

Professionalised Work? EU-Public Affairs and Lobbying as an Occupational Field

Findings from a survey

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1. The aims and guiding questions

Previous research has invested considerable energy in gathering data and conducting analyses in the fields of European lobbying and Public Affairs. Most studies have focused on two main areas of inquiry. On the one hand, they have analysed the organisational field by mapping interest groups and examining types and forms of organised interest representation (e.g., Berkhout et al. 2015; Coen/Richardson 2009; Greenwood 2011; Marchetti 2015). On the other hand, research has also dealt with the actual work of lobbyists by addressing patterns, practices and strategies (e.g., Dür/Mateo 2013; Feldblum 2003; Geiger 2006; Kluver 2009; van Schendelen 2013; Woll/Jacquot 2010).

So far, the personnel in this domain have received little attention. We know very little about who European Public Affairs professionals are, how the occupational field or labour market is patterned, and which professional orientations the personnel share. This survey was conducted with the explicit aim of addressing this information gap by gathering data on the occupational field and its staff. It was part of a research project funded by the German Research Council (see project information below) and conducted by a research team located at the University of Siegen in Germany.

To better understand not only the aims and scope, but also the potential limitations of this survey, it is necessary to state the research questions it was designed to answer. Its overarching research question can be summarised as follows:

Is European Public Affairs exposed to processes of professionalisation?

This question promises new insights into this field of activity, because it provides an analytical concept that assists in unveiling the underlying structures and trends of this labour market. ‘Professionalisation’ is thus used as a diagnostic and explanatory device. For the sake of clarity, it needs to be highlighted that we follow a very specific understanding of what ‘professionalisation’ is about. In the following, we are less interested in what practitioners themselves might consider to be ‘professionalisation’, even though this element is not completely absent from the analyses. In this practical understanding, ‘professionalisation’ is about ‘increased capabilities’: it is a process that engages in the rationalisation of work-related activities and skills (e.g., the development and use of models, methods, norms) with the aim to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of job activities, particularly in times of work-related challenges, problems or crises.

The empirical analyses to be presented here are rooted in a different sociological understanding of ‘professionalisation’: It is about the formation and establishment of an occupational field of (full-time, paid, dependent) employment with a shared professional expertise, practice and ethos (Larson 1977; Evetts 2012; Büttner et al. 2015). Analysing European Public Affairs in terms of ‘professionalisation’ theory thus allows us to understand whether this activity is increasingly patterned, standardised and secluded as a ‘professional labour market’: e.g., through the standardisation of career and work patterns; the exclusion of ‘non-professional work’, the increased capacity for self-organisation, and the proactive legitimation of a professional mission.

2. The survey: data and methods

The implementation of the survey required decisions about the sample of respondents to be interviewed. For this purpose, our research team used the Transparency Register of the European Commission and the European Parliament.¹ The advantage of the Transparency Register is that it provides individualised data about the registered persons and/or organisations. In this manner, it was possible to construct a ‘total population of respondents’. The decision to centre on the Register has disadvantages, however, because it underestimates the size of the total population. In fact, not all lobbyists working for the various interest groups and consultancies in the field of EU policy-making are part of the Register. In particular, law firms abstain from the Register, as they are not compelled to list themselves. Still, the Register assists in identifying those lobbyists that are (currently) involved in public affairs relations with EU institutions.

¹ Transparency Register: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do>

We extracted 7,332 persons from the Register (summer 2016), either by using their individual contact details or by addressing the organisation they were listed for. Due to the high non-response rate, the questionnaire was sent to all persons extracted from the Register. Running from October 5th 2016 to October 25th 2017, fieldwork was time consuming since it involved repeated contact. Lobbyists were contacted either via e-mail, regular mail or telephone. Ultimately, we obtained 699 fully answered questionnaires, a rather low response rate (9.5%).

The dataset has thus several limitations. In the first place, it is difficult to ascertain the quality of the sample of respondents, for two reasons. On the one side, it is very difficult to ascertain the scope of the total population of European Public Affairs professionals. Estimates about the total number of persons diverge considerably (Courty 2010). This has to do with the ‘borderlessness’ of the population. European lobbyists not only work for the Brussels-based interest groups; we also need to consider those persons working in various cities throughout Europe and the world. Additionally, it is difficult to draw a line between organisations that are fully engaged in lobbying and those with a less clear lobbying profile (e.g., consultancies, management, PR and communication, law firms, think tanks etc.). Even if we assume that the Transparency Register helps to ascertain the total population of those lobbyists actively engaged in addressing European institutions, we have to deal, on the other side, with the low response rate. Every tenth’s person listed in the Register filled out the questionnaire, and this low response rate may generate a strong bias on our database.

These limitations call for a prudent analysis and interpretation of the data. Given that these limitations were foreseeable, our research team engaged in further activities. On the one hand, we conducted a series of open-ended, semi-structured interviews with representatives of relevant actors in the field. Overall, 40 interviews with members of different interest groups, consultancies, professional associations, mass media and EU-Institutions were conducted, following a ‘most dissimilar’ case design. Also, this sample of interviews is not representative of the ‘total population’, but allowed us to grasp some inside knowledge of those actors involved in the field. This allowed us to gather information to check the reliability of our data and the validity of our findings. Findings from these interviews will not be presented here, but first thematic analyses of core aspects (e.g., the professional career development, the professional knowledge and skills) show that findings converge with what the statistical examinations have unveiled. On the other hand, a public event was conducted in Brussels on March 21th, to which European Public Affairs professionals participating in the survey were invited. The event made it possible for us to assemble important feedback on the data and findings. This report has made active use of these discussions when presenting and interpreting the findings.

3. The findings

The data paint a mixed picture of the professionalisation of European Public Affairs. On the one hand, we expected to find little professionalisation, given the openness of EU Public Affairs as an occupational field. On the other hand, our findings highlight that European lobbying is now a well-established occupational field and labour market. Our findings also show that this field has developed joint standards, skills and rules of professional work.

In the following, we will briefly summarise the main findings for each of these three aspects.

