

# ***Transforming States: Continuity and Change in the Europeanisation of the Nordic Central Governments<sup>1</sup>***

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### **Introduction**

It has increasingly become common to think about the world as our world. Migration and media are two factors that have contributed to a change in people's way of imagining themselves (Appadurai 1996). According to Robertson, we have witnessed a "... compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson 1992, p 8). Robertson calls this globalisation, which is a concept that during the last decades has attracted social scientists and others to such an extent that one could ask if globalisation has become "... the cliché of our times" (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton 1999).

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According to Held et al. (1999), there are hyper-globalists that talk about a global age in politics, economy as well as culture, where transnational companies act on global markets, largely independent from those obsolete dinosaurs called states (Ohmae 1995). Castells also describes an evolving network society where "... the new economy is organised around global networks of capital, management, and information, whose access to technological know-how is at the roots of productivity and competition" (1996, p 471). As an alternative to hyperglobalists and skeptics, Held et al. (1999) discusses a third perspective on globalisation – a thesis about transformation.

Globalisation is seen as a strong force of change, responsible for a massive shakeout of societies but it is not obvious at all where this process leads. Surely, states are changing but this change could mainly be looked upon as a transformation. In some respects, states tend to become even more important than before. Not as rational actors and rule makers (in the sense of inter-governmentalists), but as rule followers in a world penetrated by an expanding amount of organised governance. Globalisation consists of contradictory forces, and the role of states in this (at least partly) new world may not be obvious at all.

In some respects, the discussion about globalisation is rather poor in capturing the spirit of what is going on. What we see is an evolving rule-making that is both transnational and organised, and involves states, international governmental and non-governmental organisations, but also standardisation organisations, private companies, the scientific community and others. Some of these regulators are states or connected to states, but some are more loosely connected or even not connected at all. Some parts of the evolving transnational governance are private. The world is full of organisations that produce rules for others – be they states, companies or individuals – to follow (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000).

We also see a world-system that supports and legitimises a system with states (Meyer m fl 1997, Boli and Thomas 1999). The idea to become a state and to act as one is more popular than ever. Also states are regulated by global rules and ideas. There are plenty of rules that are exogenous to each specific society that makes it relatively easy to construct oneself as a state. In this way, we may also explain how it is possible that states all around the world in some aspects tend to be surprisingly similar. They construct themselves according to rules and ideas that are institutionalised on the world level. The argument needs not to be a deterministic one. As Boli and Thomas argued, the rule following of states could be characterised by a considerable degree of creativity and innovativeness:

«World culture defines modern actors not as cultural dopes but as creative innovators who are the one and only source of change, adaptation, and restructuring in response to situational contingencies» (Boli and Thomas 1999:4).

States are part of a transnational rule making where also other organisations (companies, IGOs, INGOs, standards organisations etc) are important (compare Risse-Kappen 1995), but this does not make states less important. But it is necessary not to view them as actors with

exogenous preferences that they try to safeguard in negotiations with other countries. To «... bring transnational relations back in», does therefore not mean that states are excluded from the analysis (compare Evans 1995, Skocpol 1985), but it means that it is necessary to study states as embedded in a transnational and European context.

### **Europeanisation of states**

Regulation of modern societies is changing, and the European Union is one important actor in this process. And the significance of Europe could only be understood in this wider perspective. The implication of EU is, according to Mény et al. (1996), that the national political agendas tend to run into each other to become a common European. Hardly any policy area, it seems, could be excluded from the European integration process. There is a substantial literature on the European Union – both about what kind of political, economic and cultural community it is and may become, and also about the mechanisms of integration (see for example Bulmer and Burch 1998, Caporaso 1996, Caporaso, Cowles and Risse 1998, Eriksen and Fossum 2000, Hanf and Soetendorp 1998, Olsen 1997, Sverdrup 2000).

The driving forces in the integration process are according to neo-functionalists the European Organisations, mainly the European Commission but also the Court (Haas 1968). In this perspective integrative efforts in some areas may spillover to others, eventually creating a less state-centred Europe. Nation-states have in these discussions been portrayed as dysfunctional units: too big to solve some problems and too small to solve others. Questions have been posed if the states will crumble away in the cross-pressure between, on the one hand, forces in Brussels and, on the other hand, the increasingly important Europe of Regions?

Simultaneously, the other major tradition in the discussion about European integration – the liberal intergovernmentalism – claims that the states are as important as actors as before. States or coalitions among states are launched as the main explanations of critical changes (Milward 1992) and the European Union organisations are mainly seen as arenas or instrument of states. States are in this perspective perceived as rational actors that first balance the interests in their society to a national one, and then work to safeguard and protect this interest in negotiations with other states, sometimes referred to as a two-level game (Moravscik 1993, Putnam 1988). European integration is according to intergovernmentalists a result of negotiations between states with well-defined and pre-determined interests. Thus, there are heterogeneous ideas about the future of states to be picked up in this literature about European integration. And to some extent this is a similar discussion as the one about globalisation, in the way that the perspective on states is very simplistic.

This paper is about nation-states in the European north - Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden - and the impact of European integration on the administrations in these states. We are studying the response patterns or adaptation of the central administrative apparatus. The

theme of the paper is that states are transformed in this emerging European context. We do not believe that European integration makes work and activities in these states insignificant, but we believe that states, their administrations and their political life in general are transformed in this new European context. What we will try to do in the paper is to describe and make sense of the manner and extent to which the central administration has been transformed as a consequence of European integration.

We do not see any withdrawal of or “hollowing out” of states, as has been a frequent theme in the discussions about the future of the nation-state. States are neither totally disciplined by the demands from the EU, nor can they freely choose how to adapt. And states frequently are able to borrow ideas about “who to be”, “what to think” and “how to organise” in their European environment. Although their possibilities for manoeuvring are restricted, states have certain amount of leeway. European rules and ideas are important but they are interpreted and translated in a setting where national traditions and strategies have a role to play. And states are seldom coherent, but both the extent of and mechanisms of transformation is different in different parts of the state administrations.

Ambitions concerning European integration imply that there are distributors of both ideas and rules that may influence both the identities and activities of states. However these influences are not always homogeneous, and they could be quite ambiguous. Sometimes, it is not necessary at all to follow the rules and - if they have to be followed - there are often a wide range of alternative ways of translation or interpretation that may be used. As a consequence, the mixture between European rules and ideas and the national systems may look quite different in different states as well as in different parts of states. Traditions, strategies, systems of conflicts in a state may in some instances mould the “external” rules and ideas to the extent that the one may speak both about a nationalisation of Europe and an europeanisation of the nation-state.

In speaking about transformation, we wish to avoid both the idealistic (states may freely choose how to adapt) and the fatalistic notion (there is no choice whatsoever) about European integration. Transformation means both continuity and change. Adjustment impulses, which frequently arise, are interpreted and translated to make them compatible with national administrative traditions and political strategies (Chrisensen and Lægheid 2001). By using the concepts of interpretation and translation, we, on the one hand, try to catch the idea that we are dealing with wilful actors that strategically protect and safeguard their interests. On the other hand, it is true that these strategies and interests simultaneously develop in the same processes. The emerging transnational processes (where there are strong relations between officials in different countries) make it possible both to pro-actively work for national interests, but these are also processes where national interests are changed and even created.

In this paper, we will outline some mechanisms by which the states are transformed. First, we discuss the advent of a transnational administration where stable relationships develop, in the form of contact networks, participation rights and actual participation in a

number of EU-organisations. Second, we discuss tendencies towards segmentation, where some units remain more or less outside the influence of the EU, while others are strongly engaged and affected in their day-to-day activities. Third, we discuss the consequences and increased attempts in co-ordination, sometimes focused on a national interest and sometimes on a state interest. Fourth, we discuss multiplier effects, that is the overlap and interplay between the various relationships. And, fifthly, we will discuss why established forms of organisation emerge as relatively robust, in spite of the fact that comprehensive changes are taking place in the day-to-day administrative practice.

