

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE EUROPEAN UNION'S AND SWEDISH CULTURE OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICS**

Sweden, just as their Scandinavian neighbour, is a country with a cultural tradition of democracy called consensus democracy. In their decision-making process, Sweden as a country with a consensus democracy involves their citizens on the making process of certain policy. This culture of decision-making process in Sweden is also known as corporatism. For example, for labour-related policies they will involve representatives from the labour industry to discuss and formulate what kind of policy should Sweden have. Consensus democracy and corporatism that does not only involve certain interest groups and Swedish government bureaucrats, but also the grassroots organisation, private actors and parties ruling on the parliament enabled Sweden to produce policies that reflect Euroscepticism if that is what their citizens desire (Raunio, 2007).

On the other hand, the EU has a cultural tradition of democracy wholly different from Sweden. On their decision-making process, this supranational organization uses a top-down approach. In contrast to the democracy type of Sweden, in the EU, a policy will be discussed with political elites -also called representative of countries and it will be fully handed to the member states for the implementation of the policy decided. Consequently, this made many of the EU member states feel the level of democracy on this supranational organization is rather low. The union then is said to have a tendency of democratic deficit by Richard Corbett (Richard Corbett, 2015). This term is introduced for the first time by David Marquand in 1979 as a phenomenon where normal citizens of member states have limited access to EU institutions, the lack of citizens representative in EU institutions and the lack of accountability of EU

institutions (MILEV, 2004). This chapter will break down each cultural difference of democracy and politics in decision-making process between Sweden and the EU.

## **2.1 The European Union's Culture of Democracy and Politics**

### **2.1.1 The European Union's Culture of Democracy**

This sub-chapter will discuss about how democracy in the EU works. In doing so, it must be explained first how and who are the actors running the EU. This most successful supranational organization in the world cannot stand alone, to govern its member states, it has institution pillars consisting of the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of the European Union (formerly known as Council of Ministers), the European Parliament, the Court of Justice of the European Union, European Court of Auditors and European Central Bank. The EU also has several bodies to help their work such as European External Action Service, European Economic and Social Committee, European Investment Bank, European Ombudsman, European Committee of the Regions, European Data Protection Supervisor, European Data Protection Board, and other interinstitutional bodies (EU Official Website, 2021).

Talking about democracy in the EU, the concept of democracy itself means how citizens are involved in political decision-making process (Hatton, 2015). There are four main institutions involved in their decision-making process. The European Council, acting as the executive body, headed by a President and its members (heads of state or government of member states, European Council President, European Commission President) mainly sets the Union's political agenda, priorities, and direction.<sup>1</sup> Its other job is to handle

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<sup>1</sup> The role of the European Council as set on Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) [2012] OJ C326/1 Art. 15(1) is as following, "*The European Council shall provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its*

complex and sensitive issues that cannot be handled at intergovernmental cooperation, nominate and appoint candidate for EU institutions or bodies' head, and set the European Commission's common foreign and security policy. However, this institution does not hold any sovereignty to pass laws (EU Official Website, 2021). Hence it needs to collaborate and work together with the European Commission, European Parliament, and Council of the European Union in decision making process. Nevertheless, with the Treaty on European Union, the European Council still hold big influence and power in the EU because unlike the other bodies, the European Council is the only body which have the sovereignty to decide the Union's general political directions and priorities without other bodies' approval or opinion. In time of crisis, it is also the final body that can step up to take a lead (Cuyvers, 2017).

The European Commission headed by a President Commissioner and Commissioners from each member state oversees legislation initiations, making proposals for European laws, oversees decision implementations, issuing regulations and works as the face of the EU in the world's political realm, such as summits, negotiations, and international organizations (McBride, 2020). In its work, the European Commission needs to ensure it caters the EU's general interest.<sup>2</sup> The European Commission's influence in the EU is bigger and more

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*development and shall define the general political directions and priorities thereof. It shall not exercise legislative functions."*

<sup>2</sup> The role of the European Commission as set on Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) [2012] OJ C326/1 Art. 17(1-2) is as following, "1. *The Commission shall promote the general interest of the Union and take appropriate initiatives to that end. It shall ensure the application of the Treaties, and of measures adopted by the institutions pursuant to them. It shall oversee the application of Union law under the control of the Court of Justice of the European Union. It shall execute the budget and manage programmes. It shall exercise coordinating, executive and management functions, as laid down in the Treaties. With the exception of the common foreign and security policy, and other cases provided for in the Treaties, it shall ensure the Union's external representation. It shall initiate the Union's annual and multiannual programming with a view to achieving interinstitutional agreements.*

*2. Union legislative acts may only be adopted on the basis of a Commission proposal, except where the Treaties provide otherwise. Other acts shall be adopted on the basis of a Commission proposal where the Treaties so provide."*

significant than what the EU states as it has several semi-judicial and enforcement powers. Although it needs the European Parliament and the Council's approval to pass their proposed laws, it is fully in their power to draft and adopt an act and supervise the implementation. And it will not do it any justice to fit them into one of the traditional models of the Trias Politica (Cuyvers, 2017). Unfortunately, to our dismay, the appointment of the European Commission does not involve any entities outside the EU (Benn & Worcester, 1991).

The European Council sets agenda, and the European Commission makes law proposal, now the EU needs institutions to bring the decision-making process into actions. The Council of the European Union (best known as the Council) works together with the European Parliament as legislative bodies to process proposals from the European Commission by negotiating and adopting laws according to their area of expertise.<sup>3</sup> This means, there is no fixed members and positions in the Council. This makes it easier for each Ministers to coordinate EU policies with its country's and facilitate the needs for decision-making process with their area of expertise (EU Official Website, 2021). Along with the Council, the European Parliament is the EU's main decision-making and law-making body. The members of the European Parliament are elected directly by the EU's citizens every five years and have a different number of seats for each country proportionate to its population. As the main representative of the EU citizens, the European Parliament has three main roles: legislative, supervisory, and budgetary. For their legislative role, they work with the Council to oversee passing laws based on the European Commission proposals, deciding

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<sup>3</sup> The role of the Council of the European Union as set on Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) [2012] OJ C326/1 Art. 16(1-2) is as following, "1. *The Council shall, jointly with the European Parliament, exercise legislative and budgetary functions. It shall carry out policy-making and coordinating functions as laid down in the Treaties.*

2. *The Council shall consist of a representative of each Member State at ministerial level, who may commit the government of the Member State in question and cast its vote.*"

on enlargements and international agreements, and reviewing the European's Commission work programme. For their supervisory role, they oversee democratic scrutiny of all EU institutions and bodies, electing the President for European Commission, examining citizens' aspiration such as petitions and setting up inquiries, and election observations. For their budgetary role, along with the Council establishing the EU budget and approving long-term budget of the EU (EU Official Website, 2020).

Even though in most cases the Council needs the European Parliament to pass a law, as member states' representatives sit in the Council, it plays a greater role than the European Parliament in the EU's decision-making process. The Council can adopt an act whilst the European Parliament can only ask the Commission to amend proposals or give opinions on the proposal. Hence, the Parliament is said to only have an advisory role (Benn & Worcester, 1991). Indeed, it has greater significance and power than before since the Treaty of Lisbon, but its role on the EU's decision-making process remains less significant compared with the Council's.<sup>4</sup>

So, the plot for policy formulation is, firstly the European Council sets agenda, priorities, and directions of the EU. Then the European Council would ask the European Commission to propose laws according to the set agenda and directions. The European Commission would then pass the law proposals they have made to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to be reviewed, discussed, negotiated, and decided to be passed or rejected. The

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<sup>4</sup> The role of the European Parliament as set on Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) [2012] OJ C326/1 Art. 14(1 and 2b) is as following, "1. *The European Parliament shall, jointly with the Council, exercise legislative and budgetary functions. It shall exercise functions of political control and consultation as laid down in the Treaties. It shall elect the President of the Commission....*" and "... 2b. *The European Council shall adopt by unanimity, on the initiative of the European Parliament and with its consent, a decision establishing the composition of the European Parliament, respecting the principles referred to in the first subparagraph.*"