3.1. The openness of EU Public Affairs as a labour market

The survey confirms that European lobbying is a highly open labour market. This openness can be validated on the basis of the following four factors:

- a) *the diversity of professionals and interest groups involved;*
- b) *the marginal role of specific job aspirations and career destination;*
- c) *the variability of lobbying-related job activities;*
- d) *the variety of professional identities.*

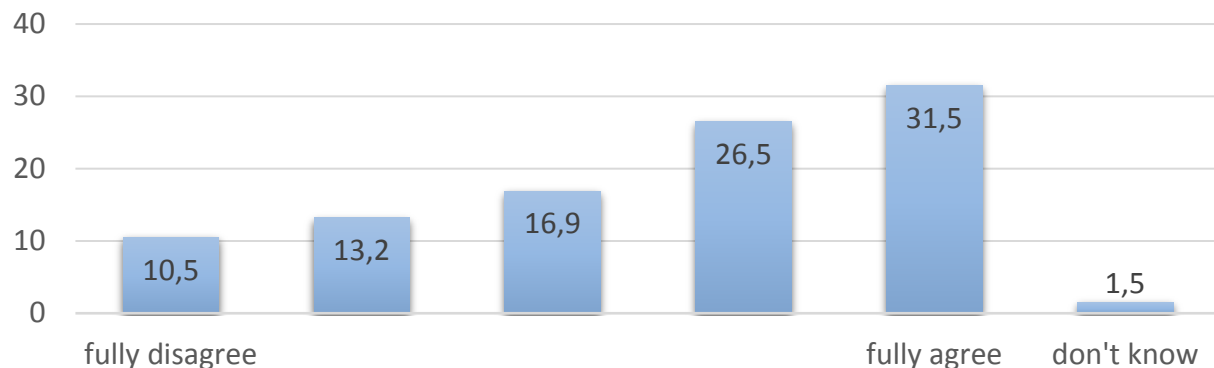
a) The diversity of professionals and interest groups involved: The diversity of professional backgrounds is apparent. In our data, we find almost all study areas: administrative science, law, business administration, economics, accounting, clinical medicine, engineering, chemistry, agronomy, astrophysics, mathematics, geography, history, political sciences, anthropology, languages, theology, and many others. Also, in regard to citizenship and national provenance, diversity is the prevailing element. Respondents come from 39 different nations. 97% have a European background, and only 3% come from non-European countries, such as Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia or the US, from Russia, Australia, South Korea or South Africa.

Additionally, the diversity is pronounced in regard to employers. Respondents work for professional consultancies, companies, business associations, trade unions, think tanks, public authorities or NGOs. And their fields of activity bridge all policy areas dealt with by European institutions: communication, information and media; food, agriculture, consumer and health; energy, environment and transport; finance, trade, employment and social affairs; research, education, culture and sport; development, humanitarian, justice, public and civil society interests.

The low career destination: The openness of the occupational field is evidenced also by the fact that most respondents stressed that they did not become a lobbyist by design, but rather fell into it by chance. This is evidenced by every second respondent, with only a small minority having had a clear job aspiration.

Figure 1: Career aspirations and access to the field (in %, N= 620)

“I did not actively aim to work in Lobbying, it happened rather by chance”

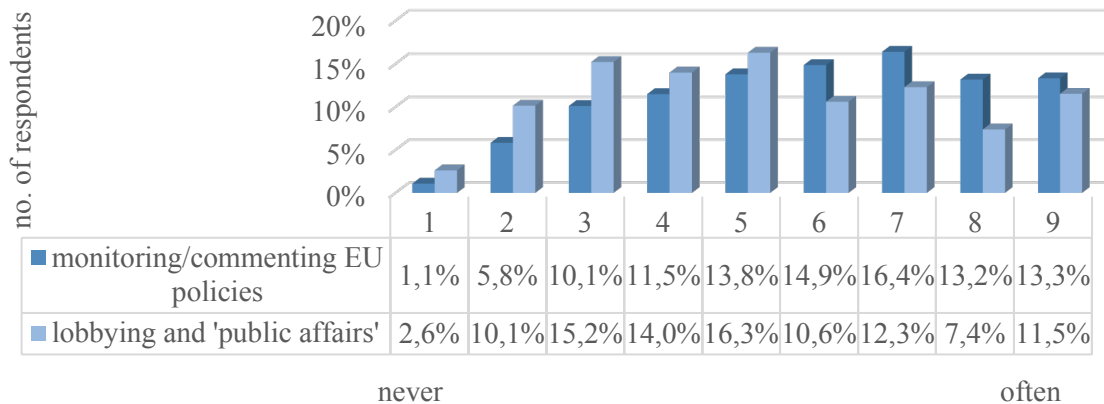


b) The variability of lobbying-related job activities: Additionally, our data show that it is difficult to demarcate the occupational field when focusing on lobbying related activities, given that most

respondents agree that these tasks are only part of their job descriptions and activities. As reflected in the following figure, 17% of all respondents say that they never or almost never monitor or comment on EU policies, and 28% repeat this for lobbying and public affairs. A considerable proportion of the respondents are placed in an intermediate position, thus evidencing that Public Affairs and lobbying are not necessarily a clearly demarcated job description.

Figure 2: Variability of lobbying-related job activities (in %, N= 653/651)

“In your current position, which share of your working time are you busy with...?”



c) The variety of professional identities: The openness of the field is finally substantiated also by the fact that respondents have very different perceptions of how their work should be labelled. As detailed in the following table, more than half of the respondents identify with lobbying as a professional label. The survey provided opportunities to add open answers. In this field, they specified further labels that deviate somewhat from ‘lobbying’, but can be considered synonyms. However, there is a significant minority that detaches itself from ‘lobbying’ and comparable labels, and those respondents opt less for names that have political connotations.

