2004:15).

A commonly used definition of Europeanization, including both ‘logics’, is the one formulated by Radaelli (2003:30):

“Processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies”.

However, although defining Europeanization as a process, Radaelli indicate that there is an idea of results and impact by arguing that one thing is preceding another. According to Radaelli, the process starts on the European level, followed by incorporation in national discourses and structures, a presumption only useful for researchers interested in causal chains of argument. On the other hand, it accommodates both organizations and individuals, that is both structural and actor-based change, which fits this study. Furthermore, the definition does not mention EU laws or decisions, but ‘EU public policy’, including modes of governance which are not targeted towards law making. Europeanization contains therefore both formal and informal processes. Radaelli also argues that one of the most interesting areas of research on Europeanization concerns the time, timing and tempo of the process. “The temporal dimension is relevant to the extent that decision-makers can manipulate ‘time’ by delaying decisions, sequencing the process of adaptation, and controlling the speed of Europeanization” (Radaelli 2003:48).

Knill and Lehmkuhl, on the other hand (1999) outline three mechanisms of ‘Europeanization’ (see also Wong, 2005 for a similar division). The first mechanism is labelled ‘negative integration’ and occurs where EU legislation alters the domestic rules of the game; for example the single market, i.e. the removal of internal market barriers. Both the traditional European integration literature and Nordic alcohol policy literature from the mid-1990s have focused on the effects of these changes and implementation processes in the nation-state. The second mechanism Knill and Lehmkuhl identify is called ‘positive integration’, referring to when EU obligations prescribe or
encourage a new institutional model at the domestic level\(^3\) to regulate areas such as consumer protection, environmental policy or safety at work. The third and least obvious mechanism is where European policy alters the beliefs and expectations of domestic actors. This may involve a change of preferences and strategies, as well as institutional adaptation. Knill and Lehmkuhl see this mechanism in terms of a core concept of frames or framing, affecting the perceptions and thus the ways of thinking as well as actions of those involved. Although exclusively with a top-down focus, this is a very broad framework, including arguments from different theoretical perspectives such as new institutionalism, multilevel bargaining games, rational choice and sociological institutionalism (Featherstone, 2003:14).

Both Radaelli’s and Knill and Lehmkuhl’s definitions are at a conceptual level and need further operationalization if used. They also have a top-down view on Europeanization, arguing that the process starts at the EU-level and induces change at the member state level. These changes can be both on a formal and/or on an informal (framing) level. The focus includes legal changes, but also changes in how alcohol is seen and talked about. However, Europeanization studies focusing on impact rather than policy processes “may miss important transformative processes since these studies define the dependent variable in very narrow terms” (Mörth 2003:160). Having the EU as a starting point and initiator to change may also limit the lessons that can be learned from studying Europeanization processes in a broader perspective.

**Europeanization as a two-way process**

Although it could be argued that the dominant perspective in the Europeanization literature still remains ‘top-down’, the views presented so far lack the focus that for example Börzel (2002) or Green Cowles et al., (2001) bring into the Europeanization debate, describing Europeanization as a bottom up or a two-way process where the member states transfer their preferences to Brussels via complex negotiations and then bring back home different EU policy menus. Europeanization is defined as a process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making, a process essentially driven by the transfer of policy competencies from the member state to the European level. It is argued that:

\(^3\) This is however not the usual understanding of ‘postitive integration’, which rather focuses on the development of ‘market correcting’ policies on the EU level (see for example Scharpf, 1996).
“States are not just passively reacting to changes at the institutional level; they are the primary actors in the process of policy change and proactively project preferences and policy ideas and initiatives to the European level. By ‘Europeanizing’ previously national policies and generalizing them onto a larger stage, a dialectical relationship between the state and the EU level is created, which in turn feeds back to the national level” (Gross, 2007:505).

Furthermore, as Sindbjerg Martinsen and Vrangbæk (2008) argue, Europeanization occurs as a result of a multilevel governance situation, rather than being simply a top-down EU-induced process of change. Multilevel theories developed during the 1990s as a critique against both neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, arguing that the EU has both intergovernmental and supranational characteristics (Bache and Flinders, 2004). According to a multi-level framework, the EU is just one explanation among many, where economic and cultural factors such as globalization, the marketization of economies, societal changes towards more individualism and technological development can make a difference. Furthermore, a multi-level governance (MLG) approach sees Europeanization as a process triggering change within the nation state and opening up possibilities and channels for sub national actors and interest groups to influence EC decisions. The domestic reactions to these changes may then further push forward the Europeanization process. Britz (2008) argues that one result of a European integration process is that new policy areas are created; areas that before have been national become partly European. National politics and European politics become intertwined, and what had been considered to be an important national question is redefined to have a European as well as a national angle. Europeanization becomes thus the development both of a European and of a corresponding national process.

Highlighting the interrelationship between EU governance and national governance arrangements (Kohler-Koch, 2003), the interconnectedness (Blomgren & Bergman, 2005), or when the dividing lines are dissolved and the processes even more interwoven, the ‘embeddedness’ of national and European policy processes (Jacobsson et al., 2004; Eriksson, 2006) offers a more comprehensive picture of the area analyzed. The difference between seeing Europeanization as a two-way process or as an embedded process is thereby the extent of institutionalization, where in the latter norms and discourses have become taken for granted. Jacobsson et al. (2004) argue that:

“National, regional, European and global levels are often described as distinct spheres in which policy is created. Either the levels are opposed to each other (for instance in questions about whether the European level will prevail over the national) or the creation of policy is discussed in terms of events that take place simultaneously at different levels. Our perspective is based on the view that these ‘levels’ overlap and are inextricably interrelated in the same sense that strategies can be both European and national at the same time” (Jacobsson et al., 2004:19).
However, both Jacobsson et al. and Jacobsson and Sundström (2006) offer a narrow process perspective on Europeanization, defining it as the “exchange between, on the one hand, the Swedish administration and, on the other, the administrations of other member states and the organisations of the European Union” (2006:11). Jacobsson and Sundström (2006) argue that the Swedish administration’s interwovenness with the European level illustrates certain basic features in the decisional processes, where new types of actors with different views on what the problem is, how it should be solved and what the options are have resulted in increased conflict. Although Jacobsson and Sundström’s definition has the advantage of discussing Europeanization as a process, based on the notion that the European and national levels interact, it is lacking in other respects. Jacobsson and Sundström’s focus is on changes within national administrations resulting from the impact of the EU, and lacks thereby a broader perspective, including processes other than the more formal ones.

Eriksson (2006) interprets Europeanization as an interaction where the nation-state sometimes affects the European level and sometimes is steered by it. Europeanization then becomes the gradual development of a European process, which means an interaction between European and national processes. How the processes interact is an empirical question. Also Héritier (1999) argues that the national and the European policy processes can be studied as parallel processes that sometimes cross each other. She sees Europeanization as a reciprocal process including both the process and an outcome of both formal and informal changes. Héritier presupposes Europeanization and has as a starting point that the EU affects all member states. The focus is instead on the different forms of Europeanization, determined by the pre-existing policies in each member state, and the political process in which they are embedded. Héritier’s analysis is thereby something of a contradiction, having a process perspective but ending up in impact studies with an assumption of a clear rational actor.

One of the main differences between Héritier and, for example, Radaelli is that Radaelli sees the national feedback process of EU policy, that is when national actors draw lessons from Europeanization and seek to change or adapt EU policy, as outcomes of Europeanization rather than as part of the Europeanization process. Radaelli argues that one should distinguish analytically between the policy-making process and the ramifications on the national level, since Europeanization otherwise becomes the same thing as an EU policy process. Börzel and Risse also follow this argument: “Europeanization processes are constantly in motion and so are the domestic adaptations to them. There are also continuous feedback processes leading from the domestic levels to the European one” (Börzel and Risse, 2003:74). These two pathways are, according to Börzel and Risse, not mutually exclusive, but need to be distinguished analytically, although in practice the two processes
often occur simultaneously or characterize different phases in the process described (Börzel and Risse, 2003).

Featherstone, on the other hand, questions this and argues that the emphasis on phenomena that are first set at the EU level and then impact domestically begs a “‘chicken and egg’ question: ‘which comes first. Or, who is affecting whom?’” It may also not adequately reflect the emergence of cross-national policy networks that are not directly defined and consolidated in the EU policy process (Featherstone, 2003:18). Mörth (2003) also considers it difficult to separate a national and European process, and argues that Europeanization entails states taking part in the formation of new norms and rules at the EU level. When States participate in the informal and formal EU policy-making processes, the linkage between the two processes is an empirical question, and by studying various types of Europeanization a theoretical framework can be developed on how the two levels interact.

**Europeanization in this study**

As mentioned, many researchers have limited their research on Europeanization to focus only on whether their area of interest has been Europeanized or not. In this study it is assumed that this is a process in progress, and the focus is instead to analyze how this has developed, and what structures are involved in the process. Or, as Börzel and Risse put it: “The issue is no longer whether Europe matters but how it matters, to what degree, in what direction, at what pace, and at what point of time” (Börzel and Risse, 2003:60). Nevertheless, researchers on Europeanization have so far tended to focus more on how EU policies are implemented and how they affect national policymaking, that is a top-down view on Europeanization. This is not controversial, since many policy areas are affected by the European level, but, as previously argued, seeing Europeanization as a two-way process, including both top-down and bottom-up processes, or as Radaelli puts it horizontal and vertical processes, is a more fruitful approach.

Since we have stated that Europeanization also includes mechanisms involving different forms of framing, a definition should also include not only hard law and formal changes but also soft law and informal changes. Just as Eriksson (2006) does, I argue that Europeanization should be seen as an interaction between the nation-state and the EU, where states partly influence the European level and partly are steered by it. Europeanization is thereby the gradual development of a political process characterised by an increased interaction between a national political process and a European one.

To sum up, the present study has a process focus, rather than an impact or result view on Europeanization, looking at both formal and informal changes on the national and the EU level, and how they interact. The dissertation will
thus focus on processes of structural and actor based change, and cognitive and perceptual changes among actors. The purpose of this study is not to investigate *whether* there is a relationship between the European Union and the member states, and there are no hypotheses formulated that need to be critically tested. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the process focus of Europeanization is not focusing on drawing causal inferences, as a more impact-oriented focus on Europeanization would do. Instead the dissertation is discussing probabilities and different ways of understanding the development. Moreover, the multi-level governance framework does not exclude any other explanatory factors; the study just chooses to focus on a limited part of the development.

The articles in the dissertation reflect different parts of the Europeanization process, with the intention to cover both top-down and bottom-up processes, soft and hard law, and changes in structure and in frames, as well as covering recent developments in the alcohol policy field. The articles illustrate different parts of the Swedish handling of the more and more internationally-connected alcohol question. As shown in Article I, Europeanization contains top-down enforcement of hard law, but also, as shown in Article II, bottom-up reframing, based on a reversed use of Knill and Lehmkuhl’s three mechanisms. Article III, on the other hand, has the two-way process as a starting point when applying to the alcohol case Héritier’s discussion of how deadlock can be avoided in the decisional process on the EU level. Finally, Article IV, discussing the Nordic retail monopolies, shows the need of national resonance for both national and EU-induced change, but also how alcohol policy within the monopolies has developed unquestioned norms around service and marketization. As Britz (2008) shows, marketization is an important part in the Europeanization process, making it easier for further changes to occur.

The choice of alcohol as a research area is not a common one within the Europeanization literature, which usually focuses on hard-law areas, where EU competence is clearer (see for example Dimitrova & Rhinard, 2005; Steunenberg & Voermans, 2006). Alcohol diverges also from more usual choices partly because it is, at least historically, an unusual or non-existent policy area among the member states and on EU-level, and partly because it is an area that is highly politicised and in many respects is based on an identity and cultural question. The diversity of approaches in Europe and the cultural differences attached to alcohol policy is what makes it extra fascinating (Lubkin, 1996). Furthermore, the time period analyzed in the project is of particular interest just because the changes studied are swift.

As mentioned, it is also an area influenced by both hard-law regulations and soft-law recommendations. Analyzing the processes of alcohol policy

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4 As will be discussed later, there are indeed a few studies with a focus on European integration and Nordic alcohol policy development, e.g. Ugland (2001) and Kurzer (2001).
from 1995 to 2006 allows us to explore how Sweden has handled policy-making in a more international world, but also the problems and limitations that member states encounter with social policy/public health-related questions. This means that the results of this study will give insights into the process of Europeanization which may be applicable in other policy areas where some of the same background factors are important. An example could be commodities with a possible public health framing such as gambling. While some of the findings of this study will not be applicable for all member states, it still raises interesting questions about the possibilities for national social policymaking within the EU.

Thus, the dissertation applies the Europeanization framework to the alcohol case, but will also expand the understanding of the concept of Europeanization to include process studies of areas where the EU partly has no legal competence and therefore is influenced by soft law.

As shown earlier, the views on what Europeanization entails are many. There are therefore discussions arguing that, due to its broad range of application, the Europeanization concept is risking so-called conceptual stretching (Radaelli, 2003:17). The view that Europeanization works as a continuum and the notion of domestic political systems being ‘increasingly’ penetrated by EU policy makes the distinction between what is Europeanized and not difficult. It has been argued that, rather than serving as an explanatory concept or theory, Europeanization can be useful ‘as an attention-directing device and a starting point for further exploration’ (Olsen, 2002: 943). It could also be argued that the Europeanization concept is theoretically empty and needs to be fleshed out with theoretical and methodological tools to be useful in analyzing the processes of interest. The different articles in this dissertation all have different points of focus and use somewhat different theoretical tools. However, it is argued that Europeanization is not only an ongoing process but is also the overarching context of the alcohol policy field. How the content and form of the Europeanization process look like when it comes to alcohol is an empirical question and not predefined. This is an approach that “makes it easier to capture Europeanization in policy areas outside the community area, where sovereignty has not formally be[en] handed over to the EU” (Eriksson 2006:2).

In this study the two-way Europeanization process is conceptualized and analyzed in terms of framing, narrative analysis and new modes of governance. Below I will account for these main theoretical tools used in the articles, but also how they are interconnected and how they elaborate the Europeanization concept. Framing is the most comprehensive term, which includes different problem descriptions and solutions of a policy area. The advocates for the different frames are thereby constructing competing narratives about the process studied. The different views and stories about what the problem is and how it ought to be solved, result in different possible scenarios of action and techniques for decision-making on the EU level.
When it comes to alcohol policy development on the EU level, this is above all within the so-called new modes of governance and soft-law area. This is not to say that the study disregards hard-law development in the alcohol policy area, and the implications thereof.

Framing

Framing refers to a process of defining reality. A frame can be constructed to connect a particular problem to an appropriate action to solve or ameliorate the problem (Björkdahl, 2008). When discussing policy-making, different frames are defined as structures of belief, perception, and appreciation which underlie policy positions (Schön and Rein, 1994). Schön and Rien make a distinction between policy disagreements and policy controversies, distinguishable by the role that facts play in the dispute. While disagreements are resolvable by examining the facts of the situation, controversies are disputes which are immune to resolution by appeal to facts. Such disputes tend to be intractable, since parties to a controversy often focus on different facts as being most relevant and tend to interpret the same facts in different ways. Policy controversies are thus disputes in which the contending parties hold conflicting frames. Frames have normative implications, that is, different frames have different views on what are considered to be the problem and how this ought to be solved. Frames or framing are therefore a core concept when analyzing changes in how particular policy areas are talked about.

