Rationale
The role and position of interest groups in the European Union (EU) is widely debated in the media, in particular how these non-elected political actors affect the EU’s democratic legitimacy and deteriorate the transparency of its policymaking process. Moreover, the importance of group politics can hardly be underestimated as most theoretical approaches about European integration and European policymaking – ranging from neo-functionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism, supranationalism, to multi-level governance – emphasize in one way or another the relevance of interest groups. Furthermore, it is hard to imagine how the EU would operate without the informal involvement of non-state stakeholders. When the European Commission launches a new legislative initiative, this typically propels political activity of affected stakeholders as they mobilize to shape the outcome of the policy debate in their favor. In addition, the European institutions seek the expertise and support from organized interests and several EU-level interest groups have been established with the active support of the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Interest group mobilization in European’s multi-level and multi-institutional context is a complex affair however. To begin with, this context is never constant. Policy issues differ extensively in the level of attention they raise among the public, the scope of European competencies, their (technical) complexity and the conflict they cause among stakeholders. In addition to the varying complexity of policy issues, interest groups face a highly fragmented institutional environment. They can seek access to the European policy-making process through a wide variety of institutional venues at the European, the national level, and even the sub-national level. Hence, interest groups are embedded in a highly complex and multi-layered institutional environment that sometimes constrains, yet in other instances enables them to successfully pursue their interests.

A large number of interest group studies, in the EU and elsewhere, however, traditionally focused on the characteristics of individual interest groups such as their financial resources, their organizational characteristics or their expertise. While most studies on EU legislative politics explicitly take into account the role and position of the EU institutions (Council, Parliament, Commission) as well as EU-level political parties, much less attention has been paid to how institutional and policy-specific contextual factors affect interest group lobbying in the EU. We distinguish three ways in which contextual factors affect interest group lobbying in the EU. First, interest group activities are shaped by policy-related factors that vary with regard to (a) the nature of the legislative proposal which triggers their attention
and (b) the characteristics of the specific issues that are part of a legislative proposal such as the salience and the degree of conflict related to these issues. Second, lobbying in the EU is furthermore affected by the institutional features that vary (a) across national political systems such as the number of veto points and (b) within a political system such as the DGs involved, characteristics of national ministerial departments, or the economic sectors in which issues are located. Third, we expect that these policy-related and institutional contextual factors not only directly affect general lobbying strategies or outcomes, but that they could also moderate the effect of organizational characteristics of interest groups. The aim of the special issue is to investigate the contextual nature of lobbying in the EU, more precisely, how the characteristics of the policy context and the institutional setting in which interest groups operate affect their lobbying activities and their ability to influence the outcome of legislative debates in the EU.

Contribution
The lack of previous interest group research taking into account policy-specific and institutional context characteristics is largely due to research designs that primarily focused on one or just a few policy debates so that contextual characteristics were largely held constant. The special issue brings together articles from different modules that are part of a larger European Collaborative Research Project, INTEREURO, carried out by research teams in nine different countries under the auspices of the European Science Foundation (2012-2014; see www.intereuro.eu). The main goal of the project is to analyze strategies, framing and influence processes for a set of 125 legislative proposals submitted by the European Commission, in an effort to better understand the involvement of interest organizations in the decision-making process of the EU. Typical for INTEREURO is that it draws on sophisticated and innovative proposal-driven samples of interest group mobilization, which allows us to account systematically for how policy-specific and institutional context factors shape mobilization, lobbying strategies and influence of interest groups on public policy debates in the EU. The special issue will involve European and American scholars at different stages of their careers working in different parts of INTEREURO and two affiliated projects, an US-based project (at the University of Virginia; sponsored by the National Science Foundation) and the Danish INERARENA project (based at the University of Aarhus). These projects employ a large-N research design as well and use similar data and indicators. The US project focuses on interest group framing at the EU level using an overlapping set of legislative proposals, allowing for a better specification of the policy context. The Danish project uses similar indicators of interest group activity and allows for a more specific account of the multi-level nature of interest representation in the EU. All contributors have made important contributions to the study of interest groups in the EU and represent the breadth of positions taken in the current literature.
Contents of the Special Issue

The proposed structure of the special issue is as follows. First, an introductory paper will develop a typology of contextual factors that shape interest group politics in the EU. Eight substantive contributions, all of which papers that offer novel (theory-guided) empirical work, then test the effect of these contextual factors on three aspects of interest group politics in the EU: interest group density and organization, framing strategies employed by interest groups and lobbying success in the EU.

1. **Interest group density and organization**: the first two papers assess the impact of contextual factors on interest group density and interest group organization. This section reflects the focus in INTEREURO to more explicitly account for the relationship between organizational maintenance and political influence in the study of interest group politics.