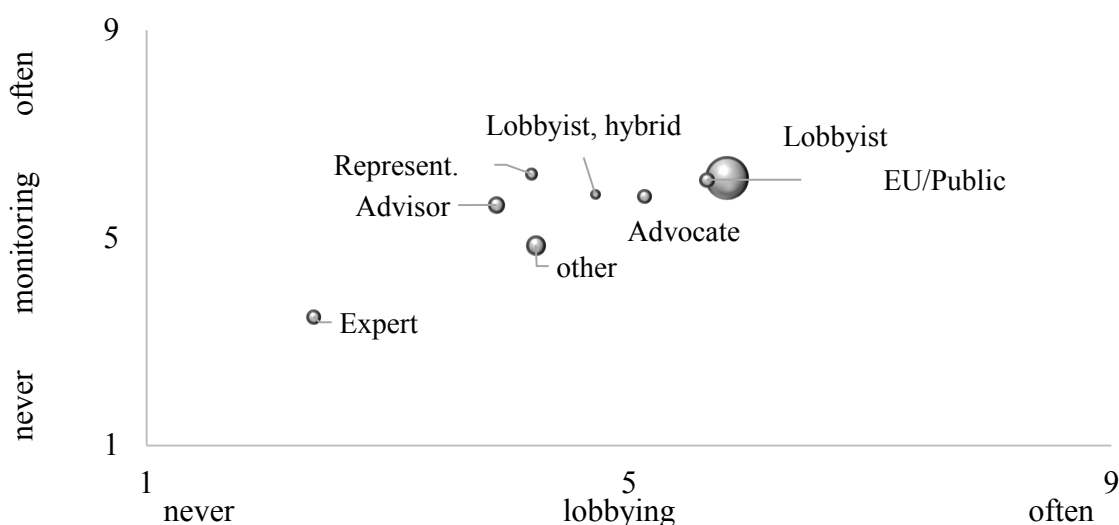
Table 1: Professional identities

“Which label describes your professional identity best?”

	freq.	%	cum. %
Lobbyist	350	53,9	53,9
Lobbyist + ... (hybrid)	21	3,2	57,2
Advocate / activist	42	6,5	63,6
Interest representative	27	4,2	67,8
EU/Public affairs officer	44	6,8	74,6
Advisor / consultant	53	8,2	82,7
Expert / analyst	42	6,5	89,2
Other	70	10,8	100,0
<i>Total</i>	<i>649</i>	<i>100,0</i>	

Figure 3 unveils that reported activities and chosen labels are strongly associated. While those respondents opting for ‘lobbyist’ as a professional identity are also among those respondents engaged regularly in lobbying activities and policy monitoring tasks, there is a small group of ‘experts’, ‘advisors’ and ‘others’ who are involved to a much lesser extent in these activities. Still, these respondents have actively participated in our survey, and have certified that they belong to the field of European Public Affairs and lobbying.

Figure 3: Activities and professional identities (N=617)



In sum, there are several indications that EU Public Affairs is an open labour market that grants access to a considerably diverse group of people. This openness is a strong sign of low professionalisation, because the implication is that ‘anybody can do the job’, that anybody can ‘get a foot in the door’.

3.2. The formation of an occupational field

The openness of an occupational field does not necessarily exclude professionalism, though. Our data unveils, to the contrary, that European Public Affairs is a well-established labour market; and there is a clear indication of professionalisation processes. The findings indicate, however, that this labour market has its limitations and contradictions. On the one hand, European Public Affairs is a...

- a) *fully established field of full-time, paid employment*
- b) *with a high degree of cross-sectoral integration*

On the other hand, however, European Lobbying seems to be a transitional labour market. This is substantiated by two observations:

- c) *the prevalence of a young personnel with strong gender-mainstreaming elements*
- d) *a moderate income situation.*

a) A fully established field of full-time, paid employment: The first strong indication of a professionalised field of activity is provided in Table 2, which indicates the number of respondents employed full-time, and paid for their work. Only a small minority of our respondents report having a part-time and/or unpaid work. It is also interesting to note that only a tiny minority reports having a second position, thus evidencing that working as a Public Affairs professional requires full time commitment.

Table 2: Types of occupation

	first position		other positions			
	N	%	paid		unpaid	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
full-time						
paid	548	83,0	3	0,5	14	2,1
unpaid	6	0,9	0	0,0	0	0,0
part-time						
paid	65	9,9	4	0,6	10	1,5
unpaid	7	1,1	1	0,2	2	0,3
<i>total</i>	<i>626</i>	<i>94,9</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1,2</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>3,9</i>

Table 3: Types of employment

	N	%
employed by an organisation	569	84,7
self-employed/freelancer	66	9,8
expense allowance	7	1,0
voluntary	14	2,1
others	15	2,2
don't know	1	0,2
<i>total</i>	<i>672</i>	<i>100,0</i>

The information about the type of employment confirms this picture (see Table 3), because almost all respondents do work (full-time) for an organisation. Lobbying is not a job for freelancers, and it is not a task delegated to volunteers. The number of respondents that do unpaid work or do it on the basis of expense allowances is very small. In sum, European Public Affairs is a well-established labour market that has instituted full-time paid employment as the base line of professional activities, marginalising voluntary forms of activity.

b) An occupational field with a high degree of cross-sectoral integration: European Public Affairs is a fully integrated labour market, when considering the sectoral provenience of our respondents. In our questionnaire, respondents were asked to list the type of sectors where they acquired work experience in their previous career. Table 4 shows that almost 40% report having worked in the area of consulting, public administration, the NGO and business sector. The sum of percentages adds to 250%, because respondents could indicate several sectors. This shows that respondents worked, on average, in 2.5 sectors, indicating a strong cross-sectoral mobility.

In fact, merely 20% of all respondents have worked only in one sector, 38% in two, and 43% in more than three. Almost all theoretically possible combinations of sectors are present in our data, which shows that changes are possible in all directions, even though typical profiles tend to combine work experiences within NGOs & unions, within trade associations & companies or within consulting & administration & research organisations. European Public Affairs is thus an integrated labour market that is located at the intersection of various sectors, and seems to spur cross-sectoral mobility.

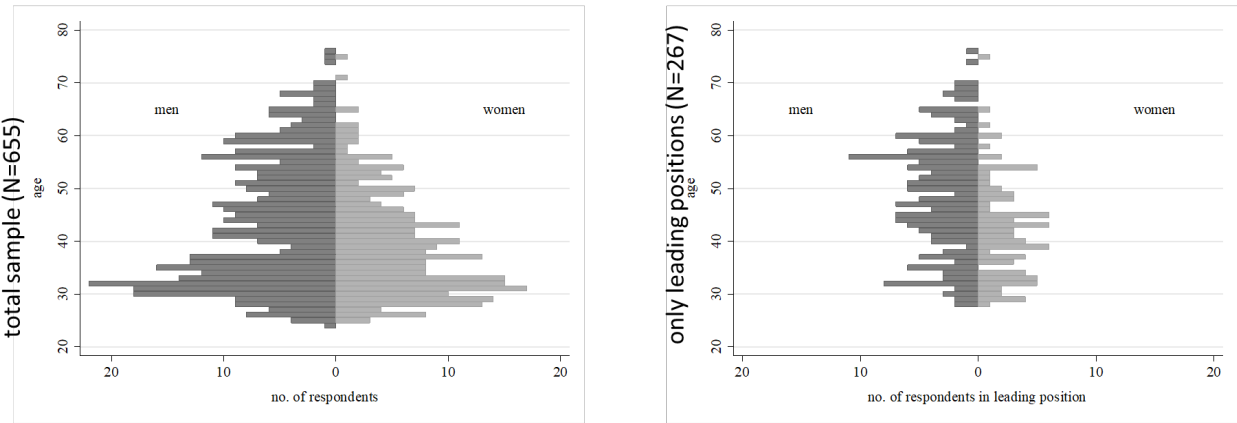
Table 4: Work-experiences (N=611)