A focus on frames also brings a constructivist view into studies of Europeanization, complementing the primarily rationalist approaches found in liberal intergovernmentalism, neoliberal institutionalism, neofunctionalism, and multi-level governance approaches (Trubek et al., 2005). There is a reciprocal relationship between parties’ interests and the way that they frame a problem. On the one hand their understanding of their interests may motivate them to frame a situation in a particular way. On the other hand their framing of the situation affects their perception of their interests. Because of this relation between frames and interests, and because of our tendency to interpret facts differently in light of our frames and interests, it is not possible to falsify a frame (Schön and Rein, 1994).

As Knill and Lehmkuhl (1999) acknowledge, framing is an important part of the Europeanization process. Frames legitimize certain decisions and activate certain questions, actors and type of knowledge. In this sense, framing is the power to define and conceptualize a question (Mörth, 2000; 2003). Framing plays an important part in the decision-making process within the EU, since the construction of a common framework is an important part of the steering of the EU (Mörth, 2000; Jachtenfuchs, 1996, Schön and Rein, 1994). Framing exists within both hard and soft law, but has been shown to be more important where regulations are lacking (Mörth, 2000). How alcohol is framed is therefore of great importance, since the definition often de-
terminates whether the EU has any competence to act and the extent of its powers, and choosing between alternative definitions may have important practical consequences. Frames not only tell us what to think about, but also how we think about the matter. In this way, framing means the power or struggle to define and conceptualize. The competition between different frames can result in one frame winning the preferential right of interpretation, although it does not mean that the old frame disappears. Jachtenfuchs argues that

“to change problem definitions of another actor by promoting a different interpretation of the world is a process of arguing and convincing, which is not fundamentally different in the international system, within a state or in an intermediary organization such as the European Community” (Jachtenfuchs, 1996:2).

Framing is more or less apparent in all the articles in this study. As shown in Article II, the two major frames when it comes to alcohol are the distinction between a market frame and a public health frame. These two frames overlap with the two major discourses – restrictive and liberal - found by Olsson (2000) in the Swedish press during the 1990s. The different frames are held by separate actors that hold different views on what is considered to be a problem, what the causes are, and what solutions are considered to be legitimate and desirable. The two frames are also based on different logics, which lead to different strategies for policy development in the area of alcohol. While the public health frame for long has had a risk and evidence-based logic, the market framing is much more concerned about rules relating to access to the market. Furthermore, market frame advocates argue that alcohol policy should be left to national competence, with the EU restricted to giving information on best practices, but at the same time that EU’s single-market rules overrule any national market restrictions. The two frames also imply different possibilities for policymaking on the EU level. The advocates for the different frames are governments, the alcohol industries through so-called social aspects groups, NGOs, etc. The two sets of advocates try to affect policy-makers, mass media and the general public to accept the frame that they are presenting. Alcohol producers emphasise their efforts to promote responsible attitudes towards alcohol consumption. In their opinion, the great majority of European consumers drink sensibly, moderately and with pleasure. Producers feel that policies aimed at reducing overall per capita consumption through high taxation do not address those who abuse the product, and that experience shows that such an approach can even have unintended adverse effects (e.g. smuggling and illegal production). NGOs and advocates of a public health frame, on the other hand, are focusing more on the risks from alcohol, and argue for alcohol to be excluded from the general rules of free movement. The two sets of advocates
try to tie their arguments to more compelling framings, such as risks to youth on the one hand, and the hope of economic development through, for example, open borders on the other.

Furthermore, as shown in Article III, some frames or focuses when discussing alcohol as a public health question are more successful than others in European policy making, for example the need for protecting youth or the usefulness of comparative data. This is supported by Björkdahl who argues that norms “framed in a way that links them to an issue of great common concern are more likely to gain attention” (Björkdahl, 2008:140).

Narrative theory and analysis

Article I in this dissertation uses the concept of narratives as a theoretical and methodological tool for analysing the alcohol-political development and the Swedish relation to the EU. The focus in this section is on accounting for what ‘narratives’ implies and how the concept can elucidate Europeanization processes, leaving the methodological questions related to the use of interviews for later.

Narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event or action, chronologically connected (Czarniawska, 2004). Narrative theory and analysis embrace a number of different theoretical traditions, not only traditions traditionally connected to the study of story-telling but also more general critical theories such as structuralism, hermeneutics, conversational and discourse analysis (Johansson, 2005: 20). The social constructivist perspective dominates within narrative research, supporting the view that there is a connection between knowledge and social processes and actions (Johansson, 2005). To capture and analyze narrative communication is therefore a way to reach fragments of a larger process (Skott, 2004).

Although there is great disparity between different traditions of narrative research when it comes to research questions and theoretical starting points, there are a few common viewpoints. Firstly, narrative is present at all times, in all places and in all societies (Barthes, 1975). Secondly, within narrative research it is emphasised that narratives have the function of organizing events and making it possible to understand what has happened, and also to help to remember the past and plan forward (Polkinghorne, 1988; Törrönen, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004). Through this life-historical framing, narratives can help us create continuity and cultural affiliation and can also exemplify moral conflicts, choices and positions. Thirdly, narratives are not seen as finished product and objects, but as parts of social and cultural processes that should not be separated from the context. A narrative needs to be interpreted to get a meaning. A narrative can never be seen as a direct and unadulterated representation of an actual course of events, but a result of the narrator’s selection and presentation in a given context. A narrative is always told from a specific perspective with some kind of purpose. The use of narrative analy-
sis should always be understood as an interpretative activity, where the researcher as interpreter asks: what does the narrative mean, what is the meaning of it? Narrative analysis is therefore an activity that does not seek for one ‘true’ interpretation (Johansson, 2005). Finally, it is emphasized that a narrative’s social context and functions has consequences for how it is presented. The narrative should be seen as a result of an interplay between the narrator and the listener, where the story is formed by the social situation it is presented in (Hydén, 2007; Johansson, 2005).

One of the ways to collect narratives is by interviewing, where many answers spontaneously are formed into narratives, for example in interviews aiming at historical descriptions of a certain process. “What people present in the interviews is but the results of their perception, their interpretation of the world, which is of extreme value to the researcher because one may assume that it is the same perception that informs their actions” (Czarniawska, 2004:49). The purpose is to see how respondents in interviews make sense of certain events or actions (Kohler Riessman, 1993). Changes in views or frames, as described earlier, could therefore be well elucidated through narrative analysis.

Analyzing the different narratives that emerged in accounts of the story about the Swedish traveller’s allowances (Article I), I argue, can elucidate the Europeanization process and the interplay between Sweden and the EU. Furthermore, how a process is talked about affects the handling of the issue; by focusing on the course of events, the reasons offered for actions, and different possible outcomes, the narratives reflect different actors’ views on EU cooperation and its development.

New modes of governance & soft law decision-making

As already argued, Europeanization is not only about rational top-down implementation of EU rules. Policy change can occur even in areas that are still not among EU’s competences (Giuliani, 2001). The policy developments in these areas above all work through codes of conduct and recommendations. These voluntary recommendations, with the intention to increase the coordination between the member states, have increased considerably during the last decade (Montari, 2003), especially within the social field. Soft law began to be treated as an identifiable concept at the beginning of the 1970s, and became the object of an intense argument again in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. The interest reflected an increasing awareness of globalization and the importance of non-state actors, as well as the ways in which globalization makes traditional law-making more problematic when states are embedded in various formal and informal organizations (Mörth 2004). The increased emphasis on the proportionality and the subsidiary principles, the possibility for flexible integration, and the enlargement of the EU indicate that the use of soft law is likely to continue to increase (Landelius, 2001).
The introduction of so-called ‘new modes of governance’ (NMG) in the EU context can be seen as a reaction to the imminent risk of deadlock in community decision-making (Eberlein and Kerwer, 2004). Relying on ‘soft law’, which is not legally binding and has no legal sanctioning mechanisms against non-compliance, leaves the effective policy choice to each individual Member state (Kohler-Koch & Ritberger, 2006). By emphasizing ‘benchmarking’, ‘peer review’ and ‘best practice’, NMGs engender the assumption that participating actors can learn from assessment and comparison (Eberlein and Kerwer, 2004:125f).

One example of a policy area steered by soft law is the area of public health. Article 152 of the Amsterdam Treaty states that it is the member states that have the main responsibility for public health questions, and the EU should only complement national actions, not substitute for them. Furthermore, there is no legal basis to introduce harmonization between the member states, and the EU is only allowed to interfere in questions that cannot be solved at the national level. The European Commission instead governs through communications, codes of conduct and guidelines. The idea behind this soft approach is, among other things, to enable member states to collaborate in areas where the EU system precludes a common policy or legal framework, and areas where national diversities are recognised. By a soft-law approach, concerted EU actions are possible without interfering with individual member-states’ legal competences and authorities. Soft law can therefore lead to joint action in areas in which the EU lacks legal competence or a binding decision lacks political support. Soft law measures are also seen as preferable when dealing with complex and diverse problems that are characterized by uncertainty (Héritier, 1999). Critics argue that a big part of EU’s social policy goals often remain only as goals and that the implementations seldom are effective. This is partly due to the EU’s limited mandate in the area, but according to Mattson (2003) this should also be understood in the light of the symbolic value of politics within the EU. The formulation of common goals is often based on political compromises, but can at the same time constitute a first step to a more unified view on a controversial question, and can thereby lay the ground for more concrete political initiatives in the future (Landelius, 2001). It is also argued that soft law can provide a fertile environment for domestic policy change by providing legitimacy to domestic reformers in search of justification, offering possible solutions in the national debate or through altered expectations of the future (Radaelli, 2000).

As a result of soft law policy-making, new committees have been established, playing a central role in the monitoring of the policy co-ordination process.
“These committees have proved to function as deliberative forums, places for exchanging policy knowledge and experience, for learning about each other’s welfare systems and ways of thinking, and for consensus-making in the sensitive welfare areas in which formal competence rests at the national level” (Jacobsson, 2004:94).

The meetings of civil servants and high-level politicians are essential to the monitoring of the policy co-ordination processes, but also have a socializing effect concerning what is seen as appropriate behaviour (Jacobsson, 2004). Jacobsson also argues that one of the advantages of soft law is that it allows for a more active participation of non-state actors. For the Commission, building alliances with other actors is a common strategy for mobilizing support for its line. As shown in Article III, the Commission consciously tries to incorporate all stakeholders with the purpose of identifying possible areas for consensus. The mobilization of different actors can also pressure decision-making authorities to honour their commitments to the common objectives or guidelines (Jacobsson, 2004).

One method within the soft-law approach is the open method of coordination (OMC). The exact application of OMC varies between different areas, but is in the main based on common goals, and guidelines between member states. This coordination should be distinguished from harmonization, which involves a formal standardization of member states’ rules and regulations (Blomqvist, 2003). The OMC gives governments the possibility, on the basis of reports and action plans, to compare notes, information and views and thereby improve their knowledge and possibly develop a future common approach.

“The idea is to use the European Union as a policy transfer platform rather than a law-making system. Thus, the OMC should assist member states in developing their own policies. The method is defined by the following characteristics: the EU guidelines are combined with specific timetables and action to be undertaken at the national or regional level; benchmarking and sharing of best practice; qualitative and, when appropriate, quantitative indicators; periodic monitoring, evaluation, and peer review organized as mutual learning processes” (Radaelli, 2003:43).

The increased use of OMC is a “nail in the coffin of the top-down approach to Europeanization: an approach that assumes clear choices made in ‘Brussels’ and transferred to the national level in a vertical chain of command fashion” (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003:337).

Monitoring is one of the mechanisms used to get reluctant member states to adopt a common view on areas not earlier considered important. Statistics from the Eurobarometer and the Eurostat statistics have been instrumental in developing a perception of a European public opinion, which makes it possible for the Commission to point to the views and demands of European citizens. As Article II shows, and to some extent also Article III, the auditing
practices, and the systematization of comparison and evaluation and rankings within the EU, are all part of the soft law development with the ultimate goal of internalizing common norms and standards (see also Jacobsson, 2004).
METHODS AND DATA

The case study method

The methodological basis for the project is the case study method, a method that has been much discussed both in terms of its strengths and weaknesses when it comes to suitability for theory development, and in terms of its limitations when it comes to theoretical conclusions. A case study, defined by George and Bennett, is “a well-defined aspect of a historical episode that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than a historical event itself” (2005:18). The expressed advantages of the chosen method are many: the potential for achieving high conceptual validity, the strong procedures for fostering new hypotheses, the capacity for addressing causal complexity, and the capacity to analyze qualitatively complex events. Furthermore, the use of case studies highlights, according to Ragin, “complexity, diversity, and uniqueness, and it provides a powerful basis for interpreting cases historically” (1987:xiii). Yin argues that “the case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context” (1994:3).

Van Evera (1997) argues that while large-n methods tell us more about whether hypotheses hold, case studies say more about why they hold. It can also be argued that case studies are important in order to build, develop, and adapt theories rather than as a method to make a crucial test of existing theories (Britz, 2008). George and Bennett agree with this when saying that the case study method gives the “opportunity to use the findings to incrementally refine middle-range contingent generalizations, either by broadening or narrowing their scope or introducing new types and subtypes through the inclusion of additional variables” (George and Bennett, 2005:124). Researchers have also pointed out that the method is especially suitable in answering “how” and “why” questions, since case studies remain much stronger at assessing whether and how a variable mattered to the outcome than at assessing how much it mattered (George and Bennett, 2005).

The question – “what is this a case of?” – that David Collier (1995:465) invites qualitative researchers to relate to is relevant for all researchers to reflect upon. Case studies should say something besides the specific – a case is always a case of something (Mörth, 1996:14). As previously argued, this
study is a case of Europeanization, with in depth probes into the interplay between Swedish and the EU’s policy processes when it comes to alcohol.

Social science research usually makes a distinction between an inductive and a deductive approach. Induction is based on universal and general conclusions from empirical studies. A theory is developed to explain a phenomenon, which makes it important that the conclusions are possible to generalize. When using a deductive method, the researcher starts with a general rule and asserts that this rule can explain a certain situation. This approach does not have as its goal to explain but rather to prove and establish a fact. Theories are used to make predictions and logical inferences. This dissertation is using a third method, that could be argued to be a middle course between induction and deduction. Alvesson and Sköldberg (1994) call this method abduction. The abduction method is used in many case studies. An individual case is interpreted with a hypothetical overall pattern that, if it is correct, explains the case. The interpretation should afterwards be certified through new findings. It becomes therefore a combination of deduction and induction but it includes also new elements. The empirical area is developed gradually during the process, and the theory is adjusted and refined. The difference between abduction and induction and deduction is that abduction, through the interplay between theory and empirical findings, gives better room for understanding (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 1994). The advantages with using abduction are that it makes it possible to start out from a theoretical framework and through the analysis link it together with the empirical material. Another advantage is that the method permits a reinterpretation of both theory and empirical material as the research process continues.

Process-tracing vs. a process study approach

One methodological approach designed to capture processes is to perform a so-called process tracing study. The method is used when the study has few cases and functions as a complement to other research methods. Checkel (2005) argues that process tracing is compatible with, and complementary to, a range of other methods within the empiricist/positivist tradition, including statistical techniques, analytical narrative, and content analysis.