2. **Interest group framing**: the next three papers examine the effect of policy-related and institutional context factors on interest group framing, more specifically the frame choices made by interest groups, the frame congruence between interest groups and the European Commission and the multilevel framing strategies of lobbyists. Our focus on framing addresses a current lack of attention in the literature to this important influence strategy.

3. **Lobbying success**: the last three papers examine the effect of contextual characteristics on lobbying success, more specifically on interest group-partisan alignment, on interest group success in setting the policy agenda and on interest group influence over legislative outcomes in the EU. The contextual approach to lobbying success offers distinct theoretical explanations and empirical insights into lobbying success in the EU that were previously largely overlooked.

1. **Introduction**

   Jan Beyers, University of Antwerp  
   Caelesta Braun, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam  
   Heike Klüver, University of Bamberg

In the introduction to the special issue, we first provide a short introduction to the topic of interest group politics in the EU, before briefly reviewing the existing literature on this topic. We then develop a theoretical framework that will guide the contributions to the special issue by presenting a typology of policy-related and institutional contextual factors that affect interest group density and organization, framing strategies and lobbying success in the EU.
Section 1: Interest group density and organization

2. Interest organizations across economic sectors: Explaining group density in the European Union

Joost Berkhout, University of Amsterdam
Brendan Carroll, Leiden University
Caelesta Braun, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Adam Chalmers, Leiden University
Tine Destrooper, Leiden University
David Lowery, Pennsylvania State University
Simon Otjes, University of Groningen
Anne Rasmussen, University of Copenhagen

The number of interest organizations differs strongly between policy domains, political issues and economic sectors. This is likely to fundamentally shape the nature and outcomes of interest representation. We don’t know precisely why there are such differences. In this paper, we explain the density of interest organizations per economic sector in the European Parliament register on the basis of political and economic institutional factors. Political institutions produce ‘demand’ for interest organizations by making laws, developing public policy or spending money. Economic institutions structure the ‘supply’ of interest organizations by affecting the magnitude of the collective action problem, the number of potential constituents and the availability of resources. These contextual factors are modeled in a novel way in order to account for the specific nature of the EU and to control for the cross-sectoral differences in the sensitivity to these contextual factors.

3. Interest group adaptation and representation at the EU-level

Sabine Saurugger, University of Grenoble
William A. Maloney, University of Newcastle

Organizational structures adapt. The structures’ life cycle is submitted to change and transformation induced both through outside pressure and inside demands. Interest groups, which are organizational structures, are no exception to this rule. At the European level, these pressures and demands have been particularly high since the end of the 1980. Research has shown how interest groups have adapted their strategies and representation venues. However, not only interest group strategies or representation venues change but also interest group internal structures at the European level. Interest organizations face competing incentives to adapt their behavior (logic of influence) and organizational features (logic of membership). Recent evidence suggests that in the context of EU interest representation the logic of influence is increasingly dominant in shaping lobbying strategies and organizational adaptation. It thus seems that there is a strong interdependence between the logic of influence and the logic of membership. We argue in this article that the relationship between logic of influence and logic of membership in interest representation in the EU is based on the need for patronage. Patronage is an important institutional contextual factor. It is not only necessary for interest groups’ financial survival. It is also necessary for the institution’s
legitimacy and policy efficiency. Based on secondary literature, this article will offer a comprehensive analysis of the influence of patronage on interest group representation at the EU level.

Section 2: Interest group framing

4. Framing in context: How interest groups frame policy debates in the European Union

Heike Klüver, University of Bamberg
Christine Mahoney, University of Virginia
Marc Opper, University of Virginia

Framing plays an important role in public policy. Interest groups strategically highlight some aspects of a policy proposal while ignoring others in order to gain an advantage in the policy debate. While some interest groups might highlight the economic impact of a proposal, others use arguments about its consequences for the environment. What is more, frames not only differ between interest groups within a debate, but interest groups also change their framing strategies across different policy debates employing economic arguments in one debate while using a public health frame in another debate. Despite the central importance of political rhetoric, we know remarkably little about how interest groups choose their frames. This article aims to overcome the shortcomings of the literature by studying the determinants of frame choice in policy debates in the EU. We argue that frame choice is a complex process which is simultaneously affected by interest group as well as contextual characteristics. With regard to interest group characteristics, we expect that frame choice varies systematically across actor type. With regard to contextual characteristics, we hypothesize that the frames that interest groups employ are shaped by the complexity of the proposal, the policy responsibility of Commission DGs and the density and diversity of interest groups mobilized in the debate. Our theoretical expectations are tested based on a new and innovative dataset on interest group framing. Drawing on a quantitative text analysis of more than 3,500 submissions to legislative consultations, we study the determinants of interest group frame choice in 44 policy debates.