We will, thus, show how states are transformed, and we do this through an inductive, comparative and detailed study about the adaptation of the Nordic state administrations.<sup>2</sup> The Nordic area could be seen as a kind of pseudo-laboratory. On the one hand, there are many similarities between the countries – small, open and culturally relatively homogeneous - and it is reasonable to speak about a Nordic community (which also over the years has become quite organised). However, we also have in connection to the European Union distinct differences between the countries – we have one country that since long is a member of the European Union (Denmark); we have two relatively recent full members (Sweden and Finland) and we have one country with a “EU-light”- connection through the European Economic Agreement (which states that Norway has access to the internal market). The countries also differ in terms of administrative traditions as well as the strategies chosen in relation to the EU.

### **The patterns of europeanisation**

*The adaptation of the central administration in the Nordic countries have been studied along various dimensions of change: changes in the formal structure, administrative capacity and the distribution of functions; general embeddedness of EU; relations within the administration, with the EU, with Norden, with interest organisations and companies and with the political leadership as expressed in contact networks, forms of contact, participation, co-ordination and influence. In this section of the paper, we discuss the most important patterns in the processes of europeanisation. We argue that the adaptation patterns can be characterised as transnationalisation. At the same time, however, there are also clear elements of segmentation, multiplier effects and increased co-ordination. Moreover, the administrative structure within which this*

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<sup>2</sup> This study is based on a comparative survey undertaken in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden comprising all ministerial departments as well as departments in central agencies and directorates in 1998. A total of 1323 units answered the questionnaire and the response rate varied from 86 percent in Norway to 77 percent in Finland. The survey data had also been analysed together with more case-like studies about the consequences of European integration on specific sectors and organisations.

*adaptation has taken place is robust enough to allow change without being fundamentally changed itself.*

### **Transnationalisation**

Transnationalisation means that EU affects the administration to a significant degree and has a considerable effect on the majority of areas relevant to individual administrative units. At the same time, significantly stable relationships develop, in the form of contact networks, participation rights and actual participation in a number of EU-organisations. The Nordic countries' central administrations are not closed off to influence from Europe and it would certainly be a mistake to maintain that stability and the status quo characterise the development of their administrative structures. Transnational relations clearly extend beyond the intergovernmental relationships channelled through the Foreign Ministry, extending both to other ministries and further into the central administration to the directorates, central agencies and authorities.

There is no doubt that the pattern revealed demonstrates a significant degree of transnationalisation of the central administrative bodies in the Nordic countries. Links between the EU and Nordic administrations involve such European organisations as the European Commission and the experts and working groups who work under its auspices, Commitology-committees, the Council of Ministers with its subordinate working groups, and a number of other European organisations, such as the European Court, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, the Regional Committee, and the organisations of the EEA and EFTA. In addition there are other international organisations and standardisation organisations such as CEN, CENELEC and ETSI.

At the same time, many of the European and international relationships, which the administrative units are involved in, are characterised by weak and ambiguous political mandates and signals from the political leadership. Those who appear in the international arena frequently have a broad mandate and are able to exercise a significant degree of initiative. The guidelines they follow generally have their origins in their own organisation and in specialist and professional norms. This may increase the risk of a network developing comprising bureaucrats and experts, who may then mould the content of public policy without much control by popularly elected representatives. This is most likely to occur in those areas, which require considerable expertise and professional knowledge.

### **Segmentation**

Segmentation means that some parts of the state administration is affected by the EU, develop stable relationships and work with EU-matters in their everyday work, while others still have a more national orientation. The Nordic states are segmented in their EU-work. Even though most administrative units are significantly involved in transnational relations,

there are clear variations between the various parts of the administrative apparatus. While some units remain more or less outside the influence of the EU, others are strongly engaged and affected by the EU in their day-to-day activities. In the case of the ministries, this depends largely on their areas of responsibility, with agriculture and fishing, two of the EU's main areas of influence, most strongly affected by European co-operation. In general, activities associated with the EU internal market and the four freedoms are those where transnational relationships are most comprehensive.

The trend towards segmentation is also manifest in the strong interaction between different indicators of administrative adjustment. For example, if organisational adaptation has occurred in connection with the EU, then other kinds of adaptation are likely to have taken place as well. Changes made along one dimension are likely to be passed on to other dimensions of change. Thus, once major organisational adjustment has taken place, an organisation can be said to become entwined with the EU. This implies that while some organisations form their own specialised EU-units, establish collegial bodies for co-operation, undertake changes in the delegation of responsibility, employ more staff, use more resources for EU-training, have greater EU-skills, are more affected by the day-to-day activities of the EU and observe a greater influence of the EU within their field, other units are scarcely affected along the same dimensions. In turn, this implies that the various dimensions of EU-adjustment support and strengthen each other. The consequence of this is a dividing line in the administration between, on the one hand, "EU-administration" with high capacity and expertise, considerable time devoted to EU-matters and close fusion, and on the other hand a more nationally oriented administration, which has a more remote relationship to the EU along most dimensions.

The European Union creates in this way a new division of tasks within the central administration. As a result of the study, we were able to construct an EU-segment, comprising about 40% of the units in the central administration. These are units where the EU is largely involved in the unit's own administrative affairs and which simultaneously have contact with EU-organisations on a monthly basis or more frequently. Within this broad segment a core segment may be further isolated comprising 18 percent of units which are particularly affected and involved. These are engaged to a considerable degree, participating in monthly or more frequent meetings with the EU and devoting a considerable amount of their working time to EU-related matters. In such a situation, where certain parts of the administration are deeply involved in European matters while others have little contact with the EU, there is a danger that EU-related activity may lead to a fragmentation of the state administration. Certain parts of the central state apparatus have more contact with organisations in the EU than with the other parts of their own national administration.

### **Co-ordination**

It has been maintained that, particularly in smaller countries, increased integration in the EU creates a greater need for national co-ordination or the formulation of a national interest in

order to protect a country's interests in the EU – the need for "uniting along the Swedish line" (Jacobsson 1993). In discussions in European committees and work groups, administrators and politicians were (especially as new members) frequently asked "what Sweden thinks..." or "what Finland thinks...". And consequently they had to find out or even create national strategies and positions to an extent that they had never done before. Increased involvement in the EU has resulted in increased demands for co-ordination, and led to certain endeavours in this direction within the central administration (Kassim, Peters and Wright 2000).

One can speak about different forms of co-ordination. It can take place in the state administration, and here a distinction can be drawn between vertical co-ordination within an administrative area and horizontal co-ordination between ministries. Further, a distinction can be drawn between internal co-ordination within the state administration and national co-ordination, where also external interest organisations and companies are involved. It is obvious that EU-adaptation has resulted in the establishment of various forms of collegial co-ordination instruments more commonly known as special committees, co-ordinating committees, EU-offices, EU-committees, etc. There is a considerable degree of co-operation with regard to EU-matters, particularly vertical co-operation within the individual sectors. But there has also been an increase in horizontal co-ordination between sectors and national co-operation involving interest organisations and other affected parties in society. However, this co-ordination first and foremost occurs between representatives of the various agencies, and the political leadership is involved to only a small degree.

Our data suggest that the efforts to draw administrative units, politicians and interest organisations in society into a national co-ordination process are most advanced in Denmark, where it is easier to establish such a process as a matter of routine. In Finland, where the administration is primarily responsible for co-ordination, it is more difficult to characterise the results as *national* co-ordination. The same applies to Sweden, where co-ordination is primarily sectorally based, but where it also involves the political leadership more than in the other countries. In Norway, too, co-ordination is initially an administrative task, for example through the "position paper arrangement" (Sætereng 2001).

We have isolated a co-ordination segment in the central administration involving every sixth unit. These units agree that EU-matters have resulted in a need for increased co-ordination within or between sectors, and at the same time participate in monthly collegial co-ordinating bodies and have weekly contact with other state agencies in EU related matters. One interesting result is that many units in the co-ordination segment are not involved in the core segment (that is in the segment that is working the most with EU-matters). Thus, a considerable proportion of the units in the transnational administration does *not* play a central role in national co-ordinative activities. This raises the question of whether the various channels overlap and reinforce each other or whether they emerge as alternative or competing channels – something discussed in the following.



## Multiplier effects

While segmentation, and to some extent co-ordination primarily concern internal relationships within the state or between the state and the national interests of society, the multiplier thesis focuses on the interplay between these and non-national relationships and between the various non-national connections with a particular focus on relationships with the EU (Pedersen 2001a). Indeed, the stronger the overlap and interplay between the various external relationships, the more support for the multiplier hypothesis. Conversely, the more isolated and protected the EU-channel becomes, the less support there is for this thesis.