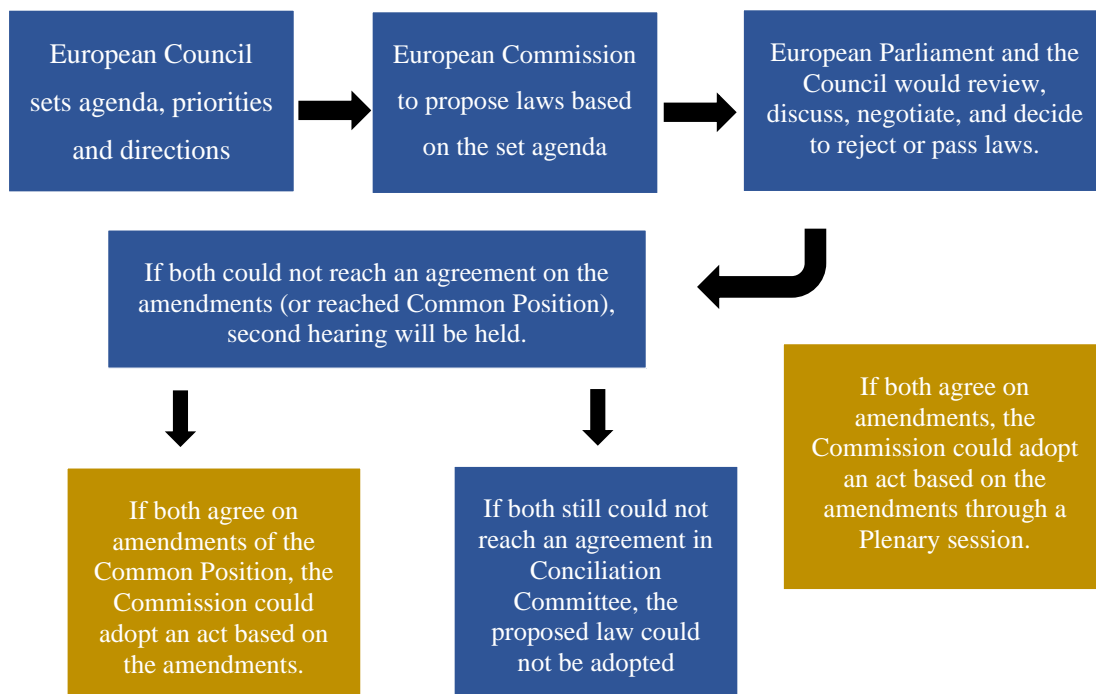
decision-making process is then in the hand of the European Parliament and the Council. The process is divided into two stages, Committees and Plenary session.

The European Parliament will divide the MEPs to 20 committees and two subcommittees with different policy areas. In the Committees stage, legislation is prepared by examining proposals, there MEPs and political group can propose for amendments, accept the proposal or to reject a bill (European Commission Directorate-General for Communication, 2014). If the two institutions could not agree for an amendment, a second reading will be held. If the two institutions agree on amendments, a Plenary session will be held to give a final vote on the proposed legislation and amendments (EU Official Website, 2020). These steps of policy formulation, legislation proposals and amendment proposals, to its implementation are called an Ordinary Legislative Procedure. The European Commission would then ensure that the set legislation is implemented in all member states according to its legislation type (European Commission Directorate-General for Communication, 2014).

In the EU, proposals that have been reviewed and passed will become a set legislation. However, not all legislations are legally binding. There are five types of legislation in the EU, namely regulation, directive, decision, recommendations, and opinions. A regulation is a legislation type that is legally binding for the member states and they must implement it the way that it is, and with the objectives set by the EU. A directive on the other hand, is also legally binding and has objectives to be met, but its way of implementation is for the member states to determine. A decision is only legally binding to the member states, groups of people or individuals addressed. It is binding in its entirety only for addressed entities. Recommendations and opinions have no binding force, but are a different kind. A recommendation enables the EU to share their views on something and to suggest a set of actions without imposing any obligation. Whilst an opinion is an instrument that enables the EU to state their stance on

something also without imposing any obligation (European Commission Directorate-General for Communication, 2014).

**Figure 2.1.1**  
**Decision-making process in the European Union**



A good democracy system will involve effective participation from external entities. Several entities that are deemed important on decision-making process is non-governmental organizations (NGO), grassroots organizations of a certain policy area, civil society, national parliaments, and local authorities. In taking external entities into accounts on the EU's decision-making process, they involved NGOs, representative of a certain policy area, civil society, and local authorities in the stage of the new law proposal drafting and in assessing the implementation of set regulations. Through the programme named 'Public

Consultation’, external entities can have a say and participate in giving advice on technical issues on a new law proposal and implementation report, according to their suitability to the EU’s needs (EU Official Website, 2019).

The most recent Public Consultations the EU opened was a targeted stakeholder consultation on the Technical Measures Regulation in fisheries and maritime affairs topic for an implementation report. In this public consultation, stakeholders (international organizations, NGOs, financial institutions, academic, scientific, social, and economic partners) could participate and share their views on this matter to the European Commission. It was open for a consultation in an on-line survey submission from December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (European Commission, 2020). Another example of external entities’ involvement in their decision-making process is on the recent programme named ‘Have your say’, in which external entities can comment on and give feedback to the new policies and/or initiatives that were being formulated by the European Commission according to their suitability to the EU’s needs. This programme was open for feedback in the period of June 23<sup>rd</sup> to August 11<sup>st</sup>, 2020 with total 49 feedback received. It was also open for Public Consultation for the period of June 30<sup>th</sup> to October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (European Commission, 2020).

However, unlike other intergovernmental organisations, the EU has no formal recognition for NGOs to allow them feed into EU’s law-making process. Under the Treaty of Lisbon, NGOs are categorized as a part of the civil society. NGOs is supposedly should have an important role in advising EU institutions on decision-making process based on their area of expertise. The EU counterparts would probably defend themselves by putting NGOs on the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) under the category of civil society for NGOs involvement in decision-making process. Yet, NGOs still cannot have an important role in the EESC as it is only represented in one-thirds



of the EESC membership, not to mention that they need to divide it with others based on their sub-categories. Making it to have 28 representatives of agriculture sector; 23 of consumer and environmental organisations; 19 of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), crafts and the professions; and 36 of cooperative, mutuals, associations, foundations, and social NGOs. Realizing the nature of itself, the EESC then established a Liaison Group in 2004 to cater European civil society interests that could not be represented on the EESC. However, this setting cannot act accordingly to cater the public interest. This eventually made NGOs to choose their own channels of communication with the law-making institutions of the EU. They used the facts that the Commission is required to consult widely in formulating law proposals to access the law-making process and to approach Directorate Generals to offer consultation informally. While the European Parliament has regular meetings with NGOs for advocating purposes, the Council is hardly accessible for NGOs (Butler, 2008).

Grassroot organizations, which fall into the same category of civil society in the EU, does not have an important role in decision-making process for it is represented in the EESC based on its sub-category. To date, their involvement in the policy making process has not been enough as the EU uses a top-down approach on decision-making process. The process itself is not inclusive, transparent, and open, and they have not maximized its mobilization of expert knowledge in framing better policies (Radu, et al., 2012). The grassroot organizations, just like NGOs is supposed to have an advisory role in the EU decision-making process. But surprisingly, think tanks may have a greater role in the EU's decision-making process than it could be imagined. Many think tanks receive a particularly large share of their funding from EU bodies and private corporations. It is said that the think tanks were funded so they would contribute and help promote dialogue between the EU and its citizens. Think tanks organizations have a surprisingly close bond with EU main policy-making

bodies, especially to the European Council. It is usually focusing more on the direction of the EU with regard to the European integration and economic union. Though acting as a 'supervisory bodies' to the European Council, this research finds that think tanks are used to support and strengthen the stance of the European Council on this matter. However, research later found that think tanks have an undistinctive role with lobby groups in the EU decision-making process as it often takes sides and there is a substantial lack in its role in influencing decision-making process (Pautz & Plehwe, 2014). However, it is clear that they are shaping expectations and perceptions on EU policies.

Looking back to the concept of democracy which means how the citizens are involved in political decision-making process (Hatton, 2015), the EU should have had something to involve all its citizens to formally engage with the EU, and literally have a say on the EU. In 1979, when the EU was still under the name of European Community, for the very first time its citizens could directly elect their choice of representatives to the European Parliament. Elections is then set to be held regularly every five years ever since this first election (Directorate for European Affairs, 2014). The latest European election was in 2019, which took place from May 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>. The election process and techniques are mostly handled by national electoral laws and tradition with some common EU rules on Electoral Act of 1976 (European Parliament, 2020). The European Parliament have been strong in their communication game to promote European elections and encourage the EU citizens to vote for their own sake. By participating in the election, citizens use their democratic rights by directly choose their person of preference to represent their interests in the EU. This enables them to take part in Europe's future and gives the Parliament the legitimacy it needs to put their role into actions (European Parliament, 2020).

All the processes and efforts the EU have done in their decision-making process will not mean anything if the member states' national parliament do not

do its job on the implementation. National parliaments have an important role to implement the set legislation that have been adopted by the Commission. National Parliaments have a dependent role on decision adoption based on how the law is decided to be adopted. If a law is to be decided with a majority voting, it has a weaker power over the Council decisions, but if a law is to be decided unanimously, National Parliaments have a greater power over the Council decisions since it has considerable political and institutional significance and need active public opinion participations. The downside of National Parliaments' role in the EU's decision-making process is, it in reality is not involved in the drafting and decision-making process. Though it may formally express their reservations if they want to deal with that certain issue at national level, rather than EU level. But most of all the decisions that need to go through decision-making process are rigidly binding mandates and if National Parliaments impose any direct intervention it would bring decision-making paralysis for the EU (Micossi, 2008).

The EU's democracy is not all sunshine and rainbows as it may seem as it states. There are many critics and discourse for the EU's flawed democracy out there. The EU is perceived to be suffering a democracy deficit in its democracy culture and is inaccessible to ordinary citizens due to the complexity of its institutions and decision-making procedures. As seen from the above explanations, most of the external entities and actors outside the EU main bodies on decision-making process does not have any significant rule on influencing decision-making process. They can only act as advisory bodies, which in fact, is not very clear if their advice is even taken into account. This fact then led to the emergence of the EU's democratic deficit discourse.

