

Expression of Interest to Join a Horizon Europe Consortium

Call:

HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-02: Women's, LGBTIQ and minority rights in a context of autocracy, conflict and geopolitical shifts

Research Partner Expression of Interest

Dr. Loes Aldering

Associate Professor in Political Science, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)

Expertise: gendered politics, political leadership, voter attitudes and behavior, political communication, political representation, political psychology, polarization

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Google Scholar profile [Loes Aldering](#)

General Expertise of Loes Aldering

Loes Aldering is a political scientist whose expertise lies at the intersection of gender and politics, political psychology, political communication, electoral behavior and political leadership. Her research focuses on the functioning and resilience of representative democracies, with particular attention to political inequality, gender bias, and the role of media and political communication in shaping democratic attitudes and behavior. Her main areas of expertise include:

- Gender and politics — including sexism in politics, the underrepresentation of women, gendered political stereotypes, and gender bias in political media coverage and voter's candidate evaluations.
- Political communication and media effects — especially how media portray politicians and how this shapes voter perceptions, leadership evaluations, political attitudes and electoral behavior.
- Political leadership and candidate popularity — including the role of leadership traits, personality characteristics, stereotypes, partisanship, and “dark” personality traits in politics.
- Political socialization — particularly how children and adolescents develop political attitudes related to gender, representation, and democracy.
- Democratic representation and inequality — with a broader focus on strengthening representative democracy and improving the political inclusion of marginalized groups.

Methodologically, Loes Aaldering specializes in advanced quantitative methods, including survey research, experiments, meta-analysis, and textual and visual content analysis. Her current research focuses on gendered political socialization and the influence of the online manosphere on adolescents' political attitudes, including the development and testing of interventions to counter political sexism among youth.

Possible Contribution to the Consortium

Loes Aaldering's expertise aligns strongly with the objectives of the Horizon Europe call on women's, LGBTIQ, and minority rights in contexts of autocracy, conflict, and geopolitical shifts, especially in relation to the impact of democratic backsliding. Her research focuses on democratic representation, gender inequality, sexism in politics, political communication, and the societal consequences of exclusionary and anti-democratic attitudes. A central contribution of her work is understanding how gendered prejudice, political stereotypes, and hostile political discourse undermine equal representation and democratic inclusion. Her research on sexism in politics, gender bias in media coverage, and discriminatory voter attitudes provides important insights into the mechanisms through which women and marginalized groups are excluded, delegitimized, or discouraged from political participation.

Her work is particularly relevant in the context of rising anti-gender movements, democratic backsliding, and the normalization of conservative and exclusionary ideologies targeting women and minority groups. Her recent project on gendered political socialization and the online manosphere directly addresses contemporary pathways through which adolescents and young adults are exposed to extremist and anti-democratic ideologies online. This research examines the normalization of anti-gender ideology, (extreme) sexism, attitudes toward gender equality, and democracy, as well as interventions aimed at strengthening democratic and inclusive norms among youth.

In addition to her substantive expertise, Loes Aaldering has extensive experience translating academic knowledge into societal impact through collaborations with media organizations, societal stakeholders, and public institutions. Moreover, she brings a strong international and societal network that would benefit the consortium. This includes collaborations with scholars working on gendered politics, democratic resilience, political communication, political psychology and political violence, as well as connections with societal organizations focused on democracy, inclusion, and political participation, which could support stakeholder engagement and dissemination activities within the consortium.

Loes Aaldering could contribute to and/or lead work packages and tasks related to:

- Gendered and minority exclusion in political and media contexts
- Anti-gender ideologies and democratic backsliding
- Political socialization and youth attitudes toward equality and diversity
- Media representations and hostile discourse
- Interventions promoting democratic inclusion and equal representation
- Quantitative empirical research, including surveys, experiments, content analyses, and intervention studies

Institutional Profile: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Loes Aaldering is affiliated with the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, which is part of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. The faculty is one of the largest social science faculties in Europe, is internationally oriented and has a strong reputation for high-quality research and societal engagement.

The department has extensive expertise in comparative politics, political communication, democratic governance, and political behavior, and has ample experience in international research collaborations and externally funded projects. It also maintains strong connections with governmental institutions and societal organizations, supporting impactful interdisciplinary research and knowledge exchange relevant to Horizon Europe priorities.

Contact

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