In this study the multiplier hypothesis has received support in a number of instances. The main pattern emerging is that units enjoying a close relationship with organisations within the EU, through high-level contact, a high degree of travel and extensive participation in EU bodies, are also largely involved with other international organisations and have well-developed connections with the other Nordic countries and with national interest organisations and companies. However, these are less integrated in the national co-ordinating activity and in their relations with the political leadership. A considerable number of units have close links with EU-organisations but without playing a central role in the state's co-ordinating activity or maintaining close connections with politicians. The multiplier thesis is partly supported, since there is some but not strong overlap among the units included in the core segment, co-ordinating segment and political segment. While there is a significant degree of integration between externally oriented relations, the links between the internal co-ordinating relationships in the state and connections to the political leadership are not as strong.

One interpretation is that there is a division of functions within the central administration's EU-related work, where some units are more externally oriented and are concerned with "up-stream activities" associated with influencing the decision-making process within the EU, while others are more internally oriented and primarily concerned with "down-stream activities" associated with the implementation and enforcement of EU-rules. The main picture, however, is that the different channels are supplementary, something which is expressed when companies and interest organisations choose a "bypass" strategy in addition to a "go-through" strategy in their EU related work.<sup>3</sup> The transnational administration is not independent of the national administration but rather forms a link between the state and society and their national, Nordic and European counterparts.

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<sup>3</sup> A "pass by"-strategy implies that companies and interest organisations do not work through the state administration, but try to safeguard their interests directly visavi the European organisations (or that they work together with their colleagues and competitors in European interest organisations). A "go through"-strategy implies that companies and interest organisations try to protect their interest in co-operation with the state administration and thus work through the state (Pedersen and Pedersen 2000).

## **Continuity and change**

The emergence of transnationalisation, segmentation, co-operation and multiplier effects is indicative of a comprehensive pattern of change. It is important; however, to emphasise that these adjustments have taken place within a relatively robust administration model in the Nordic countries. Increased integration in Europe has resulted in significant changes in informal structures, rules and in participation, contact and co-ordination arrangements, but this has not resulted in fundamental changes in the formal national arrangements. The national administrative apparatus in the respective countries has not been subjected to a radical structural reorganisation following increased integration in the EU. The Nordic countries continue to borrow models and ideas mainly from one another. There is also considerable leeway for influencing changes within the administration through national administrative policy and on the basis of local, internal agency-specific initiatives.

EU-matters have been absorbed into the existing forms of national administration. They are not concentrated in the Foreign Ministry but are normally handled by specialised ministries and their subordinate directorates and bodies. Even though the changes have been comprehensive, they have not caused any rift in the fundamental forms of organisation. The adjustment of the administrative apparatus is revealed as a combination of robustness and flexibility, and has succeeded in incorporating the new tasks and challenges into the existing organisational forms. Rather than cut the coat to suit the cloth and fine-tune the formal organisational structure to meet EU-requirements, the Nordic countries have relied on established, broad organisational forms that have proven flexible enough to allow fairly broad variations in administrative behaviour and action (Olsen 1997).

The adjustments have challenged and modified existing models, but these models have not been dismantled. The Swedish official position is that in relation to EU-matters the traditional dualistic administrative model remains firm. However, this study shows that in practice the process of Europeanisation has challenged it. The same applies to the Danish/Norwegian ministerial system of administration with a ministry/directorate model. The corporate forms of co-operation remain unscathed, even though these have also been supplemented and challenged. The same can be said about Nordic co-operation. Our material did not reveal any evidence of "decorporatisation" or of "reparliamentarianisation" of policy in EU-related matters, such as has been claimed in other areas of political activity in the Nordic countries (Pettersson 1998). This reinforces the claim that adaptation occurs by combining robustness and flexibility.

One may speculate on why established forms of organisation and the traditional administrative models emerge as robust, even though comprehensive changes are taking place in the day-to-day administrative practices in a significant part of administration. There is no doubt that this form permits large variations in practice, but the question is how we may regard the dynamics of the relationship between form and practice. Does

the form include "any form of practice" – so that both form and practice develop independently of each other - or do the formal arrangements place constraints upon which activities may be conducted within them, providing space for variations in practice within given limits? Our interpretation concurs with the latter possibility. The adaptation to Europe has to be considered in terms of both continuity and change.

### **Europeanisation: the main picture and some variations**

What have we learned, then, about the consequences of European integration? The first conclusion is that European Union has had profound influences. Towards the end of the 1990s, the central administrative apparatuses of the Nordic countries underwent considerable changes. Even if there are variations in the level and intensity of changes, the belief that European integration does not mean substantial changes in the national administrative structure and practice (Page and Wouters 1995) receives little support. Likewise the notion that yielding some sovereignty to the EU will result in the central administrative apparatus is having eroded responsibility and significance. Rather, the administration has acquired new functions and tasks and has been opened up to a wider setting. Central administrative bodies are key organisations in the EU-activities of the various countries, and new groups of European civil servants have emerged (Bergman and Damgaard 2000).

Secondly, europeanisation is to a large extent an administrative process. The interface with the political leadership is relatively undeveloped in EU-matters. Co-ordination is increasing but is dominated by the civil service. Civil servants have acquired a central place in the administration of the EU, while politicians and political organisations have become more passive. Generally, there are quite weak and ambiguous political mandates and signal from the politicians. Most of the affected administrative units had a reactive relationship with the EU.<sup>4</sup> We have described a transnational but reactive administration in respect of the EU and a passive political leadership in its relationship with the administration. The administration reacts to EU-initiatives and pursues these, but without any notable involvement by politicians. Sweden is an exception with more contacts between the administration and the political leadership. This may be explained both by the design of the co-ordination-system as well as the design of the general control system.<sup>5</sup>

Thirdly, changes are continuous. The adaptation of the central administration to the EU has not occurred solely in connection with changes in the forms of association but has subsequently continued in later years, gathering considerable momentum. The majority of the respondents consider that more major changes occurred in laws and regulations as a

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<sup>4</sup> In spite of the considerable contact with and intensive participation in Brussels, the level of conflict is low and influence in Brussels is limited. This applies particularly to the Council of Ministers, but also to the EU-Commission, where only one third of the units concerned stated that they had been successful in getting their viewpoint and aims accepted.

<sup>5</sup> Even if the Swedish and Finnish units have more contacts with the political leadership, this does not mean however that they know better than for instance the Danish units (with less contacts) what the minister wants.

consequence of the EU during the first four years following the changes in the form of association than in connection with the actual process of membership entry or association with the EEA. Nearly three out of four units stated that in 1998 they were more affected by the EU than four years previously. One indication of this is that travel abroad in connection with EU/EEA matters has increased considerably compared with the previous four years. The end result is increased transnationalisation.

The fourth point is that although European integration has had considerable consequences, this does not mean that the changes to which the administration has been subjected in recent years may be regarded solely as a reflection of this. They may also be traced back to traditions and routines as well as to an active administrative policy that is part of the Nordic governments' modernisation programmes for the public sector and also to more internally motivated processes in the individual departments and sectors (Lægreid and Pedersen 1999, Olsen 1992). Nevertheless, this study provides a basis for questioning the relative significance of an active national administration policy compared to the more pragmatic adaptation necessitated externally by closer integration in the EU. Our interpretation is that the significance of administrative policy for adaptation and change in the central administration should possibly be somewhat reduced in favour of the significance of the europeanisation of problems and solutions.

### **Variations between countries**

We have also revealed significant variations between countries, administrative levels and sectors. There are clear variations between these countries regarding the adaptation of the administration to the EU. One pattern that emerges repeatedly is that Norway is experiencing the least change, while Finland and Sweden are the countries where EU-related adaptation of the central administration is greatest. Denmark is in an intermediate position.

The *Norwegian* administration is especially affected by the EU through the EEA-agreement, particularly with respect to the internal market. A rapid implementation of EEA-rules occurred. Nevertheless, as expected, adjustment to the EU has been weaker than in Sweden and Finland. The Norwegian central administration is not excluded from Europe, but its administration is less involved in European co-operation. The increase in the degree to which the EU has exerted its influence is far less than in the new member countries, and much less time is devoted to EU-matters. Participation and contact networks with EU-organisations are far less developed. This applies to the Commission-system, and particularly to the Council-system. Norwegian bureaucrats travel far less frequently to Brussels than their colleagues from the other Nordic countries. The impression that Norway compensates for non-membership of the EU through increased informal contacts and adaptation does not find much support in this study. The central administration in Norway also has weaker contacts with the government and political leadership. Politicians are less directly involved in EU/EEA matters than in the other countries. Moreover, Norway does

not compensate for being a non-member by having more international contacts outside the EU than the other Nordic countries.

