ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey began on a September day with a phone call from Amsterdam. The voice on the other end of the line delivered the good news that I was selected for a PhD position. I had to pinch myself once or twice to make sure that it was not all a dream as conducting a doctoral research has been a long held aspiration of mine. And just like that, my life has changed forever.

Now, looking back at this exciting journey, I do not remember the weary feet and the forks in the road and at times pretending that I was not lost. I only remember many wonderful people that I met along the way and those waiting and cheering for me at home, the sun that was shining kindly, discussions about the way where I was going, and recovering strengths after long walks. There are a number of people that have enriched this journey. I would like to acknowledge their support and express my gratitude.

First of all, I would like to thank my promoter Deirdre Curtin and co-promoter Joana Mendes. I am incredibly grateful for your guidance, support, invaluable expert advice and constructive criticism in writing this thesis. Dear Deirdre, thank you for making this journey possible in the first place and for allowing me to conduct this research under your supervision. Your words of wisdom and advice have always been received with the highest degree of respect. You have helped me in numerous ways to finish this journey successfully. I would also like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend many summer schools, conferences and seminars, which broadened my understanding and knowledge of the topic under scrutiny. Dear Joana, your confidence in me, and loyalty to this research, were instrumental to its successful completion. I consider myself very privileged to have benefitted from your broad theoretical knowledge, crucial feedback and continuous support. Thank you for helping me become a better researcher.

Second, I would like to sincerely thank my “daily supervisors” Maria Weimer and Madalina Busuioc. Dear Maria and Madalina, I enjoyed the time under your supervision: you let me a lot of freedom with my research, yet I never felt alone on the way. Thank you for all the time you have spent on our discussions and for being there for me.

I am very thankful to my respondents without whom this book would not have been possible. Conducting interviews with you all was an extremely enjoyable experience and it was an honor and a privilege to hear and retell your stories. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to contribute to this research.

I would also like to thank the members of the doctoral committee, Kenneth Armstrong, Leonard Besselink, Herwig Hofmann, Annette Schrauwen, Ellen Vos and Adrienne de Moor-van Vugt for investing their time in reading and evaluating this thesis.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Angela Moisl. Dear Angela, you were always there willing to help and for that I am extremely grateful. Many thanks also to Betty and Willem for their help and for making my time at the ACELG enjoyable.
Much gratitude goes to Tamara Takács for her unwavering support and lasting friendship. Dear Tamara, I started this journey on your inspiration, as you encouraged me to consider doctoral positions after completing my master studies. I am very grateful for your trust and unconditional faith in me throughout the years. You are a great friend and the best role model.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and friends at the UvA for enjoyable and motivating atmosphere, pleasant discussions, support, noise and silence at work, coffee breaks and after work drinks. Special mention goes to my wonderful “paranimfen” Candida and Maarten, to my office roommates Tim and Anne, and, in no particular order, to Robin, Eljalill, Elaine, Krit, Marija, Vigiilenca, Josse, Anniek, Béreénice, Chris, Enrico, Kathalijne, Nienke, Isabelle, Nik Jan, Chantal and Christina. I really enjoyed our years together.

To my dear friends Klara, Marta, Ida, Kata, Nataša, Rok, Gabi, Jarka, Lisa, Mihela and Pika, thank you for filling my life with so much joy. I am forever indebted for your love and support. You are the best!

To my dearest sister Agata, you are my favourite person in the whole world and my best friend. I do not remember time before you and cannot imagine my life without you. You read my mind and complete my sentences. Thank you for always being by my side supporting and understanding me, and for making my life complete. Najraj! To Jaakob, I could not have wished for a better (future) brother- in-law and for that I thank you dearly.

To my grandparents, who would be so proud of me. I miss you every day.

A special word of thanks goes out to my wonderful parents Meta and Feri: I could not wish for better and more loving parents! Without you, this journey would not have been possible. You have always encouraged me to exploit whatever talents I had and to follow my dreams. Nothing gives as much comfort as having someone who stays unconditionally by your side, no matter what. You are my everything. Rada vaju imam! To my beloved cat Miki, thank you for your invaluable critique.

From where I stand, the sun is shining all over the place.
Participation and European agencies have become two major and highly researched topics of European governance. However, they have never been comprehensively analysed together despite the fact that participation has become a pervasive feature of agencies and the way in which they conduct their work. This book opens the black box of participation in European agencies and provides a thorough analytical assessment of the extent, and the manner, to which European agencies have lived up to the central promises of participation.

In this book, the pertinence of involving interested parties, and the reason why some agencies are particularly keen on developing participatory structures even in the absence of legal provisions, rests on the idea that participation may fulfil one or more of the following central promises: (i) ensure better and more informed agency outcomes, (ii) promote inclusiveness and responsiveness of agency operation, (iii) advance compliance and implementation, and (iv) enhance transparency and monitoring of agency activities and help build trust. In line with these promises, the extent and impact of participation can be crucial to agencies’ ability to perform effectively, as well as to their credibility. But does participation in European agencies deliver on its promises and, thus, contribute to effective policy-making and agency credibility or is it merely an exercise in window-dressing? The promises of participation are used as an evaluative yardstick against which participation in European agencies is assessed.

This book investigates the various participatory arrangements existing in European agencies at both de jure and de facto level. The analysis follows an innovative and interdisciplinary approach treading so far unexplored paths. By examining agencies’ rules and practices of participation, this study combines a legal and political science approach. Furthermore, it also has a broader normative significance, as it provides a contextual evaluation of participation in European agencies and an assessment of whether the agency model is well-suited for consolidating participation at the EU level.