



Evelien Willems

**FWO Junior Postdoctoral Researcher | Lecturer Political Science
– University of Antwerp**

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Bio

My research focuses on lobbying and interest representation in Belgium and other European countries. Specifically, I study the interplay between interest groups, public opinion, and public policy. The main questions I try to answer are when and how interest groups strengthen or weaken the connection between citizens' policy preferences and policy outcomes. I defended my dissertation on this topic in February 2021. I am currently developing this research agenda as an FWO junior postdoctoral fellow and additionally concentrate on how politicization dynamics impact policymaking processes. My methodological expertise includes content analysis of news coverage, legislation and government documents, and survey methodologies for statistical analysis purposes (R and STATA).

I am an active member of the ECPR Standing Group on Interest Groups and regularly participate in activities organized by the network of interest group scholars in the Low Countries.

During the academic year 2022-2023, I teach the introductory course Political Science (*'Politologie'*) in the Bachelor of Laws at the University of Antwerp.

Professional research experience

- March 2021 – present: Postdoctoral researcher – Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp
- January 2016 – February 2021: PhD candidate – Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp
- July 2014 – December 2015: Research assistant – Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp

Teaching & educational activities

- Lecturer Political Science (*'Politologie'*) (2022-2023), Bachelor of Laws – University of Antwerp
- Coaching of the close-reading sessions Issues in International Relations (2020-2022), Bachelor in Political Science – University of Antwerp

Other activities:

- Guest lecturer Lobbying in the European Union (2020 & 2022), European Public Affairs Master – Maastricht University
- Guest lecturer Interest Representation in the EU (2021), Master in European Studies & Master in Political Science – Université Libre de Bruxelles
- Guest lecturer Seminar on Lobbying & Interest Group Politics (2018-2019 & 2022), Master in Political Science – University of Antwerp
- Guest lecturer Political Actors & Behavior (2019-2022), Bachelor in Political Science – University of Antwerp
- Debate moderator European Integration (2015-2019), Bachelor in Political Science – University of Antwerp
- Student supervisor EUROSIM (2020), Master in Political Science – University of Antwerp

Thesis supervision

Currently, I supervise several master's theses in the political science programs of my department.

During the academic year 2020-2021, I co-supervised bachelor theses (group work) with Prof. dr. Jan Beyers in the Political Science program of my department. In addition, I also supervised four master's theses in the Comparative Politics program of Radboud University, Nijmegen.

Mentoring PhD students

I am informally acting as a mentor for Frederik Stevens, a PhD student and teaching assistant in the Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp. His dissertation analyzes interest groups' agenda-setting influence in the context of the European Green Deal.

Highlights of international activities

- Co-convenor, together with Tom Willaert (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Diliara Valeeva (Universiteit van Amsterdam), and Frederik Heylen (Datamarinier) of the workshop 'Digital Political Science: Bringing computational data gathering and analysis techniques to political science' at the 2023 Annual Political Science Workshops of the Low Countries
- Co-chair, together with Daniel Rasch (FernUniversität in Hagen), of the 2021 ECPR General Conference section 'The Times They are A-Changin': Interest Groups and Lobbying in Times of Societal and Political Change', endorsed by the Standing Group on Interest Groups
- Co-convenor, together with Moritz Müller, Caelesta Braun (Leiden University), and Sharon Belli (University of Antwerp) of the workshop 'Organized interests and the public interest: an imperfect relationship?' at the 2019 Annual Political Science Workshops of the Low Countries

Approved funding

- The road to advocacy success: Analyzing the mechanisms shaping issue-specific interactions among interest groups and policymakers

FWO Junior Postdoctoral fellowship (grantee number 12A8822N), October 2021 – September 2024

Publications

- Willems, E. (2022). No escape from the media gates? How public support and issue salience shape interest groups' news media prominence. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.
- Willems E., & Beyers, J. (2022). Public support and advocacy success across the legislative process. *European Journal of Political Research*.
- Rasmussen A., & Willems, E. (2021). Interest Groups, Public Opinion, and Political Representation. In: Harris P., Bitonti A., Fleisher C.S., Binderkrantz A.S. (eds.). *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Interest Groups, Lobbying and Public Affairs*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heylen, F., Willems, E., & Beyers, J. (2020). Do Professionals Take Over? Professionalisation and Membership Influence in Civil Society Organisations, *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 31, 1226-1238.
- Willems, E., Beyers, J., & Heylen, F. (2020). Interest representation in Belgium: Mapping the size and diversity of an interest group population in a multi-layered neo-corporatist polity. *Politics of the Low Countries*, 3, 32-72.
- Willems, E. (2020). Politicized policy access: The effect of politicization on interest group access to advisory councils. *Public Administration*, 98, 865-872.
- Willems, E., & De Bruycker, I. (2019). Balancing constituency and congruence: How constituency involvement affects positional congruence between organized interests and the general public. *Governance*, 34, 107-126.
- Heylen, F., & Willems, E. (2019). Writing blank checks? How government funding affects interest organisations' advocacy behaviour in a multi-layered context. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26, 863-882.

Dissertation

- Walking a tightrope between representing organizational constituencies and the general public: Analyzing interest groups' functioning as intermediaries between citizens and public policymaking.

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Jan Beyers & Prof. Dr. Iskander De Bruycker

Professional memberships

- ECPR Standing Group on Interest Groups
- ECPR Standing Group on the European Union
- Vereniging voor Politieke Wetenschappen

Science communication

- Discussion on the future of the Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen (SERV) with the daily management members, journalists, and academics (28/02/2023)
- #ExpeditionSocialSciences Instagram story on the Faculty of Social Sciences' account (December 2022)
- Panelist in the session on lobbying and the news media at the 'Nacht van de Lobbyist' in the Hague (10/11/2022)
- News article VRT NWS (12/07/2022): Uber-lobby zou taxidossier in Brussel sterk hebben beïnvloed, maar hoe gaan lobbyisten eigenlijk te werk?
- Lunch talks BePact & Hill+Knowlton
- Universiteit van Vlaanderen & associated opinion piece in Knack (30/08/2021): Is lobbyen legale corruptie?
- Podcast Politicologica: Wiens belang vertegenwoordigen lobbyisten?
- Press>Speak 2021: Onterecht negatief imago van belangengroepen in de politiek
- Newspaper article De Standaard (28/08/2019): Werking adviesraden is lang niet altijd duidelijk
- Newspaper article De Standaard (16/07/2018): Subsidiebeleid heeft sturende werking op politieke activiteiten Belgisch middenveld

Skills

- Quantitative data collection methods: content analysis, elite surveys and interviews, survey experiments
- Data management: web interfaces & SQL Server
- Data wrangling & statistical analysis: R, STATA
- Science communication
- Languages: Dutch (native), English (proficient), French (good passive knowledge)
- MS Office

Education

- 2013-2014: Master of Science in Political Science (distinction), University of Antwerp
- 2010-2013: Bachelor of Science in Political Science (distinction), University of Antwerp