There are significant differences between the new member countries and *Denmark*. This is not surprising, given that Denmark is an EU-veteran, while the new members are still experiencing the effects of initial adaptation. The Danish central administration has a different point of departure than Sweden and Finland, insofar as the country has adapted to the EU over a 25-year period. Its relationship to the EU is largely perceived as part and parcel of day-to-day administrative business, something which may present difficulties in distinguishing between EU-related activities and other tasks (Sidentopf and Ziller 1988). The largest formal and structural changes in the Danish administration occurred when Denmark joined the EU, while later adjustments have mainly been incremental (von Dosenrode 1998). At the same time, Denmark has been hesitant and sceptical about political integration, as evidenced by its rejection of the Maastricht agreement by popular vote in 1992 and subsequent reservations regarding EU citizenship, economic and monetary union, defence policy and judicial and internal conditions (Miles 1996). The public debate in Denmark on the country's relationship with the EU has been long and intensive, something, which may have affected the impact of Europe on the central administration. The Danish position is, however, somewhat contradictory. In spite of a "euro-sceptical" attitude towards the EU in Denmark, the country is nevertheless a well-adjusted EU-member in its day-to-day activities and emerges as one of the countries that has been most adroit in implementing EU legislation (Pedersen 2000).

*Sweden and Finland* are currently going through a period of consolidation where they appear as active parties in the adjustment process. The contrast to the pre-membership period is revealed as far more dramatic than in Denmark, where EU-related tasks have become routine to a much greater degree. While Sweden and Finland are now facing adaptation effects stemming from their recent accession, Denmark's adaptation can be seen much more as an effect of an established EU-country. The Danish administration has, for instance, developed more formal co-ordinating mechanisms and well-established procedures both within the administration and in relation to interest organisations. It appears more proactive than Norway and Sweden and reports greater levels of achievement for its own position in Brussels. Another feature, which distinguishes Denmark from the other countries, is the central role of the Foreign Ministry in EU matters.

Even though the Finnish administration may be slightly ahead of Sweden in adapting to the EU, we found no dramatic difference, unlike some other scholars and observers (Raunio and Wiberg 2000a, von Sydow 1999). The fact that Sweden and Finland distinguish themselves from the other Nordic countries in this respect may be an indication that the East-Nordic administrative model is appearing in a new version. The Swedish and Finnish administrations are becoming more involved in a steadily more integrated Europe, while the administrative bodies in Norway are less integrated. Sweden and Finland are experiencing a significant cultural collision between their national administrative cultures and norms and

the practices and working methods of the EU. This cultural conflict is more pronounced in Finland than in the other Nordic countries and is to a greater extent met by attempts in the administration to obtain models and ideas from the EU concerning the manner in which activities are to be carried out.

There are, however, some interesting differences between Sweden and Finland. One trend observable in the Finnish administration is that EU work is only weakly linked to the political level and is dominated by the administration. Finnish EU activity is carried out to a larger degree within a pragmatic, closed and technocratic culture operating in a central administrative apparatus with a large degree of autonomy. By contrast, the Swedish working manner is more public and involves greater participation by the government and the political leadership. One reason for this is that the democratic process was strongly emphasised in the Swedish administrative-political discussion concerning the EU. In Finland, the emphasis was more on having an efficient bureaucracy. Denmark's style is also less public, in keeping with the decision-making culture of the EU. Thus for Danish units it has not become more difficult to take into consideration public access to EU matters. Generally little importance is attached to public information compared to the other Nordic countries. The Danish practice of the public awareness principle has gradually adjusted to become more compatible with the political style of the EU (Grønbeck-Jensen 1998).

Another interesting difference between Sweden and Finland is that while in Finland, Nordic relations play a minor role, the idea of Nordic co-operation has a strong footing in Sweden. Finnish units try to a lesser degree than those in other countries to exercise common influence over EU bodies together with the other Nordic countries. They also have a narrower orientation within Norden and look more to countries outside Norden and to EU and other international organisations to find models for their own organisations. A somewhat surprising finding is that units in Denmark, despite 25 years of membership in the EU, look less than the other Nordic countries to the EU to find models for (re) organising their own working methods and administrative structures. The general picture is that Nordic co-operation is still strong.

In contrast to Finland, contact with the political leadership in Sweden is regarded as political control. Finnish administrative units operate largely independently of politicians, but at the same time Finland emerges as the nation where co-ordination of EU activities is strongest: intra-sectoral co-ordination has increased far more in Finland than in Sweden on this point. The fact that the adaptation of the Finnish administration has been most in line with the EU may stem from the fact that Finland was to take over the role of chairman of the EU in the summer of 1999 and was therefore under more pressure to conform. Furthermore, in contrast to Sweden and Denmark, Finland has an EU-strategy, which is more amenable to adaptation and integration. Hence, Finland is the only Nordic member of the EMU.

### Variations between administrative levels

In the Nordic countries, a distinction may be made between two levels of central administration. The inner central administration consists of those units which are most closely associated with the political leadership and which have a cabinet minister or other ministers as their leader. In Denmark and Finland these are the ministries, but in Norway and Sweden these are termed *departement*, and in Sweden they are organised under the common designation of *Regeringskansliet* (Chancellery). The outer band of the central administration is the central civil service comprising the *direktorater* (Norway, Denmark), *styrelser* (Denmark) and *centrala myndigheter* (Sweden, Finland). In principle there is an important difference between the dual Swedish system and the monistic Danish/Norwegian one. In Sweden there is an organisational bifurcation between the ministries and the central agencies, which are subordinate to the cabinet as a collective body rather than to individual ministries. Denmark and Norway, on the other hand, have a purely ministerial government where the outer bands are subordinate to the minister himself, who can be held responsible for all decisions made in these secondary bodies. The Finnish system falls somewhere between these two models. Our findings suggest that many of the differences found between administrative levels traverse national boundaries, an indication that the principal differences between the administrative levels in Sweden and the other Nordic countries are less manifest in practice.

This study shows, firstly, that the adaptation of the administration to Europe does not occur only within the inner administration but also within the directorates and central agencies. In Denmark, for example, the agencies play an important part in special committees. Hence EU adaptation is not undertaken primarily among the staff most closely associated with the political leadership but is also practised to a considerable extent among the outer and more autonomous central agencies. Concerning matters associated with the internal market -the area where the central administration is most tightly interwoven with the EU - the directorates are affected just as much as the ministries. This supports the transnational thesis, which assumes well-developed relations with the EU in these outer-band organisations and not just at the peak of the administrative hierarchy.

Secondly, there are clear variations between administrative levels – though not necessarily those that might have been expected - based on differences between the East- and West-Nordic administrative models. Even though the ministry units have, relatively speaking, more training and a greater number of EU-related positions, the greater part of the increase in new positions has occurred in the outer central administration, since there are far more units at this level. EU-membership has had a particularly significant effect in Sweden at the ministry level. This may be associated with the fact that the *Regeringskansliet* shows some reservations about delegating matters to the central agencies, and this uncertainty may in part be related to the Swedish administrative model. While the Swedish ministries have particularly close ties with the political leadership, the Swedish central agencies have no less contact with the political leadership than their Danish and Norwegian counterparts.

Moreover, this contact is more informal than in Denmark and Norway, something which is quite surprising in the light of the differences between the East-Nordic and West-Nordic models.

### **Variations between sectors**

Concerning the variations between sectors, a distinction is made between, on the one hand, the ministerial area associated with the old integration areas in the EU within Pillar One, the internal market and the four freedoms, and on the other hand, the new areas incorporated into the welfare state, foreign affairs and security, and judicial and police co-operation. This implies that the ministerial areas most affected are to be found in the commercial or trade ministries, the agricultural and fisheries sector and also transport. Over 60 percent of the offices in the agriculture and fisheries administration can be characterised as EU administration, i.e. they are very largely affected by the EU within this special area and have contact with EU-bodies every month or more frequently. The foreign policy administration has not experienced major changes as a result of adaptation to EU-related activity. This suggests that the time be now past when the Foreign Ministry was the superior co-ordinating ministry through which all international contacts and connections were channelled. Within the EU area, the trade and commercial ministries emerge as an equally important channel for foreign affairs. European matters are to a large degree rooted in the specialist ministries and the role of the Foreign Ministry has been reduced, even though it remains relatively strong in the core segment and has closer contacts with the political leadership than many other ministries.

