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Women's Mobilisation in the Digital Era

Lobbying and Advocating for European Women's Rights

Emilie Faarup Storvik

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Storvik holds a Master's degree in European Studies from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. She was affiliated with the EU3D project and ARENA through the EU3D student grant.

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Preface

The EU has expanded in depth and breadth across a range of member states with greatly different makeups, making the European integration process more differentiated. *EU Differentiation, Dominance and Democracy (EU3D)* is a research project that specifies the conditions under which differentiation is politically acceptable, institutionally sustainable, and democratically legitimate; and singles out those forms of differentiation that engender dominance.

EU3D brings together around 50 researchers in 10 European countries and is coordinated by ARENA Centre for European Studies at the University of Oslo. The project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, Societal Challenges 6: Europe in a changing world – Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies (2019-2023).

The present report is part of EU3D's work on Public opinions, debates and reforms (work package 4). The report analyses how interest groups seek to obtain political influence through social media. More concretely the focus is on how two women's rights organisations, the European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe, use social media as a part of their lobbying towards the European Union. The report sheds light on EU3D's concern with the nature and scope for 'democratic bouncing back' after the financial and refugee crises. An important question that the report addresses is whether social media can serve as a 'weapon of the weak' and if it is able to replace more traditional lobbying strategies.

John Erik Fossum

EU3D Scientific Coordinator

Abstract

Lobbyism plays a large part in the decision-making process in the European Union. Several interest groups have moved over to obtaining political influence through social media in the last few years. This report asks whether this online activity is a part of their lobbying strategies towards the European Union or not. The report draws upon existing conceptual frameworks of lobbying strategies to analyse whether and, if so, how the two women's rights organisations, the European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe, use social media as a part of their lobbying towards the European Union. It explores the activity, visibility, and outreach of the two women's rights organisations and looks at the use of features like attachments and hashtags. The report examines whether social media is a 'weapon of the weak' and if it can replace traditional lobbying strategies. This study is done through a mapping exercise of the posts that the two organisations publish on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, a content analysis of the organisations' posts, and an interview. The report contributes to a deeper understanding of how interest groups in the European Union can use social media to lobby and highlights the differences between two women's organisations in the usage and significance of social media. The main argument of the report is that both the European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe use social media as a part of their lobbying strategies. However, it is more vital to Young Feminist Europe than the European Women's Lobby.

Sammendrag

Lobbyisme spiller en stor rolle i beslutningsprosessen i den europeiske union. De siste årene har flere interessegrupper har gått over til å oppnå politisk innflytelse gjennom sosiale medier. Denne rapporten spør om denne sosiale medier-aktiviteten er en del av deres lobbystrategier mot EU eller ikke. Rapporten bygger på eksisterende konseptuelle rammeverk for lobbystrategier for å analysere om og i så fall hvordan de to kvinnerettighetsorganisasjonene, European Women's Lobby og Young Feminist Europe, bruker sosiale medier som en del av sin lobbyvirksomhet mot EU. Den utforsker aktiviteten, synligheten og rekkevidden til de to kvinnerettighetsorganisasjonene og ser på bruken av funksjoner som vedlegg og hashtags. Rapporten undersøker om sosiale medier er et 'våpen for de svake' og om det kan erstatte tradisjonelle lobbystrategier. Denne studien er gjort gjennom en kartleggingsøvelse av innleggene som de to organisasjonene publiserer på Facebook, Instagram og Twitter, en innholdsanalyse av organisasjonenes innlegg og et intervju. Rapporten bidrar til en dypere forståelse av hvordan interessegrupper i EU kan bruke sosiale medier til lobbyvirksomhet og fremhever forskjellene mellom to kvinneorganisasjoner i bruken og betydningen av sosiale medier. Hovedargumentet til rapporten er at både European Women's Lobby og Young Feminist Europe bruker sosiale medier som en del av sine lobbystrategier. Sosiale medier er imidlertid viktigere for Young Feminist Europe enn European Women's Lobby.

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Thank you to my Mom and Dad for being my biggest supporters. This is nearly the first time I have not sent you my schoolwork before submitting it. You have been there to guide me, hold me, help me, correct me, and teach me for all other tests, exams, papers, and schoolwork. Thank you for guiding me through life but letting me make my own mistakes as well. Thank you to my little sister for keeping me grounded and sending pictures of our dog when I need support.

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Emilie Faarup Storvik
Trondheim, 16 May 2022

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Abbreviations

EC	European Community
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
EWL	European Women's Lobby
MEPs	Members of European Parliament
NSD	*Norsk senter for forskningsdata* (Norwegian centre for research data)
Sikt	Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research
YFE	Young Feminist Europe

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Topic

> New media tools provide immediacy to action which is useful for women, often allowing women to act when angered or interested in an issue.
>
> (European Parliament, 2012, p. 12)

This excerpt is from a report penned by the European Parliament (EP) in 2013 – the early days of social media platforms and digitalisation of the society. The report points to social media as a potential tool for women to gain more political opportunities in the European Union (EU). The report also states that 'women's interests are often not reflected in mainstream political debate' and 'women's lower political participation can be explained by their lack of financial and power resources, and of time to engage in traditional politics' (European Parliament, 2012, p. 22). Since the Parliament penned the report, a great deal has happened regarding women's rights movements utilising the power of social media. The report points out the inadequacy of the political landscape in representing the diversity of women's interests and that women's interest groups may have poorer conditions to participate in European politics than other parts of civil society. Accordingly, this study will mainly focus on women's rights and women's interest groups.

The EP report shows that women's rights issues or perspectives have poorer interest representation. The political debate has neglected women's rights, and women's rights are less mediatised and politicised (Seibicke, 2017). Seibicke (2017, p. 126) states that around European gender equality, policies have gone from institutionalisation to marginalisation in the last 20 years. Gender equality is now a part of a broader area of justice and rights instead of a particular gender focus. Thus, women's interest groups are currently working towards visibility in European institutions and competing against other advocacy groups defending women's rights in Europe (Seibicke, 2017; Jacquot, 2015; Mazey, 2000, p. 334). Researchers claim there is a need for more studies on modern-day organised European feminism (Woodward, 2015; Seibicke, 2020; Storer & Rodriguez, 2020). An in-depth analysis of women's interest groups and their use of social media is thus overdue. This report contributes to understanding how women's rights interest groups utilise social media for lobbying and advocacy purposes.

The EU has a constitutionalised dialogue with representative associations and civil society through articles 10 and 11 of the Treaty of the European Union. This dialogue includes organisations representing women's rights. This constitutionalised dialogue between EU institutions and societal organisations is a supplementary channel in the representative democracy of the EU (Greenwood, 2017, p. 3). The EU does an essential part of this dialogue through organised groups or associations that represent, mediate and articulate the interests of civil society at large. In the digital age, traditional lobbying tools, such as networks and alliance building, are increasingly being supplemented by new digital devices such as, for example, social media. The latter takes centre stage in this study. Media has acquired a much stronger salience in the formalised dialogue process. Social media as a tool in interest groups' representation towards the EU, provides new opportunities and challenges for traditional lobbying strategies. Social media is fascinating as it can cut costs for interest groups and give new channels to reach policymakers and the public (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020, p. 1).

1.2 Presenting the European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe

Because there is a poor representation of women's interests in the European political debate, one could expect that social media plays a vital role as a tool for women's organisations to advocate for their interests (Seibicke, 2017, p. 123). As I discuss in Chapter 6, social media proves to be a significant part of Young Feminist Europe (YFE) and the European Women's Lobby (EWL) work towards changing policies and connecting with both the public and the policymakers. The scholarly literature on lobbying also assumes that diffuse interests, like women's organisations, are more likely to resort to non-traditional lobbying strategies (Seibicke, 2017, p. 123). At the same time, women's interest groups have been active and represented in the European political arena since the 1980s.

One of these interest groups that have been around for a long time is the EWL. The interest group was a forerunner for women's interest representation in the EU and has been a prominent actor in women's rights, having established a close relationship with the institutions in the EU (Greenwood, 2017, p. 165-167). Nevertheless, even though not all interest groups advocating for women's rights in the EU enjoy the same institutionalised relationships as the EWL, there are more and more organisations representing women's rights being established. YFE was established as one of these, aiming to advocate campaigning for women's rights in Europe (Young Feminist Europe, n.d.).

The EWL was formally created in 1990. The purpose of the establishment was to create a permanent representation of women's rights at the European level in the European Community (EC). The founders set up the EWL as an umbrella organisation through funds from the Commission. National organised feminist groups or networks with some structure ware national representatives into the new European-level organisation (Hoskyns, 1991, p. 67). The organisation aims to bring together national-level women's organisations and be a part of the consultation process of gender policies in the EU (Seibicke, 2020, p. 386). The European Commission's work for gender equality has included women's organisations as valued actors. Thus, despite the EP's report from 2013 mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, groups like the EWL do not

seem to suffer from being under-represented in the EU. Greenwood (2017, p. 165-167) argues that the EWL has successfully established close relationships and dialogue with the institutions in the EU and with EU member states.

YFE was established in 2015 and 'aims to amplify young feminist voices and activities across Europe through campaigns, advocacy and movement building' (Young Feminist Europe, n.d.). Their members are between 18 and 35 years old, and the organisation is solely run on a volunteer basis, meaning that the volunteers work for YFE in their spare time. Their activities include participatory discussion meetings and cultural events. YFE states that they both do grassroots and digital activism on their websites. Grassroots activism aims to expand the membership base and build the organisations. Moreover, they also organise or participate in events based on feminist values and try to engage with 'key stakeholders around the EU bubble' (Young Feminist Europe, n.d.). Their digital activism consists of building online spaces for engagement and reaching out to young feminists in Europe to engage in activities. For YFE, digital activism is also building networks online to use in their work in Europe (Young Feminist Europe, n.d.).

Both organisations share the same values and interests, but as a recently established organisation, YFE does not enjoy the same access to policymakers as the EWL. This difference in access affects the relationships and dialogues the two organisations have with the EU institutions. YFE cannot benefit from the same established relationships that the EWL has built since its creation. Thus, based on what the literature assumes, it indicates that YFE relies more on means like social media as a lobbying tool to achieve its targets in the EU (Beyers, 2004, p. 212; Storer & Rodriguez, 2020, p. 161). This study explores and compares how the EWL and YFE use social media as a part of their lobbying strategies.

EU institutions are particularly open to interest representation as a part of the decision-making foundation, and interest groups generally seek to establish close relationships with institutional actors (European Council, 2013; Mazey & Richardson, 2001, p. 4). To make up-to-date and factual decisions, the EU increasingly uses interest groups as a part of the decision-making process (Seibicke, 2020, p. 385). Upon the arrival of the

European Social Platform in 1995, the development of organised social interests at the EU level extended. Interest group representation represents a solid foundation for expanding the European integration, and many interest groups grew from the Commission's initiatives and funds to create support from the public (Greenwood, 2017, p. 161). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been created and supported by the Commission by establishing community action programmes, which again are taken to the member states through NGOs (Greenwood, 2017, p. 162).

Since the 1970s, the Commission has helped and fostered the establishment and growth of transnational women's networks and interest groups, as the European interest group system was becoming an essential part of the European policymaking system. Greenwood observes that 'the mixture of the EU labour market focus, an irresistible policy frame of equality, a committed patron, a strong network of grassroots organisations and the ability to work in institutionalised politics combines to create a favourable set of circumstances for EU women's organisations' (2017, p. 164). The Commission uses interest groups to monitor and advise on various aspects of equality policy (Mazey & Richardson, 2001, p. 11). The European Council characterises interest groups by three concepts. Firstly, interest groups have a minimum of organisation, meaning that not all social movements can be interest groups. Secondly, interest groups engage in an interest related to specific policy outcomes – not generic values or principles. Lastly, interest groups pursue influencing policymaking by acting as private actors, not through an electoral mandate (European Council, 2013).

1.3 Research Questions and Methodology

Social media are an integral part of political communication and lobbying today. There are still few studies that show how this social mediatisation and digitalisation of advocacy affect democratic politics. This statement also regards the ongoing struggle to ensure gender equality both in practice (policies) and access to public voice (communication/lobbying) (as stated by Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019, p. 1530). This report contributes to filling this concerning our knowledge of the role of social media in advocating for women's rights. With the ever-changing

dynamics of social media platforms and user popularity, the research on politics on social media requires constant updating. Therefore, the academic and societal relevance of studying civil society and interest representation on social media is still high. This study thus makes an essential contribution to refining our understanding of the use of social media in advocating for women's rights.

This report explores social media as a lobbying tool by the EWL and YFE. The EWL and YFE are two active women's rights organisations in the EU but operate on different levels. While the EWL, founded approximately 30 years ago, has established networks and access, YFE is a newcomer in the European political landscape. Studying their use of social media sheds light on how access to resources and traditional lobbying might affect the use of social media for lobbying purposes. It discusses how interest groups like the EWL and YFE can use social media in their lobbying strategies to achieve their goals in Europe. 'In Europe, as in many other parts of the world, social networking sites have amplified the intensity and broadened the scope of information and communication exchange among citizens' (Bossetta, Segesten & Trenz, 2017, p. 53). With the popularity that social media has gained, both in Europe and the rest of the world and new apps entering people's everyday life, there is a need to understand civil society can use social media to influence politics and policies in the EU (Trottier & Fuchs, 2015, p. 14-15). This study aims to contribute to this by looking at the issue of women's rights. The report does not seek to compare traditional and online strategies. Instead, it looks at whether interest groups use social media in addition to or as a supplement to traditional lobbying strategies. I will do this by analysing the EWL and YFE's presence and activity on social media to identify the targets and strategy behind the use of social media. The report draws on the traditional lobbying framework and analyses how social media fits into this as a tool. Thus, the main research question chosen for the report is:

What role do social media play in the lobbying and advocacy strategies of the European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe?

To ensure a comprehensive cover of the research question and the aim of the study, the research question has been broken down into three sub-research questions.

First, to understand the role played by social media in lobbying strategies, it is necessary to explore how the EWL and YFE use social media. This implies examining the EWL and YFE's social media over a selected period, two weeks in February 2022, to measure the use of social media by the two organisations. For the report to understand the role played by social media in lobbying strategies, the report will focus on how the EWL and YFE use their social media. This is an important question to ask, as there may be similarities and differences between the EWL and YFE in their social media usage and what they emphasise in their posts on social media. The first sub-research question is thus:

(1) How are social media used by the European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe?

Secondly, to further investigate whether and how social media is a part of the EWL and YFE's lobbying strategies, the study takes a closer look at the activities of the two organisations on their social media and their visibility. Tjora (2018, p. 85) states that how interactions play out on social media and online is formed by the medium. This notion indicates that the different social media platforms may affect how the interfaces between users and the organisations are studied and how the organisations use the various apps. I will investigate this by mapping four mainstream social media accounts responsible for the two organisations. Mapping the activity of the two organisations across different social media platforms will offer insights into the possible differentiation of their lobbying strategies across different digital communication environments. Accordingly, the second sub-research question is:

(2) How active and visible are the European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe's social media accounts?

Thirdly, an essential aspect of this study is to provide insight into the extent to which social media are a part of lobbying strategies for the two organisations. The study posits that social media are a crucial element of the lobbying strategies of the EWL and YFE. Nevertheless, this needs to

be substantiated. The third question will also help determine the extent to which the EWL and YFE prioritise social media lobbying differently. As a result, the third sub-research question is:

(3) To what extent are European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe using social media as a lobbying/advocacy/mobilisation tool?

Scholars first introduced s*ocial media* to the literature through *Web 2.0* (O'Reilly, 2005; Trottier & Fuchs, 2015). Compared to *Web 1.0*, Web 2.0 was where users co-create platforms through interactions and connections. Advocacy groups can spread messages to users with similar opinions, and movements can spread across national borders (Saxton *et al.,* 2015, p. 2; Bruns & Burgess, 2011). Other terms have sprung out of this notion, for instance, social network sites and participatory media (Trottier & Fuchs, 2015, p. 5). boyd and Ellisson define social media as 'web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made within the system' (2008, p. 211, in Trottier & Fuchs, 2015, p. 5-6). Trottier and Fuchs (2015, p. 4-6) further develop the notion that social media should be social, looking at socialisation theories and previous definitions. By drawing the theoretical frameworks of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, Trottier and Fuchs explain that social media are three notions: 'Media and online platforms that primarily support cognition (such as websites of newspapers) are social media (1), those that primarily support communication (such as e-mail) are social media (2), and those that primarily supports community building and collaborative work (Such as Wikipedia, Facebook) are social media (3)' (Trottier & Fuchs, 2015, p. 5). Social media as a term is complex, mainly because what defines as social media platforms keeps expanding with the development of new apps and platforms. However, by looking at the definitions provided by Trottier, Fuchs, boyd, and Ellison, one can state that online services which provide a platform to connect or socialise with other members can be defined as social media.

1.4 Advocacy vs. Lobbying: Definitions

This report will study advocacy and lobbying by women's interest groups in the EU. Therefore, I need to provide an understanding of what I mean when I use the terms, as it can be challenging to separate them.

Advocacy and lobbying are commonly used interchangeably in academic research and by the public. The role of advocacy and lobbying is well established in the European legislative system. The term lobbying can have negative connotations in politics and civil society (Dialer & Richer, 2019, p. 5; European Commission, 2007, p. 3; Eide, 2019, p. 2), leading to advocacy' or 'interest representation' being used instead. To understand what this report research, there is a need to understand the difference between the terms.