The term democratic deficit is introduced for the first time by David Marquand in 1979 as a phenomenon where normal citizens of member states have limited access to EU institutions, the lack of citizens representative in EU

institutions and the lack of accountability of EU institutions (MILEV, 2004). Democracy deficit in the EU falls into two categories based on its lack of accountability nature, horizontal and vertical. The lack of accountability among the EU decision-making bodies (the Commission, Parliament, and Council) falls into the horizontal category whilst the lack of accountability of the European political elites towards the European citizens falls to the vertical category (Kim & Jung, December 2010). The facts that the development of the EU has been for the people rather than by and of the people; the culture of democracy in the EU that has been prioritizing European integration in stealth by its political leader; and that it has been accentuating output legitimacy over input legitimacy are the main reasons of the democratic deficit discourse of the EU (Lee, 2014).

Andreas Follesdal and Simonhix (2006) argued that even when the criteria of democracy on the EU cannot be compared like on nations, there is a 'standard version' of the democratic deficit to help assess the EU's democracy condition. It is said that the EU lacks substantive and process-oriented approaches to democracy. Which means, the EU's democracy, which should have been a government of, by and for the people, is not meeting it means. In policy-making process in the EU, even when its citizens have been represented by the Parliament, it is mainly dominated by executive bodies. This made the voices of the people meaningless as the drafting and implementation of policies are even isolated from national parliamentary scrutiny. As a result, the European Parliament's role is deemed to be too weak. The executive bodies of the EU become too powerful and decrease the power of national parliaments (Follesdal & Hix, 2006). At this point, EU institutions that have been targeted to be the cause of the EU's democratic deficit are executive bodies, namely the European Commission, the European Council, and the Council of the European Union. In consideration of which, these three institutions are equally inaccessible in their work and accountability.

Another phenomenon reflecting a democratic deficit in the EU is the voting system where EU citizens elect for their national government to sit in the European Parliament, even the competition is only between candidates from their country. This system for Follesdal and Hix is not a European election at all. They just basically elect their country personalities, not the EU personalities and parties at European level or the direction of the EU policy (Follesdal & Hix, 2006). The European integration dream of the EU also resulting in a policy drift from the citizens' preferences. As a result of this, many policies that has been adopted by the EU are not supported and welcomed by the majority of EU citizens and member states (Follesdal & Hix, 2006).

The failure of the EU to include European citizens in their decision-making process and the failure to involve actively external entities such as NGOs, grassroots organizations, think tanks, and national parliaments, and the failure to even integrate trust networks between its institutions and its citizen resulting in a democratic deficit, can be seen as the failure of its institutions' decision-making bodies (Lee, 2014). Now, let us talk about the afore-mentioned EU institution bodies which are equally guilty in contributing to the EU's democratic deficit. The European Council even though cannot pass laws or regulations, it – without anyone to intervene– sets the EU's agenda and directions on its own. The way they step up and take a lead in time of crisis without discussing what to do with other EU bodies does not reflect democracy at all (Benn & Worcester, 1991). The European Commission, whom the European citizens did not elect, could not even be elected by the citizens, and cannot be removed from its position is the one who cleared the ultimate decision-making process and just simply told member states what to do. In fact, their daily works were being taken care of invisible actors due to technical complexity of subject matters. How they work, how decisions have been made on their public sessions cannot be known to the citizens as it is only releasing press statements on the institution's position

on issues (Lee, 2014). The Council of the European Union, on the other hand which is held accountable to its nation, is not undertaking its deliberation and decision-making work. Its works are actually being taken care of by its working group, the Secretariat and COREPER. They take care of the Council's daily tasks and even working on the Ordinary Legislative Procedure dossier behind the scenes. Therefore, the Council is deemed to have a rather weak accountability and transparency (Lee, 2014).

On early 2020, the newly appointed president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen was holding a conference to launch a two-year consultative process to transform how the EU works and listen to the voice of its citizens. However, the expectations raised were not something the EU can easily achieve, instead, it could erode citizens' trusts and positive opinion on the union. This initiative, which was even only a preparative step was supposed to be an exercise to bottom-up approaches on its decision-making process where the European citizens are listened and could contribute to the debates on the future Europe. To everyone's disappointment, it turned out that the Council, the Commission, and the Parliament itself are fighting to be on the conference's driving seat. And none of them bother to foresee the participation of the European citizens other than European Trade Union and BusinessEurope. The participatory dimension for this conference plenary is only the agoras, and it was unclear how they will actually be run, moderated and their conclusions will be taken into accounts.

### **2.1.2 The European Union's Culture of Politics**

Politics is an inevitable aspect of human's life, and so it is in the EU's decision-making process. This subchapter will unravel the culture of EU's politics in decision-making process. In previous subchapter, it has been

discussed about the culture of EU's democracy, how democracy in the EU works systematically. But does everything really go as per planned? The EU's plan on how they execute decision-making process is no exception. As it does not only involve themselves, but also external entities, there must be some dynamics in their decision-making process.

As the main actor in the first step of decision-making process in the EU, the European Commission is the first institution that can be highlighted on its political practices on decision-making process. In formulating policy and law proposals, this institution undergone a series of internal and external politics dynamics to make sure its proposal is acceptable and agreeable, most importantly not going to get voted down in the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. In the European Commission, policy formulating process is played by the Directorate General as the key actor. Commissioners are divided as the political heads of Directorate Generals (DG) based on their field of expertise, they formally take decisions in the College of Commissioners -which is held once a week- and are responsible to defend their DG's interests towards their colleagues (Wonka, 2008). When President Commissioner asks certain DG to make a new law proposal, the DG staffs will work on it, independently or collaboratively with another subcommittee in their DG and other related DGs if needed (Robinson, 2014).

The process for a new law proposal making in the responsible DG is not as simple as it seems, there were several internal dynamics in the DGs. DG as administrative wing in the Commission consists of Directorates which staffs further are divided into Units. In most cases of new law proposal making, a new ad-hoc body is formed out of these staffs from all across the Directorates and/or Units to study and work together as working group to produce a new certain law proposal. DG staffs engaged in policy making process can be called as an AD category staff (hereafter will be mentioned as Commission officials). The new

law proposal the Commission officials have made will then be brought to their respective DG first to be reviewed. If their respective DG has approved their law proposal, it will be brought to the Commissioners' cabinets first to undergo some editing and filtering before it is referred to the Commissioners and the College of Commissioners (Egeberg, 2010).

The new law proposal will be discussed in the College of Commissioner meeting, in hopes that after the new law proposal is released to other EU policy-making institution bodies, other DGs will not be questioning the new law proposal as it is the final new law proposal that the Commission has agreed to release. Other DGs can tell their opinions and inputs in the College of Commissioner meeting if they feel like several aspect of consideration needs to be included. This being said, the DGs are supposed to be debating and questioning (if they have any) the new law proposal in the College of Commissioner meeting and if they feel the need to intervene and get involved in the new law proposal revision process. Once the new law proposal has been approved in the Commission level, it will be released to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union thereafter (Egeberg, 2010). While Commission officials work on the new law proposal and its revision, the DG officials normatively will actively support its administrative staffs in sounding the in the making law proposal to other EU institution bodies and interest groups in order to get as many expert inputs and feedbacks as possible. In the European Parliament, Commission officials will meet political and expert groups there to brief them on this matter and ask for their advice.

Under the Treaty on European Union, the Commission is to promote the general interest of the Union without any political or national considerations. However, research found that Commissioners, more often than not, will help to promote his DG's sectoral interest as long as it is in line with its party's and a broad domestic coalition in his country's interests and position (Wonka, 2008).



Taking the example of the Takeover Directive, which proposal always got militated even in the College of Commissioner, which was then eventually handed to Bolkestein (Dutch Commissioner) and saw success afterwards. This was because Bolkestein considered other Commissioner and DGs preferences when formulating a new proposal while still managing to bring it in line with his country's party-political elites' and economic constituencies' interests (Wonka, 2008). It is also visible in this case, that lobbying plays a significant role in policy-making process.

Lobbying plays a significant role in both policy-making and decision-making process in the EU. The policy-making stage is as important as decision-making stage for lobbyist to lobby key actors to give uninformed policymakers and actors the private information they might need about certain issues (which would benefit the lobbyist). In doing so, they must do it in the most strategic way possible for their information to be heard and considered by policymakers. This is because the primary goals of policymakers and lobbyist are different oftentimes (Crombez, 2002). In this discussion, the term lobbyist is referring to representatives of interest and/or pressure groups, and NGOs. It is important to keep in mind that the term lobbyist (for NGOs) here does not refer to selfish inside lobbying.

In the European Commission Directorate Generals, because they have a very limited staff and rather limited knowledge on specific fields, many of them involve interest group representatives when drafting proposals in their system of committees. This is deemed necessary because there might be several factors (unknown to the policymakers because they are not practitioners in those fields) intervening the goal of their proposed policy. So, to prevent this in the early stage, policymakers need lobbyists' knowledge and private information in certain fields. Lobbyists, on the other hand, is more than happy to give their insight and knowledge on the field to the DGs. After all, they do this to influence

policy outcomes to be decided in the direction they favour in certain areas. With doing this advocacy role, lobbyists can maintain a close relation with DGs that will benefit their political bargaining power and pursuit of goals (Eising & Lehringer, 2010). Lorenzo (2003) found that the European Commission promotes informal contact with interest groups to extract information needed to better their proposal and to prevent national administrations from rejecting the proposal.