The agriculture and fisheries sector emerges as the area where the largest personnel and organisational adaptations have been made to the EU. No other ministerial area spends more time on EU-related matters and none reports greater effects of EU integration within their area. This is also the area where contact and participation have been most developed with both EU-bodies and interest organisations. They engage in extensive co-ordinating activity and receive many, relatively precise signals from the political leadership, which frequently becomes involved in EU-matters. The extent to which these are affected is seen particularly in the changes that have been made to laws and regulations, a sphere of activity, which has experienced considerable growth in recent years. By contrast with the agricultural administration, the transports sector largely functions without signals from the political leadership. This may be partly because the transport sector has a well-developed system of contacts with the standardisation organisations, which are of little concern to politicians. The effects of the EU upon the environmental, energy and commercial sectors reflect well-developed connections with interest organisations and private companies and also to some extent with various EU bodies. These sectors are largely engaged in co-ordination tasks and have considerable contact with the political leadership.

The other side of the picture is that EU adaptation has had only a limited effect on changes in organisational forms, skills, personnel resources or the division of responsibility



within the areas of defence and justice. The defence sector spends less time than any other ministerial area on EU-related matters, experiences the least effects of the EU within its own field, and has a weakly developed contact and participation network with EU organisations as well as weakly developed co-ordinating activities. Together with areas covering the church, education, research and culture, defence is one of the least affected areas. Justice is also a relatively peripheral area in an EU context, reflected in the limited degree to which co-ordinating practices can be observed. The EU has had little role to play in the changes that have occurred within this ministerial area, and there have been few changes in the distribution of functions regarding EU matters.

In summary, it can be stated that these variations between sectors largely complement the thesis about segmentation. In all, the main pattern revealed is that variations in the adaptation of the administration to the EU cannot be traced back to a single dimension; rather, there is a complex interplay between countries, sectoral variations and differences in the administrative level.

### **Theoretical explanations of transformation**

In the previous sections we have characterised in what ways European integrative efforts have had an impact in the organising and work procedures of the Nordic state administrations. In this section, we will try to account for these observed changes. We will use four broad theoretical perspectives.

The first is an *environmental-determinist*, in which adaptation is traced primarily to external pressure from the EU. Here, we expected the response of the administration to be influenced mainly by the form and length of association with the EU. The second perspective, the *historical-institutional* one, looks at how administrative traditions and the particularities of national administrative regimes determine modes of adaptation to the EU. A broad distinction is drawn between the East-Nordic and West-Nordic administrative models. The third perspective focuses on national *political strategies* and conscious choices made by the political leadership. According to this perspective, national EU-strategies, as expressed in the organisation of the national co-ordinating apparatus in EU-matters and national administration policy, will be important explanatory factors. Fourthly, we discuss a translating or *transformative perspective*, which combines elements of the other perspectives. Here, national strategies as well as administrative structures and traditions influence how external demands are interpreted and translated and shape perceptions of which problems are relevant and what constitutes good solutions.

### **Form and length of association; pressure from the EU**

One plausible conclusion is that the form of association that Nordic countries have with the EU is important for the pattern of adjustment that takes place, even if it is not in itself decisive for the changes that emerge. Even though the EU permits considerable variation in

individual national arrangements, formal association appears to be of considerable significance (Trondal 1999). Thus, the extent and level of adaptation to the EU is less in Norway than in the three member countries. Association with the EEA results in much less co-ordination than association with the EU. This study does not support the view that the Norwegian administration has undergone excessive adaptation in order to reduce uncertainty and increase legitimacy (Sverdrup 1998:150). There are significant differences in adaptation to the EU between the new members, Sweden and Finland, and the new EEA-country, Norway, regarding contact with the Commission and the General Directorates. At the same time, Norway's participation in committee committees (i.e., the bodies concerned with formulating administrative legislation in the EU) is on a similar level to Denmark's. A relatively high level of participation in these committees may be seen as a form of compensation for absence in the Council. The Norwegian delegation to Brussels may function as a lobby organisation for Norway in those EU bodies where Norway is not represented (Jeppesøl 1999). Thus, while one might have expected the non-EU member Norway to score lower than Sweden and Finland on most indicators of change, a more surprising finding is the Norwegian administration's high level of adaptation to the EU.

However, it is not only the form of association that is of significance. Length of membership is also important, as is indicated by the general differences between Denmark, on the one hand, and Sweden and Finland on the other. Becoming a member in the 1990s required more dynamic administrative adaptation than earlier accession to the EU. In an effort to catch up with established EU-members, new members tended to engage in a high level of activity in the areas of contacts, participation, co-ordination and expertise. Even though the field of co-ordination has undergone considerable development and expansion within the EU since the mid-1990s, the established member country, Denmark, is still experiencing a lower level of adjustment and adaptation than the central administrations in Finland and Sweden. One obvious explanation for this is that the day-to-day running of the Danish central administration, after 25 years of membership, has become integrated into the EU in a quite different manner than in the other two countries. The changes, which do occur, are perceived as less dramatic in Denmark than in Sweden and Finland, for whom almost any degree of integration of their administrations in the EU is new.

Another way in which the form of association is significant is that the traditional core tasks of the EU linked to the historical areas of integration, namely, the inner market and the four freedoms, clearly emerge as those parts of the administrative system that are most affected and where the greatest adaptations have been made in all countries, something shown by segmentation. There is no determinism in the manner in which these changes in the organisation and working manner of the administration is undertaken. Rather, it is the product of interplay between external demands and national adaptation. Those policy areas where the EU has the greatest ambitions and the best-developed and established organisations and bodies of rules are also those areas where national administration activities must make the most effort to adapt. The redistribution of resources in the EU system occurs first and foremost in agriculture and structural funds, resulting in strong transnational

relations within the agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors. These are also the areas where the EEA-Agreement is of greatest relevance. Nevertheless, the EUs organisational principles do not affect the domestic co-ordination pattern in a simple and straight-forward manner. It is not the case, for example, that Norway – which is associated with the Commission through its sector logic rather than with the Council through its area logic – has a more developed vertical sectoral co-ordination than the other countries. This illustrates the point that the link between the demands of the EU and national adaptation cannot be described in terms of simple determinism.

The boundary between membership and non-membership is, however, not absolute, as Norway's intermediate position as an EEA-member illustrates. There are also differences between the various forms of membership, as observed in the many exceptions pertaining to Denmark, particularly in areas outside Pillar One. To a certain extent, the question of membership is more of a continuum than a dichotomy (Trondal 2001). Even though the formal forms of association and the length of association are of significance, the differences between Norway and the member countries are nevertheless not so wide as to suggest the interpretation that non-members follow a far more radical line than members regarding adaptation within the national administrative apparatus (Sverdrup 2000, Wessels and Rometsch 1996). Even if they are important, the form and length of association are not the only elements, which may explain variations in administrative adaptation.

### **Administrative models and historic legacy**

In this study we have shown that differences exist between the dualistic East-Nordic model adopted by Sweden and the more monistic West-Nordic model with ministerial governance that characterises Denmark and Norway. However, these differences may be more a question of form and rhetoric than of practice. For example, it is not the case that there are significantly fewer administrative units in the central administrations of Norway and Denmark than in Sweden. In spite of the important dualistic element, which implies that Sweden should have small ministries; they are not that much smaller than in the other Nordic countries.

In line with our expectations, we find a much closer and integrated contact network between the ministries and the political leadership in Sweden than in Denmark and Norway. There is a close co-operation between the political leadership and the units in *regeringskansliet*. But the Swedish central agencies have no less well-developed contacts with the political leadership than in Norway and Denmark. The vertical co-ordination regarding EU matters is not stronger in Denmark and Norway than in Sweden. Whether these differences are the consequence of special relations in EU-matters or whether these are an expression of a wider gulf between formal arrangements and practice (Jacobsson 1984) is still an open question. What can be stated, however, is that the clear differences that emerge between Sweden and Denmark/Norway do not correspond with traditional ideas about what characterises the East-Nordic and West-Nordic models.

