Theme: Horizontal Europeanization

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A transnational community of purpose? The professionalization of lobbyists within the European Union

Research in the social sciences has invested considerable energy in describing and analyzing EU-lobbying as an organizational field that spans across the member states of the EU and beyond. The focus has been on organizations (federations, individual representations, NGOs etc.), and findings show a high fragmentation and competition of the field. However, little evidence is available in regard to the personnel. Preliminary studies have shown that EU-lobbyists are part of an occupational field that cuts across the cleavages and fragmentations of the organizational field of EU public affairs. Lobbyists, for instance, maintain close professional relations to many other colleagues, and they develop career patterns that transgress segmentations between the organizations they worked for. Brussels is a supranational arena that facilitates the emergence of a transnational community of professionals. This paper will deal with the gradual professionalization of EU-lobbyism and its implications for the field of public affairs. Based on a standardized survey amongst public affairs professionals registered in the European Transparency Register, it will present fresh data about this professional field, its internal structures and cleavages. On the one hand, the paper will show how this occupational field develops cross-national structures of cooperation, and how it integrates gradually a highly contentious field of competing organizations. On the other hand, it will investigate the professional cleavages between contending occupational groups and interests (lawyers, social scientists, activists, self-made men etc.), and their aim to define the terms of what the rule of the game is about.