"The application of process tracing usually means to trace the operation of the causal mechanism(s) at work in a given situation. One carefully maps the process, exploring the extent to which it coincides with prior, theoretically derived expectations about the workings of the mechanism. The data for process tracing is overwhelmingly qualitative in nature, and includes historical memoirs, interviews, press accounts and documents" (Checkel, 2005:6).
Process tracing has acquired near buzz-word status in certain circles, with advantages described such as the possibility to find alternative causal paths, to control for spurious correlation, and to make conclusions with few or single case studies. Furthermore, it is claimed it can develop theories and give alternative hypotheses (Checkel, 2005; George and Bennett, 2005). Checkel comes to the conclusion that process tracing is a fundamentally important method for both constructivists and rationalists since, done properly, it diminishes the distance between theory and data.

However, political decision-making is seldom as rational as we want it to be. Furthermore, social sciences are based on human relations rather than causal laws. As earlier mentioned, it is problematic to talk about and analyze causal relationships when studying a multilevel governance framework, as well as when one has an abductive research design. An unbroken causal chain of events is not only hard to achieve, but in most cases methodologically impossible to prove. According to George and Bennett, process-tracing “attempts to trace the links between possible causes and observed outcomes which can generate new variables or hypotheses on the basis of sequences of events observed inductively in case studies” (George and Bennett, 2005). Although the process-tracing that Checkel and George and Bennett offer is argued to be useful in a wide range of settings with different theoretical and analytical points of departure, it is a very narrow concept focusing on hypothesis testing and impact studies. In my study I have therefore chosen to see process tracing more in the line of work done by Eriksson (2006), where the method is seen as a detailed mapping of an event. Following in detail the development of a process, tracking decisions and the implementation of decisions and different actors’ parts in this process, is also in line with what Mörh describes as ‘the process study approach’, an attempt to reconstruct political processes and to identify the dynamic and the interplay between different factors (Mörth, 2003:12). This more general use of process tracing is one of the main research methods in all articles in this study. The different articles include detailed mapping of the events analyzed, using interviews, official documents and previous research to reconstruct the process between Sweden and the EU when it comes to alcohol policy.

Sources and material

The empirical material in this dissertation consists of primary sources such as official texts and interviews, but also previous research on alcohol policy, notes and recordings of presentations, email conversations, news articles, debates, and to some extent participant observation. Participant observation in alcohol political conferences and debates was carried out to get general information about developments within the policy area and to find suitable informants for interviews. The official texts consist mainly of EU documents
and Swedish alcohol policy-related documents such as governmental bills, reports, and official minutes, and records of actions of relevant EU bodies, primarily the Commission and affected DGs and court verdicts from the ECJ. In order to collect information that could not be found in public documents, interviews with a number of key informants were carried out. Those interviewed are high ranked civil servants and advisors well informed about the European policy process when it comes to alcohol. The interviews had a semi-structured character, but more specific questions were posed in order to generate useful information about the different processes.

The combination of several research methods and/or the use of several different sources in the study of the same phenomenon is one of several rationales for multimethod research. By using several complementary sources and methods to investigate a phenomenon, the possibility to make an accurate interpretation increases. By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and empirical materials, researchers, usually within the social sciences, can hope to overcome the weaknesses or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method, single-observer or single-theory studies. The idea of multiple methods is that information collected will be more solid if it is collected from more than one source, at more than one point in time, in a number of different ways. The use of multiple measures may also uncover some unique variance which otherwise might have been neglected. Furthermore, elements of the context are illuminated, which means that the multimethod strategy is used not only to examine the same phenomenon from multiple perspectives but also to enhance our understanding of the process (Jick, 1979).

**Interviews as data and method**

Interviews are an important part of the material, since they offer knowledge in areas of the policy process that are difficult to grasp from the official texts. The interviews were carried out throughout the study period with slightly different purposes. In the beginning, the interviews were more general and gave a more overall picture, while the interviews later on were more in detail, with more specific questions.

Esaiasson et al. (2003) distinguish between interviews of an informant character and interviews of a respondent character. When doing an interview with an informant the person is used as a witness, contributing information on how the reality in a certain event is constituted. An interview with an informant is used to give the researcher the best description possible of the course of the event, and different informants contribute with partly different pieces of the complicated puzzle. There is therefore no intrinsic value in asking the same questions to all informants. Instead, the first interviews generate new information leading to new or more specific questions. This
should be compared to an interview of a respondent character, where it is the respondent themselves and their thoughts that are the object of study. Esaiasson et al. (2003) argue that the methodological core of an informant interview is based on a critical view on sources, while a respondent interview is based on access to the opinions and ideas of the respondent on different phenomena, which cannot be seen as “true” or “false”. When doing respondent interviewing it is more important than with informant interviews to pay attention to the strategic sample, focusing on maximum variation. In a respondent interview it is not the individual per se that is interesting, but the different categories of thought they can contribute to (Esaiasson et al., 2003). In this study it is only in Article I that the interviewees are viewed as respondents, analyzing the different narratives in the traveller’s allowances debate, while the rest of the articles use the interviewees as informants.

When doing informant interviews the sample is based on interviewing so-called ‘centrally placed sources’; the researcher usually has a view in advance about what the most important persons are, but the original sample sometimes needs to be complemented. Usually the researcher then uses a so-called snowball sample. This is the case in this dissertation, all the respondents were given the possibility to recommended further individuals to interview. It is impossible to know with certainty how many interviews are sufficient, and there is no clear limit for how many interviews the sample should contain. The interviews cease when the researcher in a reliable way can give an account for the particular course of events (Esaiasson et al. 2003). The argument builds on the assumption that there are a limited number of ways to look at the phenomenon examined. Saturation is reached when the researcher can argue that he or she has found all relevant categories possible to find in the population. According to Esaiasson (2003: 187), “the interviewing will only be taking place as long as the conversations disclose new aspects of the current phenomenon. When those interviewed tend to repeat what previous persons have said, one has reached the theoretical saturation”.

McCracken (1988) argues that interviews should be done with strangers and a small number of people. The first recommendation is based on the fact that it is difficult to maintain scientific distance with people you know. Furthermore, it can feel awkward to ask too detailed questions, and some answers will therefore be taken for granted. The second piece of advice is based on the fact that an increased number of interviews seldom gives better results than a smaller number. This study has tried to follow these recommendations, although the ‘alcohol world’, and thereby the persons possible to interview that you do not know in advance, is rather limited. According to Esaiasson et al. (2003) (see also Kvale, 1997) a good interview is also characterized by short questions and long answers. The goal with the interview is to evoke spontaneous descriptions based on the interviewed person’s own reality. The interviews done for this dissertation have above all focused on what Esaiasson et al. (2003) call thematic questions, but also used follow-up
questions. On some occasions, there was no time for the more detailed follow-up questions, and these have then been asked afterwards in a new interview, by phone or via e-mail. The interview guide has been reformulated during the process; questions have been removed and new questions have been added as the project has developed and became more focused.

All interviewees were contacted by email with a request and a short description of the project and its purpose. Most interviews lasted about an hour and all included gaining informed consent and making an offer of anonymity. Interviewee anonymity is usually discussed based on ethical aspects, but can also be offered in interviews of a sensitive nature in order to acquire information otherwise not attainable. It is not everyone that openly wants to boast of their opinions on policies pursued. Of course, the anonymity hampers the possibility to replicate the study, but, as argued previously, it is not the individual but rather the position that the interviewee takes that is of the most interest. In two of the articles the respondents have been anonymized throughout, since most but not all respondents agreed to allow their names to be used.

A majority of the interviews were taped and transcribed for further analysis. The first four interviews in the project were performed together with Börje Olsson, while the remaining interviews were conducted by the author. Esaiasson et al. (2003) argue that the analysis of informant interviews is rather simple in comparison with the respondent interview. The analysis has as an aim to construct a course of events, evaluate the sources and fit the pieces together, preferably including other material besides the interviews as well. With a respondent interview, every transcription is read several times to create an understanding of the narrative and to crystallize a main message of what is told (plot/intrigue). The presence of a main message is detectable through the repeatedly return to the same theme. Through repeated reading different messages are identified that both coincide and vary between the different interviews (Frid, 2004).

As with all sorts of methods, the longer the time that passes between an event and the analysis, the greater the risk that the history told will suffer from lapses of memory, misinterpretations, rationalizations and reconstructions (Esaiasson et al., 2003). With interviews, there is also the risk that the interviewee has a personal interest in depicting an oblique, deliberately touched-up story about reality. Furthermore, those interviewed are likely to construct a more consistent account of the past and their role in it than an observer would have seen at the time. For example, when representatives of the government and the opposition make public statements about the development of Swedish alcohol policy during the last decade, hardly anyone would expect the accounts to be entirely correct. It is therefore important to hold in mind who the speaker is when analyzing the data. In the political debate over the traveller’s allowances, for example, there were many accusations between the two political blocs, but Article I finds no support among
the narrators for any differences in behaviour and attitudes between the two blocs. The material for Article II probably reflects positive glosses by the persons interviewed on the policy process around the alcohol strategy. The sources should therefore be seen as partly biased, since they have an interest in emphasising certain parts and not others. In such situations, complementary sources are of extra importance. Those interviewed can also answer questions based on “political correctness” or prevailing paradigms (see for example Rödner Sznitman, 2007). Here, again, documentary and other complementary sources can help. However, the main purpose of this dissertation is to analyze both formal and informal changes, which makes it important to study how different actors perceive the process, since how alcohol is talked about politically in itself can affect the process.

Delimitations

A study of Swedish alcohol policy needs to have several delimitations. Sweden has a long history of alcohol policy and also a long history of research on alcohol-related questions. The subject has been studied for a long time by a broad spectrum of researchers, with a variety of angles of approach. The present analysis builds on this tradition of work, rather than revisiting or replicating it. One delimitation, therefore, is the timeframe, with a focus in time from the Swedish accession to EU membership in 1995 until the end of 2006. While there are several studies which include discussion of Sweden’s accession to the EU as a final stage or endpoint of their analysis, none carry their analysis beyond the first couple of years of membership (Holder et al., 1998; Ugland, 2000b, 2002; Holder, 2000; Kühlhorn & Björ, 1998). Several things happened that make 2006 a logical final point of the analysis. Swedish elections resulted in a new right-wing government, ending eight years of Social Democratic rule. On the European level, a report was made public on the member states’ implementation of the Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol by young people, and the EU Strategy to support Member states in reducing alcohol-related harm was accepted after several years of work.

Another delimitation is the focus on national policymaking rather than on the regional and the local. Since the focus of the study is on the connection between the national and the international, it means that the preventive work done on local levels is not central to this study. It is also important to point out that the Swedish “national view” on alcohol and alcohol policy is based on what is said officially from governmental representatives and civil servants, mainly the views held by officials in the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

Finally, rather than other actors that might have affected the outcome, for example the alcohol industry or the role of nongovernmental organizations
(NGOs), the alcohol-related work within the EU in this study is mainly focusing on the work within the Commission and Court decisions from the ECJ. Furthermore, the focus is on Europeanization, although acknowledging that there are other processes acting in the same period that could influence the outcome on a more global level.
ALCOHOL POLICY

In this section, we turn from the theoretical framework and methodological considerations to an overall view of the empirical part of the dissertation. The meaning of alcohol policy as a concept is discussed and previous research on alcohol policy in connection with the EU is analyzed. The latest development of alcohol related questions on both the Swedish and the EU level will also be accounted for.

Alcohol policy and policies affecting alcohol

As Holder et al. (1998) point out, the alcohol control traditions in Finland, Norway and Sweden have shown considerable contrast with those of the other EU countries. Ten years ago, alcohol policy as a concept was not included in the official terminology of most EU member states. On the EU level, alcohol was largely defined as within agricultural, tax and trade policy and rarely discussed as a part of health and social policy considerations. In order to understand the present Swedish attempts to pursue its policy in the alcohol field, domestically as well as within the EU, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by the term alcohol policy. According to Premfors (1989) policy is usually understood in political science as public policy. A policy consists of something that is more than a single decision – it is more of a programme declaration or a public directive that is made up of the different decisions or ‘links of decisions’ including actions undertaken in order to realize this programme declaration (Premfors, 1989:9). Room (1999) argues that alcohol policy as an English term is of recent date and basically an import from the Nordic languages. Judging from official Swedish policy documents, alcohol policy is understood as a coherent and integrated policy including high taxes, restricted availability and a lack of commercial interests.

In this dissertation the term alcohol policy is used to describe authoritative decisions on alcohol-related public policy made by governments or EU/EC institutions through law, rules and regulations, and also recommendations with a public health focus. As Babor et al. argue, it is
“when public policies pertain to the relation between alcohol, health, and social welfare, they are considered [to be] alcohol policies. … The central purpose of alcohol policies is to serve the interest of public health and social well being through their impact on health and social determinants” (Babor et al., 2003:6-7).

However, there are a lot of decisions at the EU level, most of them connected with inner market issues that have affected Swedish alcohol policy. In line with negative integration development, the EU has demanded changes based on the arguments of free movement of goods and services. These policies, although not alcohol policy per se, also need to be taken into consideration when analyzing the Europeanization of Swedish alcohol policy. However, as stated, the focus in this dissertation is on the interplay between two policy processes and the construction and development of alcohol policy work on the national and the EU level. However, it is important to acknowledge that views on alcohol policy, even when the main focus is on health, are differentiated not only between the Nordic countries and the EU, but also between all member states. As will be shown, there are parts of the present Nordic alcohol policy that are not presently considered in the EU context as alcohol policies. Furthermore, previous research also indicates that the historical similarities between the Nordic countries when it comes to alcohol policy slowly are disappearing (Karlsson, 2008).

**Previous research**

When discussing Swedish alcohol policy, it is usually done in comparison or together with the other Nordic countries, particularly Finland and Norway. All three countries have had a similar historical development of alcohol policy, with strong temperance movements playing an important role. Drinking patterns have also been fairly similar between the countries, with a strong emphasis on intoxication. Furthermore, the policies in each country have often taken a similar course and leaned on similar ideas and discussions. The Nordic countries show a similar trend during the period analyzed, with an increase in availability, an increase of total consumption, a vivid debate about alcohol policy, especially the tax question, and similar reactions to developments by producing national alcohol action plans and programs (Karlsson, 2008).

However, Finland, Norway and Sweden have taken slightly different approaches to the challenges to their alcohol policies in the 1990s and 2000s, reflecting external factors but also differences in the countries’ attitudes to the alcohol policy issues (Karlsson, 2008). Karlsson and Tigerstedt (2004) argue that the main difference between the Nordic countries is that Finland has been reactive rather than active in their relation to the international chal-
lenges, and chosen to work with less economic resources. In Norway, the public support for restrictive alcohol policy has been stronger and the alcohol question played an important role in the referendum that turned down EU membership (Sulkunen et al., 2000).

The changes in Nordic alcohol policy through the mid-1990s have been comprehensively documented (Holder et al., 1998; Holder, 2000; Tigerstedt, 1990, 2001; Tigerstedt and Rosenqvist, 1995; Ugland, 1996, 2000, 2002; Kühlhorn & Björ, 1998; Sulkunen et al., 2000; Österberg, 1993). Even though these analyses have paid attention to both the national and the European level, most of them have focused on the changes in national policymaking. They have also covered changes in Nordic norms and views on the welfare state in general and the relation of these to the alcohol policy development process (Holder et al., 1998; Sutton, 1998; Tigerstedt, 2001; Sulkunen et al., 2000; Leifman, 1998). However, few researchers have analyzed the EU level and how the Nordic countries have tried to influence alcohol-related questions at the EU level.