We can look at lobbying as a communication function in a democracy, where lobbyists function as experts who can convey information on complex matters to politicians more straightforwardly (Berg, 2009, p. 1). Scholars describe lobbying as persuading government officials through information (Guth & Marsh, 2000). Berg states that 'as players in the political arena, lobbyists represent, educate, and advocate on behalf of their client's interests' and 'lobbyists develop various methods, strategies, and tactics to gain access, inform, influence, and pressure policymakers who make policy decisions that affect the wellbeing of their clients, the local, national, and international communities' (2009, p. 4). Moreover, Berg (2009, p. 4) states that lobbying is a 'sophisticated' and multidimensional way of persuading policies. The 2011 Transparency Register of the European Union included the following definition of lobbying:

> All activities […] carried out with the objective of directly or indirectly influencing the formulation or implementation of policy and the decision-making processes of the EU institutions, irrespective of where they are undertaken and of the channel or medium of communication used.
>
> (2011 Transparency Register, in Greenwood, 2017, p. 61)

The term interest representation can be seen as synonymous with lobbying, but decision-makers and the public often prefer it due to the

negative implications the term lobbying might bring (European Commission, 2007, p. 3; Greenwood, 2017, p. 1). The EU uses the term interest representation instead of lobbying because of these negative associations, but the exact definition (Eide, 2019, p. 3). Lobbying strategies are 'a collection or a combination of activities and tactics to reach a certain goal, usually understood as the ambition to obtain political influence' (Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019, p. 1530). Based on the several notions of what lobbying is, lobbying and interest representation can therefore be identified as any activities that aim to sway or persuade decisions made on a political level.

Reid defines advocacy in research as 'both the representational and participatory aspects of groups as intermediaries between citizens and decision-makers, types of organisations and their capacity to advocate, and strategies of action in different venues' (2000, p. 7). While advocacy often can be used as lobbying and the other way around, some argue that in interest group studies, 'lobbying' is a specialised part of advocacy or as 'advocacy of a point of view, either by groups or individuals' (American League of Lobbyists, n.d., as cited in Berg, 2009). What this means depends on the literature one is reading. Some argue that lobbying is a specialised form of advocacy focusing more on the strategic and informal way to influence decision-makers. At the same time, advocacy also involves outside influencing — using the public to sway political decisions. However, in lobbying theory, external influencing is also seen as a lobbying theory (Beyers, 2004; Grant, 2001; Grant; 2004; Chalmers & Shotton, 2016; De Bruycker & Beyers, 2019), meaning that the claim of lobbying only being a specialisation of advocacy is conflicted. Some also describe lobbying as 'organised advocacy activities' (LobbyEurope, n.d.), adding to the confusion if lobbying is part of advocacy or the other way around.

For the sake of clarity, I will, in this report, use the term *lobbying* when describing activities that can be *interest representation*, *lobbying* or *advocacy* (as Beyers, 2004; Chalmers, 2013).

1.5 Outline of the Report

I have structured the report into seven chapters. The second chapter reviews the existing scholarship on traditional lobbying strategies, women's lobby, and online lobbying. The chapter aims to show the relevance of the report and why there is a need for more research on online lobbying, specifically regarding lobbying for women's rights. Moreover, the literature review also shows that the research in this report can refine our understanding of how interest groups can use several social media to lobby the EU. Chapter 3 conceptualises traditional political and digital lobbying strategies, presenting the political strategies of *voice* and *access* and the lobbying strategies of inside/direct and outside/indirect lobbying. This introduction to existing traditional and digital lobbying frameworks will be used later in the analysis. After that, Chapter 4 outlines my chosen methodological approach, the mixed methods. The chapter explains the mapping exercise, the content analysis of the posts, and the semi-structured interviews. The chapter also assesses the validity and limitations of the chosen methodologies. After that, Chapter 5 presents the findings from the mapping exercise and the content analysis, briefly analysing what the findings might tell us about the lobbying strategies of the EWL and YFE. I further discuss these findings in Chapter 6. Here, I examine the findings in light of the interviews conducted with YFE and the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3. Lastly, in Chapter 7, the report answers the research questions presented in the introduction and looks at suggestions for further research. The report concludes by stating that social media is a part of both EWL and YFE's lobbying strategies, focusing on outside lobbying strategies. However, there is a substantial difference in how vital social media is for the two organisations, which depends on resources, networks, the structure of the organisation, and the targets.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

There is a large amount of literature on lobbying in the EU, divided into two main focal points in broad strokes. The first focuses on measuring interest representation in the EU and the strategies used to lobby the EU (Eliassen & Peneva, 2011; Wonka, De Bruycker, De Biévre, Braun & Beyers, 2018; Georgakakis & Rowell, 2013). The second is more concerned with the role that lobbying and interest representation play in the power dynamics of the EU (Gabaldón-Estevan, Criado & Monfort, 2014; Pleines, 2012; Seibicke, 2020). The scholarship on interest actors in the EU draws on quantitative and qualitative studies. Even though there is a growing literature on the ever-increasing role of social media in politics, there are still few studies on the part of social media in the modern-day lobbying in the European Union. This chapter sets out to critically assess the literature field of lobbying in the European Union. Firstly, I review the literature about women's interest in lobbying. The following section looks at the literature on traditional and online lobbying, serving as a brief introduction to the conceptual framework that will be used further in the analysis of my report. Lastly, the literature review looks at the literature on online lobbying of women's rights to assess if there is a need for more literature on this specific theme, which I argue that there is.

2.1 Lobbying Women's Interests

This section will focus on reviewing the research done on women's lobbying in the EU. Scholars argue that there is a lack of studies that research European lobbying for women's rights (Woodward, 2015; Seibicke, 2020). The literature review also shows an underrepresentation in women's interest organisation studies, where the EWL has been in the spotlight for the last 20 years (Seibicke, 2020; Seibicke, 2017; Strid, 2009), while scholars have overlooked other women's organisations in the EU. The sub-chapter will subsequently look at the literature on women's interest representation and touch upon literature on the traditional lobbying strategies used by women's organisations.

One paper that looks at women's interest representation in the EU is Strid (2009). She wrote her dissertation about institutional conditions for gender equality in Europe and the organisation of women's interest groups in Europe, spotlighting the EWL. Strid argues that interest groups like the EWL function as input channels for the EU institutions and participate in output and feedback on policies and the political system. Moreover, interest groups serve as an intermediate level between the national and European levels. Strid also looks at the establishment and history of the EWL. The Commission helped found the EWL through funding. Since then, the organisation has had to work to make a platform that serves its interests across member countries in the EU. Strid concludes that the EWL gives women's interests a platform to influence policymaking and politics in the EU and that the EWL is the interest of women on a European level. Strid also finds that the EWL has adapted to the multi-level system of the EU, which gives it an advantage compared to other women's interest groups that have not been around if the EWL. The formal, hierarchical, and institutionalised construction of the EWL contrasts with other women's interest groups which are more loosely and limited in organising. This is an aspect that my report will further develop. YFE is a less formalised organisation and, therefore, might fit into the multi-level system of the EU in the same way as the EWL. Being less formalised could impact how the two organisations use social media to influence the EU. I aim to study this closer in my report.

Building on studies done on the EWL, Seibicke has done several in-depth studies on the EWL. Her article from 2020 investigated how the EWL as

an organisation can combine its two functional roles towards the Commission: being both an expert consultant and a mobiliser for public support. Seibicke focused mainly on the EWL as a case study of the social mobilisation of the interest groups. She clarifies whether and how the EWL handles potential tension between providing efficient technical expertise and acting as a critical voice advocating for women's interests in the EU (Seibicke, 2020, p. 386). The article discusses the concept of 'gender expertise', which is 'the specialised knowledge rooted in feminist theories and a feminist understanding of gender equality to transform unequal power relations and social injustices' (Seibicke, 2020, p. 391). Moreover, she looks at the empirical case of the EU Maternity Leave Directive and how the EWL contributed with expertise in this case. Seibicke argues that gender expertise may be a strategic tool used to advocate for women's rights from within. Seibicke further contends that 'the findings could indicate a trade-off between professionalisation and expertisation, on the one hand, and depoliticisation'. Similar to Seibicke, my study also looks at the EWL's mobilisation strategies. Nevertheless, I focus mainly on the mobilisation through social media, while Seibicke looked at the whole mobilisation strategy in one specific case. Seibickes' study is relevant as it sheds light on the EWL's lobbying strategies when it comes to informational lobbying with providing expertise. This focus could indicate that this is a strategy that we can also find in the EWL's social media, which my study will look further into.

Another study that researches interest groups' lobbyism towards women's rights is Jacquet's book from 2015. The author analyses public action favouring gender equality on a European level. The book looks at how the multi-level system of the EU has changed from the 1960s until today through gender equality policy. The book aims to describe and demonstrate the evolution of relations between women and Europe and the integration of the EU with a focus on gender equality policies. The research bases itself on qualitative field studies carried out between 2000 to 2006 and 2012 to 2013. During this period, written, oral, and budgetary material was collected. Jacquot divides the relationship between gender policy and public action into three main periods. The first period opened with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and closed with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The exception model distinguishes it. The following period was between the treaties of Maastricht and Lisbon in

2007, and the anti-discrimination model characterises this period. The last period is between the Lisbon period and the book's publishing, 2015, distinguished by the rights model. The rights model is close to today's society. This period is characterised by public action being more focused on gender equality policy and the legislative function of the EU, something that my report will look further into.

Hubert & Stratigaki (2011) looks at women's representation at a European level from a different perspective than interest groups. In their article, they highlight the role of the European Institute for Gender Equality in the work towards gender equality policies. The authors explain how women have been more reluctant towards European integration, which meant that the European institutions worked towards involving a broad spectrum of non-governmental organisations (Hubert & Stratigaki, 2011, p. 172). The article presents the EWL as one of the actors that the institute seeks to link with other NGOs, national bodies, and EU institutions. The EWL is favourable to such a formal channel of representation towards the EU. The research done at the institute has become a part of the informational lobbying, which the Commission uses in the legislative making. The institute was created by demand from the gender equality community during the 1990s, and the authors argue that it was made to advance the democratic basis of the EU with more channels to influence and lobby. However, the authors say that the institute still has a big window of opportunity that is not being used well enough. This is because of several geographical and thematical challenges that the institute and the EU face and political constraints in the role of being an individual actor. The authors conclude by stating that the trials can be faced by providing an essential step up in gender equality policies through lasting links concerning gender expertise, national and EU policies and civil society (Hubert & Stratigaki, 2011, p. 179).

Before my research, these four studies looked at women's interest representation and mobilisation in the EU. They look at various strategies to use in the multi-level system of the EU, with a focus on the expertise or informational lobbying that women's interest groups can provide to policymakers. This is an interesting perspective to bring forward in this study. Social media can be a form of informational lobbying if the organisations use it to reach out to policymakers or inform the public. My

study will expand on the existing literature on women's interest representation in the EU by looking at the social media that the organisations use to advocate.

2.2 Lobbying Strategies: Traditional and Online Lobbying

This section focuses on lobbying strategies, both traditional and online/social medial lobbying. Even though the mapping of interest groups and representation in the EU looms a significant role in the literature on lobbying in the EU, the research on lobbying strategies and how to influence the EU are central to the literature on lobbying. All these studies tend to focus on 'traditional' forms of lobbying but have neglected the role of social media as a lobbying tool. Their contribution to lobbying literature in the EU is significant, but there is a lack of perspective on using lobbying strategies with modern tools like social media.

2.2.1 Traditional Lobbying Strategies

Grant (2001) provides a new theoretical framework for categorising lobbying strategies. The article explains that 'the traditional model of pressure politics', which only looks at inside lobbying, has become outdated. With new NGOs emerging using new direct-action tactics, there is a need for a new model. The article studies Britain during the late 1990s, emphasising direct action strategies that interest groups have used. These immediate actions emerged after specific parts of the civil society did not have the same access to decision-makers as typical insiders' groups, thus resorting to direct action. Grant theorises about outside groups and the opportunities to influence, explaining how to lobby the British government using various strategies and tactics.

Grant (2004) further discusses pressure politics as the opposite of insider lobbying strategies. The article also studies Britain, where Grant argues that the insider-outsider framework is still relevant, even though Britain has had significant political changes in the last 20 years. Grant asks if outsider groups are becoming more successful in recent years in this article. The original framework developed by Grant states that insider groups are more likely to become successful in their lobbying strategies than outside groups. The article challenges this, as Grant emphasises the increase of direct action from interest groups. Grant concludes that

traditional forms of pressure politics should not be underrated as they are still valuable. Nevertheless, they are less visible than outside politics, which continues to increase, and that society will have to see both as part of pressure politics.

There is a myriad of channels and targets that interest groups use to lobby the multi-level system of the EU. Bouwen (2002) investigates the logic behind the behaviour of interest groups and develops a theoretical framework to explain the access of business interests to the Commission, the EP, and the Council. The framework presents the interaction between business interests and the EU institutions in the EU policy area. It aims at increasing understanding of how private actors can influence legislation-making in the EU. Bouwen uses an unconventional approach of focusing on access, in contrast to the literature, which focuses on measuring influence. The study of access argues that access can be a good measurement of influence, even though exceptions show that some ineffective political actors might have access that they do not utilise enough to lead to influence. Thus, Bouwen asks what factors determine the degree of business interest in accessing the EU's institutions (Bouwen, 2002, p. 366). Bouwen made the theoretical framework to analyse business actors in the EU. Still, Bouwen argues that the scholarship can use the framework to analyse other interest actors in the European political arena. The framework provides a new perspective on studying interest politics in the EU.

Beyers (2004) looks further into inside and outside strategies, analysing whether interest groups can use the strategies combined. He asks whether organisations that use inside strategies are less motivated to convey their needs in public. In his research, Beyers finds that actors utilise various channels and strategies to influence the EU and often can be combined. He presents a theoretical framework for systematically understanding the different types of political strategies; voice (outside/public strategies) and access (inside strategies). Voice can be media campaigns or protests, while access is equal with inside lobbying, the areas where political bargaining takes place. Beyers explains in his studies that even though there is a precise categorisation of lobbying strategies, it might be hard to separate them. Therefore, he argues that most interest groups use both inside and

outside strategies, as many of the strategies are combined into one comprehensive mobilisation strategy.

Klüver (2012) studies the information transition in lobbying, arguing that it is essential to lobbying strategies. Klüver contends that decision-makers often lack the necessary information to comprehend and make decisions based on a good foundation, allowing interest groups to be specialists in the policy area. Thus, interest groups can provide sufficient information as a lobbying strategy, influencing the information that policymakers have before deciding. This gives direct access to interest groups in European institutions, establishing close relations. In the article, Klüver seeks to explain how to present the information supply between interest groups and decision-makers. Some interest groups provide more information than others, even though there is a common interest in shaping policy outcomes. The article contributes to the research on interest groups' lobbying strategies by developing a theoretical framework combining resource mobilisation theory with organisational contingency theory. Klüver tests the framework using a dataset gathered from a survey that interest groups have filled out, which outlines the submissions to Commission consultations.

De Bruycker and Beyers (2019) assess how interest groups should prioritise lobbying strategies when facing the EU legislative policymaking, whether to use inside or outside lobbying. By adopting a media analysis and performing over 200 interviews, the authors show that the success rate of inside or outside lobbying strategies depends on to which extent interest groups use additional lobbying tactics. Moreover, the success also depends on the type of policy issue the interest group or lobbyist aims to affect. They find that media plays a significant role in outside lobbying success, as a widespread endorsement through media is crucial for outside lobbying to succeed. Furthermore, success may also depend on how the interest group cooperates with other organised interests that share the same goal of influencing the policy of the EU.

Traditional lobbying theories are the groundwork for this report. There is a need to understand the existing literature on traditional lobbying strategies to argue that social media has become either the sole lobbying strategy or a tool in conventional lobbying strategies. The report aims to

use some of these conceptual frameworks to analyse the use of social media, in particular Beyers' voice vs access, as well as inside/direct lobbying vs outside/indirect lobbying. Beyers has made this conceptual framework based on the existing lobbying literature, which means that the other articles and books presented in this chapter are relevant to understand and present. This section also shows that some lobbying strategies might bear different names but can be almost identical, for instance, Grants' concept of inside lobbying and Beyers' access. These frameworks are relevant to include in this report. Using arguments already made on traditional lobbying, I aim to contribute to a broader understanding of social media lobbying.

2.2.2 Online Lobbying Strategies

There are, however, some relevant exceptions to my claim that traditional lobbying theory tends to neglect social media. Widner, MacDonald & Gunderson (2020) looks at the approach of inside and outside lobbying in the context of the growth of social media. In their article, Widner et al. look at the existing literature on inside and outside lobbying and question whether the established patterns and norms can be replicated on social media as a lobbying platform. This article is a unique contribution as it studies both Twitter and Facebook, two critical social media, while other reports and studies on social media lobbying focused only on Twitter. Their study expects groups with less financial resources or networks to focus more on social media than more established groups. This notion relates to this report's assumption that the EWL, an organisation with more significant resources and a network, tends to use social media less than YFE. Widner et al.'s findings show that civil society groups are more likely to use social media for both inside and outside lobbying than other types of organisations. In their study, Widner et al. categorise lobbying groups to explain how social media norms are used. In other words, they establish a set of behavioural standards on social media, which they then use to analyse the behaviour on social media and if it differs from the established norms. My study, however, wants to review more in-depth specific types of NGOs, the EWL and YFE, and not draw conclusions based on the category they belong to. Widner et al. look at the group dynamics and behaviour in big groups, while my study will examine individual behaviour.

Another article that looks at digital advocacy is Johansson and Scaramuzzino's study from 2019. The authors study digital advocacy in their article by looking at different advocacy groups in Sweden advocating for workers' rights. They explore the three notions of digital advocacy and present a new theoretical framework for categorising advocacy strategies online: digital access politics, digital information politics, and digital protest politics. With the development of the internet, the study bases itself on the fact that the opportunities for political influence have changed. Civil society can also express their interests more with social media platforms. The authors argue that digital advocacy aims at giving more of a political presence rather than political influence. The article's main argument is that the logic behind the motives of advocacy activities has changed with digital advocacy. Sweden was chosen as a study object as almost all parts of the population have access to the internet, and the society has a permissive and inclusive advocacy culture. Civil society, therefore, tends to be involved and engaged in advocacy activities, which makes it an interesting case study to test the theoretical framework. The article found that the internet and social media play an essential part in the group's advocacy strategies. Even though the authors analysed two widely different advocacy groups, the findings showed that the groups tend to engage similarly in digital advocacy. These findings and theoretical framework are especially relevant to my study, as they indicate that YFE and the EWL might behave similarly online regardless of their size and resources.