The lobbying process in the EU legislative procedure can be divided into two stage: proposal and vote stage. While the policymaker is drafting law proposal, lobbyist (after observing the real situation first in certain field) will transmit information it has on that field to policymakers. However, lobbyist can modify their information to converge its goals and the policymakers' (Crombez, 2002). Thereafter, when the policymaker finally proposes a new law, the lobbyist will shift to transmit their information to the voters (notably in this sense, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union) and advise them to vote against or in favour with it. In this stage however, their lobbying activity is not as intense as they do to the European Commission, since the European Parliament is naturally in favour with those policies that will benefit its citizens and more responsive to diffuse interests (Eising & Lehringer, 2010). It is important to keep in mind though that European interest groups seldom directly lobby the Council and its administrative (COREPER and working groups). This is because national lobbyist usually has taken care of this matter, as the Council is originally representing their nation. More often than not, the Council's policy position is found to be evolving along national demands.

To date, there are more than 3,000 lobbyist groups who had a permanent office in downtown Brussels, representing various interests and field such as think tank, health, animal rights activists, farmers, corporate, human rights, environmentalists, public consultation firm, and many more. According to the

data from EU transparency register, there are approximately 861 lobby and law firms, 5633 corporates, 974 trade unions, 3360 NGOs, 933 think tanks, 52 religious, and 560 public authorities registering to the EU as a lobbyist. Among those number, only 10% of them having an office in Brussels and hold at least one European Parliament access pass and has had one or more meeting with European Commission officials (LobbyFacts, 2021). In 2000, about one-third of the lobbyist groups is from European trade federations; one-fifth from commercial consultants; and companies, European NGOs, and national business or labour associations each fill 10% of the populations, while international organisations and regional representations 5% and think tanks 1% (Lehmann & Bosche, 2003). All these numbers though, do not represent the actual number of lobbyist groups as it is very hard to keep the number on track due to the complexity and lack of transparency in identifying lobbyist groups.

Despite the large number and varieties of groups in lobby groups' representation in the EU, it is highly dominated by business related interest groups with it filling almost three-quarter of the lobby groups' representation in the EU. Business related interest groups are even considered as the most important social partner in the EU and are given a platform called social dialogue to provide technical information, declare their position, suggest an action, and be involved in policy-formulating process as well as the implementation of the policies (Eising & Lehringer, 2010). This made business related interest groups to have better access to EU institutions, as well as facilitating them with greater influence than other interest groups. In contrast with it, diffuse-interest groups, which fill relatively small numbers of the lobby groups representative tend to lack of social control and members that have strong incentives to 'jump in' and stuff their opinion to EU institutions. This might be said that the primary focus of EU market integration might be the cause of under-representation of diffuse-interest groups. Greenwood and Aspinwall suggested that the EU system of

representation lacks objectivity, and it appears to be strongly biased in favour of economic interests (Greenwood & Aspinwall, 1998). This resulted in weakening non-business interest groups, ultimately diffuse ones such as religious, social, human rights, consumers, and environmental. Though the Parliament and the Commission have tried to improve this by funding them so they could participate in decision-making process, it is still not clear how much fund do they are offered and what influence it has on them.

People might wonder how business-related interest groups have that much influence and power to be heard by EU institutions. Study of David Coen found that they spent as many resources to European interest groups as to the national interest groups, and directly approach and build private connections with the Commission. This makes them, business interest groups, which have rather larger capital have more powers to be involved and represented in the EU decision-making process (Hix, 2005).

In the EU politics of decision-making process, political parties also play a role in influencing the process as an inherent part of the European Parliament. In the Parliament, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are categorized based on their political groups. There are seven political groups consisting of the European Parliament now. But there are also some MEPs which do not have political affiliation and thus called as a non-attached member. Although not as significant as lobby groups, they help national actors and EU decision-making bodies align their goals, aggregate and communicate national policy preferences, and hold politicians accountable (Lindberg, et al., 2008). In influencing the EU politics in decision-making, political parties do not directly influence the decision-making process. Instead, it influences the selection of the members of the European Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament. It influences the European Parliament in controlling the distribution of officials inside the legislature to cater their interests. But it must be noted that even though

political parties do this, there cannot be any partisan leadership official who can provoke the others to vote in a certain way. Even though partisan voting pattern in the European Parliament is a common phenomenon, the reason behind it still cannot be determined, whether it is of their national party's influence, transnational party group's influence, or just their personal preferences. This can be said, political party influence is rather advocational limited.

In the past ten years, the political group with the greatest number of MEPs is Group of the European People's Party (EPP). Ever since the 2009 election to the latest 2019 election, EPP and Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) has always almost had a tie in every election with the S&D came in second place with the greatest number of seats in the Parliament (European Parliament, 2019). The EPP is a centre right political party with a goal to create a more competitive and democratic Europe (EPP Group, 2021). It highly supports financial market reformation; believes in euro as an assurance for political stability and international competitiveness; focuses on the big issues while leaving the smaller issues to the member states; highly in favour with SMEs businesses, family firms, start-ups, private investment, et cetera that fosters the advancement of economic growth; committed to invest in education, research and technology; strives for sustainable growth based on a competitive and innovative environment respecting economy; demands greater and more assertive cooperation on border management; highly respect citizens' data privacy; in favour with further EU enlargement; and many more (See EPP Manifesto 2014 Elections for more) (EPP, 2014). From their commitments, it can be said that they are in the pro EU integration category. In the European Parliament 2009-2014 term, EPP voted down on three proposals, namely Euratom Framework, Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), and Taxes on Carbon Emissions (Nissen, 2014).

The Council of the European Union, a legislative body in the EU institutions which acts as the key actor of decision-making in the EU, consists of several configurations based on its specialization sector. There are ten configurations in which related Ministers from 27 member states manage a specialized policy area, namely, General Affairs Council configuration (GAC), Foreign Affairs Council configuration (FAC), Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN), Justice and Home Affairs Council configuration (JHA), Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council configuration (EPSCO), Competitiveness Council configuration (COMPET), Transport, Telecommunications, and Energy Council configuration (TTE), Agriculture and Fisheries Council configuration (AGRIFISH), Environmental Council configuration (ENVI), and Education, Youth, Culture, and Sport Council configuration (EYCS). They meet based on the needs and urgency and will be assisted by preparatory in their meetings. In the said meeting, they will work together to reach a common solution on the problems they were currently working on by using a system of vote (Council of the European Union, 2020).

The Council of the EU's voting dynamics can also be considered as a part of political process in the EU's decision-making process. The Council has three voting system that will be used based on the issue discussed. The voting system used when discussing voting on legislative proposal is qualified majority voting (QMV). This voting system requires 55% or minimum 15 member states to be in favour on the proposed law and 65% or more European populations to be in favour with the proposed law from the Commission or the High Representative. However, the counting system for QMV is based on member states' voting weights (which is based on the size of member states' populations). Here are the voting weights of each member state: Germany 18,54%, Romania 4,31%, Greece 2,39%, Hungary 2,18%, Bulgaria 1,55%, Ireland 1,11%, Croatia 0,91%, Latvia 0,43%, Cyprus 0,20%, Austria 1,98%, Belgium 2,58%, Czech

Republic 2,35%, Denmark 1,30%, Estonia 0,30%, Finland 1,23%, France 14,97%, Italy 13,58%, Lithuania 0,62%, Luxembourg 0,14%, Malta 0,11%, Netherlands 3,91%, Poland 8,47%, Portugal 2,30%, Slovakia 1,22%, Slovenia 0,47%, Spain 10,56%, and Sweden 2,30% (EU, 2021). This voting system of the Council is unjust and prone to fostering inequality of voice. If 24 member states with smaller populations voted in favour with certain policy but got boycotted by member states with large populations such as Germany, France, and Italy, the policy will automatically be unadopted. In this matter, those member states with large populations can be seen as the determinant actor for policy adoption.

As Council configurations are contingent, the Council will need some permanent staff to assist them in their operations. This is where the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) works; preparing for Council meetings and getting involved in intensive discussion with other member states to take initiative and make a way for agreement. Each member state is given EU ambassador and a deputy who will act as a bedrock in Brussels for the member states, equipped by specialists of different policy sectors from their national ministries. Besides COREPER, the Council also has approximately 200-250 working groups to maintain their daily tasks. The working groups are specifically assigned to examine new law proposal from the Commission and negotiate with the Commission officials to decide the future of the new law proposal (Lewis, 2010).

