

Lauren Leek

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Summary

Computational social scientist and political economist (PhD, Oct 2025) with wide expertise in governmental project evaluation, (EU) policy consultancy, text-as-data, central banking and survey and social science methodology.

Professional Experience

Verian Group, London, United Kingdom
Senior Research Scientist (part-time) Mar 2025–present

- UK Government project evaluation (working on projects with the UK Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and Transport for London). Expertise in textual data, AI developments, time-series modelling, machine learning, segmentation and mixed-marketing models.

DIVIDED, London & Reading, United Kingdom
Postdoctoral Fellow, Computational Social Science Mar 2025–present

- Collaborator on projects regarding survey gamification, UK local inequality and polarization. Set up the digital infrastructure for the *Public Opinion Analytics Lab* (London School of Economics (LSE), Reading university, Southampton university collaboration); LSE Data Science Institute visiting fellow.

European Central Bank (ECB), DG Economics, Frankfurt, Germany
PhD Trainee + extension May 2023 – Nov 2023

- Project lead and first use case to train and benchmark GPT classifiers in a secure Azure-OpenAI stack on textual data applied to identifying monetary-fiscal policy-linkages. Supervised a Research Assistant and presented policy findings to DG Economics leads.

RaboResearch, Rabobank, Utrecht, Netherlands
Economics Intern (microeconomics specialisation) Aug 2019 – Jan 2020

- Modelled ESG-financial performance linkage and developed a circular economy business survey.

Teaching (selected)

- Quant Methods TA European University Institute (PhD, 2022 - evaluation: 4.7/5), Head TA Kings College London (BSc, 2024); LSE dissertation supervisor (32 students MSc, 2024); Microeconomics TA Erasmus School of Economics (BSc, 2019)

Research Assistantships (selected)

- Python/AWS OCR pipeline of historical financial data at Kings College London (2024-2025); democracy-trust data dashboards at LSE (2023-24); survey analysis with YouGov regarding Ukraine and Russia at EUI (2022-23), lobbying strategies for EU at EUI (2025)

Education

European University Institute, Florence, Italy
PhD in Computational Social Science and Political Economy Sept 2022 – October 2025
Supervisors: Prof. Simon Hix (main) & Prof. Waltraud Schelkle (secondary)
Dissertation: Essays in Central Bank Communication and Independence.

<i>PhD website:</i> centralbanktalk.eu	
<i>Extended Visiting PhD Researcher at the London School of Economics</i>	Sept 2023 – Oct 2024
<i>Extra credit courses:</i> Applied machine learning for social scientists (distinction).	
<i>MRes in Political and Social Sciences</i>	Sept 2021 – Sept 2022
London School of Economics , London, UK	
<i>MSc in Political Economy of Europe (Distinction)</i>	Sept 2020 – Sept 2021
<i>Awards:</i> Best Dissertation in the MSc, Best Overall Performance in the MSc	
<i>Applied policy work:</i> Delivered a report for the European Reconstruction and Development Bank investment and delivered an Euro-Asia Political Risk report.	
Erasmus University College , Rotterdam, Netherlands	
<i>BSc in Liberal Arts and Sciences (Summa Cum Laude)</i>	Sept 2017 – Sept 2020
<i>Major:</i> Economics <i>Minor:</i> Learning from Big Data (RSM) with extra courses in EU law and EU studies	
<i>Awards:</i> Dean's List (2017–2020), top 5% of students	

Publications, Working Papers, and Blogs

Selected Publications

- **Leek, L., Bischl, S.** “How Central Bank Independence Shapes Central Bank Communication: A Large Language Model Application” *European Journal of Political Economy* (2025) .
- **Genschel, P., Leek, L., Weyns, J.** “War and Integration. The Russian attack on Ukraine and the Institutional development of the EU.” *Journal of European Integration* (2023) .
- **Mascioli, L., Leek, L.** “Neighbourhood Effects on Places’ Planning Capacity: Evidence from Next Generation EU” *Conditional acceptance at Regional Studies* (2025)

Under Review & working papers

- **Leek, L.** “Who Drives Who? Agenda-Setting Evidence from the Multi-Level Eurosystem” *R&R Journal of European Public Policy* (n.d.)
- **Leek, L., Bischl, S., Freier, M.** “Introducing Textual Measures of Central Bank Policy-Linkages Using ChatGPT” *Working Paper OSF & under review* (n.d.)

Blogs

Leek, L. “Introducing Central Bank Talk” *The Loop* (December 5, 2024)

See my [Substack](#) for recent blogs. Topics include: changing the voting age, sports analytics, survey research and AI bots, trade tariffs, vibe coding, postdoc indices and central bank communication.

Languages and Skills

- **Languages:** Dutch (native), English (native), German (basic)
- **Coding / Statistical Software:** Python R Stata SPSS
- **Platforms & publishing:** Git/Github VScode RStudio AWS Azure Latex Quarto RMarkdown Jupyter Notebooks
- **Methods:** Natural Language Processing (various (un)supervised methods and Large Language Models), causal inference (difference-in-differences, instrumental variables, regression discontinuity design, survey experiments), timeseries analysis (econometric and cross-sectional), spatial analysis, machine learning (regularisation, tree-based models), data science (API, dockers, cloud computing, web scraping, web developing JavaScript React/Next, AWS).

Presentations & Professional Activities

- Presented research on central banks, survey methodology, AI, and economic communication at over a dozen invited seminars, workshops, and international conferences, including at the ECB, Sciences Po, University College London, YouGov-EUI, UC Dublin, LSE, EUI, University of Barcelona, Max Planck Institute and VU Amsterdam.
- Peer reviewer for leading journals in public policy and political economy: *Review of International Political Economy*, *Review of International Organizations*, *Journal of European Public Policy*.
- Co-organiser of the EU Studies Working Group and Political Economy working group at EUI (2022-2023)