Chalmers & Shotton (2016) asks if social media has changed the face of lobbying. The article bases its research on previous research showing that social media has levelled the playing field for lobbying groups towards the political powers. Thus, in their paper, they investigate how organised interest groups in the EU use social media as a tool, where they point to the lack of literature explaining this. The article examines which factors can explain when and why interest groups use social media and to what extent lobbying groups have embraced new social media strategies (Chalmers & Shotton, 2016, p. 375). The pair conducted a large-scale survey analysis of interest organisations lobbying the EU to investigate this. The respondents to the survey were a random sample of 1300 organisations drawn from the EU Transparency Register. The authors received 358 responses. They used the surveys to answer why and when interest groups use social media

lobbying tools. This research is a fascinating piece of literature that builds on a massive quantitative data collection. It relates to my report, as the aim of both articles is to study if and how social media can be a tool for lobbying. However, a significant difference between this report and Chalmers and Shotton's piece lies in the number of organisations examined, as my report focuses on only two organisations. This more limited approach allows my report to adopt a mixed-methods approach and look more in-depth into the two selected organisations.

Compared to the other articles presented so far, Yang and Saffer (2018) provided a different take on lobbying through social media by explaining how NGOs use social media to change the agenda-setting in media through their network structures in social media. They argued that NGOs' engagement on social media could give them more power in the agenda-building and influence the conversations on social media. The 2015 refugee crisis that hit Europe provides the basis for the study, where the authors have completed a data-mining and social network analysis to test their hypotheses (Yang & Saffer, 2018, p. 422-423). Their research looks at how NGOs can influence agenda-setting using traditional media coverage and conversations about the refugee issue on social media. Their findings show that status and resources an interest group had were crucial factors in their ability to affect the agenda-setting in media (Yang & Saffer, 2018, p. 433-434). The most important result from the study is that NGOs are dependent on hyperlink network positions and stakeholder-initiated engagement to stand out among other actors in the refugee crisis (Yang & Saffer, 2018, p. 437). My study on the EWL and YFE further explores the notion that resources and networks are dependent factors in social media and lobbying success. By comparing two similar but different women's organisation groups, I aim to show that the strategies on social media may differ based on available resources and how long an actor has been in the lobbying game on the European playing field.

Van der Graaf, Otjes & Rasmussen (2016) look at the opportunities that social media give to interest groups that are newly established or lack the same resources as more established groups, calling social media a 'weapon of the weak'. They use a quantitative approach, examining interest groups in the EU on the range and volume of their efforts on social media. Furthermore, the authors ask if social media has contributed to

reinvigorating democratic processes in the European Union, giving that it may have the ability to level out inequalities between interest groups in the European political arena. Nevertheless, this is a question they find limited evidence to answer. Their primary finding is that the resources that an interest group must use in their work on social media are the main factor in how successful that group is. These findings build on the notion that in my study, the EWL — with more resources and a more established network — might have more reach and activity on social media than YFE, which is what I set out to explore. Van der Graaf et al.'s study also only looks at Twitter and Facebook. I want to look further into the social media Instagram, which is also used actively by interest groups.

Saxton, Niyirora, Guo & Waters (2015) concludes that social media plays a supplementary role in lobbying. In their studies, they have looked at the role that hashtags play and how the use of hashtags can be effective for lobbying groups. The article examined hashtags by members of the National Health Council in the US. The authors examined eight months of hashtag use. They analysed the content written together with the hashtags, the quantity and style of hashtags, and the impact on retweets and shares on Twitter. They conclude by stating that hashtags can help decrease the knowledge gap among the public and highlight organisational values and engage the audience in a dialogue through social media (Saxton et al., 2015, p. 22). Guo & Saxton (2014) also looked at how non-profit organisations used social media in lobbying work in the US. Guo & Saxton claim that their research stands out from prior research on social media and lobbying. They look at how organisations use social media, not whether, as previously done in the scholarship (Guo & Saxton, 2014, p. 60). They conclude that Twitter is a powerful communication tool that organisations can use, especially in the format of 'public education' (Guo & Saxton, 2014, o. 73). The article finds that the primary use of Twitter is to provide information, followed by building online communities, which then can be used for action (Guo & Saxton, 2014, p. 73-74).

Both Gue & Saxton (2014) and Saxton, Niyirora, Guo & Waters (2015) present some excellent examples of using quantitative data to research lobbying and social media. My study explores this perspective by examining the same arguments regarding how social media can be a tool for lobbying that Saxton et al. present.

2.3 Lobbying Online for Women's Rights

This section sets out to present the limited literature on how women's organisations use social media to advocate, particularly in the EU. This is relevant to assess, as my report aims to do just that. This section shows that even though several authors have written about online lobbying for women's rights, further research is needed on the topic, and the research on it is still meagre (Seibicke, 2017, p. 128). Especially considering that the digital world changes each day, some tactics or strategies presented are outdated or not relevant anymore. Thus, social media study always needs to be up to date.

Several other studies have been conducted on feminist hashtags. Bogen, Bleiveiss, Leach & Orchowiski (2019) looks at the #MeToo movement on Twitter. Here, Bogen et al. examine how Twitter users employed the hashtag to gain visibility around sexual violence. Maas, McCauley, Bonomi and Leija (2018) studied the #NotOkay hashtag, which responded to former United States President Donald Trump's comments about 'grabbing' women by their genitals. The hashtag is reviewed through the social media platform Twitter, where they find that Twitter is a virtual public platform where social discourse is challenged.

Moreover, organisations can use social media to call for change or action and organise social movements through social media. Cravens, Whiting and Amar (2015) look at the hashtags #WhyIStayd and #WhyILeft on Twitter which was a movement highlighting abusive relationships. However, the study focused less on social media mobilisation and more on the problematisation of partner abuse itself. These studies show a growing interest among researchers in studying feminist hashtags and movements on social media. Still, fewer studies focus on the EU or other social media platforms than on Twitter.

Storer & Rodriguez (2020) studies social media campaigns considering women's movements. They look at the hashtag #WhyIStayed, a campaign that they argue acted as a central part of the online mobilisation towards ending gender-based violence. The authors raise the perspective that social media enables aspects of society that do not have the same influential opportunities as established and traditional lobbying actors to seek and gain attention. In this way, hashtags, and online movements,

helps the feminist community to mobilise. The article hypothesises that the hashtag #WhyIStayed laid the foundational ground for the famous #MeToo movement to become a global feminist mobilisation. The paper highlights how social media campaigns impact cultures and politicise through a different movement building than traditional outside lobbying. Regarding what my study sets out to do, Storer and Rodriguez argue that there is a need for more research on social media and feminist issues and how social media platforms can shape and impact society. Storer and Rodriguez look at virtual social movements' tools and tactics, contributing to a more significant social movement globally. My study limits itself to the EU and does not seek to look at one hashtag solely but instead looks at the organisations that use the hashtags to create social movements or influence policymakers in the EU.

In her article, Seibicke (2017) studies how the European Women's Lobby uses social media to lobby for gender equality in the European Union. The paper argues that social media gives women opportunities to connect with other activists, which will make it easier to influence the political agenda. Social media is a low-cost tool for gender quality activists to use. Therefore, the article studies how the EWL uses social media in their lobbying work through qualitative and quantitative methods using a case study, tracking hashtags, analysing the EWL's website, and an interview with the communication officer of the EWL (Seibicke, 2017). The article concludes by stating that women's organisations are moving their lobbying from offline to online more and more, which gives new opportunities for lobbying and lobbying. This argument is consistent with expectations that diffuse interests will use a wider variety of lobbying tools (European Parliament, 2013). Nevertheless, Seibicke also finds that the EWL has limited resources for communication and online lobbying, limiting social media opportunities. Additionally, traditional lobbying is still an essential factor in the 'Brussels bubble', meaning that women's organisations cannot move all their lobbying online. At the end of her article, Seibicke states, 'It is clear that social media is not used as an alternative to traditional media and offline lobbying, but as a complementary element in shaping its public image and raising awareness of its work' (2017, p. 137). Despite a claim that the article looks at social media behaviour by the EWL, Seibicke only looks at Twitter in her research. The study was also conducted five years ago. Between 2017

and today, several other media like Instagram have gained more attention from civil society and politicians and are more commonly used for information. Moreover, society can change a lot in five years, giving my report the possibility to bring a new perspective to Seibicke's conclusions and look further into how the EWL, as well as YFE, can use social media.

Chapter 3

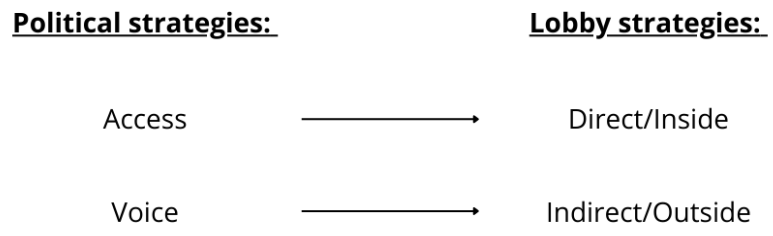
Conceptualising Traditional Political and Digital Lobbying Strategies

As highlighted in the previous chapter, several studies have looked at strategies used and how to influence politics (Beyers, 2004; Chalmers, 2013; Klüver, 2011, Greenwood, 2017). The most classical distinction in lobbying strategies is divided between inside and outside lobbying (Beyers, 2004; Rietlig, 2011). Beyers (2004) separates political strategies into two main divisions: voice and access. Greenwood (2017), on the other hand, focuses more on the channels that interest groups have available and can use. He distinguishes between two main routes: the national route and the Brussels route. Chalmers (2013) explains the role of information in lobbying strategies, establishing the exchange of information as to its strategy. Klüver (2013) has, in her work, focused more on the outcome of using several strategies, which, according to her, can explain how to measure the success of lobbying. This is something that my study does not do. This chapter describes the conceptual framework that will serve, or be applied, later to study how social media is used (or not) as a part of lobbying strategies. Here, *voice* vs access will be presented, as well as the lobbying strategies of inside/direct lobbying vs outside/indirect lobbying. I will use the conceptual framework to put the data collected in a larger context and contribute to understanding what the data is telling

us. The conceptual framework will help answer the research questions and link the research done in this report to previous and future research.

3.1 Traditional Political Strategies: Voice v. Access

Beyers (2004) created a theoretical framework around political strategies, grouping them into two: *voice* and *access*. These two notions are two overarching political strategies, while the lobbying strategies *inside/direct* and *outside/indirect* are the forms of lobbying that access and voice can take. Access lobbying is often direct and inside, while voice is often indirect and outside. The difference between them can be tenuous, but this section clarifies what those are.



Source: Germond, lecture in EUR3413, 2020

Figure 1: Strategies

Access is 'the exchange of policy-relevant information with public officials through formal and informal networks' (Beyers, 2004, p. 213). In other words, civil society makes itself relevant to politicians as the decision-makers lack information otherwise. Access happens in the political arenas where political bargaining occurs, which can be advisory bodies, technical committees, agencies and, to some extent, parliamentary committees (Beyers, 2004, p. 213) (Grant, 2004, p. 213). These strategies are not as visible to the public as voice strategies (Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019, p. 1531). To gain access, actors must provide reliable and acceptable expertise. Access is often instead used by specific interest groups that are financially well endowed or dispose of a network and contacts, allowing them access to institutions and policymakers.

Beyers defines *voice* as public political strategies (2004, p. 2013). Voice strategies happen in the public eye. Here, information transmission from interest groups to policymakers occurs indirectly (Beyers, 2004), p. 214). It can be difficult to separate or categorise lobbying strategies, especially

lobbying plans that refer to the public (Beyers, 2004, p. 215). Beyers has tried to distinguish dividing between information politics and protest politics.

Information politics is a more specific voice strategy. The strategy seeks to give or leak information to the public at strategic decision points, such as through press conferences or publishing reports. The strategy does this to gain the public's attention and spread awareness, which can pressure the politicians right before a political decision is taken (Beyers, 2004, p. 214). It is defined under *voice* as a lobbying strategy because it relates to the public arena. This strategy is indirectly connected to decision-makers and the policymaking process (Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019, p. 1531). Beyers explains it using Greenpeace as an example. Suppose Greenpeace holds a press conference at the same time as the EP debates the issue of genetically modified organisms. In that case, information politics and voice are used as a lobbying strategy. Information politics may reach the public or address the public, but often the public is not the primary target. Instead, it is used to transmit information to key decision-makers at strategic points through the people (Beyers, 2004, p. 214). Thus, in other words, voice can also be called indirect lobbying.

Protest politics is another specific strategy that falls under the category of voice. It is like information politics in that protest politics also includes transmitting information to the public. However, Beyers defines *protest politics* as the 'explicit staging of events to attract attention and expand conflict' (2004, p. 214). This means that the protest public seeks to gain attention and support for a cause that signals to decision-makers that there is public support or public opposition. Beyers states that this 'is meant to leave an impression on them' (2004, p. 215). In traditional lobbying theory, protest politics can include organising demonstrations or letter-writing campaigns (Beyers, 2004, p. 214-215).

3.1.1 Lobbying Strategies: Inside & Direct

One cannot study advocacy and lobbying without looking at inside v. outside lobbying, which some scholars also call direct v. indirect lobbying (Widner et al., 2020, p. 4; Marshall, 2012). De Bruycker and Beyers explain that inside lobbying 'privatizes conflict and restricts its scope' (2019, p. 58). Inside lobbying strategies are based on a close relationship with political

and administrative leaders, where interest groups can trade information or financial resources for influence (Walker 1991, in Widner et al., 2020, p. 4). Lobbyists prefer inside lobbying to outside lobbying, especially in the EU, which has a complex and technocratic decision-making process. De Bruycker and Beyers define inside lobbying as 'advocacy activities directly aimed at policymakers' (2019, p. 59). These are activities that are not visible to the public eye and can, for instance, be face-to-face meetings, e-mail exchanges or participation in committees. Access as inside lobbying is directly transmitted information from interest groups to policymakers. Interest groups act as representatives of civil society and societal interests. They can directly share information about the public's needs with decision-makers (Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019, p. 1531) by lobbyists or interest groups (De Bruycker & Beyers, 2019, p. 59). Therefore, inside lobbying as a lobbying strategy fits under the political strategy of voice. Weiler and Brändli define inside lobbying as 'gaining access' (2015, p. 746). Inside lobbying can also be called *direct lobbying*, as the aim is 'to influence policymakers directly, such that they support — and if possible, adopt — the policy preferred by the interest group' (Weiler & Brändli, 2015, p. 746).

In information lobbying, information is a crucial element for success. Because of politicians' limited time and resources, they might lack the correct information before taking a political decision. This is where inside lobbying or direct lobbying comes in. By having access to decision-makers before they make political decisions, lobbyists can provide the essential information needed for the politician to sway in the direction that the lobbyists want. This is also a trade-off between lobbyists and politicians, as politicians do not have to put in too many resources to obtain the information if they have a close relationship with interest groups that are experts in the field (Weiler & Brändli, 2015, p. 747). 'The information provided by interest organisations represents a shortcut for policymakers to (usually well-edited and summarised) expert knowledge and is therefore generally appreciated' (Weiler & Brändli, 2015, p. 747). Thereby explaining why interest representation is also such a significant part of the EU's decision-making process.

3.1.2 Lobbying Strategies: Outside & Indirect

Under the political strategy of voice, one can find outside lobbying strategies, also called indirect strategies. 'Outside lobbying aims at socialising conflict by publicly involving a larger audience of stakeholders' (De Bruycker and Beyers, 2019, p. 58). This means that the lobbying strategy indirectly influences policymakers through the public. De Bruycker and Beyers also state that we can see outside lobbying as 'a weapon of the weak' or 'a measure of last resort' (2019, p. 58). This is explained by the notion that interest groups that have access and can use inside lobbying strategies tend not to use outside strategies. However, others claim that outside lobbying might be a preferred lobbying strategy. It puts a different kind of pressure on policymakers through, for instance, media campaigns or mobilising citizens (Weiler & Brändli, 2015, p. 746-747). Outside lobbying seeks to mobilise and raise awareness among the public, which again can influence the politicians, for instance, through public media (Hanegraaf, Beyers, de Bruycker, 2016, p. 569). Compared to inside lobbying, outside lobbying is much more visible to the public eye, which again can gain more public support (Hanegraaf et al., 2016, p. 571).

Mahoney (2007, p. 109) states that outside lobbying plays a critical role in modern democracies because it mobilises the public and policy developments. Moreover, being visible to the public instead of inside lobbying promotes citizen engagement. This engagement can, for instance, be fostered through 'letter writing campaigns, media work, public advertising campaigns in print, radio and TV media outlets, organising grassroots meetings, demonstrations and other outreach programs' (Mahoney, 2007, p. 109).

3.2 Online Lobbying Strategies

3.2.1 Online Access v. Voice

Johansson and Scaramuzzino look further into Beyers' access notion to explain digital access. Digital access 'can be understood as when groups and actors seek — or have — direct contact with politicians and decision-makers to deliberate or negotiate on a particular topic or proposal using social media or other digital platforms' (2019, p. 1531; Widner et al., 2020,

p. 2). Digital access depends on how open the decision-makers or those that interest groups seek to influence are open to social and technical devices. Moreover, it also depends on how many political leaders are present on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. If they have open profiles that they use actively, they give interest groups or lobbyists access to contacting them or spreading information by, for instance, 'tagging' them (Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019, p. 1531; Widner et al., 2020, p. 1-2).

In their pursuit to explain online lobbying, Johansson and Scaramuzzino explain that the equivalent of Beyers' *voice* strategy, information politics, on online platforms can be called *digital information politics.* This lobbying strategy is based on Beyers' definition of information politics as a strategy. Scholars have traditionally focused on the interplay between traditional and new media with social media in digital information politics. Information politics have usually been linked to the use of media when lobbyists use press conferences or newspapers to inform the public. With the emergence of social media, lobbyists are now not dependent on traditional media to create visibility as they now can use their channels. This claim also means that members of the public, which are not necessarily organised through interest groups, also can create visibility and thus lobby indirectly (Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019, p. 1531-1532; Widner et al., 2020, p. 2).