## **2.2 Swedish Culture of Democracy and Politics**

### **2.2.1 Swedish Culture of Democracy**

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy as their governmental system. This means, a King or Queen is considered as the head of state and a Prime Minister as the head of government. Nonetheless, the

Swedish monarchy does not have any political power and affinity, the monarch duty is only as a representative of the country for ceremonials (Swedish Institute, 2020). Sweden has a *Riksdag* (a Swedish word for the Swedish Parliament), the Parliament acts as a legislative institution, whom the public choose every four years to represents Swedes at national level. Its duty, beside to pass legislation, includes to appoint a Prime Minister to governs Sweden. After the Prime Minister has been appointed by the Speaker of the *Riksdag* and voted by the parliament, s/he then is tasked to form a government of ministers according to their own area of expertise and responsibility. Sweden has a Constitution as an ultimate guideline for its country, it rules before all the other laws and no other law can be made deviate from it. The constitution covers about Swedish form of government (The 1974 Instrument of Government), the people's fundamental freedoms and rights (the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression), succession to the throne (The 1810 Act of Succession), and freedom of expression and of the press (The 1949 Freedom of the Press Act) (Regeringskansliet, 2014).

Sweden is governed at three levels, nationally, regionally, and locally as defined by the 1992 Local Government Act. At the national level, the institutions in charge of decision-making process are Riksdag and the Government (Prime Minister and Ministers). At regional level, the highest decision-making actors are the county council assemblies. At local level, the highest decision-making actors are the municipal councils. With the Riksdag as the supreme decision-making body in Sweden, the county council and regions are given the autonomy to oversee healthcare, while the local government and administrations are given the autonomy and responsibility for public services. This tradition of governing systems, namely local self-government is deemed necessary in Sweden for democratic implementation as it believes that local government could best meet local needs. Besides, it is easier for citizens to access decision-making in local



level. They can easily gain access to local politicians and scrutiny their accountability for politicians' decision. This also improves their involvement in provisions in their county council or municipality, and the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision according to their particular needs (Dehlin, 2017).

This subchapter will be focusing on discussing the decision-making process in national level and the Riksdag and Government roles in it. Decision or law-making process in Sweden is driven by the Government. They will create and amend law they deem necessary and seek for the Riksdag support and approval to implement any policies. Their duties include to submit legislative proposals to the Riksdag, implement decisions taken by the Riksdag, execute budget directions according to the Riksdag approved Budget Bill, represent Sweden in the EU, engaging in agreement efforts with other states, provide instructions and directions for central government activities, and take decisions in administrative matters (Regeringskansliet, 2014). The Government has the prerogative to adopt rules binding all Swedish citizens without having to propose it first to the Riksdag and seek for their approval, this rule is known as ordinances. (Sveriges Riksdag, 2019)

While the Government proposes new laws or law amendments, the Riksdag as the sole legislator take decisions and approve or pass law proposals. The Riksdag through its Speaker will forward the proposal submitted by the Government to a respective parliamentary committee. The proposal will then be examined in a more detailed way and the parliamentary committee will propose a position on what decision should the Riksdag take. Thereafter, the Riksdag will hold a debate in the Chamber and present their members' opinions on the parliamentary committee proposal. The parliamentary committee's proposal will then be voted to be adopted. The Riksdag member can also propose new laws or

amendments to the Riksdag, known as private members' notion (Sveriges Riksdag, 2019).

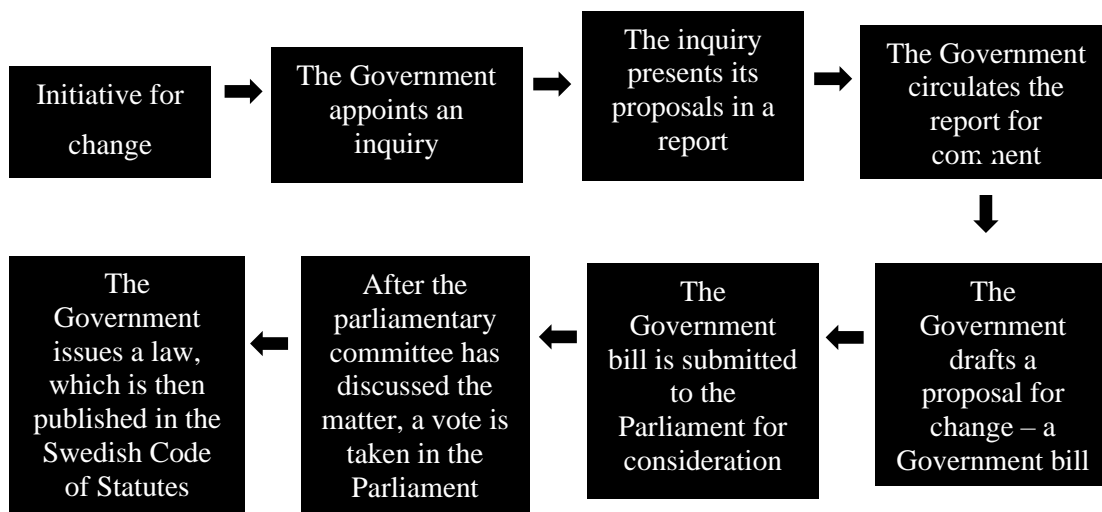
In common legislative process, when the Government proposes laws and the Riksdag either approves or rejects it, the plot of policy or law formulation process is as explained next. Government initiates a legislative change, most of the time it is the Government that initiates a legislative change when they see an issue or problem to be fixed. But before it can propose any new laws proposal, it must do an investigation through an inquiry chair or committee to better analyse, evaluate and understand the issue. The Government will appoint an inquiry to run investigation on the matters with terms of references laid down by the Government. The inquiry committee, consisting of experts in the fields, public officials, and politicians will then work together and operate independently from the Government to examine and report on the issue. The inquiry committee will then present its proposals in an inquiry report based on their investigation findings and the proposals will be published and made available to the public as part of a series called the Swedish Government Official Reports (SOU) or Ministry Publications Series (Ds) if the inquiry was carried out by a government ministry (Ministry of Justice, 2007).

Before the Government makes new laws proposals based on the inquiry reports, the report is forwarded and circulated to relevant consultation bodies such as public agencies, local government authorities or other bodies, non-governmental organisations, private individuals, and everyone who may be affected with the upcoming proposals to seeks their opinions on it. When everyone who may be affected have submitted their opinions in three months, the Government adopts a position on the inquiry report and through responsible ministry will draft a proposal for change (called a Government bill) that will be proposed to the Riksdag according to the result of inquiry report and publics' opinion on it. Before sending their proposals to the Riksdag, the Government

need to consult their proposal to the Council on Legislation to see if their new proposals conform with the existing legal system, laws, and constitutions. If there is nothing colliding with the new proposals, the Government will submit their bill to the Riksdag (Ministry of Justice, 2007).

At the Riksdag, when a proposal submission has been received, the Speaker will table this proposal at the Chamber and forward it to the related committee to be examined in a more detailed way. The committee will decide their stand and propose what decision should the Riksdag take in a report proposal. This report proposal will be put to the Chamber to be debated and approved. If the proposal is approved by single majority decision to be adopted, the Government bill will become a law. The Government will issue the law which proposal has been adopted by the Riksdag and the law will be published in the Swedish Code of Statutes (SFS) (Sveriges Riksdag, 2019).

**Figure 2.2.1**  
**The process leading to a new law**



*Source: Swedish Ministry of Justice, 2007*

In their everyday decision-making process, Sweden wants all their citizens and residents to have a say and be involved. In doing so, general elections, regional and local elections are being held every four years. Swedish voters aged 18 and above are entitled to vote in the three elections, while foreign Swedish resident can vote in regional and local elections as long as they are citizens of other EU or Nordic countries who have been registered in municipality or county and citizens of other countries who have been registered in municipality or county and in Sweden as a resident for the last three years. People who are entitled to vote may as well be nominated by a political party to stand for election (Dehlin, 2017). In general elections to the Riksdag, citizens vote for their party of preferences and the number of vote a party gets will determine the seats in the Riksdag the party gets. After the number of seats are set, the seats will be distributed evenly for 29 constituencies. As a result, members of parliaments will be appointed to represent a certain constituency might not actually originated from or reside there (Sveriges Riksdag, 2021).

In Sweden, work for democracy is never finished. There will always be room for improvement. Democracy is not something that can be finished in one go. It is a process which will always be on going. There are even discourses about how Sweden can improve their citizens' involvement in decision-making process. Sweden has many traditions of democracy that put forward public participation, local government, equal rights, and freedom of information as their main concerns. Aside from participating in elections, external actors (citizens, opposition, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, media, and civil society organizations) can also be involved in the Swedish decision-making process through several ways.

There are five different levels of participation in decision-making process for citizens to be involved in local government (Dehlin, 2017). They are information, consultation, dialogue, involvement, and co-decision making. In

dialogue level, citizens are given the opportunity to engage in dialogue on contemporary issues. Here everyone has the same opportunity to make their voices heard and present argument and point of view in the matter. In involvement level, citizens could participate for a long time and are involved in the development process of a proposal. In co-decision making, the elected authorities delegate their responsibility to a committee or board.