Alcohol control policies in the Nordic countries, with the exception of Denmark, have been portrayed as unique in a European context, with their highly restrictive alcohol control systems (Kurzer 2001; Sulkunen et al., 2000; Holder et al., 1998). These systems have been somewhat different, but all have been based on the same three basic pillars: strongly restricted physical availability (short opening hours of off-premise retail sale stores and restaurants, and high age limits), strict limits on economic availability (high taxes), and a disinterest principle, according to which the possibility to collect private profits in alcohol production and trade was minimized by state alcohol monopolies with exclusive rights to the production, import, export, wholesale and retail sale of alcoholic beverages (Holder et al. 1998). According to Tigerstedt (2001), an unspoken fourth pillar can be added to the three explicit pillars of the policies, consisting of a strong, public and moral commitment to a restrictive policy. The abolition of all of the monopolies except those for retail off-sale has been of special research interest (Österberg, 1993; Ugland, 1996; Holder et al., 1998; Holder, 2000). As a consequence of the EEA negotiations, Norway, Sweden and Finland were forced to abolish their import, production, export and wholesale monopolies on alcohol. Together with Iceland, these countries still have monopolies on retail off-sales of most alcoholic beverages.

Several alcohol researchers have described the changes that have occurred in Nordic alcohol policy in terms of trends towards liberalization, the effects of urbanization and an increased standard of living, and also a marginalization of alcohol as a policy area (Sulkunen et al., 2000; Tigerstedt, 2001; Holder et al., 1998). Tigerstedt (2001) believes that Nordic alcohol policy as an independent field of welfare policy has disappeared, and shifted into different policy areas in the context of functioning within the EU. Sulkunen et al. (2000) argue that changes in media focus, changes in consumption pat-
terns, and the drift to a service orientation in the alcohol retail monopolies show that European integration did not cause the changes but functioned instead as a catalyst for the development. The weakening of Nordic alcohol policy is described as one aspect of a general tendency to dismantle part of the social democratic welfare state, a development that eventually would have happened without the pressure from the EU. Sulkunen et al. (2000) also agree with Holder et al. in arguing that

“A long period of liberalization in alcohol policy has taken place in the Nordic countries. Obviously such liberalization would not be possible in a democracy without public opinion support. It is reasonable to view such changes in attitudes about alcohol policy in the context of more general changes in attitudes about the welfare state arrangements in the Nordic countries. Also, there may have been special changes in attitudes during the most recent years that can be more directly linked to the process of European integration” (Holder et al., 1998:195).

Holder et al. thereby argue, although not specifically, for the influence of what Radaelli (2003) calls national resonance, that is general national support for change in a certain direction, in the changes which happened in the period after Sweden’s accession to the EU. This is a period where the “old” public health paradigm was being challenged by the “new” market and individual responsibility paradigm and the Swedish model was in retreat.

Kurzer (2001) brings the focus back to the impact of European integration on domestic politics and policies. Kurzer argues that the restrictive alcohol policies in Finland and Sweden constitute a hard test for cultural convergence, as these issues are dear to the national identity. The book’s overall conclusion is that a modest rate of cultural convergence has occurred in the European Union. Kurzer also argues that European integration, and in particular the opening up of borders to the free movements of citizens, has played a key intervening role in the adaptation to European norms and values. An ever larger group of citizens dissociated themselves from established practices, but the countries’ elites have continued to defend national policies as part of the essence of their respective national identities. Also Kurzer discusses the role of the EU as catalyst; according to Kurzer, there is an impact of Europeanization in morally sensitive areas like drugs, alcohol and abortion: Europeanization affects the beliefs and expectations of domestic actors as they are drawn into a process of cultural assimilation with shared European norms and values. However, Kurzer also has a strict top-down focus, seeing Europeanization processes as an adaptation by constituent nations in terms both of formal and of informal process.

Sutton (1998) is among the few alcohol researchers that have made a discursive analysis of Swedish alcohol policy discussions, recognizing the potential for multiple interpretations of the problem, as they are spelled out in formal collective statements. Sutton argues in her dissertation that alcohol
problems in Sweden are not strictly an objective phenomenon, but are largely discursive constructions that have been reconfigured in substantial ways since at least 1910. Among other things, the Swedish case shows that definitions of the problem, and models adopted to describe it, integrate a broad range of social actors, and encourage consensus. The study explores the impact of a new discourse upon the legitimacy of Swedish approaches. According to Sutton, a medical discourse was followed by a public health/total consumption discourse in the middle of the 1970s, reflecting the influence of sociology and welfare ideology. In connection with EU membership in the mid-1990s, a new free-trade ideology discourse developed. Sutton sees two contradictory discourses concerning alcohol in an EU perspective. First, there is a discourse in which alcohol is seen as a public health issue, which points out the risks of adopting a European pattern of drinking, and secondly there is a discourse that is associated with the EU’s goal to reduce barriers for economic trade and arrange a free market. These competing discourses, or frames, are further developed in Article II and show a slow process of re-framing of the alcohol question on the EU level, which in turn has increased the possibilities for public health-based alcohol policy decisions (Article III).

Ugland (2002) argues that the focus in his dissertation is on the interplay between the national and the EU level. However, his contribution also has a focus on the impacts of Europeanization on formal Nordic alcohol control policies (that is, negative integration and top-down processes) rather than the interplay. He argues concerning the alcohol monopolies in Finland, Norway and Sweden that the EU membership produced a re-formulation (reframing) of alcohol policy, from a previous categorization as a health policy to being subject to policies on competition and the single market. A change, he argues, cannot be ascribed to any other force than Europeanization. The present study focuses on the same process that Ugland is describing, but is not limited to impact effects but includes the latest developments where a re-re-categorization (or re-framing) of the alcohol policy field also can be discerned at the EU level.

According to Ugland, the cooperation between the Nordic countries on alcohol political issues has previously taken place in other arenas than the political, mainly between researchers and to some extent between representatives of the different monopolies. At the same time that the political cooperation has been limited, the different countries’ choice of strategies has been connected: Norway followed Sweden and Finland in the monopoly question (Ugland, 1996), and Sweden reluctantly followed Denmark and Finland on the traveller’s allowances question (see Article I). One of the few common initiatives on political level is the Nordic meeting between the ministers of finance in Iceland during 2004. The Ministers then agreed on a joint strategy on the alcohol tax question: remove the EU’s zero tax on wine, raise the minimum level for spirits, and increase the tax on alcopops. This was
supported by the Copenhagen meeting the same year between the Nordic health ministers, which argued for halving the traveller’s allowances and making them into maximum amounts (Karlsson, 2008). “The novelty of this joint initiative is that the Nordic governments aim at intervening directly in the ‘hard law’ of the Single Market in matters concerning control of alcohol consumption” (Tigerstedt et al., 2006:125).

Swedish alcohol policy

In the first half of the 20th Century, Swedish alcohol policy was an often-cited model to the world of how alcohol problems could be held at a relatively low level by a restrictive but not prohibitive policy (Room, 2001), including an individualised ration book strictly controlling spirits purchases. After the ration book was abolished in 1955, high taxes became the main instrument in limiting consumption. In addition there remained a number of restrictive principles: the existence of a retail monopoly (Systembolaget), strict rules for serving alcohol, age limits, an advertising ban and hard sanctions against drunk driving. Prioritized areas were addiction treatment, alcohol information and alcohol research. The documentation and research on alcohol policy development in Sweden is unusually extensive. Comprehensive statistics were part of the control system, and public investigations have presented thorough documentations of different time periods from the beginning of the 20th century until today (Augustsson, 2007).

The Swedish EU membership led to more extensive changes than most analysts anticipated. In several areas it has also included a transfer of national political decision-making to the supranational juridical area, with the ECJ as the final court of appeal. The adherence to Europe meant that four out of five monopolies were abolished, the excise duties had to be adjusted, and the traveller’s allowances increased from very restricted allotments to be in practice unlimited. As a consequence of the abolition of the production and wholesale monopolies, the influence of commercial interests has increased, with the result that instead of one supplier (the then-state-owned company Vin & Sprit) of spirits, wine and imported strong beer to Systembolaget, there are today over 300 importers and a great number of manufacturers of alcoholic beverages. All of them have the right to sell to both Systembolaget and to restaurants (Augustsson, 2007). The membership also resulted in a new committee (the Alcohol Assortment Authority), to which producers and manufacturers could appeal against decisions on what was stocked at Systembolaget. This forced a larger range of products, including products like alcopops and cask wine (in cardboard boxes up to 3 litres).

5 For a more detailed chronology of Swedish alcohol policy development in an EU context, see Appendix 1.
These products had earlier been refused as products at Systembolaget, since they were considered to promote higher alcohol consumption. Furthermore, the Swedish limits on the alcohol content in beer and distilled spirits were abolished, based on EU regulations (Österberg & Karlsson, 2002).

The adaptation of Swedish rules for private import to the EU norms, the entrance of new member states such as the Baltic States and Poland, and major tax reductions on alcohol in Denmark and Finland, led to serious discussions at the parliamentary level of lowering the taxes on alcohol to adapt to the surrounding countries. In 2004 the government appointed an investigator with the assignment to study the development of import and sale of alcohol, above all in the south of Sweden, and to propose measures that could diminish the problems created by the increased private import (SOU 2004:86; SOU 2005:25). The major suggestions in the two resulting reports were a tax reduction on spirits of 40 percent, and on wine and beer of 30 percent. However, there has so far not been any political majority for implementing a tax reduction in line with these suggestions, and the demands for them have calmed down somewhat since the increase in private imports slowed down and the sales figures for Systembolaget showed an upward trend in 2006 (Boman et al., 2006).

The first report from the investigator also emphasized that it is of vital importance that Sweden keeps on working actively within the EU to give the public health consequences of actions affecting the alcohol market a higher priority -- work that in the long run can change the EU’s view on alcohol and thereby increase understanding for the foundation of Swedish alcohol policy (SOU 2004:86). The increased need of working proactively and putting alcohol on the agenda in all relevant policy areas, such as taxes and traveller’s allowances on an international level, has also been discussed in later government bills (Prop. 2005/06:30). A commitment to this process by Swedish authorities was discernible already some years earlier, in the early planning stage of the European Comparative Alcohol study (ECAS). ECAS was at the beginning a political initiative within the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, but became relatively soon a research-based project, falling in line with a long tradition of research-induced alcohol policy. The relatively close connection between evaluative research and policy discussions is, in international terms, an unusual feature of Nordic alcohol policy (Room, 2005).

The Centre for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs (SoRAD) is also an example of a new institution which had some relation to Sweden’s international alcohol policy ambitions. SoRAD was established in 1999 as a national centre to strengthen social research on alcohol and drugs in Sweden. The Centre was established following the recommendation of a 1995 report from a committee on the development of alcohol research, convened by the Public Health Institute (Alkoholforskningsutredningen, 1995). The report had noted that, while there was an active tradition of social alcohol research
in Sweden, it had been overshadowed in the previous ten years by biological and clinical studies. Therefore it was proposed that, as in Finland and Norway, a national centre for behavioural and social research on alcohol should be established (www.sorad.su.se).

Until May, 2003, Sweden had a ban on all alcohol advertising in newspapers and magazines. In September 1998 a Swedish district court asked the ECJ for a pre-ruling in the so-called Gourmet case (C-405/98). The ECJ found that the ban on alcohol advertising was not in conflict with the free movement of services, but only as long as it was motivated by protecting public health and proportional to its purpose. The judgement of the proportionality of the ban was left to the Swedish court to decide. Both the Swedish District Court and the Swedish Market Court decided that the legislation was not proportionate to its purpose. In view of the rulings, the Swedish parliament passed changes in the alcohol law, keeping a ban on alcohol advertising for beverages with more than 15 percent alcohol from May 2003. It was also decided that the advertisements for alcohol in newspapers and magazines had to include a warning text of a corresponding relative size to those on cigarette packages.

Swedish alcohol policy on a national level is today in the main resting on the retail monopoly, high taxes, preventive work at the local level, and information and work around alcohol-free zones. Around the turn of the millennium, the Government saw the need for new methods and strategies, especially considering the gradual abolition of the traveller’s allowances and a subsequent increase in alcohol consumption and alcohol harm in Sweden. In February 2001 the Parliament therefore adopted a National Action Plan (NAP) to reduce medical and social harm and total alcohol consumption (Prop. 2000/01:20). The main focus in the NAP was to stimulate preventive work at the regional level. This investment was in an international perspective unique in extent, with 940 million Swedish crowns earmarked for the period 2001-2005. As one of the intermediate goals of the NAP, the OAS cooperation, a cooperation between the industry, insurance companies and concerned authorities, was ended and the Alcohol Committee was formed instead. The Alcohol Committee had the principal responsibility for the accomplishment of the NAP, to stimulate developments on the regional and local levels, to coordinate work on the national level, and to take responsibil-

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6 The alcohol-free zones are part of an information campaign which started during the mid-1990s under the guidance of the Public Health Institute. The purpose of the measures is to reduce consumption and encourage abstinence during childhood, in youth, at work, on the roads and during pregnancy (Swedish National Institute of Public Health, 1995).

7 OAS, the Government’s Independent Alcohol co-operation, was established in 1997 and consisted of authorities like the police, Customs, and the National Institute of Public Health, together with alcohol producers and restaurant associations. The co-operation resulted in publicity campaigns against unregistered (black-market) alcohol, and reports and information about the risks of alcohol in traffic. Industry interests were seen by the government as not sufficiently cooperative, and the OAS was ended in 2001.
ity for information and moulding public opinion (Dir. 2001:22, S 2001:02 and Dir. 2005:125). The Committee consisted of representatives, among others, from the National Public Health Institute (NPHI), the National Board of Health and Welfare, the National Police Board, The National Road Administration, the Customs Department and The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. The main information from the Alcohol Committee focused on risk arguments, i.e. that all individuals are exposed to different levels of risk by drinking alcohol. Drinking patterns, consumption level, age and gender are each seen as affecting the individual’s risk of alcohol problems. Also the Alcohol Committee had a focus on the four alcohol-free areas of life, with a special focus on youth and with a clear harm-reduction influence. The Alcohol Committee was discontinued in January 2008.

During the period analyzed, we see a considerable increase in the total alcohol consumption in Sweden. Alarming reports appeared in the press around 2003 stating that Swedes were drinking more than at any time during the last 100 years, and that the consumption had risen by 30 percent since mid-1990s. The number of at-risk consumers has also increased, and there are signs of an increased polarization of drinking, with more people drinking less, but also more people drinking a lot. During 1996-2004, the overall figure rose from 8.0 litres of pure alcohol per inhabitant 15 years and older to 10.5 litres. However, this trend has lately phased out, and the figure in 2006 was 9.7 litres (Boman et al., 2007).

