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The Revolving Door in Brussels

A Process-Oriented Approach to Employee Recruitment by Interest Organisations

Sharon S. Belli & Peter Bursens

The staff flow between the public sector and organised interests is metaphorically defined as 'revolving door'. This paper seeks to explain variation in hiring behaviour across interest organisations (IOs). Using data from the Comparative Interest Group-survey project, we show that revolving door practices do not occur systematically across IOs but that, under specific conditions, IOs are more likely to attract employees from the public sector than others. Our main findings demonstrate that citizen organisations are more likely to hire employees with public sector background, compared with professional and business organisations. We also show that the effect of group type is resource-sensitive, as wealthy citizen groups are more likely to hire from the public sector than wealthy business organisations. Additionally, we demonstrate that contextual factors such as the degree of political involvement and the perceived complexity of the policy environment predict hiring from the public sector.

Keywords: hiring behaviour, interest organisations, revolving door

Introduction

In June 2016, when reaching the end of the two-year cooling-off period, former president of the European Commission (EC) Jose Manuel Barroso announced that he would become advisor for the American investment bank Goldman Sachs. His move became emblematic of the revolving door phenomenon in the European Union (EU), defined as the switch of professionals from public office to the private sector (Gormley, 1979). The so-called 'Barroso Gate' is just one example of the staff flow between the public sector and organised interests that has attracted the attention of advocacy groups, such as Transparency International, Corporate Europe Observatory, and the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency International. These NGOs have reported substantial movements of former Members of the European Parliament and outgoing European Commissioners towards interest organisations (IOs), (Freund & Yannik 2014; Clausen & Can 2011). Such movements are often perceived as driving forces for regulatory capture as public officials with ambitions to work for private interests are thought to regulate in favour of those interests (Cohen 1986; Makkai & Braithwaite 1992).

Reports produced by EU transparency advocates emphasise the individual incentives of high-ranking officials to leave public office but say little about who is hiring from the public sector and under which conditions this hiring is more likely to occur. Recent work by Coen & Vannoni (2016) treats revolving door practices as a corporate political strategy to build political connections (Bertrand et al., 2014; Blanes i Vidal et al., 2012). They conclude that, in the EU, personal contacts do not represent a crucial resource to be hired as a lobbyist. Coen and Vannoni instead argue that relations between firms and EU policymakers are based on the exchange of technical and political information for access to the decision-making process (Bouwen, 2004).

Since personal connections with policymakers are valued less than technical expertise, EU firms are, compared with the prevailing empirical evidence from the United States (US), not that much inclined to invest in public sector experience. Consequently, revolving door dynamics are thought to be less common in the EU. Coen and Vannoni's findings highlight a remarkable contrast with empirical work in the US demonstrating that revolving door practices are quite common in Washington (LaPira 2014; Lazarus et al. 2016). However, while American studies have examined IOs, EU studies have not yet looked beyond the hiring behaviour of firms (Coen & Vannoni, 2016, 2018, 2020). We know little about the extent to which revolving door practices occur amongst EU IOs. This is a crucial missing piece of the EU revolving door story considering the substantial role of IOs in the EU political system.

To advance our understanding of the revolving door phenomenon in the Brussels 'bubble', this contribution examines the hiring preferences of EU level IOs. First, we discuss the types of expertise that IOs need to access decision-makers. Second, we test the conditions under which IOs show an increased propensity to hire from the public sector.

In this study, we build upon the theory of the market for lobbying services (LaPira & Thomas, 2017). This theoretical framework conceives hiring staff with public sector backgrounds as a form of political insurance for interest groups to overcome fundamental risks associated with the policy process. More specifically, revolving door dynamics are associated with IOs' need for process-oriented expertise, defined as a general understanding of the political process, and an ability to establish and maintain network relations with insiders in decision-making institutions. For example, employees with experience in the public sector understand how public institutions function, and thus know how to develop expertise that resonates in a

public policy setting. Based on these premises, we argue that this unique resource of public sector experience may help advocacy activities of certain types of IOs.