Johansson and Scaramuzzino also draw attention to the concept of 'celebrity fishing' developed by Guo and Saxton (2014). Here lobbyist groups can use celebrities to spread awareness around a specific topic. By capturing celebrities' attention, the matter can spread to the celebrity's large audience through a follower-base which lobbying groups gain from. Johansson and Scaramuzzino argue that this lowers the threshold for reaching out to political and elected leaders. However, it is still not researched enough to be a theoretical part of lobbying strategies (2019, p. 1531).

Social media has given new opportunities for the lobbying strategy of digital protest politics. Internet and social media allow public members to participate in protests in other countries or globally. It also gives interest groups a new opportunity to engage with the public and other groups. Social media allow protests to happen

impulsively and remove traditional protest political structures. For instance, time limits and organisational limits are removed or limited through social media, which enables protests to arise within minutes. The protests are also not limited geographically anymore, which gives further visibility to interest groups and a more extensive reach to the public or policymakers indirectly (Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019, p. 1532-1533).

3.2.2 Social Media as a Lobbying Tool or Strategy?

Previous research on communication strategies from interest groups shows that communication depends on the resources available to the organisation (Seibicke, 2017, p. 130). Interest groups low on resources can turn to social media — which can be called 'a weapon of the weak' (van der Graaf et al., 2016). Social media offers low barriers and cost-effective channels to spread content, which can reach beyond networks and followers, for instance, through hashtags (Seibicke, 2017, p. 131). By selecting hashtags that can 'go viral' (gain attention beyond borders or followers), interest groups can renew the attention for causes, as well as expand their awareness (Seibicke, 2017, p. 133). Moreover, social media differs from traditional media because it offers the opportunity for dialogue or constant feedback. It is not just a 'reading tool' but also a 'writing' tool for users (van der Graaf et al., 2016, p. 31). By making information spreading and communication with civil society more effective and cheaper, social may help reduce inequalities between established interest groups with well-built networks and access and newer or smaller interest groups, thereby a weapon of the weak (van der Graaf et al., 2016, p 31).

Seibicke (2017, p. 129) states that interest organisations can use social media lobbying. Van der Graaf et al. (2016, p. 121) confirm this by stating that social media plays a vital role in advocacy. Seibicke (2017) clarifies that social media is not a strategy but that it can be used to conduct other forms of strategies. Social media offers interest groups the ability to interact with communities and participate in direct conversations with members of the public. Social media has also opened up more possibilities to promote and create attention around causes. Thus, social media is helpful both under voice to mobilise and represent interests and reach out and gain direct access to decision-makers.

Even though it is relatively straightforward to distinguish and categorise lobbying strategies on paper, it might be more demanding to apply them. Groups can combine all lobbying strategies, just some or only one. Empirical literature also shows that it is rare to see interest groups specialise in one lobbying strategy. It is more common to use different lobbying strategies (Beyers, 2004, p. 215). Beyers (2004, p. 215) claims that the multi-level character of the EU political system stimulates interest groups to use a range of lobbying tactics to achieve success. What limits interest groups from using all tactics are the varying costs and benefits related to the tactics and the access and position that the interest groups already have (Beyers, 2004, p. 215). Beyers (2004, p. 215) explains that the access strategy can also transmit the information actors wish to communicate through voice. On the other hand, advocacy groups cannot share information usually displayed through access and voice. This information could, for instance, be technical details which do not communicate well through a protest or a press conference. This argument gives access to an added value to interest groups. Seibicke (2017, p. 129) states that interest organisations can use social media lobbying. Van der Graaf et al. (2016, p. 121) confirm this by stating that social media plays a vital role in advocacy. Seibicke (2017) clarifies that social media is not a strategy but that it can be used to conduct other forms of strategies. Social media offers interest groups the ability to interact with communities and participate in direct conversations with members of the public. Social media has also opened up more possibilities to promote and create attention around causes. Thus, social media is helpful both under *voice* to mobilise and represent interests and reach out and gain direct *access* to decision-makers.

Chapter 4

Methodology

This chapter sets out to explain the methods used to answer the research questions. The chapter starts by defining some key terms I will use in the methodology and therefore is necessary to understand. The chapter explains why the use of methods has been chosen and describes how I will perform the research. There is a sense of practical concerns in all research that must be considered and the most suitable methodologies. Scientific concerns do not just decide the methods that researchers choose. Practical considerations also determine the methods and the researcher's capabilities to perform the study (Tjora, 2018, p. 36). At the end of this chapter, I critically discuss the methods I chose to implement for this study, reflecting on their advantages and limitations compared to other methods used in European studies and political science. This part will reflect on whether I could use other methods in addition to or instead of the methods chosen and why the preferred methods still were used. This chapter will present the mixed methods approach and semi-structured interviews used in this report. Further, the chapter will look at the validity and limitations of the chosen methodology.

Several terms need to be defined in the social media landscape, as they will be used further on in the report. Firstly, *hashtags* can be explained as

'short words or phrases that follow the hash or pound sign' (Saxton *et al*., 2015, p. 2). Hashtags are used on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. #*MeToo* is an example of a hashtag used on social media platforms. Interest groups can use hashtags to put a brand on lobbying movements, archive messages for movements and allow the spreading of the message to those that are not personally connected to the original message or user.

Facebook and Instagram *stories* can be described as 'ephemeral, short user-generated photo and video collections that display shared content for a limited period of time' (Yu & Chen, 2020, p. 1). In contrast to Facebook posts, *Stories* give visual information rather than written information. A unique aspect of stories is that they are only available to the organisation's followers for 24 hours. After 24 hours, they are deleted, but on Instagram, you can save the stories as *highlights* on your profile which can be visible to everyone (Yu & Chen, 2020, p. 1).

I define t*ags* or *mentions* as labelling or linking to other users to add them to the post. This definition could be that the person is linked in the attachment to the post, for instance, a clickable link to another user on the posted picture, to indicate who is pictured. It can also be that content of the post mentions the person. For instance, could a status be 'former president of the EP, @Name, was today', where the '@' stands for the username link? On Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the user tagged or mentioned in the post with a clickable link to their user will get a notification. This means that tagging a politician in a post would give a higher probability that the politician will see and maybe even respond to the post.

There are also several ways other users can interact with something posted on social media. Users can *like* the post that is published. Eranti & Lonkila claim that this is the most straightforward form of interaction on platforms like Facebook (2015, p. 1). Pressing the like button gives a positive reaction to what another user has published (Eranti & Lonkila, 2015, p. 2-3). Currently, likes are visible to users on Facebook and Twitter, but one can choose to turn off the number of likes on Instagram. Users can also comment on each other's posts. Thus 'comment' in this report stands for leaving a message 'under' a post, which other users can see. Another

typical interaction on social media is sharing posts. One can either share their posts or those of other users. These will then be posted on the user's profile but are marked as shared, also indicating what the original post is.

4.1 The Mixed Methods Approach

This report applies mixed methods because it collects and uses qualitative and quantitative data. The mixed methods consist of a mapping exercise and a content analysis. Semi-structured interviews will also supplement and triangulate the data collected through the mapping exercise and content analysis. Moreover, the report will utilise a theoretical framework to analyse the results, a general methodology in qualitative studies, and use quantitative hypotheses from the mapping exercise to gain insight into the interviews (Tjora, 2018, p. 33). Creswell (2014, p. 14) defines mixed methods as a blend of qualitative and quantitative research and data in one study. Small (2011, p. 60) defines mixed data-collection studies as a study based on at least two different kinds of data or two different means of collecting the data.

Scholars have used a myriad of methods to understand and research the use of social media in politics. Saxton et al. used a mixed-methods approach, analysing and categorising hashtags and looking at the retweets to determine effectiveness (Saxton et al., 2015, p. 6). They present a new approach to analysing hashtags through an inductive coding scheme and comparative analysis of the organisations surveyed in their research. Mixed methods combine different models and disciplines to 'overcome method-specific errors and challenges' (Moses & Knutsen, 2019, p. 301). The scholarship on mixed methods has expanded in the twenty-first century, with several publications using this method. Instead of the ever-ongoing debate on qualitative versus quantitative approaches, scholars now encourage research with different methods, for instance, calling for a qualitative approach to validate the quantitative data collected in a study (Small, 2011, p. 58). Several names are used to describe mixed methods, such as instance method's triangulation (Jick, 1979) or multi-trait/multi-methods (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) (Moses & Knutsen, 2018, p. 134). This report will use the term 'mixed methods' when referring to an approach that combines qualitative and qualitative methods to make it clear for the reader.

There is a lack of studies researching more than one social media in the same context. This lack also means that finding a suitable existing research design was particularly challenging. Thus, a new approach to methodology needed to be set out to ensure that the report would be feasible and that the report could answer the research questions. The choice fell on a mixed-methods approach as the report collects qualitative and quantitative data. There is a general assumption in the scholarship that quantitative methods give an overview while qualitative methods give an insight (Tjora, 2018, p. 28). This report uses these assumptions to defend the need for a mixed-methods approach. The mapping exercise and the content analysis of the EWL and YFE's social media give an overview of the activity and use of their social media. Nevertheless, these methodologies are superficial and do not give this report's insightful perspective. Therefore, the report relies on semi-structured interviews to supplement and triangulate the data collected and dig deeper into the strategies and tactics behind the use of social media by the EWL and YFE. Thus, the study depends on both qualitative and quantitative data. The EWL and YFE were chosen based on observation. The main selection criterion was that the organisations had to be active on at least two different social media platforms to have enough data to assess. I defined active as posting at least three to four times a week on more than two social media. After observing both the EWL and YFE for a couple of weeks, I assessed that they were active enough to participate in the mapping exercise.

4.1.1 The Mapping Exercise

To understand how the two organisations, YFE and the EWL, use social media, I needed to map the social media posts published by the two organisations' official accounts. Social media and the internet can be a part of the methodology of observational studies in social sciences. Tjora (2018, p. 85) recommends that observational studies of social media involve social interaction between users somehow to show that social media can be a place of community. Thus, the mapping exercise needed to show what the organisations posted and the interactions that the posts created. The mapping exercise seeks to answer the first sub-research question of this report: *How is social media used by the two organisations, European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe?* The mapping exercise aims to find a quantitative dataset that can create some assumptions about the social media use of the organisations, which the

qualitative and quantitative methods of content analysis and semi-structured interviews seek to triangulate.

Firstly, for practical reasons (time restrictions and manual coding), I needed to limit which social media platforms the mapping exercise would monitor. I, therefore, made an overview of all social media platforms that the EWL and YFE use (Table 1) and subsequently selected those platforms on which the two organisations were most active. I defined that an active social media user was required to post at least one post each week because the activity needed to be noticeable in the mapping exercise, which only lasted two weeks. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter were the social media platforms most frequently used by the two organisations.

Table 1: Overview of the organisations' use of social media

	European Women's Lobby	**Young Feminist Europe**
Facebook	x	x
Instagram	x	x
LinkedIn	x	x
Twitter	x	x
YouTube	x	x

Source: Author's own compilation.

I set the mapping exercise to start on 16 February 2022 and finish on 1 March 2022. These two weeks were randomly selected to ensure a small likelihood of data distortions due to extraordinary events. Nevertheless, disturbances occurred, which I will further explain in section 5.1. Before starting the mapping exercise, I closely followed the social media accounts to assess if they were active enough from January to mid-February. Here I noticed that there was less to no activity on the platforms YouTube and LinkedIn, which led to these being ruled out from the mapping exercise. The data was collected manually, as the amount of content collected over the two weeks was not large enough to warrant machine-assisted classification. The different platforms have different characteristics and metrics of how the users engage. Table 2, created by Coelho, de Oliveira & de Almeida

(2015), gives an overview of the main characteristics and metrics for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter:

Table 2: Characteristics and metrics for engagement in the most know virtual media

Virtual social media	Primary metrics	Specific characteristics
Facebook	Comments	Creation of groups, pages, events, and advertisements
	Likes	Use of applications
	Shares	Add more than one suer to a conversation
Instagram	Comments	Postings originated exclusively from smartphones and tablets
	Likes	Posting with images and short videos up to 15 seconds)
		Editing images and videos tool
Twitter	Favouriting a tweet	Personal or professional messages with a maximum of 140 characters
	Likes	
	Incorporate a tweet (quoting)	
	Retweet (share)	

Source: Coelho, de Oliveira & de Almeida, 2016, p. 460.

Coelho et al.'s table give an overview of what can be perceived as posts and interactions on social media. *Posts* can be defined as the content published by users on social media platforms. This argument means, for instance, a picture, an event, or just a statement. However, they published the article with the table in 2016, which means that the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have evolved since then. Now, Facebook and Instagram have given users the ability to post 'stories', non-permanent posts only available for 24 hours. As users interact with all the platforms differently due to different designs, there was a need to monitor the different modes of interaction. Both Instagram and Facebook platforms also give the

user the ability to 'repost' or 'share' other users' posts. The choice divided them into two categories, either a post or a story. This choice was because Instagram and Facebook have already divided their modes of interaction into these two categories. They result in different ways that the users can interact with the organisation. The user can either publish a post, answer, or repost on Twitter. Coelho et al. show this in table 2 through 'incorporate a tweet', which I choose to call an 'answer', and a retweet which I decide to call 'share'. Hence, I divided Twitter into three categories of how to publish. The difference between a Twitter answer and a Twitter repost is that an answer requires the organisation to write something in the post. The repost is just reposting what someone else has posted without adding anything to the post. The observant reader might note that Facebook also can repost, but I merged this with the *post* category. This is because the repost culture is larger on Twitter than on Facebook, and when sharing on Facebook, it is often seen as a post on its own (Coelho et al., 2016).

Table 3: Overview of what will be monitored during the mapping exercise

	European Women's Lobby	**Young Feminist Europe**
Facebook – post	x	x
Facebook – story	x	x
Instagram – post	x	x
Instagram – story	x	x
Twitter – post	x	x
Twitter – answer	x	x
Twitter – repost	x	x

Source: Author's own compilation.

The report also asks the sub-research question: *How active and visible are the EWL and YFE's social media accounts*? To provide a sufficient dataset of how the organisations use social media platforms, I chose a set of variables that I needed to identify in the mapping exercise. The variables help not just to describe what is posted by the organisations but also to explore the interactions. I gave each post a post-ID to identify and refer to it. For example, 'FB_story_1' indicates that it is a story on Facebook.

Firstly, to understand how active the organisations are, I needed to note when the organisations published the posts. Therefore, the mapping exercise recorded both publication and time. This recording was possible to a certain extent, as some social media platforms only show an approximate timeframe of when the organisations posted it, for instance, 'posted 3 hours ago'. Therefore, I noted both the date and time of a published post as far as it was possible. Secondly, I documented the caption of the post. I am going to use this documentation in the content analysis. This gathering meant that I copied the text that the organisations had written next to, for instance, a posted picture, into the table. I also documented hashtags, tagged users, or mentioned users. Lastly, I wrote down the number of likes, comments, and shares. I realised that this dynamic number might change, so I double-checked the numbers in April 2022 to see if they had gained more attention during the last couple of months.

Table 3 shows the variables collected during the mapping exercise. Due to the format of how the posts are published and visible to the regular user, some of the variables are not relevant for all positions. To show what was appropriate and collected from each category, I marked the variables with x in the table if they were possible to collect.

Table 4: Overview of variables collected in the mapping exercise

	Post-ID	Date	Time	Caption	Hashtag	Tagged	Mentioned	Attachment	Likes	Comments	Shares
Facebook–post	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Facebook–story	X	X		X	X		X				
Instagram–post	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	
Instagram–story	X	X		X	X		X				

Twitter – post	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Twitter – answer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Twitter – repost	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Author's own compilation.

4.1.2 Content analysis of posts

The content analysis of the several posts casts light on how the EWL and YFE use social media. The content analysis examines what the organisations post and their interactions with other users. This examination is to either strengthen or weaken the assumptions elaborated from the mapping exercise, which I will use to set a starting point for the interviews. As discussed in Chapter 1.3, the medium shapes the interaction. Therefore, the content analysis will also investigate whether there are substantial differences in how the organisations use the different apps, whether the chosen platform is indicative of a specific lobbying strategy and, if so, which one. The content analysis will draw upon the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 to understand the posts. This framework will help draw light on if social media is part of the lobbying of the two organisations and, if so: how.

Each post has a caption with information that the organisation wishes to share. On Instagram, the main content would be the picture shared, while the caption under the picture comes with additional information. Instagram and Facebook stories are often just pictures or two-three lines of informative text. In Facebook posts, the main content depends on what is attached. For instance, it might be a picture, a more extended caption, sharing or publishing an event. On Twitter, the main content is the caption — what the organisation writes. An attachment of a picture to the tweet can supplement the caption. The same goes for Twitter reposts and Twitter answers.

To analyse the main content, I want to categorise the content to understand if it is part of a lobbying strategy or not. Thus, the content analysis needs to recognise if the post is a voice or access post. I argue that I can analyse this by looking at the caption, likes, comments, and tags. If they specifically try to reach out to the decision-maker and can get a reaction from them, they

have created direct access to the decision-maker. However, by just tagging decision-makers without getting interactions or responses, this can be categorised as voice, as they still manage to spread information and awareness to the public. Still, they do not manage to establish direct access. Nevertheless, even though it is categorised under voice, it is still an attempt to reach decision-makers. Thus, I can define it as an attempt at lobbying. Under the voice category, I draw upon Johansson and Scaramuzzinos' (2019) conceptual framework of post categories: digital information politics and digital protest politics. For a post to be categorised as digital information politics, the post's purpose must be to inform the public or spread awareness. The other category, digital protest politics, can be advertising an event or asking to share or spread a message. Of course, even though one develops categories on paper, the organisations' posts can be hard to distinguish. Therefore, I will further elaborate on posts that might fit into several categories in Chapter 5.

Table 5: Categories for content analysis

Access	Voice	
	Digital information politics	Digital protest politics

Source: Author's own compilation based on the conceptual framework of Beyers (2004) and Johansson and Scaramuzzinos (2019).

