

WELCOME

This ACIM-Newsletter gives an overview of the wide range of interesting projects we have developed during the past months. We launched two important surveys. First, there is the Comparative Interest Group Survey project for which we launched the Belgian survey. Second, four ACIM-researchers travelled in December to Paris and Nairobi to conduct interviews with transnational advocates and policymakers.

Iskander De Bruycker, who defended his dissertation in October, gives a short overview of the main research findings from his dissertation (click [here](#) for a list of his publications). Peter Bursens acted as host for the 29th edition of [EuroSim](#), the largest trans-Atlantic simulation of EU decision-making. Finally, we organized the third edition of the ACIM Joint Sessions, a 2-day gathering with an academic workshop and lots of fun.

In this issue

ACIM congratulates	2-3
ACIM publishes	3
ACIM hosts	4
ACIM on the move	5-6

Jan Beyers

BELGIAN INTEREST GROUP SURVEY



After weeks of hard work we are proud to announce that the Belgian Interest Group survey has officially been launched. More than 1600 organizational representatives are invited to participate. The effort is

part of the [Comparative Interest Group Survey project](#), sponsored by the Research Foundation-Flanders and the Slovenian Research Agency. The project involves conducting web-based surveys and the systematic mapping of the interest group populations in various European countries.

Our objective is to develop systematic knowledge about the organizational development as well as the political strategies of organized interests. What kind of challenges do

these groups face and how do they manage them? The aim is to achieve a better understanding of the daily operations of interest groups across different national settings.

Currently, the Slovenian, Swedish and EU-level (INTEREURO) survey have been successfully completed. Additional surveys are planned for The Netherlands, Poland, the Czech Republic, Spain, Lithuania, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Lunch seminars and events

23/2	What explains lobbying success in the EU? Theoretical reflections and empirical evidence on the role of policy salience and policymakers. - Vlad Gross (ACIM)
15/3	The politics of TTIP - Leif Johan Eliasson (East Stroudsburg University, USA)
14/4	Francqui Inaugural Lecture by Prof. Jan Beyers - Click here for more info.
26/4	Do we like each other or do we need each other? An in-depth analysis of stakeholders' collaboration in coalitions for cross-border programs. - Marsida Bandilli (ACIM)
24/5	Simulations of decision-making: what makes worth the effort? An introduction of the research-project. - Dorothy Duchatelet (ACIM)
1-9/7	ECPR Summer School on Interest Groups in Copenhagen - Click here for more info.

ACIM CONGRATULATES

Dr. Iskander De Bruycker successfully defended his dissertation!

The news media like to portray lobbying as a fight: business lobbyists that prevail over civil society groups or the rich who triumph over the poor. Iskander De Bruycker's PhD nuances these contradictions. Lobbying in Brussels is more like the Biblical battle between David and Goliath: It are not always the richest or strongest groups that prevail, but more often organized interests that develop the most appropriate strategy in a given context.

Are business interests - think about Volkswagen or the tobacco industry - pulling the strings in Brussels? This is the main question that he sought to answer in his doctoral research. The news media regularly report on scandals associated with EU lobbying. A recent example are the massive lobbying efforts of Volkswagen to ensure EU regulation with a lighter touch. Opinion leaders caricaturize EU lobbying as being a "disease for democracy" and detrimental to the public interest. This negative depiction, however, is not an accurate portrayal of what lobbying and interest group politics in Brussels entails. Most lobbying processes focus on

the transmission of technical and scientific expertise. Often lobby groups and public opinion are on the same page. Within the framework of the INTEREURO-project (www.intereuro.eu) we interviewed 143 representatives of interest organizations in Brussels and asked them how influential they perceived themselves on a set of 125 legislative processes. On the same cases, we also consulted over 90 experts within the European Commission. This evidence demonstrates that Business lobbies and civil society groups are not so different after all. An organization like Greenpeace uses more or less similar lobbying strategies as groups repre-



*"Business lobbies are
not more influential
than civil society
groups"*

senting the car industry. In general, business lobbies are not more influential than civil society groups. On the contrary, the results show that non-business interests—such as civil society groups and NGOs—are in many instances more influential compared to business interests.

