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On a general level this book concerns the changed and changing institutional conditions for gender equality in Europe and the organisation and institutionalisation of women’s social and political interests at the EU level. The questions asked deal with the ways in which political structures and authorities enable and/or obstruct women to generate, sustain and control their presence in politics as women. More specifically, the book addresses the present and changing conditions for women to organise and act politically on the supra-state level of the EU.

How does it come that women, as a collective, are not only recognised as a politically relevant group, but also legitimised to act and be present as women in an organised relationship with the EU system’s main authorities? The presence comes in the form of the European Women’s Lobby (EWL), an EU level and EU wide non-governmental umbrella organisation which represents some 4000 women’s organisations. The EWL is not the first women’s organisation to organise on the level of the EU, but it is the first of its kind: it was established by the initiative of women within the European Commission and it receives its core funding from the Commission.

Drawing on material gathered through interviews, observations and official documentation, it is argued that while the EWL has enjoyed the Commission’s support to constitute an established EU level platform from which women can formulate, mobilise and pursue their interests, the EWL has had to organise and take control over the interests aggregated from its member organisations and over the form of the member organisations. Nonetheless, it is argued that the very existence of the EWL can be understood as being in the interest of women.