“Indicate how many years of total work experience you have in which sector since finishing your studies”

sector	freq.	% of cases
Consulting	232	38,67
Administration, Agencies	224	37,33
Political and social associations	218	36,33
Trade associations	211	35,17
Private companies	205	34,17
Research, education	136	22,67
Unions	99	16,50
Think Tanks	59	9,83
Information, media, PR	53	8,83
Law firms	41	6,83
Others	28	4,67
<i>Total</i>	<i>1506</i>	<i>251,0</i>

c) The prevalence of a young personnel with strong gender-mainstreaming elements: An important feature of the labour market of Public Affairs can be unveiled on taking a closer look at the structure of the personnel, in particular its age and gender composition. The following figures illustrate the age pyramid of the work force. It shows that a substantial proportion of professionals are rather young, when looking at the left figure, representative of the overall sample. On the right side, the respondents in leading positions are grouped. Among this personnel, we see that the age group of those in their 40s and 50s is stronger, at least among men. A second important observation pertains to women. While men seem to dominate among the older cohorts (both for the entire sample and also for the senior positions), women seem to have caught up among the younger cohorts.

Figure 4: Demographic composition



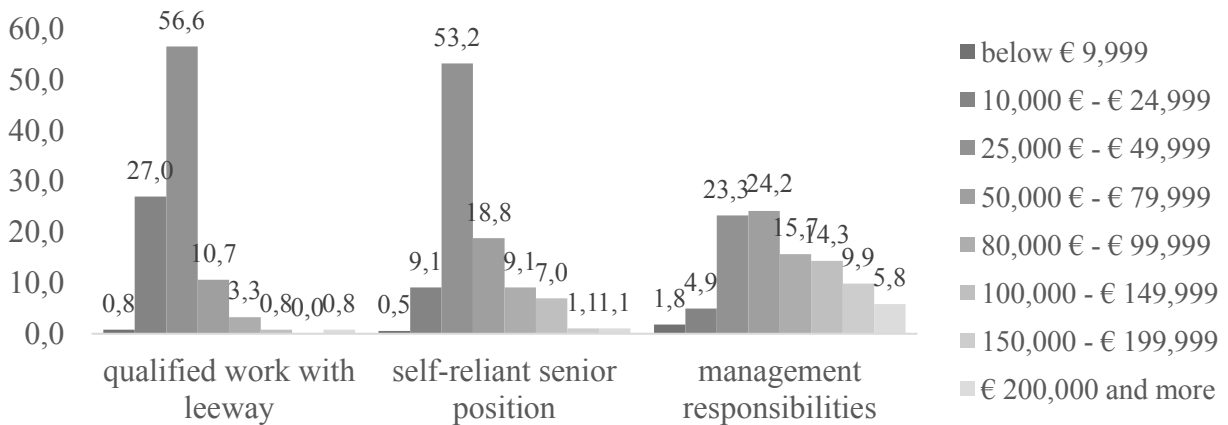
This observation is validated when looking at Table 5. The younger the age cohort is, the more equalised the gender balance, while the older the respondents are, the stronger the gender imbalance. This indicates that women have entered the field much more forcefully in the last decades, and this also seems to apply to the higher positions within the organisations.

Table 5: Demographic composition by gender

	age groups					total
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	
all respondents	79 12,1%	246 37,6%	158 24,1%	113 17,3%	59 9,0%	655 100,0
gender groups						
women	42 53,2%	111 45,1%	69 43,7%	35 31,0%	10 17,0%	267 40,8%
men	37 46,8%	135 54,9%	89 56,3%	78 69,0%	49 83,1%	388 59,2%

d) A moderate income situation: Finally, we need to talk about remuneration. As depicted in the following figure, the income situation in this field is rather moderate. Separating the sample of respondents according to the hierarchical positions within the organisation helps to differentiate more clearly between income groups. Indeed, among respondents with an intermediate position (qualified work with leeway) the majority earns between 25,000 and 50,000 euros annually, which is minimal when considering the cost of living in Brussels. The situation is not very different among respondents in leading positions. Only those respondents responsible for management tasks report higher rates of earning, in excess of 50,000 euros, annually.

Figure 5: Income situation (in %, N= 538)



In sum, our data reveals that European Public Affairs is a fully established labour market, given the dominance of paid full-time employment. Lobbying is not an activity conducted by volunteers, honorary or non-employed staff members, but work tied to dependent employment and a salary. There are indications, however, that qualify this observation to a certain degree. The prevalence of younger professionals shows that European lobbying is no longer in the hands of experienced veterans from the ‘old school’, but rather is tied to a very young group of professionals. The low mean age of our sample suggests that many professionals leave the field at a specific point of time during their career. The moderate income situation within the labour market might be a motivation to do so. European Public Affairs thus seems to be a transitional labour market for a considerable number of professionals.