When sorting through the EWL's posts, it became evident that I needed to make some rules for what kind of posts I could sort into access. I look at access as establishing direct contact with the EU institution or politicians that the organisations try to reach, thereby achieving inside access and direct lobbying. I decided that for a post to be sorted as access, it meant that the organisation had achieved access or a direct link with policymakers or the institutions. For this to be trackable, the posts, therefore, needed to obtain a like, comment or share from either the institutions in the EU or politicians or decision-makers in the EU. This rule meant that even though any of the organisations tagged, for instance, EU institutions in their post, if they did not receive any interaction back from the tagged institution, it was not a successful access strategy. I reason this by comparing it with the traditional voice strategy of protests or demonstrations outside a government building.

Politicians may walk by the protest on their way to work, but if they do not stop to interact, it is still classified as voice lobbying. However, if the politicians had stopped to talk directly with any of the protesters, one could discuss if the protesters had established direct contact and thereby gained inside access.

The qualitative sorting gave an immediate limitation to the study. As a result of limited resources, I could only spot politicians that had their role or occupation written in their biography (information section) on their user profile. If not, I could not double check each person the organisations interacted with to find out where they worked and if they had any influence on EU decision-making.

4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews as a research method are one of the most common ways to obtain qualitative facts and provide a 'quick and convenient means of getting the news, straight from the horse's mouth' (Moses & Knutsen, 2019, p. 130). Interviews allow the researcher to acquire data and facts directly from other people, which a subsequent analysis can use. Semi-structured interviews are in the middle of the scale between carefully structured and informal interviews. They follow an interview guide but allow the conversation to flow more than in a structured interview (Moses & Knutsen, 2019, p. 130). This research method can identify themes and relationships and gives the insight that this report seeks to understand (Tjora, 2018, p. 30). Moreover, semi-structured interviews open for the interviewee to talk about subjects that may not be in the interview guide. This method gives added value to the semi-structured interviews as a method, as they may give even more perceptions than expected (Jacobsen, 2018). Thus, I chose semi-structured interviews as a supplementary method to the mixed-method approach. The interviews have an informative and comprehensive purpose, both supplementing and aiming at grasping the use of strategies and the EU as a lobbying target for the EWL and YFE.

The interview guide (Appendix 1) is an overview of my questions during the interview. As it is a semi-structured interview, the questions do not have to be in a particular order or asked strictly in the same way the guide words them. The guide is a roadmap that guides me, the interviewer,

through the interview and ensures that I ask the questions I need to get the data necessary for the report. The guide included themes and sections instead of specific questions. I split the interview into two sections. The first section includes some warm-up questions that are easy to answer for the interviewee. The second section contains discussion points. The topic of the interview is '*what role does social media play when it comes to lobbying and advocacy for the organisation?*'. I specifically added open questions in the guide to ensure that the respondent could do most of the talking throughout the interview. The questions were amended in the application to Sikt after I conducted the mapping exercise to ensure that I could use the interviews as a supplementary methodology. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 1 and approved by Sikt. Research projects that require active participation can only be conducted after the participants have been informed and have consented to it (NESH 1999, in Tjora, 2018, p. 47). Thus, interviewees signed a consent form. In the case of the anonymity of the interviewees, they have been made aware that due to the report publishing their work title and workplace, there is a chance of recognition to whom they are in the report.

I contacted both the EWL and the YFE. EWL declined to participate in the interview, but only YFE answered positively. The EWL's refusal was unexpected as they participated in projects in the past (see, for instance, Seibicke, 2017; Hubert & Stratigaki, 2011; Strid, 2009). Upon their request, YFE was sent the interview guide in advance. The EWL's refusal can be seen as a limitation of this study and is disappointing but not entirely catastrophic. The interview only serves to complement the collected data and does not provide the core data for the analysis. The interview will help shed light on some aspects that cannot be uncovered through my mapping exercise and content analysis. Therefore, I cannot verify the findings for the EWL the same way as those in YFE, but they can still be seen as findings that future research can draw upon when studying the same topics.

Before the interview, I sent the chosen interviewee a consent form (Appendix 2), which explained the study's aims and the chance that the interviewee might be recognised due to the publishment of the organisation that the interview worked for. Because the interviewee and I live in two different countries, the interview was performed digitally

through the software Microsoft Teams. The interviewee agreed to me recording the interview and using the automatic transcription that Microsoft Teams offered. The reason for using both recordings and automatic transcription was to ensure that I could commit as much as possible to the interview without being distracted by having to take notes of the conversation. Using both automated transcription and recording turned out to be a good combination. Automated transcription is a good but not perfect tool, and it sometimes has difficulties understanding the right words if there are solid accents or 'mumbling'. By double-checking the transcription with the recordings, I ensured that the finalised interview transcription had all the information I needed and that I could understand it well enough to analyse it.

Burnham, Lutz, Grant and Layton-Henry (2008, p. 123) name two significant concerns with interview situations that need to be considered: interview effects and interviewer fraud. Interview effects are when respondents give different responses to the interviewers. These effects could happen if the respondent is affected by who the interviewer is, for instance, by ethnicity, gender, or dress. It is generally assumed that interviewers gain more information and honest answers when they sympathise with the respondent. I am a young feminist woman, which means that I am more likely to gain sympathy from the respondents from the EWL and YFE than, for instance, a middle-aged man critical of feminism (Burnham et al., 2008, p. 123-124). This argument means that through the interviews, I should be able to obtain honest and factual answers from the respondents. This increases the validity of the semi-structured interviews as a supplementary method to the mixed methods. For research transparency, the interview guide is included in Appendix 1. The most important findings of the interview conducted are presented in the discussion (Chapter 5).

4.3 Limitations to the Study

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the practical concerns that affected the data collection. I set the mapping exercise to a short period. This meant that I could make assumptions about how the EWL and YFE use social media, but these assumptions may only apply for the period during which the mapping exercise was completed. There is a

chance they will behave differently on social media if the researcher chooses a different period. Therefore, the mapping duration is a limitation of the study. The assumptions and researchers should test the claims made in this report over a more extended and/or different period.

The content analysis was informed by the two categories of voice and access and is presented in Chapter 3. I chose this kind of categorising because then I could draw upon the conceptual framework already in the data collection and start reflecting early on the content posted by the organisations. I chose to sort the posts according to content, tags, medium and hashtags based on the framework, and another researcher could have sorted it differently. I still believe that the triangulation of the methodologies gives credible results that can be used further to study women's interest representation on social media. I mitigated the possibility of this limitation by clearly defining the variables I wanted to use and test coding them before applying them as a whole to the dataset. Because I used concepts and variables that are not entirely abstract, the likelihood of another researcher being able to replicate my findings at least partly is still relatively high.

Chapter 5

Mapping and Analysing Social Media Use by the EWL and YFE

Seibicke (2017, p. 133) hypothesised that an organisation like the EWL would have high social media activity to increase its visibility. Seibicke based this hypothesis on a search for online mentions of the organisation on online news websites, where she found that the EWL had a low presence. In April 2022, I conducted the exact same search for the EWL and YFE using the search engine Google to explore if their online presence on online news websites. For the EWL, the results were the same as Seibicke (2017); that the EWL rarely features on online news websites. In addition, there were even fewer results for YFE. This result was expected because YFE is a younger and smaller organisation. Accordingly, based on my and Seibicke's findings, one can assume that both the EWL and YFE use their social media platforms actively to increase their visibility because they do not get the visibility through online news websites.

This assumption forms this chapter which presents the main findings from the mapping exercise and content analysis of YFE and the EWL's use of social media. These findings will help answer the questions raised earlier about how the EWL and YFE use social media. The chapter first presents the conclusions of the mapping exercise that was conducted by tracking the social media platforms Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter of YFE and the EWL. Here, I will discuss the context of the mapping exercise with notable dates and events happening during the collection before I will show the data through figures

and explanations. Lastly, I present and discuss the findings from the content analysis.

5.1 The Mapping Exercise

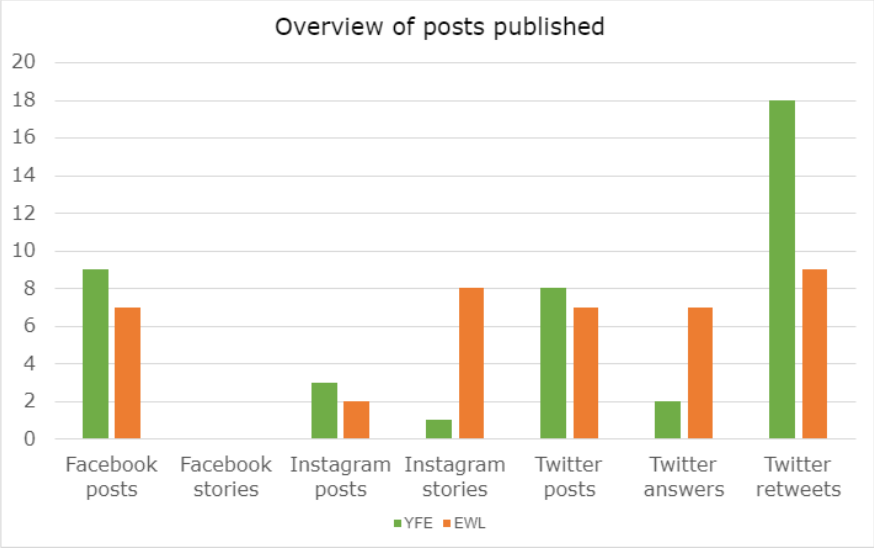
5.1.1 Context

During this period of the mapping exercise (16/02-01/03/2022), several significant events occurred that impacted the content posted. Firstly, the President of the EP, Davis Sassoli, passed away on the 11th of January (European Parliament, 2022a). On 18 January, Roberta Metsola was elected President of the European Parliament (EP) (European Parliament, 2022b). Just before the mapping exercise started, the President of the Commission, the President of the European Central Bank (ECB) and Metsola of EP met for the first time. This meeting signalled three women leading three of the most powerful institutions in Europe, which women's organisations noticed in Europe. The mapping exercise also reflects this meeting, as the organisations reacted to this meeting on their social media. Secondly, on 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, signifying that war raged again in Europe (Bigg, 2022). The invasion sparked large protests worldwide, which the two organisations also reflected on their social media. Seeing that the invasion happened in the middle of the mapping exercise, the posts published after the invasion are also affected by the war. Thirdly, on 19 February, the EWL held its first Board of Administration meeting that lasted for two days. This meeting naturally gained much attention in their posts for these two days. It is also worth mentioning that during the mapping exercise and the rest of the study, the pandemic COVID-19 had been around for two years and is affecting every day in most countries all over the world. This has also changed some perceptions of how social media is used and might influence the data collected and the findings that this report presents. Even though this turned out to be a rather extraordinary monitoring period, these events have no particular bearing for my analysis, in that they precisely only affect the content and not the purpose of the social media posts. The only exception here is COVID-19 which I will elaborate further on in Chapter 6. Another exception here might also be the two-day event that the EWL organised, where they might have used less resources on social media and more on the event taking place.

5.1.2 General Use of Social Media Platforms

This section gives an overview of YFE and the EWL's use of social media platforms by presenting the data collected throughout the mapping exercise. The purpose of this section is to establish a general understanding of how often each social media platform is used and to look at the spread of the use of the platforms compared to each other. The section also looks at the different findings between YFE and the EWL against each other to try to establish if the structure of the organisations has any impact on the use of social media platforms.

Figure 1 shows an overview of the number of posts and stories published by YFE and the EWL during the mapping exercise period. For the EWL and YFE, Twitter retweets are the most used form of posting content on social media. Twitter retweets are a simple way to forward information that does not require much effort from the user, who only must press the retweet button. However, retweets are not their original content and depend on what other users have posted. This may therefore be hard to plan a strategy towards, as it is difficult to predict what other users will post.



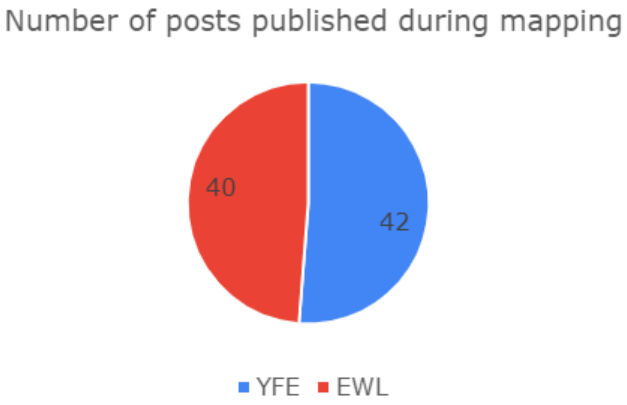
Source: Author's own compilation.

Figure 2: Overview of posts published by YFE and the EWL during the mapping exercise

Moreover, Figure 2 shows that neither the EWL nor YFE used Facebook Stories during the period of the mapping exercise. This result is a fascinating find, as both organisations use Instagram Stories — even though the EWL uses it to a larger extent than YFE. It is easy to compare

Instagram and Facebook stories as a medium, as they offer the same functions for posting information. Because stories only are available for 24 hours, Yu and Chen (2020, p. 1) argue that it makes the stories more attractive to the public since users are more willing to read them first. Therefore, it seems contradictory to outside lobbying strategies that none of the organisations uses Facebook Stories. One could think they would want to get as much information out to the public. I will ponder further on this notion in the next chapter.

Furthermore, Figure 3 shows that on most social media platforms, there are not many disparities between YFE and the EWL when it comes to posting activity. The EWL posts a lot more on Instagram stories than YFE. YFE retweets more on Twitter, while the EWL posts more answers on Twitter. Also, Figure 3 displays that YFE posted two more posts than the EWL on all social media platforms combined during the mapping exercise. The EWL posted 40 posts which represent approximately two-three posts a day. YFE posted 42 posts which is an average of three posts a day. This finding shows that there is not much difference in the activity level from each organisation, despite their internal differences and external outreach differences. However, Figure 2 only shows the number of posts combined.

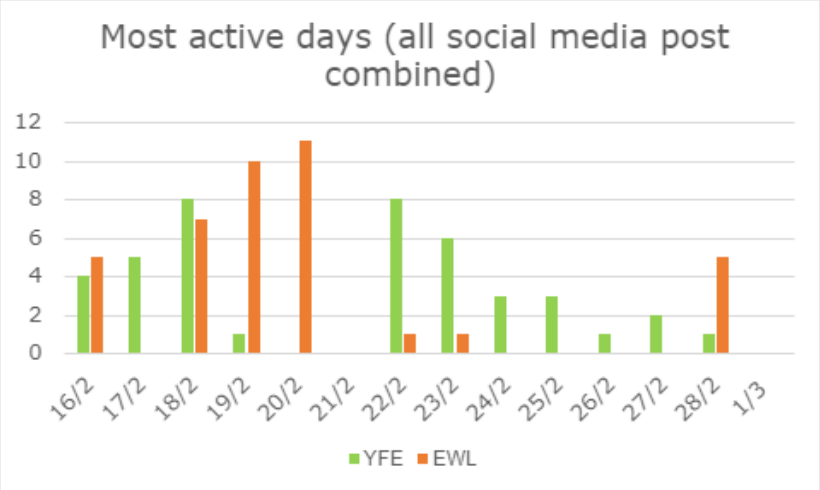


Source: Author's own compilation.

Figure 3: Number of posts published on all social media platforms during the mapping

Figure 4 gives an overview of the most active days for all social media posts combined. YFE has a larger spread of posts throughout the mapping period than the EWL. While Figure 2 suggested that the

average number of daily posts amounted to two-three, Figure 4 shows that this is not the case. For instance, 20 February was the most active day for the EWL, with 11 posts posted.



Source: Author's own compilation.

Figure 4: Overview of most active days for all social media posts combined

Figures 2, 3, and 4 show that both the EWL and YFE actively use social media and post on social media. This indicates that spending time and resources on social media is seen as important in both organisations, and it is a part of their routines and structure.

5.1.3 Visibility and Outreach

This section looks at the visibility and outreach that YFE and the EWL have on their social media. To show this, I have made an overview of likes, shares, and comments. This allows me to assess whether the posts are part of an overall strategy: if they reach out to other notable users, for instance policymakers in the EU, this might mean that they gained access to these policymakers.

Table 6 gives an overview of likes that both organisations got on their posts during the mapping exercise. The table gives an overview of Instagram posts, Facebook posts, Twitter posts and Twitter answers. I have excluded Instagram stories as in March of 2022, there was no

possibility to 'like' an Instagram story[1]. Instagram stories are also excluded from Tables 7 and 8 due to the same reason; it is not possible to publicly comment or share Instagram stories. I have excluded Twitter reposts because most reposts have been written originally by other Twitter users. This means that YFE and the EWL are simply reproducing someone else's message. Even if we were to accept that reposts also generate engagement with the profile of the organisation reposting the message, I have no way of checking where such engagement occurs (if it is the original Twitter profile or the reposter's Twitter profile) with the mapping scheme I use. For the same reason, I have also removed Twitter reposts from Tables 7 and 8.

Table 6: Overview of likes

Overview of likes	**YFE**		**EWL**
Instagram posts (in numbers)			
I_post_1	24	I_post_1	31
I_post_2	69	I_post_2	20
I_post_3	42		
Sum of likes	135	*Sum of likes*	51
Average number of likes	45	*Average number of likes*	25.5
Facebook posts (in numbers)			
F_post_1	6	F_post_1	10
F_post_2	2	F_post_2	7
F_post_3	1	F_post_3	24
F_post_4	2	F_post_4	17
F_post_5	6	F_post_5	7
F_post_6	4	F_post_6	25
F_post_7	2	F_post_7	28
F_post_8	3		
F_post_9	2		
Sum of likes	28	*Sum of likes*	118
Average number of likes	3.1	*Average number of likes*	16.9
Twitter posts (in numbers)			
T_Post_1	2	T_Post_1	4
T_post_2	1	T_post_2	33
T_post_3	9	T_Post_3	19

[1] In February 2022, Instagram, which Meta owns, launched a new feature that enables the users to 'like' each other stories. This feature was available as soon as users updated their app and were gradually introduced throughout spring 2022 (Business Standard, 2022). This feature was unavailable to me during the mapping exercise, but I obtained it afterwards. It does, however, not compromise my mapping exercise as the likes on Instagram are not visible to anyone other than the user, and I could therefore not have been able to track it in a mapping exercise.