One interpretation is that the East-Nordic model, with its clear formal differences between the *Regeringskansliet* and the central agencies, results in the development of closer, yet less formal contacts in EU-matters. By contrast, the West-Nordic model largely leads to formal contacts between the administrative levels. Although the central agencies are supposed to be independent under the Swedish model, the Swedish central agencies have just as close informal contacts and more explicit guiding signals from the political leadership than the central administrations of the other countries. Even though the Swedish model continues to thrive both formally and rhetorically, there is nevertheless reason to question certain aspects of this model.

The historical legacy is visible, inasmuch as EU-activity is integrated into established organisational forms. Further, procedures whereby interest organisations and other affected parties are integrated into the decision-making process through routine participation in different corporate bodies, is an well-assimilated part of the Nordic tradition. New organisational methods through collegial internal bodies come as a supplement, not as an alternative to the traditional organisational structure and correspond otherwise to the general tendency towards broader collegial organisational forms within the state administration (Christensen and Egeberg 1998).

One interpretation of this is that national administrative tradition and administrative models are relatively well adjusted to the EUs profile and demands, and it is therefore relatively easy to incorporate the new into the old. Even though changes have been comprehensive, they have nevertheless been largely in accordance with national traditions. Similar findings have been made in the U.K. (Bulmer and Burch 1998). The formal arrangements are, however, not immutable and do not permit all forms of practice. Even though it is officially maintained that the administrative models are fixed, our data show that the Swedish dualistic model, in particular, is closer to the European model of ministerial governance than one would expect given its formal characteristics. It is not the case that a greater proportion of EU-matters is assigned to the central agencies in Sweden than in the other countries, or that these agencies are less controlled than the corresponding organisations in the other Nordic countries.

### **The organisation of EU-work and national strategies**

National administrative policies stipulate a variation, ranging from Norway's "No" to full membership to Denmark's many exceptions, Sweden's reservations about EMU and Finland's relative EU enthusiasm. The Norwegian strategy has been to combine its position as an outsider with the closest possible co-operation with the EU and its member countries, a strategy which corresponds well with the country's traditionally positive attitude to free trade and intergovernmental political co-operation and scepticism towards political integration and supra-national obligations (Olsen 2001). During the period when this survey was conducted, Norway had a "No to the EU" government, something which quite possibly contributed to weakening political pressure for close co-operation with EU which was the strategy of the

former Labour government following the popular rejection vote in 1994. The Norwegian strategy was essentially to delegate adaptation to the EU to bureaucrats and experts and allow EU-matters to become an integrated part of the administration's everyday work. The collegial co-ordinating committees based on the Danish pattern, which were established with a view to EU-membership, continued to exist even after Norway rejected EU membership, but they had less of a central co-ordinating function than intended (Sætereng 2001). In contrast to the Danish parliament, the *Storting* was also assigned a more modest advisory role in EU matters (Nordby 2000). The relatively modest scope and depth of Norwegian adaptation to the EU, as it emerges in our material, must also be seen in the light of the considerable opposition to the EU among the citizens, which restricted the latitude accorded to the political leadership and consequently to the civil service. The adaptation strategy Norway adopted vis-à-vis the EU was only partly successful. This no doubt had something to do with the limitations imposed by links with the EEA but also reflected the changing importance attached to EU-matters by different governments.<sup>6</sup>

Denmark has adopted a positive strategy towards economic integration as expressed through the four freedoms and the internal market, but it remains sceptical about political integration and the development of the EU in a supranational federal direction. Six referendums have considerably restricted the latitude of the central administration. Although an EU member, Denmark has been granted exceptional status in a number of areas. It is this hesitance towards many aspects of EU-policy that places the Danish central administration in an intermediate position between Norway on the one hand and Sweden and Finland on the other. At the same time, Denmark's co-ordination of EU-matters is relatively centralised. This is seen in the relatively strong position of the parliament through the EU-Committee, in the central role of the Foreign Ministry in national co-ordinating committees, and also in the fact that interest organisations are given increasingly integrated participation rights in the same committees. This has helped to make forms of contact in EU matters in Denmark more formal than in Sweden or Finland, where the national co-ordination systems are structured in a different way. These trends in co-operation result in Denmark having a relatively strong system of national mandates in EU-matters, something which possibly contributes to stronger domestic support for the Danish position. This may also be one reason why the Danish administration has a more proactive attitude and has achieved a greater degree of success than the administrations of the other Nordic countries. It would not be true to say, however, that the co-ordination of EU-matters in Denmark has recently become more extensive, since co-ordination activity was already at a higher level than in the other Nordic countries and co-operation is concentrated in a smaller number of units in Denmark. A somewhat more centralised strategy than in Norway corresponds well to the general Danish

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<sup>6</sup> One factor that may explain why Norway consistently emerges with the fewest changes and adaptations along the dimensions studied is its relatively cautious administrative policy. Whereas in the other Nordic countries the momentum for reforms was co-ordinated by stronger cabinets or co-ordinating ministries, in Norway it came mainly from sectoral ministries. The tradition of being a reluctant reformer with a segmented administration policy (Olsen 1996) may have affected Norway's adaptation to the EU.

administration policy, in which the Ministry of Finance plays a stronger role in co-ordinating activities than in Norway (Lægreid and Pedersen 1999).

In Sweden, there is also relatively strong opposition to the EU among the population. This manifests itself particularly in the Swedes' rejection of EMU. As a new EU member-country however, Sweden has adopted a largely proactive stance - i.e. it has made an active attempt to change the organisation and working methods of the EU to bring them more into line with the Swedish administrative tradition. One example is its endeavours to increase the level of openness and public visibility of EU-procedures and decision-making processes. EU-work in Sweden has become largely politicised. Regarding the level of EU co-ordination, Sweden has adopted a different strategy to Denmark and Norway. Sweden does not have the same system of permanent collegial co-ordinating committees and has largely left decisions about how co-ordination should proceed to the individual ministries. This has produced a 'looser' and more informal network of advisory groups. Generally speaking, much of the co-ordination in Sweden is carried out informally. At the same time, the Office of the Prime Minister has been placed above the Foreign Ministry with respect to co-ordination, and the role of *Riksdagen* is more modest than that of its Danish counterpart. According to our data, the difference between the Danish *Folketing* and the national assemblies of the other countries is not as great as previous studies suggested (Norten 1996, Rometsch and Wessels 1996). One indication of this is that the Danish units report a higher level of success in getting their viewpoints and intentions accepted in the *Folketing* than the Norwegian *Storting* or the Swedish *Riksdag*. Contact with companies is also somewhat more developed in Sweden, reflecting the differences in the commercial and industrial structure in the different countries. The main impression is that the administration and the government have extensive and deep relationships with the EU and take a fairly proactive approach even though this seems to produce limited success.<sup>7</sup>

Finland's strategy towards the EU must be regarded in the light of the loosening of ties with Russia following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Even though there is significant EU-scepticism in Finland, the new foreign policy situation has led to a powerful re-orientation towards the EU within the civil service and at the political level. The Finnish strategy has largely been that of the "model pupil", motivated by a desire to be accepted as an equal and full member of the EU and to be regarded as a "good European" as soon as possible. Contrary to Sweden, Finland has entered the EU with very few ambitions to change the Union to fit its own image. Also, at the time the survey was

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<sup>7</sup> The Swedish strategy towards the EU can also be seen in relation to Swedish administrative policy, which has incorporated New Public Management (NPM) models for many years, coupled with elements of structural devolution, privatisation and management by objectives and results. While NPM - with its focus on market competition, management orientation and cost efficiency - may be said to be well in line with the EU as a new liberal market development venture, the comprehensive role of informal co-ordination, both at cabinet level and between the cabinet and central agencies, suggests that EU co-ordination has largely occurred alongside these other forms of control and co-ordination. For Sweden, Europeanisation constitutes a challenge both to administrative models and to administrative policy, but as yet Europeanisation has not led to any profound discussion concerning the organisation of the civil service.