3.3. The professionalisation of the field:

In a final step, we will move to a key element of the assumed professionalisation of European lobbying: Paid occupation tends to be linked to qualified work, and for European Public Affairs this should imply that a group of professionals sharing similar educational credentials, similar skills and a common ethos of professionalism might have emerged. In order to validate this assumption, we will present data on the following aspects:

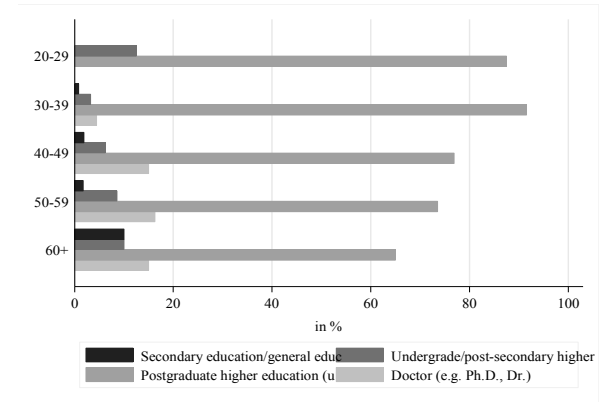
- a) *educational background: the academisation of the field*
- b) *professional skills: towards exclusive expertise*
- c) *no joint professional ‘project’*

a) Educational background: the academisation of the field: The information our respondents furnished about their educational background shows that European Public Affairs Professionals have almost all completed postgraduate university study programmes (Table 6). Only a very small minority has not completed higher education. This mirrors an apparent dominance of academics in the field – a feature that seems to pertain to many occupational fields, but has obviously also impacted on the field of European lobbying. Figure 2 suggests that this academisation is an ongoing process. The number of senior professionals without academic titles is small, but notable, while this group disappears completely when among the younger cohorts. Academic credentials seem to be a must for young professionals on entering the field, while senior professionals have been able to establish themselves ‘in spite’ of their non-academic backgrounds, probably due to practical work experience, technical expertise and personal reputation.

Table 6: What is your highest level of education?

	Fälle	%
Secondary education	11	1,6
Vocational education	2	0,3
Undergraduate/post-secondary	46	6,7
Postgraduate higher education	560	82,0
Doctor (e.g. Ph.D., Dr.)	64	9,4
<i>Total</i>	<i>683</i>	<i>100,0</i>

Figure 6: Education and age (in %, N=664)



The academic background is also revealing when looking at the study fields indicated by our respondents. The list shows that Social Sciences (including Political Sciences and European Studies), Economics, Administration and Law make up the lion’s share. Arts and Humanities on the one side, and the fields of STEM on the other side are rather marginal.

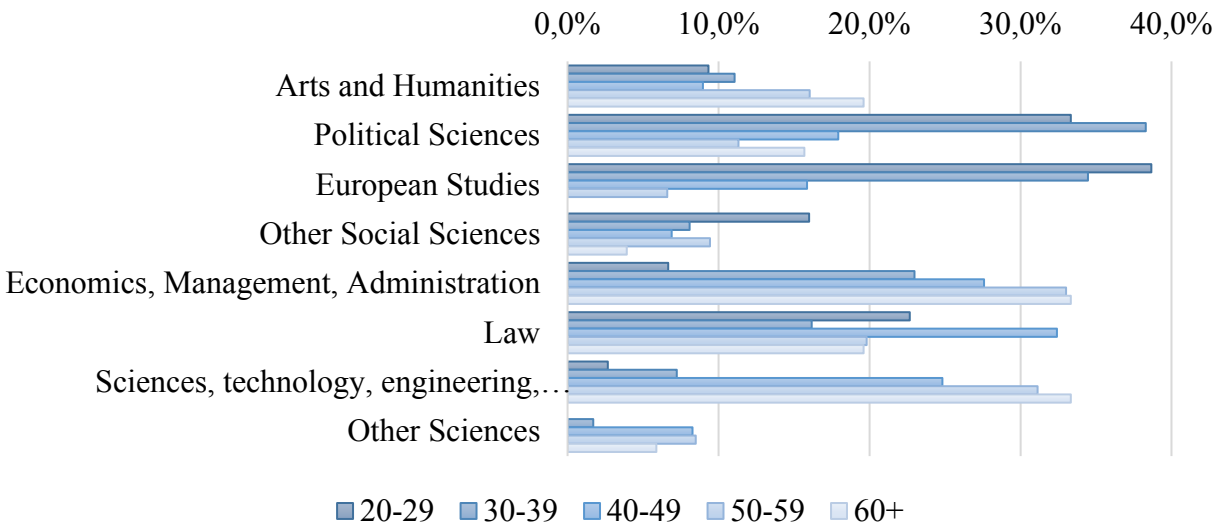
Table 7: Studies fields

	N	%
Arts and Humanities	73	11,9
Political Sciences	161	26,3
European Studies	140	22,9
Other Social Sciences	53	8,7
Economics, Administration	151	24,7
Law	133	21,7
Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics	105	17,2
Other fields	30	4,9
<i>Total</i>	<i>612</i>	<i>138</i>

due to multiple answers, % add to more than 100

It is interesting to note that the Social Sciences tend to play a core role particularly among the young respondents, when breaking up the data according to age groups, as shown in Figure 7. Can these findings be read as an indication of development across time? We see that Political Sciences, European Studies and the other Social Sciences are on the rise, while STEM and Arts & Humanities are on the decline. The field of European Public Affairs thus seems to be increasingly dominated by credentials and expertise provided by the Social Sciences, to the exclusion of other competing disciplines.

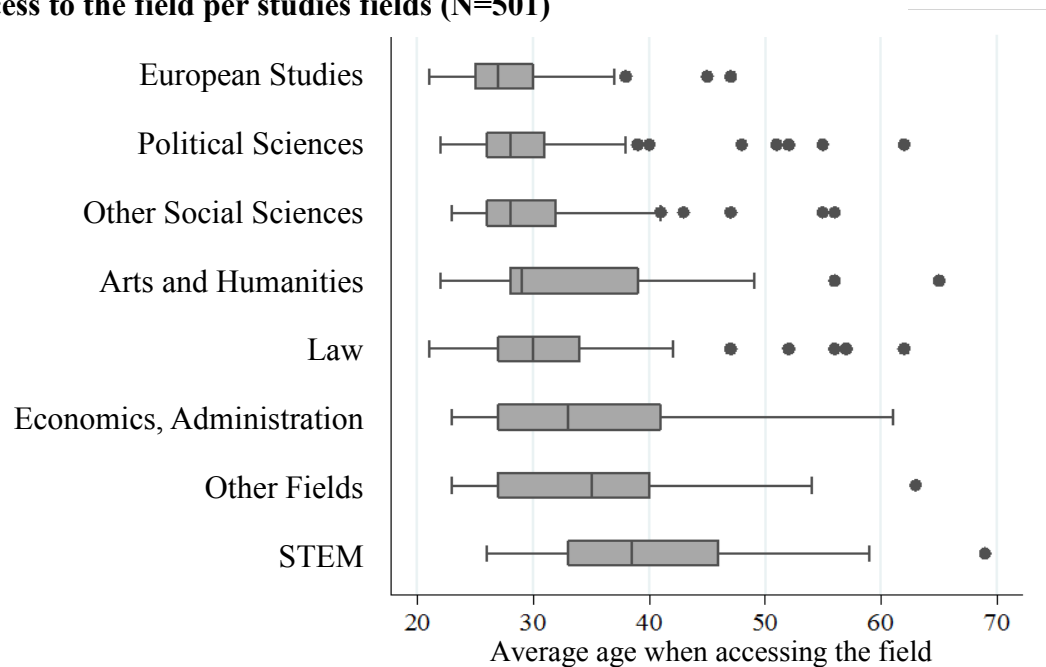
Figure 7: Field of studies per age group (in %, N=612)