T_post_4	12	T_Post_4	5
T_post_5	21	T_Post_5	14
T_post_6	6	T_Post_6	22
T_post_7	45	T_Post_7	11
T_post_8	6		
T_post_9	19		
Sum of likes	121	*Sum of likes*	108
Average number of likes	13.4	*Average number of likes*	15.4
Twitter answers (in numbers)			
T_answer_1	2	T_Answer_1	4
T_answer_2	5	T_Answer_2	1
		T_Answer_3	5
		T_Answer_4	2
		T_Answer_5	1
		T_Answer_6	5
		T_Answer_7	0
Sum of likes	7	*Sum of likes*	18
Average number of likes	3.5	*Average number of likes*	2.6

Source: Author's own compilation.

YFE gets more likes than the EWL on Instagram posts, even though the EWL has more followers than YFE during both the mapping exercise and the time of writing this (per 7 May 2022, YFE has 2313 while the EWL has 2789 followers). This finding may indicate that YFE is able to reach more out to their followers on Instagram than the EWL. On Facebook posts, on the other hand, the EWL gains a lot more likes than YFE. Compared to Instagram, where there was a slight difference in the number of flowers, the difference in likes here can reasonably be explained by the significant difference in the organisations' number of followers. On 7 May 2022, YFE had 2994 followers while the EWL had approximately 46k. The average number of likes per post on both Twitter posts and answers are similar. This finding, however, constrains my previous claim that followers count when it comes to the number of likes. Also, in this case, the EWL has approximately 15 000 more followers than YFE. In other words, divided by followers, YFE is engaging more than the EWL.

Table 7 gives an overview of the number of shares that the EWL and YFE obtain through their social media posts on Facebook and Twitter. On Instagram, it is not possible to share a post to a new post; just share on a story. This is not trackable, which is why I excluded Instagram posts from this overview.

On Twitter, YFE has a slighter higher average number of shares than the EWL. Looking at the arguments from analysing the likes, one can also state that YFE might reach more out and engage their followers more than the EWL, considering that there is a significant difference in the number of followers — where the EWL has considerably more.

Table 7: Overview of shares

Overview of shares	**YFE**		**EWL**
Facebook posts (in numbers)			
F_post_1	1	F_post_1	13
F_post_2	0	F_post_2	8
F_post_3	0	F_post_3	0
F_post_4	0	F_post_4	0
F_post_5	0	F_post_5	0
F_post_6	0	F_post_6	1
F_post_7	0	F_post_7	11
F_post_8	0		
F_post_9	0		
Sum of shares	1	*Sum of shares*	33
Average number of shares	0.1	*Average number of shares*	4.7
Twitter posts (in numbers)			
T_Post_1	0	T_Post_1	7
T_post_2	0	T_post_2	11
T_post_3	5	T_Post_3	4
T_post_4	3	T_Post_4	0
T_post_5	10	T_Post_5	4
T_post_6	23	T_Post_6	5
T_post_7	5	T_Post_7	6
T_post_8	2		
T_post_9	9		
Sum of shares	57	*Sum of shares*	37
Average number of shares	6.3	*Average number of shares*	5.3
Twitter answers (in numbers)			
T_answer_1	1	T_Answer_1	1
T_answer_2	0	T_Answer_2	1
		T_Answer_3	0
		T_Answer_4	0
		T_Answer_5	0
		T_Answer_6	0
		T_Answer_7	0
Sum of shares	1	*Sum of shares*	2
Average number of shares	0.5	*Average number of shares*	0.3

Source: Authors own compilation.

Table 8 gives an overview of comments received on posts that the two organisations posted during the mapping exercise. The table shows that, on average, the EWL receives more comments on their posts than YFE. YFE got more comments than the EWL on their Instagram posts and Twitter Answers, whereas the EWL received none during the mapping exercise.

Table 8: Overview of comments

Overview of comments	**YFE**			**EWL**
	Instagram posts (in numbers)			
I_post_1	0		I_post_1	0
I_post_2	2		I_post_2	0
I_post_3	0			
Sum of comments	2		*Sum of comments*	0
Average number of comments	0.7		*Average number of comments*	0
	Facebook posts (in numbers)			
F_post_1	0		F_post_1	0
F_post_2	0		F_post_2	0
F_post_3	0		F_post_3	8
F_post_4	0		F_post_4	8
F_post_5	0		F_post_5	2
F_post_6	0		F_post_6	2
F_post_7	0		F_post_7	4
F_post_8	0			
F_post_9	0			
Sum of comments	0		*Sum of comments*	24
Average number of comments	0.0		*Average number of comments*	3.4
	Twitter posts (in numbers)			
T_Post_1	0		T_Post_1	0
T_post_2	0		T_post_2	6
T_post_3	2		T_Post_3	4
T_post_4	0		T_Post_4	0
T_post_5	1		T_Post_5	1
T_post_6	1		T_Post_6	2
T_post_7	0		T_Post_7	0
T_post_8	0			
T_post_9	0			
Sum of comments	4		*Sum of comments*	13
Average number of comments	0.4		*Average number of comments*	1.9
	Twitter answers (in numbers)			
T_answer_1	1		T_Answer_1	0
T_answer_2	0		T_Answer_2	0
			T_Answer_3	0

			T_Answer_4	0
			T_Answer_5	0
			T_Answer_6	0
			T_Answer_7	0
Sum of comments	1		*Sum of comments*	0
Average number of comments	0.5		*Average number of comments*	0.0

Source: Authors own compilation.

By looking at the likes, shares, and comments that the two organisations received during the mapping exercise, one can assess how the organisations reach and engage the public. The quantitative numbers indicate if they manage to reach out to the public. On an overall note, the engagement that YFE and the EWL manage to create through their posts is approximately the same. This is surprising given that the EWL is a more prominent and older organisation. Moreover, the EWL operates on a lot more resources than YFE, as they have staff members that work with communication. By taking this perspective into account, one could state that YFE manages to create more engagement and reach more out to like-minded members of the public than the EWL because YFE has fewer resources and does this on a volunteer basis. This statement is also in line with previous claims and assumptions in theory that interest groups with fewer resources are more dependent on reaching out to the public and that social media indeed is a 'weapon of the weak'. On the other hand, this can also be explained by the fact that the EWL is in fact a more established and sticks to more traditional ways of engaging.

5.2 Content Analysis

This section takes a more qualitative look at the data collected through the mapping exercise. This approach assesses whether the organisations post content can tell me more about any overarching lobbying strategies behind the posting. Moreover, by looking at the content posted, one can start to slowly assess which political or lobbying strategies the organisations may use through their social media. This section looks firstly at the posts by sorting them into categories. Then it will look more into the themes and captions that come with the posts before assessing the use of hashtags specifically. By taking the content posted into consideration and the analysis, it will help assess to what extent the EWL and YFE are using social media as a lobbying tool.

5.2.1 Sorting Into Categories

As explained in Chapter 4.2, the content is categoriesed into two main categories: *access* and *voice*. Voice is divided into *digital information politics* and *digital protest politics*.

Table 9 gives an overview of how I sorted the posts from the EWL. The sorting shows that the EWL mostly uses their social media as information provision to their followers. Many of the posts are about the annual meeting of the EWL, which I categorised as information politics, as they informed about the event they held. In other cases, events can be seen as protest politics, or even as access, if it targets and invite people on the 'inside' of the EU, or if the event is held to make a statement or protest something. However, this was not the case for the annual meeting, which was a meeting for invited members.

Table 9: Overview the EWL posts sorted into categories

European Women's Lobby			
Posts	**Access**	**Voice**	
		Digital information politics	**Digital protest politics**
Instagram posts			
I_Post_1		x	
I_Post_2		x	
Instagram stories			
I_Story_1		x	
I_Story_2		x	
I_story_3		x	
I_story_4		x	
I_story_5		x	
I_story_6		x	
I_story_7			x
I_story_8		x	
Facebook post			
FB_Post_1		x	
FB_Post_2		x	
FB_Post_3		x	
FB_Post_4		x	
FB_Post_5		x	
FB_Post_6		x	
FB_Post_7		x	

Twitter post			
T_Post_1		x	
T_Post_2	x	x	
T_Post_3		x	
T_Post_4		x	
T_Post_5		x	
T_Post_6		x	
T_Post_7		x	
Twitter repost			
T_repost_1		x	
T_repost_2			x
T_repost_3		x	
T_repost_4		x	
T_repost_5		x	
T_repost_6		x	
T_repost_7		x	
T_repost_8		x	
T_repost_9		x	
Twitter answer			
T_Answer_1			x
T_Answer_2			x
T_Answer_3			x
T_Answer_4			x
T_Answer_5			x
T_Answer_6			x
T_Answer_7			x

Source: Authors own compilation.

In some posts, for instance T_post_2 (Figure 5), the EWL tagged President of the Commission Ursula Von der Leyen. If Von der Leyen had responded, for instance, by liking the post, the EWL would have achieved some degree of access. However, even though Von der Leyen did not interact back, another MEP liked the post. This interaction means that the post managed to gain a direct link to the EP, which is why I chose to classify it as the only *access* post during the mapping exercise. Gaining a like from an MEP does not necessarily 'scream' access, but it signifies a connection being made from the EWL's content. This is a curious find as the content itself could have been just informative, as it was about a pledge that the EWL had made and sent to the Commission. If the EWL had urged the politicians and Commission to sign the pledge through the Twitter

post, it would have been protest politics or even access if they answered. Nevertheless, the post instead informed the public that the politicians had answered. The EWL managed to get a direct link and gain access to their online lobbying, but not through this post. Therefore, what, in the end, classified T_post_2 as *access* was the fact that an MEP liked the post, even though it may not have been too influential towards the EWL's lobbying strategies. On the other hand, I could argue that this post is information politics, as it releases information to the public at a strategic time like Beyer theorised in his *voice*-framework. I therefore chose to classify it into both categories for now, and then ponder further on this in the next chapter.

Source: the European Women's Lobby, Twitter, 18.02.2022

Figure 5: The EWL T_Post_2

The EWL's Twitter answers four-seven (Appendix 3) were other examples that deserve mention. All are answers to the same post, the EWL's T_post_2. The EWL does not write any information in the answers but tags MEPs, commissioners, organisations, and parties. I consider this a part of their protest politics as it is a call for action, where they indirectly want the tagged users to be aware of or even adopt the pledge. One could also argue that this could be information politics, as they inform the tagged users of the new pledge that the President of the Commission has answered. However, I argue that it is protest politics because they are, in this case spreading the pledge to as many as possible, maybe indicating

that they want them to adopt, answer or read the pledge. It is not sorted into access, as the answers did not get any interactions from the tagged users.

Table 10 gives an overview of how I sorted YFE's posts. The first impressions show that there were no posts sorted as direct lobbying – access. One explanation is that YFE is not as active as the EWL in tagging decision-makers and institutions in their posts. This explanation means that the posts are also less likely to reach the decision-makers and institutions that the organisation wants to lobby. Moreover, this could indicate that for YFE, social media is a tool to reach the public and less to achieve inside access.

Table 10: Overview YFE posts sorted into categories

Young Feminist Europe			
Posts	**Access**	**Voice**	
		Digital information politics	**Digital protest politics**
Instagram posts			
I_post_1			x
I_post_2			x
I_post_3			x
Instagram stories			
I_story_1			x
Facebook post			
F_post_1			x
F_post_2			x
F_post_3		x	
F_post_4		x	
F_post_5			x
F_post_6			x
F_post_7		x	
F_post_8			x
F_post_9			x
Twitter post			
T_Post_1			x
T_post_2			x
T_post_3		x	
T_post_4			x
T_post_5			x
T_post_6 (7)			x

T_post_7 (6)			x
T_post_8(7b)			x
T_post_9 (8)			x
Twitter repost			
T_Repost_1		x	
T_Repost_2			x
T_Repost_3			x
T_Repost_4			x
T_Repost_5		x	
T_Repost_6			x
T_Repost_7			x
T_Repost_8			x
T_repost_9		x	
T_repost_10		x	
T_repost_11			x
T_repost_12			x
T_repost_13			x
T_repost_14		x	
T_repost_15		x	
T_repost_16			x
T_repost_17			x
T_repost_18			x
Twitter answer			
T_answer_1			x
T_answer_2			x

Source: Authors own compilation based on results in the mapping exercise.

YFE has many posts I categorise as protest politics. For instance, because of the war breaking out in Ukraine, YFE has posted several solidarity posts for Ukraine (T_post 6, T_post_7, I_post_3, T_repost_18). I decided that posts that show solidarity for another country in wartime can be categorised as protest politics, as YFE takes a clear stand against the war and chooses to show solidarity with Ukraine. This is the same argument I presented for the solidarity posts that the EWL posted.

Compared to the EWL, YFE also works more on engaging the public in initiatives. For instance, YFE posted calls for articles about climate change on Instagram, Instagram stories and Facebook (I_post_1, I_story_1, F_post_1). I categorised these posts as protest politics because I claim that they engage in protest politics by initiating actions among the followers, which is the public. The same argument goes for the writing workshops

that YFE invites their followers to join (I_post_2, T_post_6, F_post_6, F_post_8).

As stated earlier, YFE has more posts categorised as protest politics than the EWL. This seemingly validates the argument of social media as 'a weapon of the weak'. While the EWL relies more on social media to inform its followers and like-minded users about their initiatives and politics, YFE is also dependent on using social media as a call for action. Based on this, I can assume that this is because the EWL has more resources than they can use on lobbying strategies outside of social media, such as inside lobbying and gaining access, than YFE. YFE has fewer resources to use on inside lobbying and has less access than the EWL. It is a younger organisation, meaning that social media is an affordable and effective tool.

5.2.2 The Use of Hashtags

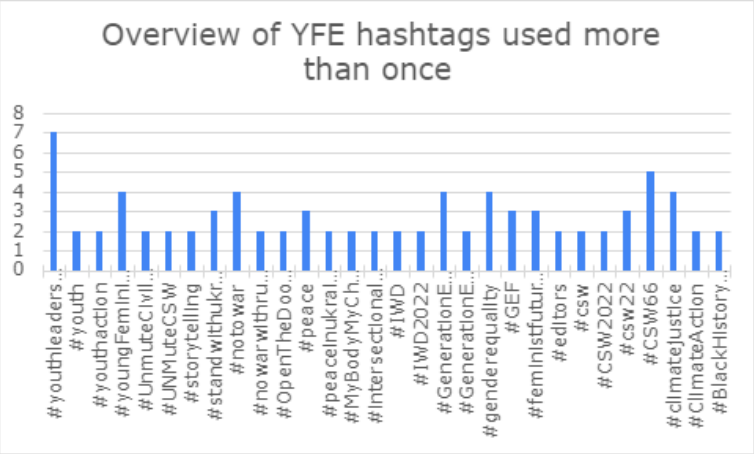
Young Feminist Europe

During the mapping exercise, YFE used 166 hashtags in addition to their captions to posts or as the only caption. Of these 166 hashtags, 113 were unique. To give an adequate impression of the different hashtags, Table 11 and Figure 6 below give an overview of the hashtags used more than once, looking at how many times the organisations have used the hashtags. I chose to sort out the hashtags that had only been used once by the organisations because of limited resources and time. By looking at the hashtags used more than once, I argue that this can indicate that the hashtags are a part of a broader lobbying strategy because they are used regularly. It is vital for organisations that want to reach out to more people than their followers to use hashtags. Hashtags allow people to follow and participate in exchanges on topics of interest (Bruns & Burgess, 2011, p. 2). Therefore, it is arguable that organisations use hashtags to spark debate and reach out to more like-minded people or engage in online movements. By looking at the hashtags that the organisations post more than once, I can analyse themes that are important to the organisations and analyse if there are groups or topics that they are explicitly reaching out to.

Table 11: Overview of YFE hashtags used more than once

Hashtag	Quantity
#youthleadership	7
#youth	2
#youthaction	2
#youngFeministManifesto	4
#UnmuteCivilSociety	2
#UNMuteCSW	2
#storytelling	2
#standwithukraine	3
#notowar	4
#nowarwithrussia	2
#OpenTheDoor2NGOs	2
#peace	3
#peaceinukraine	2
#MyBodyMyChoice	2
#intersectionality	2
#IWD	2
#IWD2022	2
#GenerationEquality	4
#GenerationEqualityForum	2
#genderequality	4
#GEF	3
#feministfutures	3
#editors	2
#csw	2
#CSW2022	2
#csw22	3
#CSW66	5
#climatejustice	4
#ClimateAction	2
#BlackHistoryMonth	2

Source: Authors own compilation based on results in the mapping exercise.



Source: Authors own compilation based on results in the mapping exercise.

Figure 6: Overview of YFE hashtags used more than once

YFE has an extensive spread of hashtags that they use when posting. Out of the 113 unique hashtags they used during the mapping exercise, the hashtag '#youthleaders' was the most used. A quick search on this hashtag shows that this is a commonly used hashtag that other organisations and users use. '#Youthleaders' is also a hashtag that is not only used by feminist organisations but by other youth-led organisations as well. This finding means that YFE can reach out to users that follow the hashtag and maybe gain followers or attention on women's rights issues through the community under '#youthleaders'.

Social media users use the hashtag '#MyBodyMyChoice' in the fight for abortion rights in feminist communities. It comes from the eponym feminist slogan, which is commonly used during rallies and protests over the world by feminist movements (Stevenson, 2019). By using a popular hashtag that is well established in the feminist community, YFE can reach out to other women's interest groups globally and users that support this hashtag. Therefore, hashtags like this can be seen as mobilisation hashtags that have a clear statement in the hashtag and promote a view. Therefore, I claim that using a hashtag like this is part of protest politics as long as it indirectly targets the decision-makers.