Like every other countries and its government, Sweden also has opposition parties in their ruling government. In Sweden, opposition parties have a rather significant influence on policy formulating and policymaking process as they are also involved in the legislative process. This rooted in Swedish value of *representativeness* in its democratic and political culture where powers are shared with opposition parties as government is perceived to be representative for the people and thus, should represents all walks of life (Lewin, 1998). The opposition parties should be involved in policymaking process in order to forms part of a wide-range consultation which has been the key element in Swedish open style of government (Arter, 1990). The involvement of opposition parties on policy formulating and policymaking process also rooted from Swedish model of minority government where the parliament and the government need support from opposition parties to keep them strong. It is important to keep in mind that the function of the government does not necessarily get affected by the opposition parties, but it needs to seek opposition parties' support to pass their agenda and maintain its position. However, this does not happen just naturally, there are some reciprocal benefits both sides are going to have and fulfil. In this case, opposition parties are going to attain political influence in policymaking process in return for their support for the government (Christiansen & Damgaard, 2008).

Then one of the questions would probably arise is how opposition parties really influence legislative process. Opposition parties have two ways to

influence legislative process, indirectly and directly. It indirectly influences legislative process if the government anticipates their reactions and adjust it to their policies immediately. If not, then opposition parties would have an opportunity to directly influence Swedish legislative process through alternative majorities or negotiated agreements. This is where the opposition parties often do not agree with the government legislative initiatives and how they worked towards resolving it. In alternative majorities, the government will admit their defeat and have the government then ruled by an alternative majority. In negotiated agreements, however, opposition parties are agreeing to support the ruling party. This is what happens in Sweden for almost decades. In the 1980s, Social Democrat who has dominated Swedish politics joined in hands with Left Party Communists to rely on their support. In 1990s, it was cooperating with Centre Party for financial and security & defence policies by supporting the party appointed with several political advisors. And in 2000s, it started to cooperate with both Green and Left Party (Christiansen & Damgaard, 2008).

Swedish society and people culture has always been based on the development of science and technology. She is to be said as the EU member state with the highest share in terms of brain business jobs with 9% of the working age populations are employed in knowledge intensive field, one of which is in research and development field (Sanandaji & Fölster, 2017). There, developments have been relying heavily on science and technology, resulting to a highly advanced society who has been using scientific findings as their base of development. This also applies to their everyday life aspects and certain situation such as their political and economic cultural situations. In Swedish society, research, science, and technology is not centred exclusively within universities. It is accessible for the society through multiple medium and channels, few of which are what called as think tanks where experts, researchers, epistemic communities are working closely together about the latest issues on multiple

fields. Studies show that Sweden has the most think tank population in Scandinavia and ranked 16 in the world's country with the largest number of think tanks (McGann, 2021). Think tanks there compete in influencing decision making and are part of the social structure of the society and its government.

Think tanks in Sweden has various political landscape and ideological profile and background. Some of them are known as political advocacy organisations focusing on research and policy advice, some are more focused on being an expert insider in policy debates, and some others are focused on playing a role as mediator in an elite consensus and mobilizing public opinion. This wide range of think tank characteristics made it a little bit hard to be defined. All in all, the Swedish think tanks existing now are commonly acting as actors attempting to produce and disseminate knowledge in order to reach consensual orientation of policies. They are by the Swedish media and public perceived as advocacy organizations with confrontational political role in public policymaking (Allern & Pollack, 2020). With that being said, this research defines think tank as research institutions that attempt to produce and disseminate knowledge to reach consensual orientation policies and influence policymaking process.

In Sweden, think tanks are founded to contribute to maintain negotiation, consensus making and reasoned debate in Swedish policymaking central values. Some of them are focused on giving advice in certain areas such as environmental and climate policy, education and research policy, security issues, European affairs, and welfare policy. They act as actors that preserve consultation, cooperation, compromise and consensus in Swedish policymaking process. Some of the privately funded think tanks act as political interest representations in front of the media and seems to go beyond direct interaction with decision-makers (Kelstrup, 2020).

Another significant actor in Swedish policymaking process is NGOs. It is regulated on Chapter 7, Article 2 of the Instrument of Government (Refereringsform) that NGOs have the rights to be included in decision-making process by being given the opportunity to express their opinions and comments on the government's proposals and activities (Sweden, 2016). Before Swedish citizens were given the rights to participate in democratic practice, NGOs was developed to be used as the people's medium to participate in democratic practice. Now, as Sweden is seeking to extend their role in international development cooperation, it supports Swedish, international, and local NGOs through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). As most of the NGOs are helping Sweden with its development cooperation goals, in return, they are entitled an important role in the development assistance policy and some other NGOs are also entitled an important role in some field of policies (Onsander, 2007).

NGOs in Sweden can be said as important advisory and supervisory actors in legislative process. In late 1980s to early 1990s, Swedish NGOs concerning about the forest industry and environment, exert their influence in Swedish policymaking process by collaborating with their counterparts in export markets to put pressure on the Swedish forest industry. They criticized the environmental impacts of its forestry practices in United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. This resulted in an adoption of a new Forest Policy by the Riksdag in 1993 followed by a new Forestry Act in 1994. At that time, it was a coincidence that the National Board of Forestry was experiencing budget cutbacks and thus their role in policy implementation had been reduced significantly. The situation then provided more room for NGOs to be involved in legislative process in environmental and forestry industry. The most prominent example of this was the establishment of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) working group by Worldwide Fund for Nature



Sweden, which eventually until now is used for forestry industry standard certification (in which, IKEA is to date refers to the FSC for their forest certification). From this case it is evident that the NGO had played a significant role in the Swedish legislative process in their own way (Elliott & Schlaepfer, 2001).

In Sweden, NGOs believe public should participate and be involved more directly in decision-making process. In influencing decision-making process, first NGOs will raise awareness. Second, they will 'lobby' actors that might be impacted with the issues. Third, they will 'brainwash' the actors involved to push governments to adopt a new 'positive' policy. And fourth, they -more often than not- will eventually be heard (Elliott & Schlaepfer, 2001). NGOs also played consultation roles in policymaking process by joining the committee forum where discussions are initiated there and information from the NGO sector is debated there with politicians and public authorities such as Ministers (Jacobsson & Johansson, 2007).

Media is an important aspect in Swedes' life as it is constituted in the 1949 Freedom of the Press Act. Transparency, equality and popular support are important values in the Swedish democracy and political culture (Pettersson, 2014). These all can be reflected through the media system in Sweden. However, media literacy plays part in engaging citizens to participate in the country's democracy and is the key to full development of freedom of expression and the right to information. A great media literacy in a human being will bring his participation and active citizenship to the public sphere. Here, with a guaranteed freedom of expression and right to the information, citizens will be involved in an intercultural dialogue continually, which then up forms participatory democracy (Tornero, 2008). Internet penetration in Sweden is high, and this resulted in encouraging Swedes to be more knowledgeable and proactive in Swedish democracy and political situations. Research shown that media literacy

plays part in providing facts which then in return, influencing the citizens' choice of their participation in democracy (Petersson, et al., 2006).

When in few other countries media is being used to shape public opinion towards policies, in Sweden media stands independently from any political influences and affiliations and thus have their own prerogative to their contents. This resulted in increasing media influence in politics towards greater mediatization where mass media increased its influence and importance in opinion formation based on facts and newsworthiness (Strömbäck & Nord, 2008). Swedish media is then consisting of public and interest groups preferences and/or opinion. Study by Rasmussen, Romeijn and Toshkov found that even though Swedish media acts as a platform for public to express their opinion and voice, and acts as an advocate, it does not have that much effect in policymaking process (Rasmussen, et al., 2018).

When public strongly express their dislikes on a proposal on certain issue, the Riksdag and government might adopt policy reflecting its wishes. However, when public express strong support for a proposal, it does not necessarily mean a policy change will be adopted. Nevertheless, it does bring more discussion of the issue in the Riksdag. Media's role as advocate does not have a significant role either in policymaking process as there has been very low political attention casted when the media is in favour with the status quo. Uniquely, research has also found that politicians sometimes managed to find ways to accommodate media's pressure but without changing the grand policy. This research pointed out that even though Swedish politicians are aware of and responsive to public preferences, they are not always able or willing to put that preferences into action (Rasmussen, et al., 2018).

Unlike any other countries, Sweden has particularly significant political affinity with civil society organization (CSO). As it is known, Sweden is a welfare state where their entire social and economic system lies in the

importance of their people's well-being. It has been the culture in Sweden that society is close to one another, leading them to have unique ways in facing and dealing with social issues and problems with socialist approach. It is manifested further in their affinity towards in the creation and participation of CSO in their decision and policymaking process. In order to preserve the Swedish welfare state model, the Swedish government goes hand in hand with CSO for example employers and labour unions in their policy formulating and decision-making process (Carlson & Hatti, 2016).

Sweden's relationship with CSO is to be said as a trust-based mutual dependency thus resulted in a relationship characterized by consensus. There also has been a high degree of formal membership and engagement between the CSO and the Swedish policymaking process (Lundberg, et al., 2011). This relation is rarely found in other countries (except other Scandinavian and Nordic countries), where there are particular actors and groups that can affect policies rather significantly. Those fallen into this category are trade unions, round table businesses, export groups, and interest groups. This phenomenon can be explained by corporatism where policy processes from the formulating, making and implementation are involving continuous and structured participation of CSO (Molina & Rhodes, 2002).