5. What is at stake? Frame congruence between lobbyists and European Commission officials

Frida Boräng, University of Gothenburg
Daniel Naurin, University of Gothenburg

This article studies frame congruence between interest groups and European Commission officials. The Commission is the primary agenda-setter of the EU, with a unique position to frame the debate and the subsequent legislative process, which means that whose frames the Commission promotes is crucial for the success of lobbyists. On the basis of more than a hundred interviews with Commission officials and interest group representatives on 38 different policy proposals in the Intereuro data we analyse to what extent lobbyists and officials share similar frames, i.e. perceptions of what is at stake in the proposals at hand.
Congruence is measured by the extent to which similar answers are given to an open question of what is at stake. We find no evidence that business groups generally have a higher degree of frame congruence with Commission officials than citizen groups. However, we do find that the degree of congruence is more dependent on context for citizen groups than it is for business groups. In particular, as the scope of the conflict is expanded with more actors and more public visibility in the media, congruence increases between Commission officials and citizen groups. This underlines the normative importance of strengthening the general visibility and public debate on EU politics. Interestingly, the overall degree of congruence is strikingly low. Most lobbyists, most of the time, seem to have a different perception of what is at stake in the proposals at hand, compared to the Commission officials. Although we cannot draw any conclusions about causality here, it is clear that few lobbyists have been able to influence the frames adopted by the Commission officials. Those frames apparently derive from somewhere else, such as the deliberations within the Commission, and in the inter-institutional dialogue with the European Parliament and the Council.

6. Policy frames and policy arguments in the EU multilevel system

Rainer Eising, Ruhr University Bochum
Daniel Rasch, Ruhr University Bochum
Patrycja Rozbicka, Ruhr University Bochum

The article starts from the premise that policy framing is a political strategy. Actors employ policy frames and highlight certain arguments in policy debates to influence policy outcomes. Established theories of European integration and EU policy-making yield contradictory expectations on the role of policy framing: Theories of the EU as a regulatory state claim that EU policy debates center on regulation, harmonization and welfare frames while understandings of the EU as a multi-layered political system imply a greater diversity and contestation of frames across the left-right axis, member states, and policy areas. In our study, we identify and analyze the variation of frames that EU level and national level interest groups have used in support of their positions. We use a computer assisted manual content analysis to identify the frames that were prevalent in two environmental policy debates [Electrical and electronic waste disposal and Promotion of renewable energy resources] and two instances of financial market regulation [Alternative investment fund managers and Deposit guarantee schemes]. We conduct the analysis by coding a stratified sample of 300 policy documents, among them the position papers that were submitted to the EU level and national level consultations, the official documents of the political institutions as well as the media coverage of the policy debates. To examine the impact of contextual factors on frames, we provide for variation across the EU level and the national level, four member states (Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), as well as across and within the two policy areas. More specifically, we control for (1) the socio-economic and institutional contexts such as market structures, domestic interest group systems, and public opinion, (2) the issue characteristics such as policy scope, salience, and the extent of policy change, as well as (3) the resources and organizational structure of interest groups
Section 3: Lobbying success

7. Partisanship, Alignment and Legislative Lobbying in the EU

Jan Beyers, University of Antwerp
Iskander De Brurraycker, University of Antwerp
Inger Baller, University of Antwerp

This paper seeks to analyze an important contextual factor of legislative lobbying in the EU, namely when and why parties and interest groups align in terms of the position they adopted vis-à-vis Commission proposals. We argue that, despite the absence of exclusive and strong organizational party-group links, groups and parties regularly align in issue-based policy debates that are driven by proximities in terms of policy positions. Gaining a more profound understanding of alignment is important in order to characterize the politicized nature of EU-level legislative battles and their outcomes. In order to explain variation in patterns of party-interest group alignments we raise three explanations. First, we argue that these alignments are shaped by general left-right political cleavages that are also prevalent in domestic politics. Second, we submit that alignments depend on the issue-context, namely what is at stake in a particular political case. And third, we investigate the role of interest group strategies in producing alignments, more in particular the type of information groups transmit during the policy process. The data used concerns party and group involvement in the political process surrounding 125 legislative acts adopted by the EU between 2008 and 2010. Our preliminary findings, which we presented at the EUSA Conference 2013 (Baltimore) and the ECPR General Conference 2013 (Bordeaux), suggest that political cleavages prevalent in domestic politics play a crucial role in party-interest group alignments during EU legislative politics.