As mentioned earlier, YFE has posted several solidarity posts about the war in Ukraine. These posts have been accompanied by the hashtags '#peace', '#peaceinukraine', '#nowarwithrussia', '#notowar', and '#standwithukraine'. Here one can argue that the meaning behind posting such hashtags is two-sided. Firstly, by posting hashtags that are used

globally to support Ukraine in the war, they can reach out directly to Ukrainians and others affected by the war to show their support. Secondly, YFE also posts a political statement where the organisation joins in on the movement supporting Ukraine and opposing Russia and its war. Posts like this prove that even though YFE is a specialised interest group focusing on women's rights, they are also active in general human rights and following political trends that are not directly linked to women's rights. Going a bit broader than their interest area could also mean that they can reach out to more significant parts of the public.

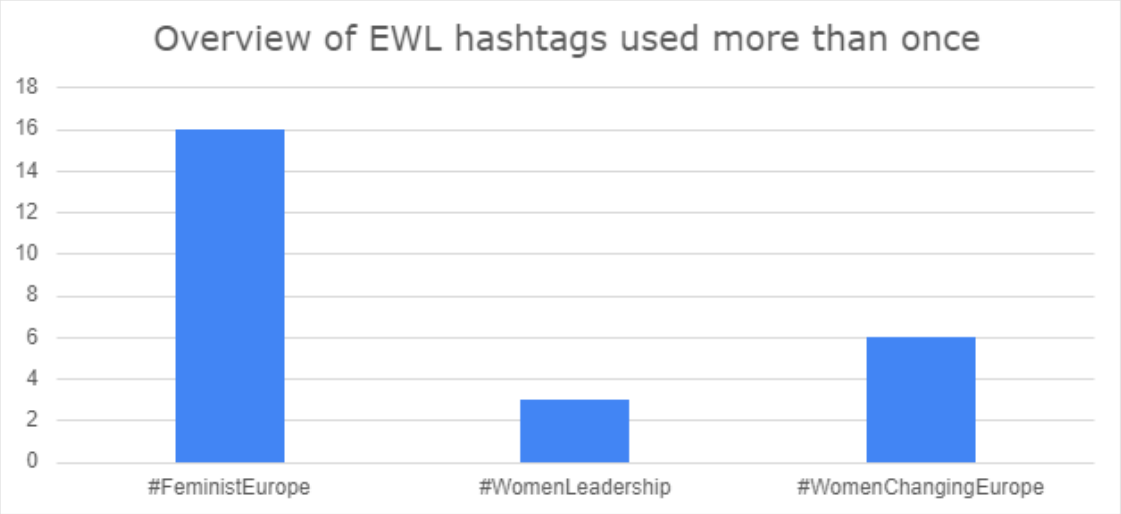
European Women's Lobby

During the mapping exercise, the EWL used 38 hashtags in addition to their captions on posts or as the only caption. Of the 38 hashtags, there were 16 unique ones. Table 12 and Figure 7 provide an overview of the hashtags used more than once, looking at how many times they have been used.

Table 12: Overview of the EWL hashtags used more than once

Hashtags	Quantity
#FeministEurope	16
#WomenLeadership	3
#WomenChangingEurope	6

Source: Authors own compilation based on results in the mapping exercise.



Source: Author's own compilation based on results in the mapping exercise.

Figure 7: Overview of the EWL hashtags used more than once

Compared to YFE, the EWL shows more consistency in their hashtags and uses fewer hashtags per post. The hashtag '#FeministEurope' is recurring throughout their posts, and as Table 12 and Figure 6 show, it is the most used hashtag by the EWL. '#FeministEurope' is a well-used hashtag by interest organisations representing women's rights in Europe and EU politicians promoting their views on women's rights. Because both politicians and interest groups use it, one could claim that the hashtag creates a channel for direct lobbying. Politicians that follow the hashtag can see what interest groups post and they have the opportunity to answer them directly. Moreover, the EWL also can reach out to other interest groups or users using the hashtag and share their views and stands. Therefore, the hashtag can be influential in lobbying both directly and indirectly.

Another hashtag used by the EWL is '#WomenLeadership', which is similar to YFE's most used hashtag '#YoungLeadership'. Both '#WomenLeadership' and '#WomenChangingEurope' give some of the same indications as '#FeministEurope' and creates a community for like-minded people supporting the message to find each other on social media. Thereby, they give more visibility to the organisations when they use them. Another observation from the findings is that there is a more coherent theme in the hashtags that the EWL uses than YFE. The EWL also uses fewer hashtags on each post. Suppose one assumes that hashtags are a central part of the capability to spread messages and reach out to other interest groups, politicians, or public members. In that case, it is again shown that YFE is more dependent on using social media and its functions than the EWL. This finding may again go back to the question of resources and followers. As stated earlier, the EWL and YFE either have the same number of followers (Instagram), or the EWL has many more (Facebook and Twitter). The difference in followers means that for YFE's posts to have the same outreach and impact as the EWL's, they need to use more hashtags to spread their message outside the circle of followers.

Chapter 6

Social Media as a Lobbying Tool?

Johansson and Scaramuzzino (2019, p. 1531-1532) claim that decision makers and political institutions with open social media profiles allow interest groups to lobby them digitally. In other words, using the political strategy of online access. However, even though interest groups try to connect and interact with politicians or institutions with open profiles, they may not be able to receive answers. This kind of lobbying is still public if the interest groups use posts or stories, which one can classify as indirect lobbying. Indirect lobbying can be part of the political strategy of online voice. A guiding assumption of this report is that the interest groups that use resources on social media do it in order to lobby and influence political decisions. Therefore, the question is how can interest groups use social media to lobby the EU.

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, women's rights policies compete with other policies to obtain the attention and engagement of decision-makers in the EU. Social media gives the possibility for a new channel of influencing policymakers and grassroot constituencies. This final chapter discusses the findings presented earlier in light of the information gathered in the interviews and the conceptual framework of lobbying strategies in the EU. This will allow me to answer the main research question: '*What role do social media play in the lobby and advocacy strategies of European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe?'* Firstly, I

look at how the different platforms play a role in how social media is used a lobbying tool. I ponder further on this notion by discussing the effect that the access to resources has for the organisations. Then I discuss social media as an outside lobbying strategy, and if it can be seen as a replacement or supplement to traditional lobbying strategies.

6.1 Platforms Matter

As discussed in the literature review, there is little to no lobbying research on other platforms than Twitter. A few studies have shown that interest groups use social media platforms for different types of lobbying. For instance, Facebook can be used for facilitating civic engagement and collective action (Obar, Zube & Lampe, 2012, Widner et al., 2020, p. 7), while Twitter can be used more as a direct channel to reach decision-makers (Figenshouch & Fredheim, 2020, p. 6). I have shown (Figure 2, p. 31) that both the EWL and YFE use Facebook and Instagram actively, meaning that they post several posts each week. However, YFE's respondent explains that Instagram is their preferred platform for lobbying activities:

> We prefer to use Instagram when it comes to advocate […] Different social medias target different audiences. And in this case, Instagram is better when it comes to illustration and visual creation. Then we also try to create our visual samples, and on Instagram tag as many organisations as possible. Then we can share stories again, but also share visuals that we created.
>
> (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022)

Widner et al. (2020, p. 5) argue that the platforms Facebook and Twitter provide a more personal and intimate experience than other platforms. The authors reason that platforms like Facebook and Twitter offer direct communications with other accounts and users. I argue that the same claim can be said about Instagram, which provides the same functions as Twitter and Facebook, such direct messages, likes, shares, and comments. The main feature of Instagram is to show a visual image or video and then supplement it with some text. This feature applies to both posts and stories. Arguably, the format of Instagram can help communicate a perhaps complex message through simplified images and simple text.

Therefore, I argue that Instagram might be more accessible to the outside lobbying and appeal to the masses, as visual elements are more accessible to engage than just text (Ekman & Widholm, 2017, p. 18).

Facebook can be used for 'facilitating civic engagement and collective action' (Widner et al., 2020, p. 7). Both the EWL and YFE use Facebook posts actively, but the mapping exercise showed they prefer not to use Facebook stories. This was a surprising find. Facebook stories offer the same possibilities as Instagram stories, and because Facebook and Instagram are linked together, one can post the same story on both platforms simultaneously. Therefore, an explanation for why the EWL and YFE do not use Facebook stories is arguably that they want to post different kinds of posts on Facebook than on Instagram, which means that Facebook stories might be redundant. Another argument is that the Facebook-format makes the organisations focus more on the content rather than the visual, like Instagram. Facebook posts can just be text captions without any visual attachments. If the organisations prefer this, Facebook's stories are therefore not the right format for what they aim at using Facebook for. In the interview, the YFE respondent addressed:

> 'On Facebook it is more about promoting the events and conferences we are participating in or hosting'
>
> (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022)

Based on my findings and Sebicke's (2017) research, I can assume the same results for the EWL. The organisation uses Facebook to post a lot of the same content as on Twitter, but they promote hiring and present information. The captions on the posts are often more extended than what users can express on Instagram. This finding is also in line with Seibicke's (2017, p. 135-136) that outlined that the EWL tends to use Facebook to publicise events and share relevant information.

If we count Twitter posts, answers, and retweets together, Twitter is the social media platform that is most used by both organisations. Twitter is a popular political platform used by most politicians (Widner et al., 2020, p. 6). This also explains why the EWL uses Twitter to raise awareness and react to political discussions (Seibicke, 2017, p. 136). I also found that YFE uses Twitter in a similar way. The YFE's respondent confirms that they see Twitter as a powerful tool to reach both other organisations and decision-makers: 'On

Twitter it is indeed more about campaigning and lobbying' (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022). YFE's respondent also explains that Twitter's word limit makes it an adequate tool in the political landscape. The messages need to be transparent and to the point. This feature gives an advantage in reaching out with clear messages and reacting to other political discussions happening on Twitter. However, the EWL state that they try to be reactive in their Twitter work (Seibicke, 2017, p. 136), but YFE explain that they, due to resources, are not as reactive as they want to be:

> We are not as reactive as we should be in some cases. […] The passivity when it comes to just tagging people and not really reacting or replying, is something we want to focus more on. […] Sometimes we prefer not to be as reactive as other organisations are. But in other cases, we try to be reactive. For instance, when the Commission discusses the status of women, we have an action group as well as being part of a wider group of NGOs or volunteer youth which are more proactive. Here we follow them, and we repost what they have shared or comments they have given to policymakers
>
> (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022)

The EWL stated in 2017 that Twitter and Facebook are the most important social media platforms they use (Seibicke, 2017). My findings show that Instagram is used just as actively as Twitter and Facebook, which indicates that their social media strategy has changed since 2017. Arguably this makes sense as the digital landscape changes rapidly, and the organisations therefore need to change in line with this to continue engaging with other users. Therefore, I argue that Instagram is now also seen as an important social media platform for the EWL to use, next to Facebook and Twitter.

6.2 A Question of Resources

Conventional lobbying activities often require considerable (personal and financial) assets, for instance, sending lobbyists to physical meetings in other cities or hosting significant events (Widner et al., 2017, p. 1). Women's rights organisations tend to have fewer resources than other interest groups and work interactionally in several fields to gain influence in the EU (Seibicke, 2017, p. 126). As mentioned earlier, the EWL and YFE are active on several platforms of social media, where Facebook,

Instagram, and Twitter stand out as the most used platforms. The observation done before the exercise found that they also had accounts on YouTube and LinkedIn, but that these accounts were less active. I claim that this can be explained by how many resources the organisations' have and what they prioritise using their resources on. Moreover, I argue that YFE prioritises a more significant part of their resources to social media than the EWL. I reason this because they have approximately the same activity level, but the EWL have a lot more resources than YFE. This means that if YFE wants to keep up with the EWL, they need to use a more significant percentage of its resources. This could also explain that the EWL uses social media more to complement traditional lobbying. It can be indicated that the EWL has more resources that could be put into social media, but the organisation chooses not to. In the interview, the respondent from YFE explained why YFE is not more active on social media:

> We are missing resources because as volunteer-based evening we work to the end of the evenings. […] Our meetings happen in the evening from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM and therefore we are not as reactive as we should be
>
> (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022)

Nevertheless, even though YFE has fewer financial and human resources than the EWL when it comes to finances, the respondent explained that they had set up a working group that works actively with social media, which has given the organisation much strategical focus on the importance of social media. The organisation hopes that this will increase its influence on social media and makes it an even more critical tool in their lobbying strategies:

> We allocate a lot of human resources to social media, as we don't have that much financial funds per se. We are therefore trying to do more
>
> (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022)

I argue that organisations can use social media to show off their work without directly influencing decision-makers. This can still be seen as a lobbying strategy because interest groups can use social media to create visibility of their work without directly influencing decision-makers. This argument aligns with the framework of digital information politics under

the political strategy of voice. When the EWL and YFE share information about what they are working on, it can still be seen as a lobbying strategy because it appeals to the public and shares information that might engage the public. This statement is also in line with Seibicke's findings, where she states that the EWL uses social media to 'strengthen existing networks and increase the visibility of its' activities' (Seibicke, 2017, p. 127). Even though the EWL is an organisation with more resources and networks than other women's rights groups, like YFE, they do not use social media to the extent that they could have, showing that it is a complementary lobbying strategy, as I have shown earlier.

The EWL 'only' uses it to strengthen and maintain their networks and show their work may explain the similar activity levels of YFE and the EWL on social media. The EWL is not as dependent on social media as YFE and can use more resources on traditional lobbying strategies. In contrast, the respondent of YFE answers that they prioritise social media, but without financial resources, it is through human resources only:

> It is just human resources, and the time we take to acknowledge the tool and try to use it.
>
> (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022)

YFE's respondent explains that because of the low resources, social media becomes a vital tool in their lobbying work. This can be explained by the fact that 'social media offers low transaction costs and the ability to directly inform, persuade and mobilise' (Seibicke, 2017, p. 127). Considering that the EWL is a larger organisation than YFE with more financial and human resources, the activity level should be more different between them, instead of what my findings show. Figure 3 in C, Chapter 5 shows that they have posted approximately the same number of posts during the mapping exercise, with YFE exceeding the EWL with two posts. Arguably, no difference at all. Despite the organisational differences, I argue that this similarity is because YFE is more dependent on social media because of low resources and that they do not have the same access to inside lobbying as the EWL does.

6.3 Social Media as a Voice Strategy

I sorted the posts into categories in the content analysis based on whether they were voice or access strategies. I also categorised the 'voice' forms of lobbying into digital information politics and digital protest politics. It became evident after the categorising that social media posts almost always have voice content. Out of the 82 posts collected during the period of the mapping exercise, I was only able to sort one into access, even though I also thought this could fit into information politics of voice, as stated in the previous chapter. This post was when an MEP liked the post after the EWL had tagged other MEPs, commissioners, and EU institutions. Being women's organisations, the EWL and YFE can be classified as citizen groups, which scholars argue are more likely to use outside (voice) strategies (Widner et al., 2020, p. 5). Voice strategies, even digital, offer less complexity in lobbying, and citizen groups may not be as well connected, which means that they must put much effort into their political work to succeed in obtaining access (Widner et al., 2020, p. 5; Walker, 1991; Junk, 2016). Moreover, another critical aspect is the audience and who the organisations target matter. Social media is not location-dependent, which means that the organisations can reach out to part of the public that other traditional outside strategies cannot.

Widner et al. (2020) used a similar methodology to categorise their posts, but they had a broader view of what scholars can define as inside lobbying. For instance, they categorised tagging policymakers and posting a picture from a meeting where inside lobbying was happening as inside lobbying on social media (Figure 1 in Widner et al., 2020, p. 12). I argue that even though these posts show inside lobbying and the access that the organisations have, it is not the post itself that is inside lobbying. I argue that the inside lobbying is if the organisation gets an interaction (like retweet) or dialogue (comment/answer) from the decision-makers they try to lobby. If the decision-makers they had tagged reacted to the post on social media, it could have been the inside lobbying. However, how the article presents the examples shows that the posts only give information about the inside lobbying that the organisation has done outside of social media. In the example from Widner et al., this was a meeting that the organisation had taken part in. It, therefore, informs the public about the inside lobbying and access that the organisation has, but

it is the public that is the target. Therefore, in my analysis, I would have categorised this as information politics under the strategy of voice, in other words, outside lobbying.

Considering the network and successful inside lobbying that the EWL already see to, it was a perplexing find that I could not sort more of their posts into the access category as I expected. I argue that the previous finding can explain this. The EWL prefers traditional inside lobbying and looks at online lobbying as supplementary to traditional lobbying strategies. Social media provides a significant information channel for the EWL, but the EWL does not look at social media as a tool for inside lobbying. They already have these channels physically in the Commission and their networks (Seibicke, 2017). YFE, on the other hand, did not have any posts that I could categorise as voice. I argue that based on my findings, YFE focuses more generally on outside lobbying, where social media plays a vital part.

Both organisations use hashtags as a part of their content when posting. Storer & Rodriguez state that 'hashtag organising on social media sites has been praised for democratising social movements and for its potential to raise awareness about critical social issues' (2020, p. 161). Seibicke claims that 'hashtag activism can mobilise public attention and bring women's issues to the forefront of political agendas' (2017, p. 132). I can therefore argue that hashtag is a helpful mechanism in online lobbying. In the mapping exercise, I found that YFE uses more unique hashtags than the EWL. This finding could be because YFE is more dependent on reaching out through social media than the EWL. The EWL only sees social media as an additional tool to their already established inside lobbyism. However, the EWL is more consistent in its hashtag use. The hashtag the EWL uses most frequently, '#FeministEurope', is a popular hashtag used by many other organisations and EU politicians, institutions and administrative staff. This could indicate that using the hashtag '#FeministEurope' is part of a specialised strategy towards social media, aiming to have continuity in their postings and reach out to similar-minded accounts. It could also indicate that the EWL has successfully used this hashtag before and, therefore, continue using it.