being conducted, the Finnish central administration was preparing itself both organisationally and psychologically for assuming the EU presidency, even though this was a year prior to the inauguration. The organisation of Finnish EU co-ordination lies somewhere between Denmark/Norway and Sweden. Even though a number of collegial co-ordinating committees exist, Finnish co-ordination is more informal in character than in Denmark or Norway. One expression of this is the government's "tête-à-tête," where bureaucrats and members of the government meet once a week for a free and open discussion of current matters (Selovuori 1999). This implies that the Finnish civil service engages in comprehensive co-ordination while at the same time appearing to have considerable autonomy with regard to the political leadership. However, one should remember that the positions of senior civil servants in the Finnish central administration are political appointments, which contributes to politicising the Finnish bureaucracy. While Sweden emerges as strongly politicised concerning co-ordination, Finland is far more bureaucracy-centred. But this does not necessarily suggest that the Finnish civil service is unresponsive to political signals.<sup>8</sup>

In summary, it may be said that there is a relationship between national strategies as expressed in the formulation of administrative policy as the basis for EU activity and the actual adaptation that occurs within the central administration. Those countries, which have introduced the most drastic administrative reforms, are the very countries, which have engaged in the most comprehensive adaptation to the EU. Conversely, Norway, which has been a hesitant administrative reformer, also emerges as a cautious adapter to the EU compared with the other countries. Further, the business of EU activities is clearly revealed in the actual adaptation to the EU as expressed, among other things, in the Swedish arrangement of governmental prerogatives and the Danish mandates in the *Folketing*, resulting in different co-ordinating activity and content in transnational relations.

### **Translation and transformation: a more complex model**

EU-related adaptation within the state administration cannot be traced back to a single explanatory factor or one basic perspective. The changes which take place in an administration as a consequence of increased integration in the EU are neither purely an adjustment to pressure and demands emanating from the EU nor solely the result of a conscious national strategy or of historic legacy and administrative traditions. Instead, they reflect a complex interplay between external pressure, national strategies and choices and particular path dependencies that can be traced through the administrative history of each country (Christensen and Lægveid 2001, Campbell and Pedersen 2001, Olsen 1992). EU-integration is significant, but its significance is not as simple as is often claimed in the literature on Europeanisation (Goetz 2000). With this in mind, we can go

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<sup>8</sup> In Finland there are also clear parallels between the formulation of administrative policy and the intensity of adaptation to the EU. In the same manner as in Sweden, Finland has operated a relatively intensive NPM-inspired administrative policy. An extensive administrative reform process is related to comprehensive adaptation towards the EU.

back and think about the perspectives on states that we outlined in the beginning of the paper.

It is obvious that the administrative apparatus in each country cannot be regarded as a consummate actor with a large degree of homogeneity such as is maintained, for example, by intergovernmentalists (Moravcsik 1993). The strong segmentation shows that the differences between sectors and administrative levels in certain cases can be just as important as the differences between countries. EU-activity does not only pay heed to national borders but also to sectoral limits and organisational boundaries, something, which is a central feature of transnational administration. The bifurcation between, on the one hand, European and, on the other hand, a national interest is doubtful. Identities as well as loyalties and activities are created in processes, which traverse national boundaries. The transnational administration to some extent is both national and European.

The “state as coherent and rational actor”- paradigm is not supported, but this does definitely not mean that states are becoming obsolete, and eventually will wither away. States are still important as organisations, but they must - as all organisations - be understood in relation to a wider environment of organisations, rules and ideas. States as organisations used to be described as regulating, autonomous and co-ordinated, but what we see in this study is that they are also regulated, transnational and segmented (Jacobsson 1999). States issue rules, but they are also created by European rules and ideas. States still produce national strategies, but these strategies are also created in transnational processes. States present themselves as monoliths, “we-are-speaking-with-one-voice”-actors, but in practice different parts of states also act loosely coupled from others.

We propose a more complex model of states, which include the idea that some parts of states may be less co-ordinated and more transnational than others. There are no clear distinctions between what may be considered European and what may be considered national and there is interplay between structural constraints and conscious actors. Adjustment impulses, which frequently arise through increased integration, are translated and edited to make them compatible with national administrative traditions and political strategies (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). A transformative perspective of this type implies that we must combine “internal” and “external” factors in order to understand why EU adaptation varies in content, depth and intensity in the Nordic countries. Demands from the EU are often ambiguous, unclear and multifarious and they are filtered, interpreted and modified in different ways (Christensen and Lægveid 2001): both by the national political-administrative history, culture, tradition and decision-making style but also by national administrative policies and EU-strategies.

Transnationalisation is also a double process. Influences also travel from the north, and the Nordic countries have been influential in the discussions about environment, public openness, employment and enlargement. A transformative perspective of this



kind is critical of the idealistic notion that individual states may freely choose their method of adaptation to the EU and that actors have a complete overview and power over reform processes with respect to the EU. It is equally critical; however, of the fatalistic notion that development cannot be influenced at all, that there is no choice whatsoever and that therefore states are obliged to adapt to the external demands of the EU. Rather, this transformative perspective offers an intermediate position where political leaders have a certain amount of leeway regarding their own choices and strategies, while their possibilities for manoeuvring are restricted by environmental constraints and national administrative structures and traditions and their attitudes and actions are formed and moulded in transnational relations. Problems and solutions are interpreted, edited, modified and revealed within a process of complex institutional change. This transformative perspective adds complexity to the understanding of adaptation to the EU in the national administrative apparatus. This may make the presentation less elegant but hopefully more realistic (Christensen and Læg Reid 2001).

Pressure from the EU may have considerable effects if it is strong, consistent and tightly woven into the administrative structure and working methods of the country in question and if it receives active support from the political-administrative leadership. Conversely, if it is ambiguous, inconsistent and only tenuously linked with the administration's day-to-day work, and, furthermore, if it encounters opposition or only negligible support from the national political administrative leadership, its impact on the national administrative apparatus may be marginal. These are extreme positions. As illustrated in this study, adaptation to the EU in practice is more complex, inconsistent and vague in its execution. The EU's demands are not always clear and consistent. National traditions and structural arrangements represent broad categories which permit correspondingly broad variations in the pattern of adaptation, and there are frequently conflicts and opposing views among national actors about how the strategy for adaptation to the EU should be organised and what its content should be. This results in administrative units discovering values and solutions in transnational relations.

These divergent development trends are apparent in the different response patterns of the individual countries as expressed in variations in the intensity of change and in broad and converging development trends in events where the response pattern is either similar across national borders or proceeds in the same direction. This corresponds with the pluralistic approach, which allows for different co-ordination models within the national administrative EU adjustment process (Spanou 1998). Increased integration within the EU generates changes in the administration's structure and working manner, although the pressure for adjustment varies from country to country, depending on the form and length of association with the EU and the degree of correspondence between what is occurring in the EU and the traditions and institutional structures of the country in question (Julippe and Caporaso 1999). It is our interpretation that the administrative adaptation that increased EU integration requires is generally perceived as falling within

acceptable and reasonable limits as far as the administrative traditions of the individual countries are concerned (Knill 1999). At the same time, the transnational relations that emerge from this adaptation process must be regarded as something new, which cannot be wholly traced back either to national structures, or to demands from the EU.

European integration efforts produce a tendency towards homogenisation and convergence. Simultaneously, these demands may be experienced differently depending on how long a country has been a member. Norway, with one foot in the door and one outside, will naturally experience pressure from the EU along some dimensions more than others will. Similarities between the countries can also partly be understood as the product of a learning process. For a long time countries have borrowed from one another and learned from each other's experiences and among the Nordic countries this borrowing has been extensive. Danish co-ordination patterns have been copied by Norway and formed the inspiration for corresponding arrangements in Finland. One implication of this is that the effect of Europeanisation not only occurs via a vertical logic through an adjustment process downwards from the EU, but also via a horizontal logic incorporating learning and model-borrowing across national boundaries (Goetz 2000). At the same time, national political and administrative structures, decision-making styles, traditions and culture will provide restrictions as well as models with respect to external demands and contribute to divergence and variation in the responses of the various countries.

One important admission must be made, however: namely, that the growth of the EU-segments in administrations and transnational administrations have helped to eliminate the differences between internal national factors and external European guidelines. This may imply that parts of the administration have closer transnational links than national. Transnational processes create new identities, loyalties and strategies, and translations, modifications and adaptations occur transnationally. In certain respects this is a challenge both to the national and to what is genuinely European. By regarding administrative adaptation purely as a meeting between external pressure and national constraints and strategies, we lose important aspects of the processes. In the last section, we will discuss some implications of the expansion of a transnational administration.