8. Interest Groups and the Second Face of Power: Self-perceptions of political agenda-setting across decision-making levels

Anne Skorkjær Binderkrantz, Aarhus University
Anne Rasmussen, Copenhagen University/Leiden University

The paper analyzes whether contextual factors affect how successful interest groups perceive themselves in setting the agenda of EU and national policy-makers. More specifically, it compares the explanatory potential of factors at the national, policy and interest group level for understanding the ability of interest groups to persuade national and EU level policymakers to initiate new issues. Findings from a multinomial logistic regression analysis based on survey responses from app. 1,500 domestic interest groups in the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Netherlands indicate that domestic interest groups have less success in setting the agenda of policy-makers in the EU than in the national context. However, little variation is found between national contexts in absolute levels of agenda setting on the two levels. Instead, an organization’s policy context has a substantial impact on the size of the gap between the ability to set the agenda of national and EU policy-makers. Moreover, its embeddedness into the national political context affects its ability to persuade both EU and
national policy-makers to initiate new issues, albeit with varying strength. Finally, staff resources play a stronger role in the EU than in the national context in reducing the likelihood that groups never manage to introduce new issues to the agenda.

9. Information Trumps Context: Explaining Positional Proximity between the European Commission and Organized Interests

Patrick Bernhagen, Zeppelin University
Andreas Dür, University of Salzburg
David Marshall, University of Salzburg

It is well established in the literature that organized interests seek insider status in policy communities with the aim of having an early impact on the formulation of public policy. Membership in policy communities depends on context: organized interests involved in one policy community with policymakers will often be outsiders in other contexts. An alternative factor determining the extent to which organized interests can shape policy formulation is their ability to provide helpful information and expertise, both sincerely and strategically. While information and context may be related insofar as helpful information provision is seen as a prerequisite for insider status, to date it remains unclear which of these factors better explain positional proximity between political decision makers and organized interests. To address this question, we investigate the roles of information and context in explaining position alignment between lobbyists and policymakers. Analyzing data on over 100 policy issues in the EU, we find that proximity of positions is explained partly by the amount of information a lobbyist is able to bring to the policy process, confirming general theories of informational lobbying. By contrast, context variables such as institutional characteristics of the policymaking unit contribute little to explaining why the Commission’s policy position is closer to some groups than to others. Institutional context matters only insofar as it reinforces the role of lobbyists’ informational resources in relation to some policy units while depressing it in relation to others.

Timetable

All authors work together in the INTEREURO project, the affiliated NSF project and the INTERARENA project on interest group politics in Europe. The special issue proposal is the result of papers that were presented at panels organized at the EUSA conference in April 2013 and the ECPR General Conference in September 2013. In addition, all authors attended a workshop organized by the prospective editors of this special issue in October 2013 at the University of Bochum. This workshop has been an ideal environment in which to discuss first drafts of the papers; it allowed all authors to receive valuable feedback on their projects. To ensure the coherence of the special issue and the quality of the papers, we will organize a second workshop to take place in Salzburg in spring 2014. This workshop, for which we have already secured funding, will ensure the readiness of the papers for submission to peer-review. We will then submit the papers for peer-review following the tentative schedule below, with the exact schedule depending on the date by which we have to submit the final papers to JEPP for copy-editing.
### Milestones

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<th>Milestone</th>
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<tr>
<td>Conference presentations of drafts</td>
<td>April/September 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st Workshop discussing first full drafts</td>
<td>mid October 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal submitted to JEPP</td>
<td>30 November 2013</td>
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<td>Draft papers submitted to editors</td>
<td>31 January 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Workshop discussing final drafts</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
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<td>Whole volume submitted for peer review</td>
<td>31 May 2014</td>
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<td>Deadline for external reviewers</td>
<td>30 June 2014</td>
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<td>Revisions of authors to be completed by</td>
<td>30 July 2014</td>
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<td>Revised papers resubmitted to referees</td>
<td>15 August 2014</td>
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### Length

To keep the overall length of the special issue below the 65,000 word mark for a JEPP special issue, each of the eight substantial contributions will at most have 7,500 words, with the introduction accounting for 5,000 words.

### Editors

Jan Beyers is Professor of Political Science at the University of Antwerp and the Director of ACIM. In addition to this he is a Visiting Research Professor at Agder University (Norway). His research and teaching covers institutional theories, comparative politics, European Union politics, interest groups and research methods. His work has been published in journals such as *European Journal of Political Research, European Union Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Governance, West European Politics,* and *Journal of European Public Policy.*

Caelesta Braun is assistant Professor public governance at Vu University of Amsterdam. Her research interests include the policy impact and political strategies of interest groups in multi-level governance systems and stakeholder management and enforcement capacity of regulatory authorities. Recent publications appear in journals such as *Governance, Public Administration, West European Politics, Administration & Society* and *the Journal of Public Policy.*

Heike Klüver is Professor of Empirical Political Science at the University of Bamberg. Her research interests include European politics, interest groups, political parties, coalition governments, legislative politics and quantitative text analysis. Her work has been published in journals such as the *British Journal of Political Science, European Union Politics, West European Politics, Party Politics* and the *Journal of European Public Policy.* Moreover, she is author of *Lobbying in the European Union: Interest groups, lobbying coalitions and policy change* which has been published with *Oxford University Press.*