Most studies on social media lobbyism argue that social media is a tool of outside lobbyism (Widner et al., 2020, p. 6). However, I claim that an exciting aspect of social media is that it has changed the common notion of inside or direct lobbying and the political strategy of access. Johansson and Scaramuzzino's (2019) framework for digital online strategies also shows this by creating the digital access framework. Before social media, inside lobbying was not visible to the public (Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019, p. 1531). I argue that through social media and the possibility of online access, the public can now see live interactions between interest groups and lobbyists. Scholars agree that inside lobbying includes contacting policymakers directly (Widner et al., 2020, p. 4). Access is now visible to everyone if this is done on public channels like social media platforms. This direct contact that social media offers changes the face of what access is, as social media now facilitates inside lobbying (Widner et al., 2020, p. 2). This corresponds with Figenschou and Fredheim's findings (2020, p. 6). Both authors found that Twitter was a unique 'middle-stage' platform that simultaneously provides both inside and outside lobbying (Widner et al., 2020, p. 7). The findings from this categorising also fit nicely into digital protest politics and digital information politics.

6.4 A Supplement or Replacement to Traditional Lobbying?

For interest organisations to achieve results when influencing the EU, they need public support (Seibicke, 2017, p. 125). Seibicke states that 'next to more traditional lobbying strategies, social media provides another element in the toolkit of interest groups due to its increased speed, reach and effectiveness' (2017, p. 125). Widner et al. agree with this statement, arguing that 'social media provides an additional tool on which interest groups can pursue both inside and outside lobbying strategies' (Widner et al., 2020, p. 6). Social media removes distance barriers. This means if one looks at the argument that to achieve successful lobbying, one needs to have support from the public, social media provides a new possibility for gaining public support. Before social media, interest groups seeking to influence the EU needed to be present and active in more than one country to promote their views. Today, social media provides free services to reach anybody anywhere. The EWL has lobbied since the 1990s and has already established networks and lobbying strategies. Therefore, social media

may be an additional tool that can be provided if needed, but they still trust their traditional lobbying strategies.

In the interview, the YFE's respondent was clear on the importance of social media as a strategy but also explained that strategies on social media need to consider the fact that the lobbyists cannot control how interactions on social media may play out. Social media is designed for the users to find what they find interesting, which means that organisations might not reach out to as many as they want to. Therefore, even though it is an integral part of lobbying strategies, there are some restrictions to the tool:

> Of course, messages need to be amplified and we see not that the algorithm also prefers as the tendency to use more visuals, more videos. This is determined preference, and we can't really influence this, but that does not mean that even if you don't have the resources, or funds to start a movement, you or an individual can use social media and it ensures that there is more chance to get notice than without
>
> (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022)

When evaluating whether social media is a supplement or replacement to traditional media, it is hard not to ignore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. When I conducted the research, the pandemic affected most aspects of everyday life worldwide for two years. It also impacted the political landscape. Meetings were held digitally, and businesses and society have become more dependent on online platforms for communication. The pandemic may also have influenced how the EWL and YFE use social media as a lobbying tool, as they do not have the same physical access as before. The respondent from YFE confirmed this in the interview:

> Since the break of Covid or way of campaigning has changed, because before we did protests and events in Brussels, and local like screening of movies and then talk about it, game nights, quizzes, trivia and so on and so forth. Also waiting in front of European Parliament and waiting for the policymaker to come out and same in events that we organised. We invited them [politicians] to take part and the same with other youth organisations. And now this has switched again

> because we are not being present at events or conferences. But we are paying more attention to online activities, and we've tried to invite them [politicians]. The problem is, I suppose, with online meetings they are more overwhelmed and therefore they are not giving us the space to be part of our conferences or joining meetings we organised. So, they are not as responsive as before, and maybe that was because we were able to go there in person and meet them. Therefore, the change has turned social media really important because it is the only tool we have.
>
> (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022)

I consider this an important finding in my report. COVID-19 made it harder for organisations to do inside lobbying the EU because they lost the physical contacts they had through in-person meetings, events attendance, or meeting politicians outside EP. This begs the question of whether COVID-19 led to increased use of social media as lobbying tools, given the lack of other in-person means. However, the content analysis of the posts from February 2022 to March 2022 did not show results that there was more inside lobbying taking place on social media, given that nearly all posts were categorised as voice and outside lobbying. This might be because the society was slowly opening, which meant that the organisations were slowly gaining physical access again. Moreover, it could also indicate that the organisations in this time focused more on outside lobbying through sharing information with the public. The interview with YFE also implies this:

> Especially when it comes to social media, there are of course different ways of seeing social media as the tool in which we can practice our campaign […]. Given the time of COVID-19 and the society we are living in, social media have really become the most powerful and influential source of information
>
> (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022)

Additionally, when assessing whether social media is a supplement or replacement for traditional lobbying strategies, we need to consider the size of the organisations and the access they have. While the EWL has the access and networks, especially in the Commission, as mentioned earlier, they do not have the same need for social media. For them, social media

can provide a tool for showing their supporters the access they have and their work. Moreover, they can provide information and strategically use it to gain public support when it is needed. My findings show that it is not only a matter of resources but also of strategic decisions and priorities. YFE, on the other hand, is more dependent on social media as a lobbying tool, which YFE's respondent explains: 'Social media is our megaphone, as it is well explained and visualised in our logo' (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022). As similar studies have shown, organisations like YFE, which are younger and less established in the European political landscape, are likely to use social media more as a lobbying tool. Like Van der Graaf et al. (2016) argues, social media can be named 'a weapon of the weak'. When asking YFE what they thought of this expression, they seemed to agree: 'Yes, social media is a weapon of the weak, because thanks to social media you, for instance, had the Arab spring. […] I really believe it is so important' (Interview respondent YFE, 28 April 2022). I argue that social media is especially important for interest groups or newly established movements that have not obtained the same resources to develop or use inside lobbying strategies.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

Social media have become a prominent part of the European political sphere and provide a new lobbying channel for interest groups in Europe. This study has shown that the women's interest groups, the EWL and YFE, use social media as a part of their broader lobbying strategy. However, how these organisations use social media to influence European politics is questioned. This study aimed to research how the EWL and YFE use social media as a part of their lobbying strategies. This contributes to the still sparse literature on how interest organisations, particularly those representing women's rights, use social media in lobbying strategies. Even though this report only looks at two organisations among the myriad of interest representation in the EU, the study can represent both organisations for women's interests and diffuse interest groups. The findings can provide a broader understanding of how organisations choose to use social media to influence politics in the EU.

The main research question for this report was: *What role do social media play in the lobbying and advocacy strategies of the EWL and YFE?* To answer this question, set up three sub-research questions. My first sub-research question asks: *How is social media used by the European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe?* I found that the EWL and YFE are most active on the social media platforms Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Therefore, these platforms were studied further in the mapping exercise and content

analysis. The organisations both use the features of publishing posts and stories on the platforms, and they post regularly on the platforms. For both organisations, the platforms serve different functions. The organisations prefer Twitter for direct communication with policymakers, Instagram for gaining attention and awareness, and Facebook for promoting events and information. Even though there are structural and organisations differences between the EWL and YFE, they use social media reasonably similar. However, YFE is more dependent on social media and activity than the EWL. I base this statement on two observations that transpire from my analysis: 1) the fundamental differences in how many human and financial resources the two organisations have; and 2) the fact that — partly as a result of 1) — YFE does not have the same access to direct lobbying as the EWL.

The second sub-research question asks: *How active and visible are* the *European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe's social media accounts?* The mapping exercise found that both the EWL and YFE are active on their Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter social media accounts. In my analysis, I find that YFE is proportionally more active than the EWL, considering that the EWL has more resources than YFE. There are several differences between the likes and followers that the EWL and YFE manage to obtain through their posts; for instance, EWL has more followers than YFE on Facebook. Despite these differences, which could arguably make the social activity of the two organisations non-comparable, I conclude that YFE is better at engaging their followers to like and comment, as they get more interactions based on a smaller follower base than the EWL. During the mapping exercise, the organisations rarely interact with decision-makers, highlighting the finding that several scholars have proved before me; that social media is mainly used for outside lobbying and appealing to the masses, not the decision-makers.

The third sub-research question: To what extent are European Women's Lobby and Young Feminist Europe using social media as a lobbying/advocacy/mobilisation tool? YFE confirmed that social media is an integral part of their lobbying strategies. This claim is also valid to some extent for the EWL, but it has not replaced the traditional lobbying strategies. For YFE, social media is an essential part of their work towards reaching out to the public. For the EWL, it is merely an information tool.

Both organisations use social media as a part of their outside lobbying strategies. The EWL does this because they already have access and networks outside of social media, while YFE has not yet achieved this kind of access. Nevertheless, they both tag other users who can be seen as influential or decision-makers in their posts. I argue that both organisations would have used social media as inside lobbying if it had been effective. In my content analysis, I split all the posts sorted into voice digital information politics and protest politics. There was an even spread between posts used as information to the public and posts as a call for action. This finding indicates that both organisations see social media as a flexible tool that can be used for informational lobbying and mobilisation.

Coming back to the main research question of how the organisations use social media in their lobbying, I argue that it depends on which platforms they use. The different social media platforms offer different features that organisations can use for lobbying strategies. Instagram appeals to the public as it offers more visual communication than Twitter and Facebook. Facebook is used to inform about events and facilitate collective action. Twitter is used to connect with decision-makers and nurture networks and connections. A significant finding from my report that contributes to the literature on online lobbying is that Instagram is becoming more critical for interest organisations, which YFE also argues in the interview, stating that it is their 'megaphone to the world'. Interest organisations reach new parts of the public and connect with both policymakers and other networks and organisations. I argue that the scope of Instagram as a political tool needs to be studied further to see what impact and influence this kind of platform might have.

Furthermore, I claim that the use of social media by the EWL and YFE also depends not only on the resources the organisations have but also on the organisations' different approaches to how much resources they should allocate to online lobbying. In my data, I found that the EWL and YFE have approximately the same activity level on social media. Considering the difference in the size of the two organisations, this indicates that YFE prioritises social media while the EWL does not. This finding aligns with previous research on the EWL and what YFE states in their interview. YFE uses a lot of human resources on social media to be able to spread information and mobilise for action. The EWL, with more resources

available than YFE, prioritises traditional lobbying over online lobbying and therefore spends fewer resources on social media. In other words, if the EWL had prioritised social media as much as YFE, their activity level would be significantly higher than today. Thus, I further claim that EWL has an unfulfilled potential for using social media as a lobbying tool. However, it is arguably because they would instead use these resources on the inside lobbying they already practice.

During the data collection, it soon became evident that both organisations used the three different social media platforms as an outside lobbying strategy. I argue that this also depends on the audience of the posts. If decision-makers, for instance, had answered or engaged in a significant part of the number of posts, I would have argued that the organisations use social media as an inside strategy because they get access to the decision-makers. Nevertheless, social media gives new forms of obtaining access which I argue can be studied further. Social media has changed how access as a political strategy is perceived because social media opens digital access up to the public. Thus, a future avenue of research is to delve into how transparency and the degree of embeddedness in the lobbying 'establishment' converge. Perhaps the more established a lobbying organisation is, the less they need the type of transparency that social media offers? Moreover, where does this leave these established organisations regarding relations with the smaller organisations and movements they claim to represent?

Based on my findings and the studies performed on the EWL and YFE, I argue that interest groups do not replace traditional lobbying with online lobbying but are seen as a supplement. How many human and financial resources are allocated to online lobbying is based on structure, networks, access, and traditions inside the organisations. The social media landscape is in continuous development. This means that the scholarship on interest representation in the EU needs to continue studying social media mechanisms to understand the overall lobbying landscape in present and future Europe. With the continuous development of the digital landscape, I contend that we can expect even more digital lobbying in the future. Therefore, the growing role of social media in lobbying requires further in-depth scholarly studies.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Appendix 2: Information letter including consent form for interviews

Appendix 3: EWL T_Answer_4 to T_Answer_7

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Interview guide

Semi-structured interview

Introduction

Information about the MA report, the interest and what the report will focus on.

It is [date]. This is Emilie Faarup Storvik, MA student at NTNU. I am interviewing [name of interviewee] in [location]. This interview is being conducted as part of an MA report project at NTNU about social media and advocacy in the EU through social media.

Warm-up questions

1. Name of interviewee

2. Role in the organisation

3. Short about the organisation and its aims

Topic of the interview: What role does social media play when it comes to lobbying and advocacy for the organisation in question? Open questions

Discussion points:

Political strategy regarding social media:

- Whether/ how and to what extent social media is part of a broader lobbying/advocacy/mobilisation strategy?
- What role/importance/objective(s) does/have social media in your organisation's communication and lobbying/advocacy strategy?

How the organisations use social media:

- The choice of platforms when lobbying and/or advocating
- Reactive vs active posting
- Resources allocated to social media
- Cooperation between communication officers and policy officers

Lobbying and advocacy:

- Social media vs. traditional lobbying strategies, what do the organisation prefer?
- Do the resources that the organisation have affect how the organisation uses social media compared to traditional lobbying strategies?

Appendix 2: Information letter including consent form for interviews

Invitation to participate in the MA report research project

'Women's Mobilisation in the Digital Era: Lobbying and Advocating for European Women's Rights'?

This is an inquiry about participation in an MA Report research project. The main purpose of the report is to explore how women's organisations use social media to advocate for women's rights towards the European Union. This letter provides information about the purpose of the project and what your participation, if you consent, will involve.

Purpose of the project
This project is a master report, which is completed to obtain a master's degree in European Studies from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

This report explores the relationship between social media and advocacy by looking at two lobby and advocacy groups: the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and Young Feminist Europe (YFE). These are the two primary interest groups advocating for women's rights towards the EU and national governments. The report sets out to explore these organisations presence in social media, and the opportunities that social media give them for lobbying and/or advocacy purposes.
The report investigates whether social media is more than just a communication tool for EWL and YFE. It also explores whether it is used as part of a broader lobbying strategy. Other questions that the report examines are how and to what extent is social media used to lobby and advocate for women's rights?

The report has three main research questions, which are
1. Are EWL and YFE using social media as lobbying/advocacy/mobilisation tool?
2. How are EWL and YFE using social media as a lobbying/advocacy/mobilisation tool?
3. To what extent are EWL and YFE using social media as a lobbying/advocacy/mobilisation tool?

The report adopts a mixed methods approach. Firstly, the study will map the social media platforms on which EWL and YFE operate. The findings from the mapping exercise will help formulate a hypothesis on YFE and EWL's social media strategies. These strategies will be explored further in semi-structured interviews. Interviews

with select representatives from the two aforementioned organisations are thus critical to the successful completion of the project. These representatives can be responsible for overall political strategy or advocacy strategy of the organisations, or they can be communication officers responsible for the updating and posting activity on social media.

The data collected from the mapping exercise and the interviews will only be used in this research project. No personal data will be collected aside from the role of the interviewees in the organisation from which organisation the interviewee is from.

Who is responsible for the research project?
The main supervisor, Professor Carine S. Germond (Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)) and the co-supervisor, Senior Researcher Asimina Michailidou (ARENA, centre for European Studies, University of Oslo (UiO)) are responsible for the research project. The research project will be written by MA student, Emilie Faarup Storvik.

Why are you being asked to participate?
You are invited to an interview because of your communication role in Young Feminist Europe. Your position and your profile will bring invaluable insights into Young Feminist Europe's advocacy strategy and communication strategy.

What does participation involve for you?
If you chose to take part in the project, you will be invited for a 30-60 minutes (semi-structured) interview in April 2022, at a date and time that is convenient for you. The interview questions will address your organisation's communication and advocacy strategy. The interview will include questions about how Young Feminist Europe works, how Young Feminist Europe uses social media and how the political strategy of the organisation is formed. The master report will include the role and the organisation that you as a respondent work for. This information will also be included in the research method considerations. Information pertaining to name, age and other personal information will not be published in the report.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed, and the recordings will be deleted after the 15th of May. The interview guide will be included in as an appendix in the research project and will include information about the role in the organisation and which organisation.

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. The only personal data that will be collected and used in the MA report will be your position and the organisation you work for. There will be no negative consequences for you if you

chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw. If you withdraw, all information about you will be deleted and will not be used in the report.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data
We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).
The data will be stored on NTNU's office 365. This platform is NTNU's cloud storage and requires two-factor authentication to be accessed.

- In the institution Emilie Faarup Storvik (student, NTNU), Carine Germond (supervisor, NTNU) & Asimina Michailidou (co-supervisor, UiO) will have access to the personal data collected.
- As the role in the organisation and the organisation will be publicised in the report, the participant might be recognizable in the publication if there are few or none other with the same role in the organisation of the respondent. Only job role and organisation will be public, not name, age, gender etc.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?
The project is scheduled to end 15th of May 2022. Digital recordings and personal data that is not published will be deleted from NTNU's cloud storage.

Your rights
So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?
We will process your personal data based on your consent.

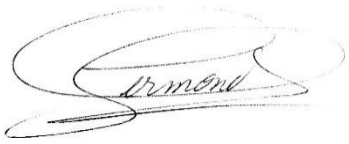
Based on an agreement with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and the NSD, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?
If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The Norwegian University of Science and Technology via Emilie Faarup Storvik by email (emilie.f.storvik@ntnu.no) or the main MA dissertation supervisor Professor Carine Germond (carine.germond@ntnu.no)
- Our Data Protection Officer: Thomas Helgesen (thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no)
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Carine Germond
Project Leader
(Researcher/supervisor)



Emilie Faarup Storvik
MA Student

Appendix 3: EWL T_Answer_4 to T_Answer_7

EWL T_Answer_4

Source: the European Women's Lobby, Twitter, 18.02.2022

EWL T_Answer_5

Source: the European Women's Lobby, Twitter, 18.02.2022

EWL T_Answer_6

Source: the European Women's Lobby, Twitter, 18.02.2022

EWL T_Answer_7

Source: the European Women's Lobby, Twitter, 18.02.2022

UiO : ARENA Centre for European Studies
University of Oslo

Contact

EU3D scientific coordinator: Prof. John Erik Fossum
EU3D project manager: Geir Kværk

ARENA Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo

www.eu3d.uio.no info@eu3d.uio.no @EU3Dh2020