The increase in consumption could be ascribed to a large extent to increased availability -- not only the changes in traveller’s allowances but also an increased access to smuggled alcohol, a considerable increase of Systembolaget’s opening hours on evenings and Saturdays, and more alcohol permits for restaurants. From 1995 to 2006 restaurants permanently licensed to serve spirits drinks, wines and/or strong beer to the general public increased from 8121 to 10,785 (Folkhälsoinstitutet, 2008). The increase came when the local authorities took over the responsibility for granting permits in 1996, and at the same time in practice were hindered from taking social aspects into consideration. However, the increase in consumption could also be ascribed to lowered prices on alcohol (Babor et al., 2003). The prices in Systembolaget, for example, have not increased in line with inflation. There was also a tax reduction on strong beer in 1997 and a tax reduction on wine in 2001. The general economic boom also resulted in a higher disposable income than usual. The consumption changes have lead to an increasing trend when it comes to harm and violence caused by alcohol, but the increase is less than feared and considerably less unfavourable than in Finland (Andréasson et al., 2006; Karlsson, 2008).

Despite all changes, both politicians and researchers have argued that Sweden, unlike Finland, has kept an ambitious and coherent alcohol policy with official reports, a new organizational structure and above all impressive
economic investments in alcohol preventive work at the local level (Romanus, 2001; Karlsson and Tigerstedt, 2003).

The EU and alcohol issues

The EU is above all an economic entity concerned with free trade and in particular the free movement of goods, capital, people and services, the cornerstones of its internal market (Gilmore et al., 2004; Scharpf, 1999; Egan, 2001). At the EU level, market building has therefore been identified as one of the principal projects, and the work of the Commission and the rulings of the ECJ have so far mostly been focused on deregulation and harmonization. National exemptions in many areas have disappeared in the interests of central standardization and a single market within the union. Furthermore, the economic environment has undergone rapid change during the last twenty years, with striking results for the nation state. Noticeable among the changes have been the privatization of state industries, new rules ending monopolies and an increased role for the EU (Thatcher, 2002; Smith, 2005). However, the growth of the EU inner market has also resulted in collisions with other policies, both within the EU and nationally (Hine and Kassim, 1998). In particular, the development has made it more difficult to maintain divergent national regulation in the public health area.

Since the EU has above all an economic rationale, alcohol has been primarily defined and dealt with in the EU in market terms. Alcohol beverages constitute a set of commodities that are produced, distributed and consumed on a large scale in Europe. Alcohol is one of the Union’s leading export commodities, and many of the member states have a considerable positive trade balance from their export of wine and spirits. The production and sales of alcoholic beverages play a significant role in the European economy and have done so for a long time (Lubkin, 1996). Public health, on the other hand, has been a field for cooperation in the EU only since 1993.

The ECJ and alcohol-related court cases

European law is to a great extent directly applicable in the member countries and is supposed to be used in a direct manner by national courts and authorities. European law has, furthermore, a general precedence over national law in case of a conflict between the legal systems. International agreements that the EU has made, for example the EEA agreement, are also tied to European law (Bernitz and Kjellgren, 2002). The ECJ has become a more and more influential political actor, strongly contributing to what many analysts argue to be a “market adjustment” of welfare policy within the Union (Blomqvist, 2003). Baumberg and Anderson (2008) argue that there is a partial juridification of alcohol policy, leading to negative integration within the field, and
the structure of the EU can be argued to prioritise economic over health interests. However, they also show that the court is prepared to prioritise health over trade concerns, providing certain conditions are met, so that the pessimistic interpretations of the role of EU law in alcohol policy should be tempered.

The judgements of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) are based on a few important legal principles. The main principles concern subsidiarity, discrimination, proportionality and necessity (Bernitz & Kjellgren, 2002). The subsidiarity principle was first introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht as a general principle applicable to all areas where both the European Community and the member states have legislative competence, so-called shared competence. According to the subsidiarity principle, the Community shall take action only “if and insofar as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member states and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effect of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community”. In short, the EU should only have responsibility for what it can do better than the Member State acting separately. The equality of rights principle, also called the non-discrimination principle, forbids every form of discrimination based on nationality within the EC-treaty. The prohibition against discrimination means that a natural or juridical person (i.e., both real persons and companies) from another member state should be treated in the same way as the citizens and companies of the country. The principle prohibits not only open, direct discrimination but also indirect discrimination, such as unjustified open, direct discrimination but also indirect discrimination, such as unjustified residence or language demands (Bernitz & Kjellgren, 2002).

The proportionality principle means that the measures used to obtain a certain purpose cannot be more burdensome or far-reaching than the minimum necessary to obtain the desired purpose of the measure. “Appropriate and necessary” are terms frequently used by the Court. In a choice between several effective measures, the least burdensome one has to be chosen (Bernitz & Kjellgren, 2002). The ECJ has recently often left the proportionality judgement to national courts, which has resulted in the same measure being judged differently in different Member states. However, one of the purposes of the proportionality principle is to allow free room for national solutions (Allroth, 2005).

The ECJ has, when it comes to alcohol, mainly pronounced verdicts in cases concerning taxation (C-86/78; C-168/78; C-170/78; C-171/78; C-68/79; C-216/81; C-243/84; C-166/98; C-434/97; C-5/05, C-167/05), advertising (C-152/78; C-1/90; C-176/90; C-405/98; C-318/00; C-262/02; C-492/02) and monopolies (C-91/78; C-189/95; C-170/04) (for a discussion of the different cases, see for example Baumberg and Anderson, 2008). In 1997 the ECJ had the opportunity to pronounce on the compatibility of the Swedish retail monopoly with free-market principles in the so-called Franzén case (C-189/95). Harry Franzén was prosecuted in 1995 for selling alcoholic bev-
erages illegally in his store with the purpose of testing if the Systembolaget monopoly was in accordance with the EC-treaty. The ECJ concluded in their verdict that the sales monopoly was not in opposition to the EC-treaty Article 31 on the conditions for a state retail monopoly. The Frantzén case, together with the ECJ’s support for advertising bans in Catalonia (C-1/90 & C-176/90) and France (C-262/02), shows that the ECJ has accepted the influence of public health arguments in their decisions (Anderson and Baumberg, 2006; Baumberg and Anderson, 2008). Furthermore, in line with subsidiarity and proportionality judgements, “case-law seems to leave quite some discretionary space for the national executive in the interpretations of how to make national law and policy compatible with incremental judicial interpretations of EU law” (Sindbjerg Martinsen and Vrangbæk, 2006:6). One Swedish example of this is the so-called Gourmet case (C-405/98), where the ECJ found that the ban on alcohol advertising was not in conflict with the free movement of services, and the judgement of the proportionality of the ban was left to the Swedish court to decide.

In case C-167/05, the Commission argued that Sweden, by having different forms and tax levels on beer and wine, discriminated against imported wine to the advantage of nationally produced beer. After two letters of formal notice in February 2000 and in July 2002, the Commissions sent Sweden a reasoned opinion in June 2001 and a new version in July 2004. According to the Commission, the changes made in Swedish legislation in June 2001 through SFS 2001:517 and SFS 2001:822 were not sufficient, and since Sweden did not agree with the view of the Commission, the case was taken to court. However, in April 2008 the European Court of Justice dismissed the Commission action against Sweden, concluding that different tax treatment of beer and wine in Sweden does not infringe community law. The Court dismissed the Commission action since “given the difference in selling price between a litre of wine and a litre of beer, the difference in excise duty is not liable to influence consumer behaviour” (C-167/05).

But there are also court decisions that have gone in the other direction. In the so-called Rosengren case (C-170/04), the Swedish ban on private imports was tested. The case is based on a request from Mr. Rosengren, who tried to import Spanish wines without a license, thereby bypassing the national alcohol monopoly. The ECJ issued its ruling on the 5 May 2007, stating that the prohibition for individuals to import alcohol is contrary to the European Community Treaty, since the monopoly has a discretionary power to refuse to import alcohol beverages requested by clients (this was however changed in Swedish law in 2005). They also found that an import monopoly was separate from a retail monopoly and that the policy could not be justified as part of either limiting consumption or preventing underage sales, contrary to the two Advocate General’s preliminary opinions in the matter. However, despite initial shock at the decision, the Swedish authorities have decided that it is not decisive for Swedish alcohol policy. In 2006 the ECJ estab-
lished in the so-called Joustra case (Case C-5/05) that only products acquired and transported personally by private individuals are exempt from excise duty in the state of importation. According to the judgment, private individuals acquiring products subjected to excise duty from a Member State, in which the duty for the products already has been paid, and transported by a third party, must also pay duty for the products in the Member State of destination. The judgement applies both to products acquired by private individuals for their own use as well as to products acquired for the use of other private individuals. Based on the judgment, only products transported personally by private individuals are exempt from duty in the country of destination. The ECJ overturned an earlier opinion by the advocate general allowing individuals to order alcohol and cigarettes online, paying only the lower duty of the state from which the goods were ordered. The judges made clear that alcohol and cigarettes bought from other EU countries could only be exempt from domestic excise duties if those goods were intended for “the personal use of the private individual” who had transported the goods. Since this means that Swedish taxes have to paid on all alcohol that is not transported by the individual who purchased it, the incentive to order on the internet, for example, is low.

Finally, when discussing the impact of the ECJ on Swedish alcohol policy making, it is important to bear in mind that what was probably the most important policy development, the changes in traveller’s allowances, was not taken to the ECJ. Neither was the abolition of four of the five monopolies. This indicates that there are other important actors within the EU body when discussing alcohol policy development.

The increased interest in public health on the EU level

With the adoption of the single European Act in 1986, the EC started the development of positive integration within several areas that previously had been handled at national or regional levels. The Maastricht Treaty increased the policy areas for the Union considerably, and the Amsterdam and Nice treaties confirmed this development. Policymaking around public health questions increased in importance and extent after the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, since this treaty incorporated a new public health article (Article 152) which requires the Union to promote, as well as protect, the health of EU citizens. The Article stresses the importance attached to public health in the political process (Randall, 2001). However, so far the article has not achieved great importance in practice, since it specifically excludes, with a few exceptions, binding legislation. Furthermore, Article 152 emphasizes that health policy is a member state responsibility and the EU should only support and supplement national actions, not substitute for them. Given the importance attached to subsidiarity in health matters, the idea of so-called added value has been presented as a criterion for EU actions and policies.
(Randall, 2001). However, the current picture of alcohol policy in the member states is remarkably different from the one visible fifty years ago, not only in terms of the weakening of availability restrictions in the Nordic countries, but also in terms of an increased level of policy activity in many countries, for example on drink-driving, marketing controls, minimum ages to buy alcohol and public policy structures to deliver alcohol policy – all of which were much more common in 2005 than in 1950 (Österberg and Karlsson, 2002). At a European level, we also see some “homogenization” of alcohol consumption levels, convergence in beverage preferences and drinking patterns, and a greater public health focus (Leifman 2002; see also Simpura et al. 2002). According to Tigerstedt and Törrönen (2007) the standard concepts and images of different European drinking cultures have thus become diluted and inappropriate. For instance, the validity of the typology between “beer-drinking countries”, “wine-drinking countries” and “spirits-drinking countries”, and the distinction between wet and dry drinking cultures has weakened during recent decades. However, since alcohol policy in the main belongs to national competence, the 27 different member states have their own way of doing things, and each may seek a different path towards a common goal of less alcohol-related harm. At the same time, common interests and interdependencies mean that each state has an interest in the behaviour of the others. This means that the work mainly will be based on soft law and long-term work on moulding public opinion.

Until the late 1990s, public health policy was addressed within Directorate-General (DG) V of the Commission, dealing with employment, industrial relations and social affairs. After reorganization in 1999, DG Health and Consumer Protection (SANCO) was formed. DG SANCO is divided into six different directorates (A-F), with Directorate C handling public health questions. Directorate C is in turn divided into seven subunits (1-7), with the C4 unit handling health determinants, including so-called “lifestyle determinants” like tobacco, alcohol, drugs and obesity. This reorganization reflects, according to Randall (2001), the rising status of health in the Commission.

The growing concern among NGOs and European politicians about binge drinking patterns among young people (Sutton and Nylander, 1999; Commission, 2000) raised demands for action at the European level. As a result, in 1996 the Commission established a Working Group on Alcohol and Health, consisting of experts from EU’s member countries, as a forum for sharing experiences on alcohol-related problems and alcohol policy (Tigerstedt et al., 2006). In December 2000 the Commission delivered a proposal for a Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol by young people (Council, 2001), encouraging Member states to foster a multisectoral approach to educate young people about alcohol and to increase young people’s involvement in health-related policies and actions. The Commissions proposal was presented during the French Presidency, but it was Sweden, with strong support from France, who initiated and completed the work dur-
ing its Presidency in the following six months. In June 2001, the Health Min-
isters of the EU unanimously adopted the Council Recommendation on the
drinking of alcohol by young people (2001/458/EC). During the Swedish
Presidency a second important step was taken, the adoption of Council con-
cclusions where the Health Council invited the Commission to put forward
proposals for a comprehensive Community strategy aimed at reducing alco-
hol-related harm. The same year the Commission recommended measures to
tackle drink driving, including an EU-wide Blood Alcohol Concentration
(BAC) maximum limit. Special attention has also been given to drink driv-
ing in the Road Safety Action Programme 2003-2008, with tighter controls
of blood alcohol levels. In 2002 the European Parliament and the Council
adopted a programme of community action in the field of public health for
Programme, several actions focus on drink-driving countermeasures and
awareness-raising activities to combat alcohol-related harm.

A EUROCARE project, Alcohol Policy Network in the Context of a Larger
Europe: Bridging the Gap (BtG), was funded by the European Commis-
sion for the years 2004-2006. The project included partners in 30 European
countries as well as the World Health Organization (European Office), the
European Youth Forum, and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA).
The main aim of the project was to create an alcohol policy network to fur-
ther the development of an integrated Community strategy to reduce alcohol-
related harm in the context of a larger Europe, as embodied in the Council's
conclusions of 5 June 2001, and to support and encourage European coun-
tries to implement the Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol
by young people.

In 2004 the UK-based Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) won the tender
to write a report that would provide the evidence base for the Commission's
strategy on alcohol. The *Alcohol in Europe* report was funded by a 9 month
tender from the European Commission, and called for an analysis of the
health, social and economic impact of alcohol in Europe (Anderson and
Baumberg, 2006).

The Commission Communication on an alcohol strategy was approved on
24 October 2006. The EU alcohol strategy focuses on five areas: protecting
young people, children and the unborn child; reducing injuries and deaths
from alcohol-related road traffic accidents; preventing alcohol-related harm
among adults and reducing the negative impact on the workplace; informing,
educating and raising awareness on the impact of harmful and hazardous
alcohol consumption and on appropriate consumption patterns; and
developing, supporting and maintaining a common evidence base. One cor-
nerstone for the implementation of this Strategy is the establishment of a
European Alcohol and Health Forum. This has the overall objective of pro-
viding a common platform for all interested stakeholders at the EU level that
pledge to step up actions relevant to reducing alcohol-related harm. Particu-
lar emphasis is placed on strategies aimed at curbing under-age drinking; information and education programmes on the effect of harmful drinking and on responsible patterns of consumption; possible development of efficient common approaches throughout the Community to provide adequate consumer information; actions to better enforce age limits for selling and serving alcohol; interventions promoting effective behavioural change among children and adolescents; and cooperation to promote responsibility in and prevent irresponsible commercial communication and sales (European Commission, 2007). The adopted strategy has been described both as a landmark in alcohol policy development and as a watered down strategy due to alcohol-industry involvement in the process.