Respondents also provided information on the number of years they have been involved in Public Affairs and lobbying, which allowed us to estimate the approximate age of access to the field. This information helps to unveil whether respondents with different academic backgrounds have entered the field at earlier or later stages of their career. This is obviously the case (see Figure 8).

Professionals with an academic background in European Studies were younger when starting their activity within the field, when compared to those studying STEM. The boxplots indicate, for instance, that the mean age among academics with STEM-credentials is around 39 years (and fifty percent are within the grey box, ranging between 33 and 46 years). The professionals with European Studies are not only younger on average; the variation is also smaller. Accessing the field as a young professional seems to be the preferred route for those with European Studies, while those entering the field at a later stage come from other, more distant fields of study. In these cases, the entrance ticket is not necessarily an academic title, but other work experience and career positions.

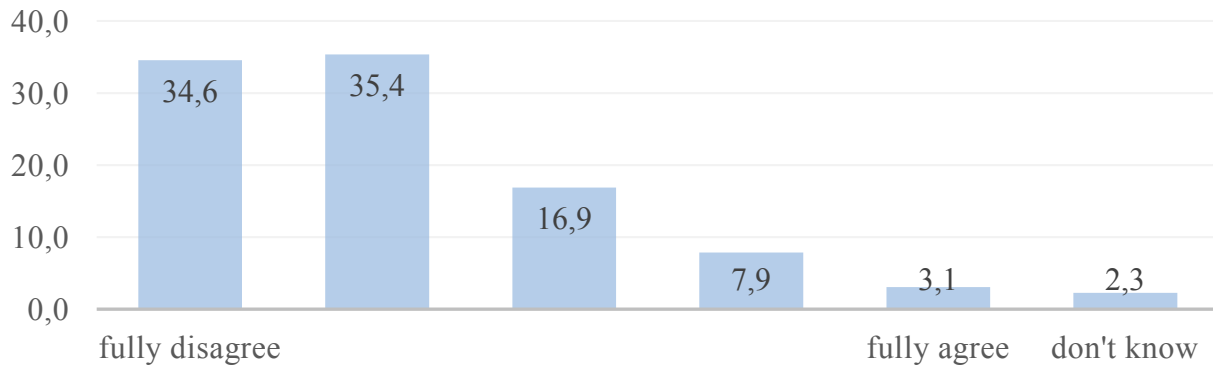
Figure 8: Access to the field per studies fields (N=501)



Overall, these findings show that higher education has become an essential precondition for access to the field, and that apparently educational credentials in the areas of social sciences and European studies are a privileged calling card for career starter jobs, closely followed by those with studies in economics, public administration and law.

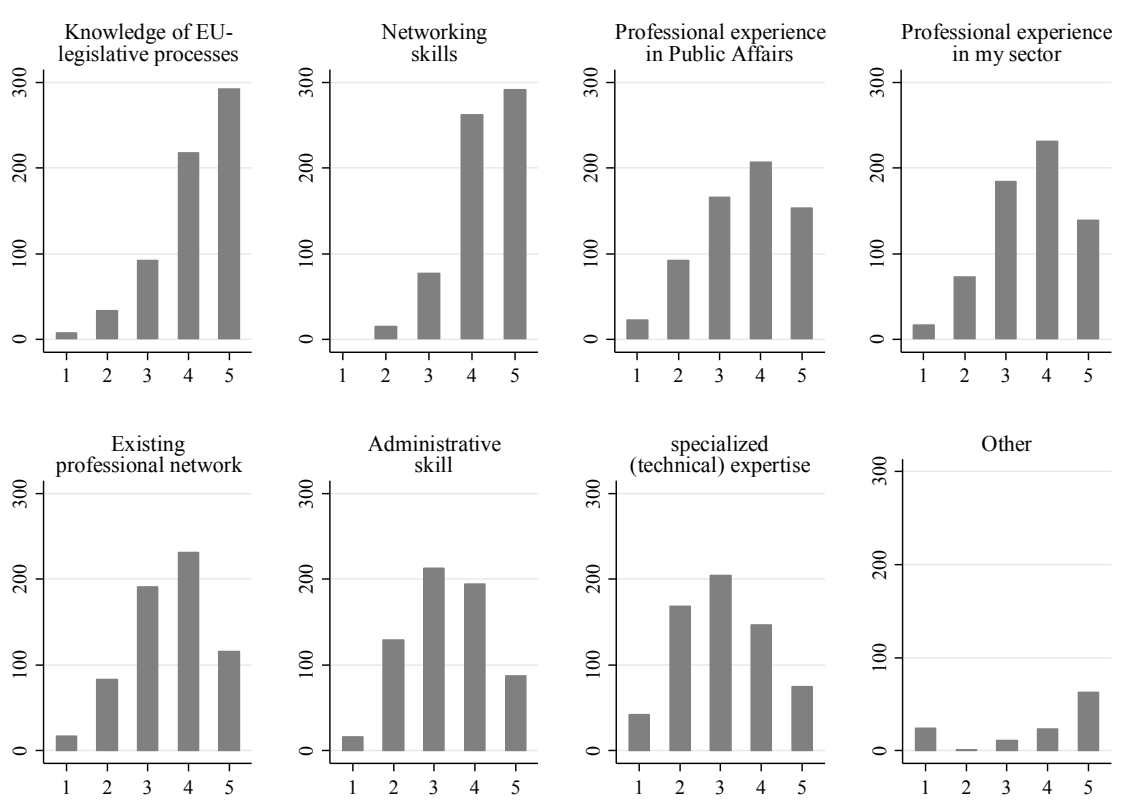
b) Professional skills: This puts the question on the table as to whether European Public Affairs is tied to professional skills and forms of knowledge. Figure 9 summarises the general impression of our respondents by highlighting that the vast majority of respondents is convinced that this activity is not something anybody can do. Inversely, this suggests that two thirds agree that Public Affairs requires special skills. Public Affairs professionals seem to see themselves in a privileged position when compared to laypersons.