Corporatism in Sweden can be characterized by CSOs taking responsibility for public policy based on their participation, bargaining, pragmatism, and consensus. CSOs are given the platform and opportunity in cooperating with the government to work together to manifest Swedish welfare state model. Corporatism here can be categorized into two parts, preparation corporatism and implementation corporatism. Corporatism has been linked with consensual, negotiation, centralized and inclusive democracy. In preparation corporatism, consensual politics are being facilitated, and thus foster consensus in the legislature as major political parties and its allies are involved in policy

preparation. Whereas the implementation corporatism focuses more on consensual democratic institutions, meaning corporatism are being used by the government to secure inclusion and interests so policy implementation would not be thwarted by veto. In Sweden, it works both ways. CSOs use this tradition of corporatism as a strong inclination to fuse their influence in policy preparation and formulating, and policy implementation. However, the government have more control over the process of policy preparation instead of the policy implementation (Christiansen, et al., 2010). Structurally, corporatism refers to the centralized policymaking by incorporating interest intermediation. It relies heavily on central-level bargaining and high governability. This means, interest intermediations are involved publicly in policymaking process in central national level under the scrutiny of the government, according to their responsible and/or expert of policy (Traxler, 2004).

### **2.2.2 Swedish Culture of Politics**

The Swedish culture of politics, in fact is so close with its culture of democracy. This subchapter will unravel Swedish culture of politics in decision-making process. How the Riksdag, and the Government work together in policy making process; how corporatism facilitates and involves interest associations in policy formulating and decision-making process; how civil society organizations are being accommodated on decision-making process; how the voting system works in Swedish decision-making process; and what's the political parties' role in Swedish culture of politics.

Previous subchapter have discussed about the institutions involved in Swedish decision-making process and their roles in it. Now, this part will discuss how they actually get to work together, discussing and debating the proposals, and the political dynamics of Swedish decision-making process. The political

culture of Sweden is based on egalitarian foundations where all people have equal rights and opportunities. However, Swedes are more in favour with representative model of politics rather than to be directly involved individually in politics. Their trusts for the Swedish politicians and political parties are high (as the citizens feel represented by them) and they are completely fine with letting the politician and political parties decide on public affairs (Wee, 2018). This resulted in a double-sided Swedish culture of politics; one is where the strong governmental centralization takes place, and the other one is where civil society organizations of any significance are organized into three level that will further be centralized within super organizations in national negotiations in decision-making process (Anton, 1969).

In deciding policies concerning Swedish people's everyday life, the Government and the Riksdag are only tasked to take centralized decisions. More detailed and comprehensive rules and implementations scrutiny are then in the hand of individual municipalities and county councils as they are deemed to be more relevant and up to date regarding each municipalities' and county councils' needs. Therefore, after the Riksdag have passed proposal laws and decisions have been taken to be applied at the national level, the regional and local governments (they work separately as their area of works are different) will then formulate decisions to be applied to their respective local or regional government according to the decisions the national government has made. In implementing and formulating crafted decisions according to the local or regional needs, dialogue between citizens and politicians is always on going. Citizens can meet individual or organizational politician and have conversations around the topic they are concerned. These kinds of dialogues are open anytime for citizens and are necessary for the politicians as a useful basis for their decisions. This way, local and regional politicians are enabled to gain broader knowledge and insight on what their citizens' value and needs, which in the

future will be useful as the basis for their decisions on important matters (Dehlin, 2017).

At national level, the politics in decision-making process often take place in the Riksdag. Common legislative process in fact also has the Riksdag be involved in commissions of inquiry, not only on the ‘negotiating’ process of law proposals (Arter, 1990). Hence the possibility of a proposal law to be rejected by the Riksdag are rare to be found. Not to mention, the commission of inquiry has the insight, knowledge, and preferences of several actors of representative weighted in their reports and the Government bills are most of the times have been adjusted to the public comments. Even so, the law proposals still need to be examined by the parliamentary committee and be debated and decided in the Chamber. After the Government passes their bill to the Riksdag, or private members’ motions have been tabled, it will be referred to a respective parliamentary committee to be examined and considered. The committee will hold a closed committee meeting with various political parties’ representations in the committee to negotiate their stance on the proposals and will then adopt a position as a recommendation for the Riksdag on what decisions should they made in a committee report form (Sveriges Riksdag, 2020). The committee can also hold public hearings to gather information on certain subjects from expert groups, interest groups, and other civil society organizations’ representatives. So, in Sweden, CSOs do not have to makeshift their way to make sure their perspectives are being catered. It is the representatives that will reach out to the people they represented in the Riksdag. The people can take part in the public hearing on location or via the Riksdag webcast service. The members of the Riksdag also pay attention to the information and developments in society to make sure they take the best decisions they could. To fulfil this, most of them has integrated research to their work by maintaining close contact with research community (think tanks and epistemic community). They also tried their best to

participate in seminars and conferences on current research or may even arrange seminars on their own and invite researchers to participate (Sveriges Riksdag, 2020). As the research and development, and technology in Sweden are developing rapidly, this is only the bare minimum they could do to keep them updated on the society's trends and needs.

The Chamber, where the 349 members of the Riksdag meet and debate on items of parliamentary business in plenary meetings, led by the Speaker will then discuss widely among the members of parliament on what should they decide on that proposal. It is not impossible that several parties represented in the Riksdag would have different opinions and foster a hot debate. The opposing members in turn are also eligible to ask for reservations and propose a counterproposal instead. The counterproposal, if possible, may be set against the committee's proposals in time of voting (Sveriges Riksdag, 2021).

When it's time for members of parliaments to vote on their discussed matters, a signal will be belled throughout the Riksdag so they all can get back to the Chamber and vote on the matter in their seats. If no one opposes when the Speaker asks if the Chamber approves the Committee's proposal, the Speaker will verify the answer as yes and confirms the decision by acclamation. If a member wishes the Chamber for the matter to be voted, he/she can demand a vote to be held. The Clerk of the Chamber will then start the procedure by reading the proposal to hold a vote. Each member then needs to cast their vote, according to their preferences of the committee majority or counterproposal. They can vote with a 'Yes', 'No', or 'Abstain' and the result will be displayed on the screen. Each member has the same voting weight, which is one vote per one person (Sveriges Riksdag, 2021). This way, there is no voting inequality between members and each constituency is represented equally. Most of the decisions are agreed through consensus which was obtained through communication, discussion, and debates. And more often than not, decisions are

agreed through consensus because the proposal has been examined by a parliamentary committee which consists of members expertizing in the respective field. However, if a member deemed a vote is necessary to be held, then the vote is going to be held accordingly. Oftentimes, this will happen if there are parties in opposition, or if the policy concerns sensitive and/or specific issue.

As a parliamentary democracy, political parties in Sweden are paramount. They are the actors upholding the chain of delegation in parliamentary democracy, and most of the political parties are centralised, cohesive and policy oriented. As discussed earlier in this subchapter, Swedes' trust on political parties to act as their representative are relatively high. Political representation in Sweden of social classes and certain interests has relatively been stable over the years (Wee, 2018). Therefore, the political parties elected for minimal 4% are given the power and authority to be involved in the decision-making process through their members in the Riksdag. By the 4% rule, a political party needs to receive at least 4 per cent of the votes in an election to be assigned a seat in the Swedish parliament and to be involved in Swedish decision-making process. Once political parties have secured their seats, all the Government bill, proposal of new policies and policy changes need to be discussed and got the representative members' approval to come into force. Albeit it is important to keep in mind that political parties are in no ways have the rights to pass proposals and laws only accordingly to their likings as they are aware that their job is as a representative for the people, and they are held accountable for every action they took.

Since 1990, the Riksdag has been ruled under minority government with the Social Democratic Party as the political party with the largest share of seats in it. It has been forming a coalition together with the Green Party since 2014 until now in governing Sweden, before the Moderates Party was in government



with the Centre Party, the Liberals, and the Christian Democrats in 2006 to 2014. Social Democrats as the country's oldest political party has been having the largest share of seats in the Riksdag since the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is referred as socialist. They support public sector focused solutions and policy and are in favour with policies and practices that promote people's well-being. This is where the idea of Swedish welfare state derived from. As the Social Democrats can be said to be the majority of the Riksdag, the policies the Riksdag generated has mostly been in favour with the Social Democrats' focus and goals. In an interview for the book written by Björck and Davidsson (2001), Social Democrats declared that their vision is to create a society which human is more important valued than market and they all have the right to have a job. This vision is a total egalitarian, resulting them to be promoting just society, financing free schools, healthcare, children care and elderly care by taxes. Their vision is very much in line with the Swedish society, it shares the primary traits and culture of Sweden and its people relating to their democratic practices, egalitarianism, openness, and socialism.

As the oldest political party, it feels like the Social Democrats is a mini-Sweden which equally focuses on the Swedes' well-being through an inclusive and large healthcare system, increased retirement pensions, reduced unemployment, promotes freedom, inclusivity, equality, human rights, and striving to be a society based on democracy. Through their platform on the internet (Socialdemokraterna, 2020), they have been clear about the main policies they support. These are policies concerning the welfare of the people such as inclusive healthcare for everyone despite their class, social and economic status; elderly care which main goals are to create a secure life for the elders; labour policies which promote decent working environment, conditions and benefits for all; justice and migration policies which focuses on abolishing violence, crime, as well as the causes of it; feminist national and foreign policies

which promotes real implementations and works for gender equality; and environment friendly policies which foster innovations that reduce emissions, promoting sustainable consumption, reducing of aviation emissions, and work towards green transitions.