An event that exemplifies an increased understanding of restrictive measures on alcohol policy among the member states outside the Nordic countries is a recent suggestion within the economic and monetary committee of the European Parliament. In November 2008 the Committee recommended a halving of the traveller’s allowances, instead of a complete removal. However, the European parliament has only consultative competence in tax-questions.

Alcohol taxes

Even though health-related questions have increased in significance, there are areas within the alcohol field that are still pending on the EU level. One of them is the alcohol tax question. The minimum rates of excise duty on alcoholic drinks currently in force came into effect in 1993 (Council Directive 92/84/EEC). Above these minimum levels member states are free to set excise duty rates at levels that they consider appropriate. This has resulted in a great diversity within the Community in the levels of taxation applied, reflecting varying national policy considerations. Although full harmonisation of the excise duty rates throughout the European Union was not considered necessary by the Council of Ministers for the proper functioning of the Internal Market, the Directive requires that the Commission review these minimum rates periodically. In 2004 the Commission presented a report (COM (2004) 223) on the operation of the EU-wide system of minimum rates of excise duty on alcohol and alcoholic beverages with the purpose of launching a debate on the subject. The report considered the effect of the present system on the proper functioning of the Internal Market, the competition between the different types of alcoholic drinks due to differences in levels of excise duty, and the current real value of the minimum rates. The Commission concluded that the wide rate divergences in rates of excise duty and VAT between different member states constitute an opportunity for legitimate cross-border shopping but also an incentive for fraudulent transactions and smuggling. The Commission offered the opinion that enhanced
convergence of rates would go a long way towards providing a solution to these problems.

In the report the Commission states that Sweden is the only member state that gives predominance to health objectives in determining the duty levels on alcohol (for a comparison between EU minimum tax levels and Swedish tax levels, see Table 1). For other high taxing countries (for instance Finland, the UK and Denmark), health objectives are stated to have become less of an issue today than they were in the past. When it comes to agricultural policy, the current zero minimum excise duty rate for wine is often seen by wine-producing member states and by producers as a necessary supplementary measure, to the EU’s agriculture policies on wine. However, some of the other Member states would require any changes to the minimum rates to be made conditional upon the introduction of a positive minimum excise duty rate for wine. The issue of wine taxation remains therefore a very controversial and politically sensitive issue (IP/04/669).

Following the report and subsequent discussions in the Council, the Commission on 8 September 2006 presented a proposal for a Directive (COM(2006) 486) amending Directive 92/84/EEC by increasing the minimum rates of excise duty in line with inflation from 1993 to 2005 on alcoholic beverages other than wine. This amounted to a 31 per cent increase, but transition periods up to 2010 were suggested for those member states that could be impacted. The Commission feared that without an adjustment for inflation, the minimum rates could eventually become meaningless and would in the longer term encourage greater disparity of rates amongst member states. Such disparities might have what the Commission considered to be the undesirable consequence of member states pressing for tighter restrictions on the amount of alcohol that individuals can take from one Member State to another. However, early discussions of the proposal in the Council indicated that some of the new member states felt that to choose 1992 as the point for revalorisation did not take account that they had acceded more recently. Bearing in mind that many of the new member states had only recently made significant increases in their rates to comply with the minimum levels currently set, the Commission promoted a compromise proposal that limited the increase for inflation to the period that has elapsed since 2004. This amounted to a 4.5 per cent increase in the rates and fairly minimal impact on the current rates set by member states.

Since most member states impose excise duties at rates higher than these minimums, the increase would only affect the beer rates in Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta and Spain and the intermediate products rates in Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Portugal and Spain. For example, the most serious impact on a particular member state would have been a € 0.002 (0.2 eurocent) increase on a half litre of beer by the time the transition periods ended in 2010. Nevertheless, the compromise proposal has still met some difficulties in obtaining universal support. Despite this, the
Commission still hopes that at some stage unanimity of Member states on the compromise proposal can be achieved (European Commission, Taxation and Customs Union, 2008).

Table 1. Minimum tax rates on alcoholic beverages in EU and tax rates on alcoholic beverages in Sweden according to beverage categories in July 2008, euros per litre of pure alcohol.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product category</th>
<th>EU minimum tax rate</th>
<th>Tax rates in Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>18.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate products (e.g. fortified wines such as port wines, sherry etc. up to 22° alcohol)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>27.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethyl alcohol and spirits drinks</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>54.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Calculations are based on the following alcohol contents for wine, beer and intermediate products: beer 5% alcohol by volume, wine 11% alcohol by volume, intermediate products 18% alcohol by volume

Source: Directive 92/84/EEC; CEPS, 2008

Alcohol advertising

Even though the ECJ has concluded that advertising acts as an encouragement to consumption (see for example C-262/02), common rules or even guidelines have been hard to achieve on an EU level when it comes to the marketing and advertising of alcoholic beverages. A report from the ELSA project with the aim of assessing and reporting on the enforcement of national laws and self-regulation on the advertising and marketing of alcoholic beverages in EU-Member States, applicant countries and Norway, has called for harmonised European advertising rules and concludes that the European rules on alcohol advertising are not sufficient to protect young people (STAP, 2007; see also Anderson, 2007).

The discussion on alcohol advertising has so far mostly focused on self-regulation of the industry. Alcohol advertising is today regulated differently depending on the country, forum, type of activity and the sort of beverage. One aim for the Commission is therefore to reach agreement with stakeholders on codes of commercial communication implemented at national and EU levels.

However, one of the areas that is regulated within the EU is cross-border television advertising. The Television Without Frontiers Directive (Directive 89/552/EEC) was adopted in 1989 and then revised in 1997. According to Article 15 of the Directive, the promotion of alcoholic beverages is permitted under certain conditions: it may not be aimed specifically at minors or, in particular, depict minors consuming these beverages; it shall not link the consumption of alcohol to enhanced physical performance or to driving; it shall not create the impression that the consumption of alcohol contributes...
towards social or sexual success; it shall not claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities or that it is a stimulant, a sedative or a means of resolving personal conflicts; it shall not encourage immoderate consumption of alcohol or present abstinence or moderation in a negative light; it shall not place emphasis on high alcoholic content as being a positive quality of the beverages. The article on alcohol advertising restrictions is implemented in each EU country largely through the self-regulatory bodies dealing with advertising. Directive 2007/65/EC amends the Television without Frontiers Directive and renames it “Audiovisual Media Services Directive” (AVMSD). The amending directive entered into force on 19 December 2007 and will be fully applicable by the end of 2009. However, the AVMSD offers no new wording about alcohol, but states only that “audiovisual commercial communications for alcoholic beverages shall not be aimed specifically at minors and shall not encourage immoderate consumption of such beverages”.

In Council Recommendation 2001/458/EC the member states were encouraged to cooperate with the producers and the retailers of alcoholic beverages and relevant NGOs to establish effective mechanism in the fields of promotion, marketing and retailing. The documents demonstrate a notion at EU level that especially young persons should be protected from exposure to alcohol advertising (Back, 2008).

**Summing up**

Within certain limits there is an increasing profile for alcohol in EU in the period after 1999; for instance the establishment of SANCO, several case verdicts prioritising health over trade concerns, the Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol by young people, the adoption of an EU Alcohol Strategy, and an increased understanding for restrictive measures based on hard law. At the same time we see a reinvigoration of Swedish alcohol policy (including public support for it) in the same period. After an initial period of extensive change, Sweden has been working within the EU to give the public health consequences of actions affecting the alcohol market a higher priority, a process that, among other things, has included the ECAS project and alcohol policy initiatives during the Swedish Presidency.

The survey of recent literature on alcohol policy shows that the field is rather undertheorized when it comes to the EU connection. One of the contributions with this dissertation is therefore to add a more theoretical dimension to alcohol policy research, by adding the understanding of a two-way process of Europeanization to the alcohol policy development. At the same time, alcohol policy as a research field is an interesting area for the Europeanization debate, offering new insights when it comes to soft-law development and studies of process-tracing.
SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

The EU membership of Finland and Sweden and the association of Norway have resulted in decisive changes in national alcohol policy, but also brought up the possibility of influencing the other EU countries when it comes to alcohol. The four articles included in this dissertation illustrate different areas that are politically and/or legally interesting in Swedish and EU alcohol political development. Article IV also includes the other Nordic countries with retail monopolies on alcoholic beverages as a comparison. The specific topics have been chosen to analyze both bottom-up and top-down processes, negative, positive and framing integration. In the following section I will briefly describe the different articles included in the dissertation in terms of their general aim, methods and results.

Article I

Article I analyzes how the Swedish government’s actions on the traveller’s allowances issue can be understood. The traveller’s allowances question is one of the issues that has been discussed the most and that has had the biggest impact on Swedish alcohol policymaking. However, on the EU level, the traveller’s allowances were an issue long before Sweden’s accession. Researchers were already writing in the 1980s about alcohol taxes on the EU level (Sulkunen, 1982) and how the high allowances were a conscious way of forcing down taxes (Tigerstedt, 1990). As shown earlier, common alcohol taxes, even on a minimum level, is one of the hardest questions to solve on the EU level, due to the need for unanimous decisions on taxes.

Sweden had to abandon low traveller’s allowances and gradually adopt the considerably higher European levels by January 1, 2004. This represents a classical conflict between market forces and public health principles where the latter have had to fall back. Theoretically it is also the history of top-down mechanisms and negative integration. By analyzing this case one can understand the major changes that have occurred in Swedish alcohol policy since the mid-1990s. Different narratives from interviews, official documents, and news articles are used to illuminate the alcohol policy development in Sweden and the relations to the EU. The article finds that there are mainly five narratives present when trying to explain the development of the traveller’s allowances question: the Misinterpretation Explanation, the Dou-
The changes in Swedish alcohol policy have mainly been described by researchers and politicians in terms of a Swedish implementation of EU rules. The European Comparative Alcohol Study (ECAS), however, shows the complexity of Europeanization and can function as an example of the possibilities for the reverse influence. The project was an initiative from the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and was presented as a comparative study that could serve as a basis for further discussions about common measures in European alcohol policy. The article analyzes how ECAS has been perceived and politically used nationally and on an EU level.

Theoretically the article is based on Knill and Lehmkühl’s (1999) three mechanisms of Europeanization: negative integration, positive integration, and framing integration. The article argues that frames or framing are a core concept when analyzing changes in how different policy areas are talked about. Different actors have made different claims in efforts to define and categorize alcohol on an EU level, formulating different views on what is considered to be a problem, what the causes are, and what solutions are considered to be legitimate and desirable. The article lays out the two major frames on alcohol and suggests that the ECAS study can be interpreted as an example of an Europeanization process where the information and pressure for change has gone from the bottom up rather than the top down. Although the ‘negative integration’ in the alcohol field has been considerable in the case of the Nordic states, the case of ECAS illustrates a bottom-up version of Knill & Lehmkühl’s framing integration, which in the long term might involve a change of preferences and strategies at an EU level. Finally, the article argues that ECAS has been quite influential within the research community and within the public health frame, but the impact within other frames has been more or less limited to the slow process of moulding public opinion.
icy decisions have been transferred from a national to an international level. Policy-makers have to a greater extent been forced to take into account European legal obligations and other policies dealing with alcohol as an economic commodity. This development has led to different actors making different claims in efforts to define and categorize alcohol when it comes to what is considered to be a problem, what the causes are, and what solutions are considered to be legitimate and desirable at the EU level. In the battle over how alcohol should be defined and the struggle to get a shift in balance from market to public health, Sweden has tried to put a more public health-based view on alcohol on the EU agenda.

Despite the cultural and ideological diversity of the Member States when it comes to alcohol, several alcohol-related initiatives have been taken recently at the EU level. The purpose of the article is to analyze the development of two alcohol policy initiatives: the Council Recommendation of 5 June 2001 on the drinking of alcohol by young people, and the invitation from the Council to the Commission to develop a Community Alcohol Strategy, both adopted during the Swedish Presidency in 2001. The article shows that policy-making on youth has always been an easy target and although several countries reported changes in their legislation concerning alcohol and young people, it is the Alcohol strategy that has been the more controversial of the two initiatives. The Council Recommendation on youth had also a much more limited scope, with a smoother process in both the decision-making process and the implementation of the recommendations. The Alcohol strategy, on the other hand, became the first policy document on alcohol on the EU level, and also the first recognition of alcohol’s key role not only in public health but also in economic development. Drawing from Héritier’s work on escaping deadlock, it is argued that EU decisions on alcohol policy were made possible by using four strategies: Priority, Anchorage, Lowest common denominator and Baby steps. In cases of weak EU supranational competence, the possibilities to escape deadlock differ somewhat from cases of strong legislative competence, and the strategies of Priority and Anchorage seems to be of particular importance for questions based on soft law decision-making.

Article IV

The growth of the EU internal market has made it more difficult to maintain effective national regulation in the public health area. The EEA agreement and EU membership resulted in the abolition of all of the monopolies on alcohol except at the retail level in the Nordic countries. The article examines how the alcohol retail monopolies in Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands have developed and reacted to national and international pressures on their activities from the mid-1990s to 2006. The article
also analyzes what effects the changing surroundings of the Nordic alcohol monopolies have had on the monopolies’ present tasks, positions and political aims. The material analysed includes annual reports of the Nordic alcohol monopolies, their web pages, reports and brochures, and laws and regulations that pertain to the monopolies and interviews with key informants.

The article shows that the monopolies have worked purposefully to make themselves popular among the population, with an increased focus on customer service. The trend has more and more gone from “To sell or not to sell” to “How to sell”, and from having a policy that should be as restrictive as possible to putting a focus on how the transaction can be as pleasant as possible. These changes are based upon both international pressures and changes in perspective within politics in general, where a slow transition from a collectivist solidarity perspective to a more individualistic lifestyle perspective can be discerned.

The article also concludes that Sweden and Finland are the countries that have had to adapt the most to European legislation when it comes to the alcohol policy area. Norway has in many respects the same development as Finland and Sweden, but has not been exposed in the same way to international pressures, mostly because of the lower traveller’s allowances. Contrary to the dividing lines of EU membership, the Swedish and Norwegian monopolies are those that hold onto the social policy arguments the most, although the social control aspect seems to have increased in importance in all the countries. Of all the Nordic monopolies, Systembolaget has most actively operated as an alcohol policy actor, resulting in a particularly strong political support for the monopoly in Sweden. Sweden is also the country that has had the strongest commitment to legitimizing its policy internationally.
CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the beginning of this introductory chapter, the aim of this dissertation is to analyze the Europeanization of the Swedish alcohol policy area from 1995-2006. The following research questions were also put forward: How has alcohol policy developed on the national and the EU level during this period? What are the Swedish alcohol policy initiatives on the EU level? What does the interplay between Swedish and European policy processes look like? Of interest for this dissertation is also how the Swedish view on alcohol policy has been received on EU level. This final section deals with these questions.

The theoretical framework in this dissertation is based on the concept of Europeanization. Europeanization is assumed to be a process in progress, and the focus is to analyze what this process looks like and what structures are involved in the process. Europeanization is also defined as a two-way process, an interaction between the nation state and the EU, where states partly influence the European level and partly are steered by it. Europeanization is thereby the gradual development of a political process with an increased interaction between a national political process and a European one. Europeanization is also a reorientation of both talk and behaviour as a result of both socialization and more rational calculation (Radaelli, 2004). The concept of Europeanization is elucidated by the methodological and theoretical tools of narrative analysis, framing, and new modes of governance through soft law. Focusing on aspects of subtle processes, and the interplay between hard law and soft law in an area characterized by moments of inertia, this dissertation contributes to an underresearched area in Europeanization studies. The general research problem thus becomes how to understand change in policy areas that go beyond the national context.