Figure 9: Privileged knowledge (in %, N=622)
“Mainly, anybody can do well as a Public Affairs Professional.”



Most respondents hold the conviction that knowledge about the legislative processes within the EU is essential, and the same applies to networking skills. In comparison to these general fields of knowledge, respondents are less convinced that special skills (e.g., work experience in a specific sector, technical expertise and administrative skills) are equally important. More relevance is accorded to previous work experience in Public Affairs and existing professional networks, even though this is not stressed unanimously.

Figure 10: Important skills for your position (in absolute numbers)
“Imagine somebody else would take your current position. Which skills are important for the relevant tasks?”



To get a better overview of different knowledge profiles, we have generated a typology on the basis of the various answers. Table 8 summarises these groups, two minoritarian and two majoritarian ones. We call ‘self-taught professionals’ 12% of the respondents that argue that no privileged stock of skills and knowledge is required, that anybody can do the job, and that the respondents’ job does not really match their educational background. Respondents with studies in the area of the natural and technical sciences and in arts and humanities are overrepresented in this group. All other groups are convinced that Public Affairs requires proper skills and knowledge, and thus privilege professionals as compared to laypersons. A small group of ‘specialists’ argues that this proper expertise is tied to special and technical knowledge in specific sectors, and not to general competencies. The two majoritarian groups share the conviction that European Affairs requires proper expertise, and that this expertise is necessarily tied to general skills (networking and knowledge about legislative processes). The difference between these two groups concerns the importance of special and technical knowledge. The ‘all-rounders’ do not confer relevance on these special skills, thus testifying that general skills are sufficient, and that Public Affairs professionals can work in various sectors. The ‘holist’, in contrast, argues that a combination of both skillsets are necessary. That is, lobbyists have to be experts in legislative and networking matters, but they also have to understand the specificities of the interests to be represented.

Table 8: Knowledge profiles - typology

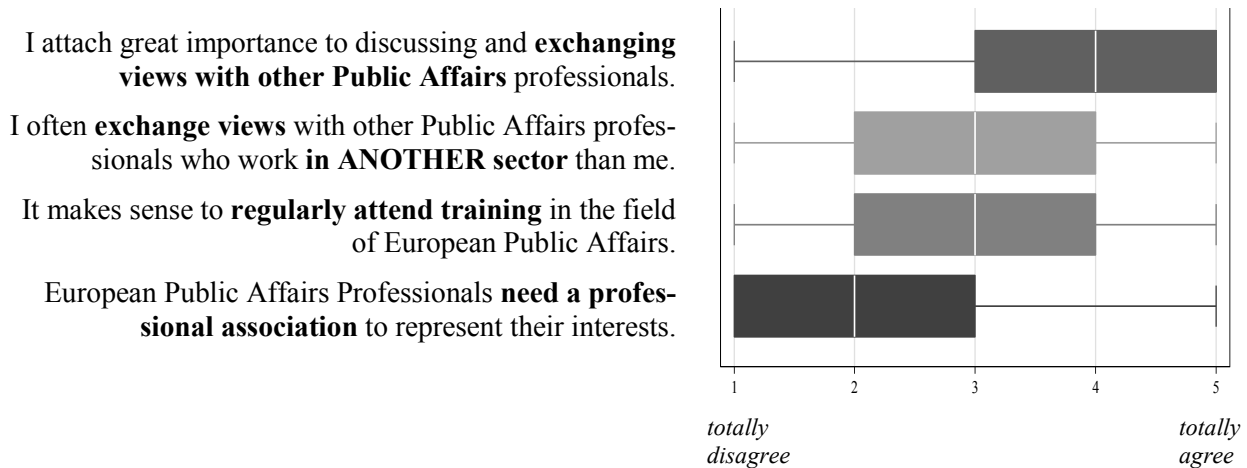
	special knowledge (sector, technical)	general knowledge (institutions, Public Affairs)	job matches educational level	everybody can do the job
the self-taught professional (12%) – STEM and Humanities overrepresented	✗	✗	✗	✓
the specialist (10%) – less European Studies and Law	✓	✗	✓	✗
the all-rounder (36%) – European Studies, Law, Humanities overrepresented	✗	✓	✓	✗
the holist (42%) – European Studies, Law, Humanities overrepresented	✓	✓	✓	✗

These insights underline a significant process of professionalisation, in the sense that paid work in the area of European Public Affairs is linked to a specialised expertise that is alien to the layperson. Employees in this area of work consider themselves to be professionals, and there is strong agreement among them regarding what this professionalism is about.

c) The lack of a professionalisation project: While there is a strong consensus about professionalism, it is interesting to note that this does not lead to a joint and collective professionalisation project. That is, respondents do not tend to see themselves as members of a professional group that

requires organisation and representation. In fact, Figure 11 shows that respondents agree – on average – about the importance of informal professional exchanges and interactions, but most of them do not subscribe to the need of organising and representing ‘their profession’ in terms of joint activities and associations – on average they disagree. Respondents are more undecided in regard to professional exchanges across sectors and about the need for lifelong learning and training. This might indicate that Public Affairs professionals tend to attach themselves more strongly to their sector of operation, which diminishes their readiness to support a professionalisation of the labour market, as such.

Figure 11: Professional orientations (N= 620/622/590/570)



Another reason for the lack of support of a joint professionalisation might also be the precarious professional identities and ethics among respondents. As we have seen before, most respondents identify with the professional label of ‘lobbying’, but a strong majority has problems with this name. Additionally, our survey unveils that a strong majority underlines the need of the ‘profession’ to subscribe to clear rules, and they believe in the political legitimacy of lobbying/Public Affairs, as evidenced by Table 9.