Important for influence are lobbying strategies. A lobbying strategy can involve meetings with journalists, conversations with policymakers behind the scenes or building a coalition with other organizations. If lobbyists develop a strategy geared to the specific context of a policy issue, they can increase their

lobbying success. The financial resources of an organization are less important. Lobbying in Brussels is much like the biblical battle between David and Goliath. David defeated Goliath, not because he was more resourceful, or because he was stronger. He used the appropriate tactical weapon, the slingshot, in the right context.

Also popularity is important. Those who represent a popular position fare better when using media tactics. Groups with an unpopular position are able to improve their influence, but they should work behind the scenes and avoid public exposure.

De Bruycker, I. (2015). Pressure and expertise: Explaining information supply in EU legislative lobbying. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. DOI: 10.1111/jcms.12298

De Bruycker, I. & Beyers, J. (2015). Balanced or biased? Interest groups and legislative lobbying in the European news media. *Political Communication*. 32(3): 453-474. Free access provided by Routledge.

ACIM CONGRATULATES

Dr. Jappe Eckhardt at the University of York

Former ACIM PhD researcher Jappe Eckhardt just started as a lecturer at the University of York in January 2016 (see his personal page [here](#)). He completed his dissertation, published by Palgrave as *Business Lobbying and Trade Governance: The Case of EU-China Relations* under the supervision of Prof. Dirk De Bièvre in 2011 (you can order it [here](#)). Before moving to York, he was a postdoc at the World Trade Institute in Bern and a Fellow at Durham University in a US National Health Institute project coordinated by the Simon Fraser University (Vancouver). Congratulations and all the best to you, Jappe!



ACIM PUBLISHES

On judicial politics

Arlo Poletti and Dirk De Bièvre (2016), *Judicial Politics and International Cooperation: From Disputes to Deal-Making at the World Trade Organization*, Colchester: ECPR Press.

In this new book in the ECPR Monograph Series, former ACIM FWO postdoc Arlo Poletti (now at LUISS, Rome) and Prof. Dirk De Bièvre shed light on how judicial politics affected the prospects for cooperation in the WTO through multilateral trade negotiation rounds. Publication is planned for March 2016, but you can pre-order the book [here](#).

On European integration

Hans Vollaard, Jan Beyers and Patrick Dumont (2015), *European Integration and Consensus Politics in the Low Countries*, London: Routledge.

This book is now available on paperback. Click [here](#) to pre-order!

On territorial representation in the EU

Tom Donas and Jan Beyers (2013). "How Regions Assemble in Brussels: The Organizational Form of Territorial Representation in the European Union", *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 43(4): 527-550.

This article is one of the five highly cited articles in Publius. To celebrate the impact factor, the journal is granting free access to the article. Read it [here](#).

ACIM HOSTS

EUROSIM 2016 at the University of Antwerp

Peter Bursens acted as host for the 29th edition of EuroSim, the largest transatlantic simulation of EU decision-making (see www.eusimulations.org).

In January, nearly 200 students from 18 EU and US colleges and universities gathered in Antwerp for a four day simulation of formal and informal negotiations. Students dressed up as heads of state, ministers, commissioners, MEP's, representatives of EU agencies, lobbyists and even journalists to discuss the broad theme of EU asylum policies. They simulated the legislative procedure for a revision of the Dublin regulation, adopted European Council conclusions on external relations related to refugees and discussed EP own-

***"Students came up
with out-of-the box
suggestions to cope
with the refugee crisis"***

initiative resolutions regarding the human rights dimension of EU asylum policy. They came up with out-of-the box suggestions to cope with the refugee crisis, proposing EU Key Points in every member state to process asylum applica-

tions, an enhanced role for the EASO and the use of automatic allocation criteria. Fierce debates took place among participants, searching for a balance between a humanitarian response, security concerns and political feasibility. Students were also offered lectures from officials and researchers to underpin the academic value of their work. Also during the social activities, such as a banquet hosted by the City of Antwerp, students continued to negotiate and convince others of their positions.



At the end 8 awards were handed out for the 'most valuable negotiators'. The final texts of the event were submitted to several EU institutions and NGOs. The next anniversary edition of EuroSim will take place in March 2017. It will be hosted by SUNY Brockport and deal with the topic of EU Energy Union.