Alcohol policy development in Sweden

Swedish alcohol policy is usually discussed together with the other Nordic countries, characterized by a similar historical development with similar ideas and discussions of alcohol policy. However, as shown in Article IV, Finland, Norway and Sweden have taken slightly different approaches to the challenges to their alcohol policies in the 1990s and 2000s. While the Swedish and the Norwegian monopolies are those that have held on to the social
policy arguments the most, Sweden has been the country that has had the strongest commitment to legitimizing its policy internationally.

This dissertation shows how Sweden joined the EU with the initial expectation that Swedish alcohol policy as a whole could be preserved. However, Sweden has instead to a considerable extent harmonized with the other EU countries when it comes both to policy development and to consumption levels. The traveller’s allowances have been raised, most of the monopolies have been abolished and alcohol taxes have been somewhat lowered as an adaptation to EU regulations. This shows that the economic incentives and the conflict between the EU inner market and traditional Swedish welfare- and public health policy were greater than expected. As shown in Article I, in the negotiations about the traveller’s allowances the result of these conflicts was consciously or unconsciously underestimated. Furthermore, in a Nordic perspective, Sweden and Finland are the countries that have had to adapt the most to European legislation when it comes to the alcohol policy area. Also, as discussed in Article IV, the accession to the European market opened up footholds for national market forces to challenge the prevailing alcohol structure, for instance in the ECJ.

In conjunction with these external pressures the national public support for restrictive alcohol policy measures are an important part of the development. Swedish public opinion on alcohol controls moved fairly strongly against restrictions in the mid-to late 1990s, but has lately swung back. However, as shown in Article IV, the support for restrictive alcohol political measures such as the retail monopoly is premised on its being a service oriented monopoly, with acceptable opening hours and a good assortment. The future of the Swedish retail monopoly is thereby in the hands of Swedish public opinion rather than the ECJ. The more secure legal status of the retail monopolies vis-à-vis the EU and the EEA, and the evidence of their strength as alcohol political tools can be connected to the recent more optimistic narrative described in Article I.

However, the possibilities for and the political focus in Sweden on restrictive measures when it comes to alcohol have diminished considerably. These changes are based upon both international pressures and changes in perspective within national politics in general. Alcohol policy today is more focused on preventive work on local level, and on drinking by special groups such as children and adolescents and pregnant women rather than on drinking by the general public. There is still a willingness to argue that alcohol creates social and health problems, but the possibilities and the political will to use restrictive measures have diminished considerably. These changes are a manifestation of adaptations to the EU but also of changing views in public opinion.

The alcohol policy development in Sweden is easily described as a top-down implementation of EU regulation in line with the negative-integration view on Europeanization. The pressure for national adaptation has brought the conflict between different interests to the fore, and a clear juridification
of previously national political questions. Previous research on alcohol policy has covered this development rather thoroughly until the end of the 1990s, but more in line with adaptation and impact studies. This study contributes to the last few years’ more general development of national alcohol policy making, and Swedish attempts to put alcohol policy on the international agenda.

However, this study also supports previous studies indicating that a liberalization trend of alcohol policy was ongoing long before the formal EU membership (Kühlhorn, 1998; Holder et al., 1998; Abrahamson, 1999; Olson et al., 2000). These arguments are in line with what researchers call national resonance for change (Radaelli, 2003; Mörh, 2004). The impact of the EU public policy is thereby contingent on whether a country is already involved in a process of reform or not. The rules that are decided within the EU can in this way strengthen and accelerate an already ongoing process and give national politicians support in reform proposals and efforts at political change (Mörth, 2003).

Alcohol policy development on the EU level

The EU above all is an economic entity concerned with free trade and in particular the free movement of goods, capital, people and services. Alcohol is in this context of immense interest because it both relates to the fundamentals of the European Community and its inner market, but also to the latest soft law development, and increased work among the member states with alcohol as a health question. Alcohol is thereby one of the public health-related commodities where the dividing line between social considerations and market issues is especially apparent. It is also a question that exemplifies the cultural differences among the member states.

The policy development on the EU level can partly be ascribed to the increased competence and interest in health questions in the wake of the Amsterdam Treaty, but also to the considerable harmonization trends between the EU member states when it comes to alcohol consumption. One of the main results from the ECAS project was the description of a “homogenisation” in drinking patterns, consumption levels, and beverage preferences among the EU15 countries (Leifman 2002; Simpura et al. 2002). Although the total consumption generally has decreased in the Mediterranean countries, there has been an increase in binge drinking, especially among youth. This has increased the incentive to work with alcohol questions, both nationally and on the EU level, from a social and health perspective. Southern European countries have thereby moved somewhat closer to Nordic positions, particularly on such dimensions as drinking driving controls, and youth binge drinking. This partial redefinition of alcohol issues includes the introduction of several alcohol policy decisions on the EU level following
this line of argument. As analyzed in Article III, among the initiatives are the Council Recommendation of 5 June 2001 on the drinking of alcohol by young people, and the invitation from the Council to the Commission to develop a Community Alcohol Strategy. The resulting Commission Communication on an alcohol strategy that was approved in October 2006, and the establishment of a European Alcohol and Health Forum with the objective of providing a common platform for all interested stakeholders at the EU level are important steps in the alcohol political development on the EU level.

However, during the period analysed hard law decision-making supporting a public health view on alcohol has been difficult, for example an increase of the minimum rates of excise duty on alcoholic drinks or common rules on the marketing and advertising of alcoholic beverages. Nevertheless, that the economic and monetary committee of the European Parliament in November 2008 recommended a halving of the traveller’s allowances indicates that a restrictive approach to alcohol, even in hard law questions, is not alien to the other member states. During 2008 we also see an increased interest for alcohol marketing questions on the EU level. Furthermore, recent research indicate that the ECJ is prepared to prioritise health over trade concerns, providing the main principles concerning subsidiarity, discrimination, proportionality and necessity are met.

This study supports that there is a process of reframing of alcohol under way on the EU level, with an increased focus on alcohol as a social and health question. As previously stated, framing is an important part of the Europeanization process, since particular frames legitimate certain decisions and activate certain questions, actors and type of knowledge. In this sense, framing is the power to define and conceptualize a question and thus determine the decision making. There seems to be a two-way process between the development of new frames and the increased national resonance in the general populations of the member states when it comes to common initiatives on the EU level.

However, due to the complexity of alcohol as a commodity, most decision-making on alcohol policy on the EU level is based on the so-called new modes of governance. Relying on soft law leaves the effective policy choice to each individual member state. As shown in Article III, research and monitoring is one of the mechanisms used to get reluctant member states to adopt a common view on areas not earlier considered important.
What are, and how can we understand, the Swedish alcohol policy initiatives on the EU level?

As previously argued, the negative integration process of Swedish alcohol policy led to considerable changes on the national level. These changes have led to an increasingly articulated need of working proactively and putting alcohol on the agenda on an international level.

This study has above all focused on three initiatives on the EU level with Swedish origin: the ECAS project, the Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol by young people, and the Alcohol Strategy. Part of the policy development could also be argued to be the joint Nordic declaration of all the Nordic Public Health ministers in October 2004, and the Swedish retail monopoly’s advertisements, with the aim of influencing alcohol policy making at an EU-level.

ECAS was at the beginning a political initiative within the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, but became relatively soon a research-based project, falling in line with a long tradition of research-induced alcohol policy. The political purposes for a comparative alcohol study included arguments about protecting national policies, about educating less knowledgeable states and about framing alcohol issues in a Swedish style at the EU level. The history of Swedish alcohol policy shows that research-based policy has been an important tradition, something that in some aspects has changed with EU membership. On EU level experts from different stakeholders are considered to have an equal part in the discussion. Both the social aspects groups and the NGOs are therefore considered to be legitimate stakeholders in EU policy making. ECAS provided support for a public health frame on alcohol on the EU level, a framing which mostly appealed to actors within that field.

During the Swedish Presidency in 2001, two important policy decisions were taken. Furthermore, Swedish authorities have tried to influence the EU level by putting alcohol on the agenda, and offered pressure, economic support and manpower to make sure that alcohol as a public health question has become and been kept as a prioritized question. As shown in the analysis of these initiatives in Article III, the strategies of Priority and Anchorage seems to be of particular importance for questions based on soft law decision-making.

What has the interplay between Swedish and European policy processes looked like?

The intensified work on social questions on the EU level has been described as the interplay between negative and positive integration. While the nega-
tive integration is about the deregulating effect the inner market has on the member states, positive integration is realized through new common rules on the EU level. What we have seen so far, in the case of alcohol policy, is a rather fast hard law implementation of EU regulations, and a slower processes of positive integration on EU level based on soft law and a re-framing of alcohol as a commodity. Although the ECI has supported both the Swedish retail monopoly and the Swedish right to have different tax levels on wine and beer, the main pillars of Swedish alcohol policy, such as the traveller’s allowances and monopolies, illustrate a top-down process based on market considerations rather than health. In contrast, alcohol questions connected to the voluntary intergovernmental work with public health focus has gone in another direction, with common agreements about BAC-levels, priority on youth drinking and the need for comparative research. The creation of new policy documents on the EU level and the rise of new actors on both the national and the EU level have been of special importance for this process. However, the fact that most member states so far have been reluctant to transfer formal decision making to the EU in the welfare policy area is one of the reasons that the positive integration so far lags behind (Blomqvist, 2003). Nevertheless, the expression ‘transition period’ has been used in earlier research when discussing Swedish alcohol policy development (see for example Abrahamson, 1999), but the period analyzed in this study – and especially the last few years - could indeed be seen as a political turning-point when it comes to alcohol policy, and an ending of a period of rather pessimistic views about the possibilities of member state influence of EU policy making.

How has the Swedish view on alcohol policy been received on the EU level?

Many studies within the Europeanization literature end up in a discussion about causality, based on a positivistic view of science and their results and the possibilities to analyze a process directed by rational actors. This study argues that political processes are more complicated than that. What is perceived as rational behaviour by actors is contextual and based on the different frames and narratives surrounding a question. Europeanization is not something static with clear and frozen variables, but a process changing during the time of investigation. This makes is naturally more difficult to analyse, but also more challenging. The focus in this study is therefore not on impact or causality discussions, but rather on illustrating probable directions.

This study shows that there are signs of a change in climate in the EU, in part reflecting Nordic-driven initiatives during the last few years (for example Council recommendation 2001/458/EC, Council Conclusion 2001/C
What we see is the emergence of a European alcohol policy as a public health-oriented process, made possible through a new focus on the EU level, with increased cooperation between member states and a trend toward harmonization of policy and frames. As discussed in Article II, the Swedish and Finnish membership brought a Nordic view on alcohol policy to the European Union. Furthermore, it is shown that Swedish initiatives like ECAS and the Alcohol Strategy can be understood as examples of a successful way of putting the alcohol as a public health question on the EU agenda. It is also suggested that the ECAS study can be interpreted as an example of an Europeanization process where the information and pressure for change has gone from the bottom up rather than the top down. While the effects of EU membership in the alcohol field have been considerable for the Nordic states, the case of ECAS illustrates how domestic actors are part of the altering of beliefs and expectations of other Member states. In the longer term this might bring about a change of preferences and strategies at an EU level. New knowledge provides a basis to start to redefine the framing and policy around a problem. The timeframe of the inception of ECAS played an important part, as the suggestion of a comparative and comprehensive study of alcohol within the Member states was presented when alcohol was high on the EU agenda. The results give us an indication that it is possible to change views within the EU, although changing frames is always a long process where results are not seen right away.

However, it seems that Swedish politicians and civil servants have adopted a new more pragmatic view on alcohol policy, combined with an increased understanding of the frames in which it is possible to work at the EU level. As shown in Article III, it is by starting with decision-making in areas where little political resistance is met and framing the issue in terms of irrefutable claims that the process can develop. This means that where Sweden has been able to influence EU alcohol policy has been in areas where consensus easily could be developed or already existed. Though victories so far are equivocal, here again, there is some recognition that Sweden has made a difference in alcohol policy in the EU. But as Trubek et al. (2005: 20) point out,

“for constructivists, policy changes result from transformative processes such as norm diffusion, social learning, and persuasion that are all time-dependent and gradual. In this sense it is understandable that the effects of soft forms of governance are not discernable in the short or even medium term, because it takes a considerable amount of time for constitutive effects or a ‘norms cascade’ to take place”.

The understanding of the different frames, and their different possibilities for decision making, is therefore of great importance. As shown in Article I, the view of the EU within the political sphere is of great importance for how a
question is handled both on a national and on an EU level. How a process is talked about affects the handling of the issue. Narratives can in this way be used to understand the Swedish relation to the EU, since they reflect different actors’ views on the EU cooperation and its development. Furthermore, the understanding of the EU affects also the possibilities for future work and development. Article I also shows that the different narratives have developed over time, which indicates, although retrospectively, that there is a learning process going on among Swedish politicians and civil servants on the functioning of EU policy processes.
FUTURE RESEARCH

In an international and globalized world, the market as a governing factor has increasingly extended beyond the national borders. Alcohol policy is therefore no longer a national competence per se. However, the most important areas for the conflict between trade liberalization and alcohol control policies are outside Europe. Global and regional trade agreements have the possibility to weaken national alcohol controls, and there are fears of new agreements on services and investment might foreclose future tightening of alcohol policy (Grieshaber-Otto & Schacter, 2002). The EU, the WHO and WTO are therefore probably the most important arenas for the development of alcohol policy and policies affecting alcohol in the future. Future research on Europeanization should therefore expand its focus to include EU cooperation with other organizations and what these processes look like. In the case of alcohol, the cooperation between the WHO and EU should be of interest, since it is mainly a limited faction of people working within the two organizations but at the moment with different strategies, goals, and action plans for the different organizations. The WHO and the EU differ from each other mainly because the EU has regulative power, but it would be interesting to see how, for example, research on epistemic communities could elucidate this development. In studies of global governance, epistemic communities are transnational networks of knowledge-based experts who define for decision-makers what the problems they face are, and what they should do about them.

Health issues have been moving up to the European political agenda. This study has focused on some of the actors in this process, above all the Swedish authorities, the Commission, and the ECJ. However, the question remains on who takes responsibility and lead in the future. A more in-depth analysis of the responsibility division on EU level, including the increased interest and influence from other actors in the process, could elucidate this development. What we see is a growth of organizing when it comes to alcohol policy, both on the alcohol industry side with the so-called social aspects groups and on the other side, NGOs with public health interests. Both the social aspects groups and the NGOs are considered to be legitimate stakeholders in EU policy making, and through networking and lobbying they try to affect alcohol policy development in diverging areas such as trade, taxation, food safety, consumer protection, market access, and general public health policies. The revisions of the Alcohol Strategy resulted in severe criticism.
against the alcohol industries’ involvement and lobbying for amendments, both from Health Commissioner Kyprianou and from the NGOs. The increased involvement of interest organizations in the policy process on EU level deserves some further attention in the future.