Table 9: Professional ethics (in %, N= 639/638/636/636)

“To what extent do you agree with the following statements?”

	not at all			very much	don't know	
The work of Public Affairs Professionals ...						
should be subject to a code of ethics.	1.1	4.9	10.0	25.8	55.4	2.8
should be more transparent.	2.4	9.4	24.6	27.3	32.8	3.6
Lobbying/Public Affairs ...						
certifies that political decisions are based on objective facts.	9.8	11.3	24.5	27.0	23.0	4.4
contributes to well-balanced political decisions.	2.4	7.2	23.1	33.0	32.2	2.0

However, there is fundamental disagreement about this ethical dimension, voiced by a significant number of the respondents, thus showing that the consensus about a joint ‘professionalisation project’ is porous. In fact, one out of four respondents does not believe that lobbying contributes to evidenced-based decision-making, and one out of ten does not see a democratic legitimacy.

Also in this regard, a typology of respondents can be developed to show the potential divisions within the field. Table 10 summarises the main fact and adds the sector that is overrepresented among these respondents. As respondents working for consultants are slightly overrepresented in all these groups (i.e., they have a more outspoken opinion when compared to the other sectors), we do not list them in the table.

The two first groups are rather sceptical about the political legitimacy of Public Affairs and lobbying. Differences between both are tied to the rules of conduct and transparency. While the small group of ‘disillusioned’ (only 3%) do not believe in the ability of rules to control this sector, the ‘regulators’ (16%) tend to subscribe to stricter regulations as a reaction to low professional legitimacy. Respondents working for NGOs are overrepresented in these two groups. On the opposing side, we have the respondents cherishing a ‘laissez-faire’ approach, given that they believe in political legitimacy, but do not see the need for rules and more transparency. Business associations are overrepresented in this group. Two majoritarian groups subscribe to a positive professional ethos, agreeing on the ethical contribution of rules and the fundamental political legitimacy of the field. The difference between both stems rather from the strength of their ethical commitment. While the ‘moderate ethicists’ subscribe to professional ethos in a more moderate tone in at least one of the two dimensions, the ‘ethical core’ is fully convinced about professional rules and political legitimacy. The difference between both groups is also one related to NGOs: the moderate ethicists work more often for NGOs, and less often for the fully convinced professionals.

Table 10: Professional ethics – typology

	rules re- quired	demo- cratic le- gitimacy	overrepresented among
the disillusioned (3%): do not believe in rules nor in democratic legitimacy	✗	✗	NGOS
the pessimistic regulators (16%): believe in rules, but not in democratic legitimacy	✓	✗	NGOs
the laissez-faire (7%): do not believe in rules, but in democratic legitimacy	✗	✓	business associa- tions
the moderate ethicists (39%) – subscribe to rules and democratic legitimacy	✓	✓	business associa- tions, NGOs
the ethical core (35%): strongly subscribe to rules and democratic legitimacy	✓✓	✓✓	business associa- tions

4. Summary and open questions

This report has summarised the main findings from a standardised survey among European Public Affairs professionals. The survey's aim was to gather systematic data on the personnel, rather than on organisations or activities. It made use of the diagnostic concept of professionalisation in order to identify core structures and trends in the occupational field. The core questions can be described as follows: Are we witnessing the establishment of a specialised labour market restricted to occupational groups with privileged skills and a shared professional ethos?

The findings presented in this report paint a mixed picture. We were able to identify aspects and dimensions strongly indebted to professionalisation, while other features hint at a low degree of professionalisation.

On the one hand, the field of European lobbying cannot be classified as wholly professionalised. It is still an open and inclusive field of activity that grants access to a variety of individuals and interest groups. The job descriptions and activities diverge considerably among our respondents, and this is also the reason why there is limited agreement when describing their professional identity. Finally, there is disagreement within the field about the political legitimacy of Public Affairs and lobbying, about the need to follow joint rules and about establishing professional associations.

On the other hand, however, we have seen that in some areas, the field is highly professionalised, particularly when looking at employment patterns and professional expertise. Public Affairs is a fully established labour market, given that full-time paid employment has marginalised unpaid, part-time honorary or voluntary work. The vast majority of employees have academic credentials and are convinced that their work requires highly professionalised skills and knowledge. All this highlights the fact that European lobbying is strongly secluded from the layperson. Additionally, there is considerable mobility across sectors (e.g., consultancies, public authorities, business associations and companies, trade unions or NGOs). Finally, most respondents underscore the fact that they engage in informal exchange with other professionals, even though they rather discard the option of formalising these professional exchanges via training and professional associations.

Overall, our findings show that European Public Affairs is a 'semi-professionalised' field of activity. In formal terms, it remains open to a variety of interest groups and academically trained professionals. Informally, however, the occupational field is patterned along shared rules of 'good professional' labour, and it seems to privilege professionally specialised experts.

These findings leave a number of questions unanswered. First of all, it is necessary to highlight some limitations. Studies focusing on personnel have to acknowledge that it is very difficult to ascertain the 'total population' to be studied. Additionally, these studies are confronted with low response-rates. There is thus a realistic possibility that empirical findings about European Public Affairs professionals will not provide a fully reliable and comprehensive picture. One should thus abstain from overambitious statements and judgements.

Beyond this general warning, our data leave two important aspects unanswered. First, the findings give some indication that European Public Affairs is in a state of flux. A paid occupation, it is controlled by academics, exhibits gender balance and has undergone gradual rejuvenation/reinvigoration. However, it is unclear whether these developments will continue, given the various crises

of the European Union, which might also affect the labour market of European Public Affairs professionals. As shown by our data, the income situation within the field is not the best, and the labour market seems to have a strong transitional dimension.

Second, our data are unable to clarify what professionalisation is good for. On the one side, the underlying professionalisation of Public Affairs offers opportunities. For each individual employee, professionalisation can help to increase one's own work capacities by promoting effectiveness and efficiency. For the occupational field as such, it can foster the joint commitment to professional standards; it generates possibilities for self-regulation; and it contributes to embedding this field into systems of institutional checks and balances. On the other side, however, professionalisation also implies risks, particularly the risk that professionalisation contributes to fencing off European Public Affairs from the layperson. Professionals tend to establish themselves as intermediaries between EU institutions and European citizens and groups. Professionalisation thus may further limit the ability of interest groups to make the voices of their constituencies heard.

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