

## Els Witte PhD Dissertation Prize 2023

*Jury report announcing the winner of the Els Witte PhD Dissertation Prize for 2023 on behalf of the selection committee*

It is a pleasure to announce the winner of the Els Witte PhD dissertation prize for 2023.

This year, the members of the selection committee were:

- Vjosa Musliu (Free University Brussels)
- Ferdi De Ville (Ghent University)
- Matthew di Guisepe (Leiden University)
- Stefaan Walgrave (University of Antwerp)
- Daphne Van der Pas (University of Amsterdam)

After a careful assessment of all nominated PhD theses, the committee shortlisted three dissertations which stood out in terms of their theoretical depth, empirical rigour, and overall contributions to the field:

- Charlotte de Roon (Leiden University): ***The Functioning of Dutch Party Youth Wings: a comparison of the 1980s and 2010s***
- Sigrid van Trappen (Ghent University): ***Colourless politics? An examination of party selectors' openness to ethnic minority candidates in Flemish local politics***
- Nella Geurts (Nijmegen University): ***Puzzling pathways: The integration paradox among migrants in Western Europe***

The committee would like to explicitly mention that all the shortlisted dissertations were of high quality. Each of them engaged with topics that are central to discussions in the field of political science: party politics, political representation, ethnic and gender diversity in active politics and migration studies. All three combined skilfully different methods and came to insights that are relevant from a scientific and societal perspective.

In the final deliberation of the committee, the dissertation of **Charlotte de Roon** stood out among this selection of already very good theses. de Roon discusses a heavily under-researched topic: the youth organizations of political parties, with a particular emphasis on the extent to which they fulfil their core functions. The empirical focus is on the Netherlands in the 1980s and 2010s. The author makes a major contribution to this field of research in analytical, methodological, and empirical terms. Methodologically, the dissertation employs a multi-dimensional approach, combining and triangulating qualitative and quantitative methods, including archival research, semi-structured interviews and surveys. It adopts a longitudinal approach, comparing two distinct time periods, such that crucial trends and developments over time can be signalled and explained.

The evaluation committee was particularly impressed with the functional analysis employed, the thorough operationalization of the different functions, the neat longitudinal component, and the combination of diverse methods in this dissertation.

The insistence of the author to unearth, document and contribute to the archival knowledge of youth wing parties deserves particular acknowledgement and praise.

The jury would also like to mention the dissertation of **Sigrid Van Trappen** as a runner-up for the Els Witte Prize of 2023. The dissertation of Van Trappen discusses a salient topic, namely the representation of ethnic minorities in Western democracies. More specifically, the author analyses the effect of (a) the socio-demographic background of the selectors, (b) their ethnic biases, and (c) the behaviour of other parties that have been investigated. The committee would like to applaud the excellent combination of observational data with survey and experimental data and the ability of Van Trappen to situate and problematize her topic in broader intellectual and societal debates.

Many congratulations to the three shortlisted candidates for their excellent dissertations and to this year's winner – Charlotte de Roon.