(Picture: Oskar Gstrein)

ACIM ON THE MOVE

On-the-spot interviews at the UNFCCC and WTO conferences in Paris & Nairobi

Four researchers – Kirsten Lucas, Marcel Hanegraaff, Sarah Arras, led by Prof. Jan Beyers – held on-the-spot interviews with around 400 representatives of civil society organizations, interest groups, governments and inter-governmental organizations at the Climate conference in Paris and the WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi.

Around 50.000 representatives of governments, inter-governmental organizations and non-state stakeholders participated in the 21st Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in the beginning of December. Later that month, again thousands of non-state stakeholders and policymakers participated in another international conference, namely the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Nairobi.

Since climate- and trade policy touch upon many issues that are vital for countries and industries, a tough lobby industry has developed. In both Paris and Nairobi, businesses, NGOs, research institutes and governments were actively advocating their (often opposing) interests. Of course, these are great events for political scientists who are interested in the influence production process. Therefore, a small delegation from ACIM travelled the world in December.

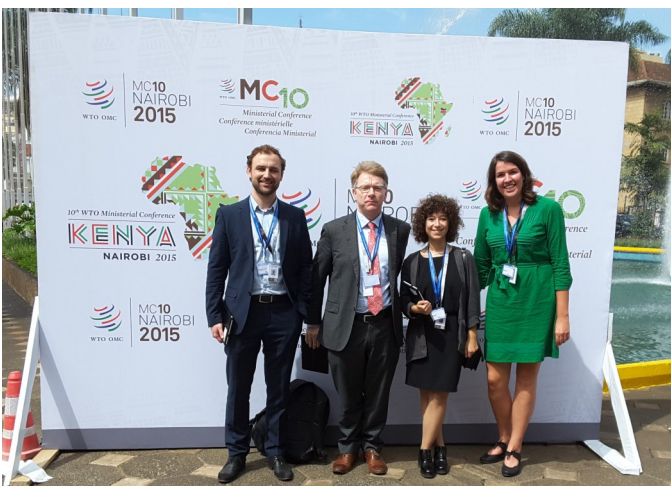
In the context of the ERC-project iBias, four researchers – Kirsten Lucas, Marcel Hanegraaff, Sarah Arras, led by



Prof. Jan Beyers – held on-the-spot interviews with around 400 representatives of interest groups, governments and intergovernmental organizations in Paris and Nairobi.

These on-the-spot interviews are innovative in their policy-centered approach. For the UNFCCC and the WTO, we identified 15 issues that were on the negotiation agenda. Non-state stakeholders were asked about their positions on these issues, the strategies used to get their position heard by policymakers and how much policy influence they estimate they had with regards to these issues. Moreover, we asked policymakers about their interaction with organized interests and their assessment of the influence of non-state stakeholders. Through analyzing this rich body of data, we expect to develop a better understanding of whether and how non-state stakeholders succeed in influencing international policymaking.

In the upcoming month, the dataset will be enriched with the results of a web-survey. The first analyses of the results are expected early Spring. For more information: janbeyers.eu/transnationaladvocacy/.



ACIM ON THE MOVE

ACIM's 3rd Joint Sessions in Corsendonk

ACIM organized its Annual Joint Sessions at the wonderful Corsendonk Priorij near Oud-Turnhout on the 5th and the 6th of November 2015.

This yearly event consists of the entire ACIM staff gathering for 2 days to focus on research and team activities on the side. After the two successful workshops held in the Hague and Mechelen in 2013 and 2014, this year the research group went to the astonishing Corsendonk Priorij, a 14th century former covenant that functions as a convention center and a hotel.

The 2-day gathering started with an afternoon workshop where a number of ACIM members presented their research that was followed by discussions and suggestions.

A diverse set of papers were presented on the first day of the workshop, mainly on topics related to European Union affairs – including interest group presence at the EU cross-border programmes, impact of firms in European trade policy, the nature and the implications of the legislative amendments in the European Parliament, and participation in online consultations organized by various EU agencies.

The 2nd day of the workshop was followed by a similar half-day session where presentations were of broader relevance – including an open discussion session in which

the staff shared their expertise on supervising and completing a publication-based PhD.

This year's joint sessions also included a team activity in the form of a quiz night which was both fun and challenging for everyone. Rotating teams were faced with brilliantly executed quizzes on various subjects from music, geography, history, to of course political science. Consequently, the 3rd joint sessions of ACIM followed its predecessors' level of success and brought an excellent knowledge exchange opportunity with fun activities.