### **The expansion of a transnational administration and its implications**

Transnationalisation implies that parts of the administration are deeply involved in processes where questions are raised, initiatives taken and decisions gradually shaped. These transnational processes are largely the provinces of the civil servant. Transnationalisation has made especially large inroads into those segments of the administration where EU ambitions are strongest. Everyday business has, for an increasing number of civil servants, become European in texture. Which problems are relevant, what are good solutions, how questions should be defined and what is

reasonable and necessary is now defined through interaction between European organisations and between the administrations of different nations. Loyalties and identities may increasingly be moulded by these cross-border processes, even when national identity is relatively robust and strong (Egeberg 1999). We also know that representatives from business enterprises and interest organisations are parties to such processes.

The growth of a transnational administration - i.e. an administration with strong contacts to other countries' administrations and to EU and other international organisations - may come about without an especially clear or precise political mandate. Those involved frequently base their activities on the rules of professional conduct of their own administration (Fjær 2000). We consider that an accelerating transnationalisation increases the risk of a network of bureaucrats and experts becoming established who shape public policy without elected representatives having much opportunity to influence the content of that policy. This may occur particularly in areas where technical and professional expertise is considered important. Although various countries have attempted to respond to this danger by strengthening co-ordination, the political leadership actually has quite limited exposure to day-to-day EU business.

It is not that the administration deliberately attempts to exclude politicians from participation in EU matter – on the contrary, bureaucrats may seek stronger political guidance and clearer instructions from politicians in order to avoid being encumbered with sensitive EU decisions (Raunio and Wiberg 2000a, Veggeland 1999) - but there is still a danger that politicians will have problems providing these guidance and instructions. Processes largely divorced from politics shape the administration's image of the world, and it gives high priority to professional expertise.<sup>9</sup> Our study indicates that bureaucrats in the central administration have more ability and capacity, are better informed and integrated and appear to be more effective in EU-matters than the political leadership. This is particularly the case in Norway, where the country's EEA associate status means that Norwegian politicians are particularly absent from the EU decision-making process.

In practice the rift between what national politicians must take responsibility for and what they are able to control continues to widen (Jacobsson 1999). In some respects, EU seems to be bureaucrats' paradise, where officials and civil servants are the central participants in the formulation of policies. Bureaucrats on an autonomous basis, without any particularly precise or strong political control largely operate the national EU-related agenda. It is our interpretation that demand for control by the bureaucrats exceeds what the politicians can supply, since politicians are frequently 'hangers-on' in the administration of EU questions. There is clearly a danger that if the administration is

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<sup>9</sup> In EU matters 58 percent of units attach very great importance to *professional* evaluation, while the corresponding proportion for *political* evaluation is 36 percent. This suggests that the administration's position has been strengthened through European integration efforts.

not controlled it will become increasingly dominant and politicians will have to take responsibility for matters over which they have less and less control.

The dynamics we have described point in the direction of increased power for experts. Almost half the units in the Nordic central administrations consider EU matters to be so complicated that they must be left to professionals and experts. In modern society there is a widespread belief that 'someone knows best,' be it economists, lawyers, engineers or others defined as qualified. Sometimes it is argued that in some distant past, it was possible for the individual, both in principle and in practice, to "ignore the pronouncements of priests, sages, and sorcerers, and get on with the routines of daily activities. But this is not the case in the modern world in respect of expert knowledge" (Giddens 1990, p. 84). It is manifest that the administration largely regards EU-tasks as an arena for the experts.

Increased confidence in expertise is associated with transnationalisation. Problems, solutions and actors travel more and further than before. Groups of experts who determine their own agendas are emerging across national boundaries. Their expert jargon is frequently derived from science, even though this link may, in practice, be quite weak (Meyer 1997). In the literature on international organisations such groups have been termed "epistemic communities," defined by Haas (1990) as "composed of professionals...who share a commitment to a common causal model and a common set of political values. They are united by a belief in the truth of their model and by a commitment to translate this truth into public policy, in the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a result" (Haas 1990, p. 41).

It is an accepted belief among civil servants that erroneous decisions result from failure to pay heed to available expertise (Haas 1990). According to Haas, the solution is to be found, among other places, in science, where scientific language can function as a "transideological and transcultural significant system" (Haas 1990, p. 46). However, it is naive to consider those demands on expertise and science in such an uncritical manner. We consider the main problem to be not whether expertise has been granted sufficient place but quite the opposite – namely that European integration has become far too technocratic and expert-dominated. One aspect of this is the issue of standardisation, which has been so important in establishing the internal market.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The process of standardisation is transnational and constructed around experts and their knowledge (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000, Tamm Hallström 1996, Vad 1998). Even though standards are always adopted voluntarily in principle, in practice countries that fail to adopt them are then obliged to show that a directive is being followed. A large number of regulatory questions are related to health, the environment and safety (Middelthon 2000), but regulation occurs elsewhere too. Standardisation organisations are composed of experts expected to produce regulations which are universally satisfactory. Among the units within the central administration apparatus, more than a half were affected in one way or another by standardisation and 18 percent were affected to a large degree. Increased technological input and bureaucratisation of policies are an intrinsic part of EU business, making it difficult for politicians to keep up with a bureaucracy that represents continuity and specific expertise in its field.

Politicians are also very much absent from the daily EU activities of the administration, where the administration calls the tune. In Norway, where the administration attaches considerable importance to political evaluation, there are few units which have contact with the political leadership over EU related questions. In Finland also, EU activity has strengthened the position of the administration, but at the same time it appears that there is little difficulty in keeping the politicians at a distance. Politicians are involved in EU matters to the greatest extent in Sweden, while in Denmark their involvement is less and the level of conflicts is possibly even lower than in the other Nordic countries. Even here it is possible that politicians are becoming increasingly obliged to accept proposals and solutions adopted at the transnational level.

This may be far too pessimistic a picture of politicians' scope. An absence of conflict could equally mean that an administration that is able to anticipate the will of politicians can act autonomously, and that this is the reason why fewer conflicts are observed. Politicians have also become largely transnational. The member countries' sectoral ministers meet regularly and determine their own agenda. How this is connected to the work of the administration is a matter for discussion. Is policy ultimately the work of civil servants and experts, or do civil servants and experts carry out their work on the basis of guidelines and decisions formulated and issued by politicians? Or do these processes occur in parallel without the need for any close inter-connection? In order to answer these questions, it would be necessary to incorporate politicians more closely in the analysis.

It should be noted that there is no simple solution to the democratic problem - for example, by stipulating more precise and long-term control. We have seen that politicians may become involved in processes and activities that pass as control, without actually having that much influence. Irrespective of how much importance is attached to national control and co-ordination, there is a risk that transnationalisation and segmentation will weaken the effect of such strategies. In Sweden, where the rationalist control model has been strongest, we observe a recurrent use of control signals. However, the influence of the civil service is as high in Sweden as elsewhere. Political control can essentially become something of a ritual. In Denmark, the administration is as informed about what ministers want as they are in Sweden, despite the fact that interaction is more frequent in Sweden. The question of how politicians are to cope with the danger of expert control is a difficult one. It requires discretion and cannot be tackled using over-simplified solutions.

The emerging domination of transnational expertise and the problems this raises for politicians also affects the role of parliament. In spite of the problems politicians in government encounter in entering into the decision-making processes, they nevertheless have numerous personal contacts in Europe. The problem is greater for the parliaments, which, as a result of the EU, risk relegation into an even more subordinate position (Raunio and Wiberg 2000b). In the Nordic countries attempts have been made to

integrate the popularly elected bodies into the decision-making process by a variety of means, especially in Denmark. But generally speaking parliaments do not play a particularly important role in the administration of EU functions.

A further problem for democracy is the rift between the very positive attitude to the EU of the various administrations and the deep scepticism of the Nordic populations. There are few administrative units that consider the EU to have had negative consequences. While there are doubtless many reasons why the administrations see great value in European integration, one contributory factor may be that increased embeddedness and transnational interaction may enhance identity and feelings of loyalty. It is natural that transnational civil servants come to see the world in a new light and possibly in a different one to the populations of their countries. From a democratic point of view, such a rift between the people and their public servants is a matter of no small concern.

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