Different member states’ views on public health questions are usually based on their different welfare systems. Nevertheless, different public health related areas are treated with varying success and with different regulatory bases on EU level. This could contribute to Europeanization debate with a special focus on ‘norm building’ and how different attitudes affect the framing of commodities with public health implications, such as tobacco, pharmaceuticals, and gambling.

Avhandlingen utgår ifrån litteraturen kring europeisering med inriktning på samspelet mellan nationalstaten och EU. En utgångspunkt är att europeiseringsprocesser är pågående processer och fokus är därmed på att analysera hur dessa processer ser ut och vilka strukturer som är inblandade. Avhandlingen studerar både formella och informella förändringar, dvs. både förändringar i lagar och regler och förändringar i hur alkohol uppfattas politiskt, både i Sverige och inom EU. De formella och informella nivåerna ses som sammanlänkande, där synen på alkohol och hur problem och lösningar ser ut påverkar den formella nivån. För att analysera europeiserings processer används olika teoretiska och metodologiska begrepp som inramning, narrativ analys och normgivning genom mjuk lagstiftning.

Avhandlingen består av ett introduktionskapitel, fyra artiklar samt ett appendi. Artikel I analyserar olika tolkningar av den svenska regeringens agerande i alkoholinförselfrågan där olika narrativ används för att belysa den alkoholpolitiska utvecklingen i Sverige samt landets relation till EU. Artikel II och III analyserar hur de svenska myndigheterna, först genom forskning och senare genom formellt beslutsfattande under det svenska ordförandeskapet, har arbetat för att alkohol ska ses som en folkhälsofråga inom EU.

Slutligen studeras i Artikel IV samtliga nordiska detaljhandelsmonopol för alkohol i en komparativ analys över hur dessa har utvecklats och reagerat på nationella och internationella påtryckningar.

Avhandlingen visar att möjligheterna till och den politiska viljan att fokusera på restriktiva åtgärder när det gäller alkohol har minskat i Sverige. Detta grundar sig både på internationella påtryckningar och generella förändringar i perspektiv inom landet. Studien finner även stöd för att svenska myndigheter har influerat EU, genom att sätta alkohol på agendan och erbjuda påtryckningar och ekonomisk stöd för att försäkra sig om att alkohol som en
folkhälsofråga har blivit, och fortsätter att vara, en prioriterad fråga. Det växande intresset för alkohol som en hälsofråga inom EU har gjorts möjlig genom en utökad kompetens på området, ett ökat samarbete mellan medlemsstaterna och en harmoniseringsstrend vad gäller konsumtionsnivåer, policyutveckling och syn på alkohol.
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Chronology

1960
January: The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is established as an alternative for European states who were either unable to, or chose not to, join the then-European Economic Community. The EFTA Convention is signed by Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland and Austria. Later Finland and Iceland join. Today only Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein remain members of EFTA. The EFTA members, except for Switzerland, are also members of the European Economic Area (EEA).

1972
Sweden and European Community sign a free trade agreement. The agreement comes into force in 1973 and includes mostly industrial goods. Similar bilateral agreements between the other EFTA countries and EC are signed as well.

1977
Blacklists for identification of alcohol abusers at the Swedish retail monopoly are abolished. Those on these lists were forbidden to buy alcohol at the monopoly.

1982
Social Democratic government comes into power, remains in power until October 1991. The political decision is made to close the retail sales monopoly shops on Saturdays.
1984
The abolition of customs duty on industrial goods between Sweden and EC is now completely in effect. The EC and EFTA agree on extended cooperation.

1987
The Single European Act (SEA), the first major revision of the Treaty of Rome that formally established the single European market, is signed. Sweden expresses a wish to participate in the EC inner market.

1989
The EC and EFTA initiate dialogues about creating a European economic cooperation (EEA). The goal is to reach free movement for commodities, persons, services and capital and certain adjacent areas such as consumer protection, research and development and education.

1990
June: Formal negotiations about the EEA are initiated in Brussels. The Swedish government declares that the objective is a Swedish EC membership. A national action program to reduce alcohol consumption is presented.

1991
Sweden applies formally for EC membership. Systembolaget’s first self-service store opens in Filipstad. October: A conservative Swedish government comes into power until 1994. December: the Swedish government decides to appoint an alcohol commission with the assignment to present a strategy for future alcohol policy, with the aim to: "evaluate the present alcohol policy and draw up suggestions for a future strategy inter alia in an EC-perspective". The National Institute of Public Health is created.

1992
EC’s heads of state approve of the enlargement of new member states, of which Sweden is one of the candidates. May: Government bill 1991/92:170, with the aim to clarify the future adaptations of Swedish law. The bill states that the Swedish alcohol monopolies on import, wholesale and retail are non-discriminating. June: The European Commission informs Sweden that the monopolies for production, import, export and wholesale can be discriminating in their present design according to Article 37 of the Rome Treaty. July: Sweden applies for EU membership.
1993

February: Negotiations about Swedish EU membership is initiated under the guidance of the Minister for European Affairs Ulf Dinkelspiel. One of the results is a two-year exemption from EU’s general rules for private import of alcoholic beverages and tobacco. April: Sweden sends a position paper to the European Commission where it states that the alcohol monopolies are compatible with the stipulations of the Treaty of Rome, as they are neither distorting competition nor discriminating against nationals from other member states. June: The Commission rejects the Swedish opinion. November: The Maastricht Treaty enters into force. December: Letter from Commissioner van den Broek to Dinkelspiel. The European Commission takes for granted that Sweden will abolish its alcohol monopolies on import, export, wholesale and production. The Commission will not take measures against the retail monopoly, under present law and provided that no discrimination exists.

1994

January: The European Economic Area (EEA) comes into being, following an agreement between member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the European Community (EC), and all member states of the EU. It allows the EFTA countries to participate in the European single market without joining the EU. The government proposes in the government bill 1993/94:136 that all monopolies but the retail monopoly should be abolished. March: The negotiations about membership are completed. The result of the Alcohol Policy Commission report (SOU 1994:24) is that a managerial group for preventive work with alcohol and drugs is established under the guidance of the Public Health Institute. October: A Social Democratic government comes into power until 2006. November: The EU membership is approved by the Swedish people in a referendum (52.3 percent yes-votes, 46.8 percent no-votes and 0.9 percent blank-votes).

1995

January: Sweden joins the EU together with Finland and Austria. At the same time the Swedish EFTA membership ends. Sweden introduces a new alcohol law (SFS 1994:1738) which replaces the alcohol laws from 1977. The monopolies on alcohol export, import, manufacturing and distribution are abolished in accordance with government prop. 1993/94:136. Vin & Sprit AB’s monopoly is dismantled and Systembolaget now has 159 suppliers, instead of one. The responsibility for investigation and supervision of on-premise retail sales is transferred from the county administrative board to the municipalities. The licence obligation for medium-strong beer is abolished. The Swedish Competition Authority starts supervising the retail monopoly in respect of its non-discriminatory function. The mandate is defined in an agreement between the European Commission and the Swedish Gov-
ernment in 1993, and requires biennial reports to the Commission. Furthermore, any supplier who is dissatisfied with Systembolaget’s decisions may appeal to the Alcoholic Beverages Product Range Board (Alkoholsortimentsnämnden), which makes impartial reviews of the decisions made by Systembolaget with regard to what products are included in its assortment. June: National action plan for alcohol and drug preventive work is adopted for 1995-1999.

1996
The European Parliament and the Council adopted a program of community action on health promotion, information, education and training. A Commission working group on alcohol and health is established. The first renegotiations about the traveller’s allowances between Mario Monti from the Commission, Swedish Minister of Finance Erik Åsbrink, Swedish minister of Social Affairs Margot Wallström and EU ambassador Frank Belfrage. The result is that Sweden is able to continue to use the same quantitative restrictions until June 30, 2000, followed by a new review.

1997
January: OAS, the Government’s Independent Alcohol Cooperation Committee, a cooperation between the alcohol producers, restaurant associations and authorities like the police, Customs, and the National Institute of Public Health is initiated. January: Tax is reduced on strong beer by 39 percent to reduce the border trade with Denmark and to adapt the Swedish taxation on beer to the mandatory system of proportionality. Beer and wine are considered by the EU to be in the same product category and taxes within the category should be broadly proportional to alcohol content. Beer up to 2.8 percent alcohol by volume becomes tax-free. The European Court of Justice rules that Systembolaget’s retail monopoly is compatible with EU law (the Franzén ruling). The Swedish Consumer Ombudsman sues the magazine Gourmet for violation of the prohibition against alcohol advertising.

1998

1999
May: The Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty of the European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts, enters into force. July: Tax-free shopping of alcoholic beverages is abolished within the EU. March: The second round of renegotiations about
the traveller’s allowances starts with Commissioner Fritz Bolkestein, Swedish Minister of Finance Bosse Ringholm, and EU ambassador Gunnar Lund. Sweden accepts the same rules as Denmark and Finland, with exemptions until 31 December, 2003. November: the special wholesale trading permit conferring the right to import alcohol is abolished in accordance with the demands of the European Commission.

2000

January: Saturday opening of Systembolaget is trialled in six Swedish counties. Systembolaget starts a trial of e-commerce. The Government presents a national action plan to prevent alcohol related harm for the years 2001-2005 (prop 2000/01:20). July: the traveller’s allowances are increased to 1 litre of spirits, 3 litres of strong wine, 20 litres of wine and 24 litres of strong beer.

2001

January: Sweden holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The traveller’s allowances are increased to 1 litre of spirits, 6 litres of strong wine, 26 litres of wine and 32 litres of strong beer. A Commission Recommendation on the maximum permitted blood alcohol content for drivers of motorized vehicles (2001/115/EC) is agreed upon. February: A Swedish national action plan for 2001-2005 is adopted. The implementation of the plan on the national level is coordinated by a national steering committee, the Alcohol Committee. The parliament grants over 500 million Swedish crowns for the implementation of the plan. The OAS cooperation is discontinued. June: A Council recommendation (2001/458/EC) on the drinking of alcohol by young people, in particular children and adolescents is adopted and a Council conclusion on a community strategy to reduce alcohol related harm (2001/C175/01) is decided upon. July: All Systembolaget stores open on Saturdays. December: after getting a reasoned opinion from the Commission about proportional tax levels on beer and wine, Sweden lowers the excise duty rates for wine by 18.8 percent.

2002

January: The Swedish traveller’s allowances increase to 2 litres of spirits, 6 litres of strong wine, 26 litres of wine and 32 litres of strong beer. September: The European Parliament and the Council adopt a programme of community action in the field of public health for 2003-2008 (1786/2002/EC), including preparation and implementation of strategies and measures on lifestyle related health determinants, such as nutrition, tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.
2003

January: The Swedish traveller’s allowances increase to 5 litres of spirits, 6 litres of strong wine, 52 litres of wine and 64 litres of strong beer. February: The Swedish Market Court pronounces sentence in the so-called Gourmet-case. The verdict set a precedent which allowed printed media to advertise alcoholic beverages. May: changes in the alcohol law (SFS 2003:116) make it legal to advertise alcohol below 15 percentages by volume. June: a report on alcohol advertising is presented (SOU 2003:69). Irregularities in the purchase routines of Systembolaget are revealed. Systembolaget reports several shop managers and suppliers of alcohol for bribery and corruption. The employees were accused of having received payments for favouring selected brands of alcohol products in their product range. June: The Minister of Health Morgan Johansson, sends a letter to EU Health Commissioner David Byrne reminding him that it is two years since the EU decided to develop a common strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm.

2004

January: The Swedish exemption with regard to personal import quotas is abolished and the EU’s indicative values for private consumption come fully into force, that is 10 litres of spirits, 20 litres of strong wine, 90 litres of wine and 110 litres of strong beer. The Government decides to appoint a special investigator, Kent Härstedt, with the task of following the development of import and sale of alcohol, especially in the south of Sweden. February: the Swedish government sends a secondment to DG SANCO of a national expert that will assist the Commission in their work to compose an EU alcohol strategy. May: The EU enlargement: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia join. The Council adopts a follow-up conclusion on Council recommendation 2001/458/EC stating that special attention should be directed at young people when drafting the Community strategy. August: The Härstedt interim report suggests a tax reduction on spirits of 40 percent. October: The government decides that a special investigator will analyse the possibilities to introduce a requirement for an alcohol safety interlock device or other technical systems to prevent drink-driving in all new cars registered in Sweden (N 2004:16). October/November: a resolution of Nordic health ministers includes calling for the EU to halve the traveller’s allowance and to make the guidelines real limits.

2005

January: the new legislation on alcohol advertising from 2003 was complemented with tougher rules, introducing health warnings on all alcohol advertising in printed media, with a required relative size corresponding to those on cigarette packages. March: The Härstedt final report (SOU 2005:25) sug-
gests a tax reduction on wine and beer of 30 percent. The government bill "Measures against illegal handling of alcohol" (Prop. 2004/05:126) is presented to the parliament with suggestions of sharper legislation, an increase in the severity of the penalty on smuggling and funds for information measures. April: the European Commission adopts a Health and Consumer Protection Strategy and a proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision creating the Community Programme for Health and Consumer protection 2007-2013. The strategy and programme proposal bring together and extend the current EU Public Health Programme and the current programme in support of EU consumer policy. September: In the Swedish government report SOU 2005:72 it is suggested that new cars owned by companies should be equipped with an alcohol safety interlock device from 2008. November: New national action plans for alcohol and drug preventive work are put in place.

2006

June: The final report on alcohol safety interlock devices is presented (SOU 2006:72), suggesting that drink-drivers and persons with alcohol problems should be forced to install safety interlocks in their cars. The European Commission publishes their plans for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy with relation to the wine sector. The Commission’s plan aims to increase the competitiveness of EU wine producers, strengthen the reputation of EU wines, win back market share, balance supply and demand and simplify the rules, while preserving the best traditions of EU wine production and reinforcing the social and environmental fabric of rural areas. The total amount of annual subsidy for wine, 1.3 billion Euros, will not change, but the Commission proposes to spend more on building quality and less on storage of wine lakes and distillation of surplus wine into industrial alcohol. October: A new Conservative government is elected in Sweden. An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm is adopted for the period 2007-2012. An EU Alcohol and Health Forum is also decided upon with the purpose of following the alcohol preventive work in all member states every year. November: The European Court rules that to avoid paying alcohol taxes in their own country, individuals must personally transport alcoholic beverages from one member state to the other (the Joustra ruling: C-5/05). This essentially stops importation by web ordering.

2007

June: The European Court rules that Sweden’s ban on remote sales of alcohol contravenes EU law, which means that alcohol can be ordered from other countries, e.g. online, but that Swedish alcohol taxes will still be payable (the Rosengren ruling: C-170/04). July: Swedish breweries announce that the majority of their members intend to introduce warning labels on their beer
cans during the autumn. October: The government restructures their policies on alcohol, drugs, doping and tobacco, since the Alcohol Committee and Mobilization Against Narcotics (MOB) that have been responsible for co-ordination and realization of national work will be discontinued at the end of the year. September: The government announces that an overhaul of the Swedish alcohol law from 1994 will be done. Responsible investigator is Anita Werner.

2008

January: The Alcohol Committee is closed and a majority of their work is taken over by the Public Health Institute. The alcohol and drug-related work is financed with 260 million Swedish crowns per year. July: It becomes legal for private persons to import by proxy alcoholic beverages for personal or family use from other member states under the condition that the person has reached the age of twenty and Swedish alcohol taxes are paid.

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