Now, a question may have arisen as how political parties influence Sweden's decision-making process. The Swedish Riksdag has a very unique working culture where parliament members from the same party form a party group and through it, play an influential role in Swedish politics. They exert their influence by cooperating closely among themselves through consensual position in their position in their respective committees and in the Chamber. Every Tuesday, political party groups will meet and discuss all matters going on in the Chamber so they can take a final position in their committee or in the Chamber based on their party's stance that has been agreed consensually. They can also invite party members outside the Riksdag and experts supporting them in their discussion (Sveriges Riksdag, 2021).

It is easier for political parties to exert their influence when they are significantly in a coalition, and/or has the support of other parties. This makes it easier for them too, to shape Swedish political culture based on their values. For instance, the Swedish government bill of *pappamånad* (Daddy month) that came in force in 2016 was proposed by the ruling Social Democrat and Green coalition with the support of the opposition Left and Liberal parties (The Local, 2015). This policy was a realization of the Social Democrats' goals on promoting better gender equality in Sweden. Now, this policy is identified as one of the many Sweden's unique identity, it can even almost be said to be as Swedish as their blue and yellow flag. Even though the Social Democrats were not in a majority position that time, but with a coalition with the Green Party and with the support of the Left and Liberal parties, they can exert their influence on making a better gender equality practices in Sweden. However, this does not mean that the

political parties in coalition or with the support of others can smash the minority and do and decide as they please. They are just in a more strategic position to influence the policies the Government are going to take.

What's interesting about decision-making process in Sweden is the fact that it is not limited to the formal goal of the decision-making bodies solely. There are other actors whose opinion, view, and goals being considered when it comes to Sweden's decision-making process. For instance, lobbying groups or civil society organizations like interest groups, NGOs, grassroots organizations, trade unions are all being involved actively in policy formulating and decision-making process in Sweden. This practice in Sweden is called corporatism.

Sweden has a long history with its corporatism roots. Before World War I, Sweden has been practicing corporatism in their political system to solve conflicts between actors such as the working class, administrative apparatuses, political elites, and such by giving them channel to communicate and to be involved in public policy. This political representation system was at first intended to accommodate working population and their employers in hope by giving them a sense of representativeness, they would not contest the government at that time. Corporatist institutions then established at the local level starting 1902 governed by corporatively organized boards. Consisting of representative from both employers and working populations and headed by a neutral local official, it was operating under the city council. The corporatist institutions setting successfully remained neutral and cater both the working populations and employers' needs. Five years later, the national scheme for corporatist institutions were established and kept being developed and used broadly up to date. It is important to keep in mind, however, that this political representation system was neither developed to control the working class in Sweden nor it was also by working-class groups' own strength that they can be

‘involved’ in Sweden’s policy formulating and decision-making process (Rothstein, 1991).

Now, corporatism is not only covering the working-class groups and employers, but also covers to facilitate various civil society organizations. Civil society organizations in Sweden are being involved in Sweden’s decision-making process through negotiations and consultations (Anthonsen & Lindvall, 2009). Even though corporatism has been declining in Sweden since the early 1990s, this research would like to argue that in some senses, corporatism is still evident in today’s Swedish political system and culture. Albeit not as strong and as ‘corporate’ as it was, the sense of representativeness and inclusion of civil society organizations in policy formulating and decision-making process is still here. After all, those were the core value of early corporatism setting which underlie modern Sweden’s value of equality.

Since the practice of early corporatism has been declining, in the 90s decade, the presence of corporatist in Sweden’s decision-making process was gradually being replaced by interest groups, trade unions and CSOs -old and new social movements (later these organizations will be called as CSOs). They even had the power to shape public policies at that time to the point the Conservative party advocated that it would best if they were to stop being involved and represented in the boards of decision-making public sector agencies (Hoefler, 1994). These actors somehow are also referred as lobbyist groups in Sweden, acting as lobbyists who voice their represented members’ interest in Sweden’s political process. There is an interesting fact about Swedish CSOs though that need to be addressed here, that the number of these organizations in Sweden are almost as the same as the EU’s or maybe even more. In 2013 alone, there were almost 6200 CSOs in Sweden. Although, there is no definite number and data about them in any platform could be searched for now, and this might be because of that is evident in the Swedes’ life that there are that many civil organizations

in Sweden. Another interesting fact found by Scaramuzzino and his colleagues (2014) is that each citizen in Sweden is found to be members of several associations at the same time. In Sweden today, there are three popular occupational union confederation, namely The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), The Swedish Confederation of Employees (TCO), and The Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO). Data from OECD Stat shown the membership percentage or union density is 65% per 2018 (OECD, 2021).

Now, how and what do these organizations exactly do to influence the policy formulating and decision-making process in Sweden. They do it through advocacy, communications, and linking politicians with citizens. They played the role as political agents where they have the function of voice and advocacy which represents and conveys their membership groups to their respective constituencies and end goal actors (Trägårdh, 2010). They also played the role as critical reviewers and opinion makers (Arvidson, et al., 2018), where they are expected to scrutinise government policies and oversee the political project of the modern welfare state and to contribute towards the implementation of public policies. The relationship between CSOs and the state, unlike any other usual relationship between two actors in other countries, is reciprocal. Lundåsen (2010) found that at times, the state and CSOs collaboration are even deemed to be too close.

In its early days, corporatism was being practiced to preserve the status quo of the Government, now this research can argue that it has been the long-rooted culture of Sweden itself, that has slowly become its identity and cannot be separated from its political culture. More or less, the sense of representativeness remains the same, only that it has been shifting or maybe it can be said, that it has been broadening its focus of interests from labour-market to social security issues. Now, how and when exactly they are being involved,

and thus exert their influence in policy formulating and decision-making process? Well, this is another unique story of Sweden to tell.

Unlike in any other countries where the CSOs even need to ‘search’ to make their way to be heard and considered, in Sweden, they are being invited by the Government and political elites to take part in policy formulating and decision-making process. Government at various levels invite their representatives to join public committees and public boards to discuss and implement policies. While politicians and political parties too are eager to ask them to cooperate and form coalitions (Micheletti, 1995). In a normative manner, there are rules applied in Sweden’s corporatism approach, where representativeness is structured from the lowest level. It all began from citizen associations, which then formed association of associations in the local level, which then again formed association of associations in regional level, which then again formed association of association in national level, until it reached its peak organizations (the highest association of them all), whom usually are the one being in contact with the state and the Government doing all the fun stuffs of negotiating and advocating the political elites (Rothstein, 1991). This practice of representativeness later creates indefinite numbers of CSOs and thus increases competition between them to try to influence policy and politics from the inside and outside of the decision-making process. In which, this gradually resulted in the development of informal contact between the two sides (Garsten, et al., 2015).

Nowadays, it is common to see politicians and CSOs sitting together in an informal setting such as dinner, talking and negotiating about policies. The possibility of this phenomenon is high because Sweden is a small country where it is most likely for people to know each other. Sometimes they could get together in a business lunch informally, but is actually in the middle of lobbying (Ann Törnkvist, 2013). It is also common for politicians to set an agenda, targeted to gather CSOs like think tanks, scientific communities, labour

organizations, trade unions, expert groups, and such to be in tune with the society needs and trends and what can they do to fulfil their needs later. Baumgratner et al (2009) addressed this activity is categorized as grassroot advocacy activity, which are a commonly lobbying strategy and technique used by lobbyists. Sometimes they also do this when they are trying to get the society's perspective on certain policy they are developing at that time. Or to make sure they have done their best in their previous work to facilitate the society needs. Through the channels the Government and political elites have been providing for the CSOs, there they exert their influences by showing insider knowledge and proactively advocating strategies that the Government and Riksdag should take.

One of the most prominent examples of the Swedish unique case of CSOs and the public being invited by officials to an informal setting is the Almedalen political week. Almedalen political week has been taking place every July since 1968 where politicians, decision-makers, CSOs, business organizations, media or journalists, association groups, and individual citizens gather to build networks, educate people, set political agenda, go deeper into issues, and give opportunities for meetings (The Local Sweden, 2009). Here they meet informally, with short sleeves -even sleeveless, while partying, at breakfast tables, in late night restaurants, discussing any topic that could be the subject of political discussions. For instance, there was once a discussion of parents' association and local politicians discussing about land conversion. In this setting, there are approximately 2000 different seminars, hearings, speeches, and many more in one week. All of which are free to attend and attended by politicians and officials. It is even possible in this event, for the public to approach ministers, or prime minister, have a discussion and share what the public want (Lydia Parafianowicz, 2009).

As seen from Sweden's culture of democracy and politics, most of Swedes are always working proactively to look for ways for improvement. They

do not wait until problems arrived to work on matter and improvisations. They do not always wait for a political upheaval to happen in their country to involve their democracy and political practices. Though this is not always the case and there must be some shortcomings in the process, after all that is why they always seek for improvement. And in its culture of democracy and political culture, they also made it clear that their work towards a better democracy and political practices is not something that they will arrive and settle in the future, it will always be an on-going process of improvement.