We also argue that the usefulness of process-oriented expertise varies across IOs. This is because organisations face different types of challenges and they adapt hiring strategies to the policy environment in which they operate (Mahoney & Baumgartner, 2008). Thus, we posit that the propensity to hire staff with a public sector background is associated with organisational (group type and resource endowment) and contextual factors (degree of political involvement in insider strategies and perceived complexity of the policy process). We apply this theoretical insight to the EU context using data from the Comparative Interest Group-survey project (CIG-survey), (Beyers et al., 2020). Our results demonstrate that, citizen groups show a high propensity to hire employees with a public sector background. We show that the effect of group type is resource-sensitive for citizen groups, when compared with business and professional organisations. Finally, the context in which IOs operate matters: high degree of political involvement in insider strategies and the perception of the policy environment as highly complex both increase the propensity to hire staff with a public sector background.

A process-oriented perspective on revolving doors

Interest group scholars have analysed revolving door practices in Washington DC and provided empirical evidence regarding staff exchanges between the public and private sectors (Gormley, 1979). Recent research has revealed that half of Washington-based lobbyists have experience in the federal government (LaPira &Thomas, 2017) and that one-fifth of elected representatives and public servants leave Congress to engage in lobbying. Furthermore, these practices have increased over time: between 1976 and 2012, one-fourth of the members of the House of

Representatives and one-third of the Senators became lobbyists after ending their political mandate (Lazarus et al. 2016). Revolving door practices are commonplace in US politics, which has spurred research into interest groups' hiring practices and into how interest groups benefit from staff with public sector experience.

US literature uses two analytical perspectives to explain why experience in the public sector is valuable to IOs. The first perspective considers the interaction between IOs and policymakers as driven by an informal exchange of political connections for career advancement in the lobbying business. Through this analytical lens, scholars have shown that lucrative positions in the lobbying industry are often assigned to former public officials with networks in the public sector, as long as their political connections remain intact (Blanes i Vidal et al. 2012; Bertrand et al. 2014; McCrain, 2019).

The second perspective departs from another type of resource. It posits that employees who worked in the public sector provide interest groups with substantive not issue-specific knowledge of processes and policy-making contexts (Salisbury et al., 1989). In other words, employing staff with experience in the public sector gives IOs a better understanding of how the policy process functions from within and among policy-making institutions (Esterling, 2004).

We study the revolving door phenomenon in the EU through the lens of the theory of the market for lobbying services (LaPira & Thomas, 2017), from which we take the concept of 'process-oriented expertise', defined as an understanding of the political process, and an ability to maintain ties with insiders in decision-making. To the perspective that former public employees sell access to former colleagues to interest organisations, we add that they also sell process -oriented expertise. We don't disentangle whether the revolving door is primarily used by new employers to obtain political process expertise rather than to benefit from the networks

with insiders of the new employees. Although we cannot identify which mechanism is at play, we argue that the concept of process-oriented expertise has the advantage to capture both potential benefits enjoyed by IOs.

Following LaPira and Thomas (2017), we conceptualise hiring strategies as a form of political insurance that interest groups implement to overcome the fundamental risks associated with the course of the policy process. The argument is that interest groups face two risks: complexity of public policy and uncertainty of the policy-making process.

First, the complexity of public policy refers to the challenges policymakers face when evaluating different policy options. Interest groups intervene by strategically providing policy expertise, defined as specialised knowledge tied to one specific policy domain. Policy expertise is not transferable across policy domains, nor is it specific to experience in the public sector since it can also be acquired via training or research experience in specific policy areas. However, professionals with public sector experience often possess skills that enable IOs to collect, organise and translate expertise about alternative policy solutions.

Second, the uncertainty of the policy process refers to the risks organised interests face when policy conflicts arise. Changes in policies or regulations can have positive or negative effects on IOs, who must stand ready to minimise the risks of policy changes by anticipating government actions. Doing so requires process-oriented expertise that delivers insider information. Process-oriented expertise reduces uncertainty by helping interest groups to claim a seat at the negotiation table. Professionals without prior experience in the public sector lack this unique knowledge.

Resource-exchange theory is a prominent framework for studying the relation between IOs and policymakers in the EU (Bouwen, 2004). Due to the consultative nature of EU

policymaking, IOs value technical expertise and political information to gain access. We argue that beyond the exchange of technical expertise and political information for access, organisations also need process-oriented expertise to secure access to the decision-making process. Process-oriented expertise is overlooked in conventional applications of the resource-exchange perspective in the European interest group literature. It is often neglected that the exchange of information between interest groups and policymakers is preceded by interest groups' monitoring and anticipating the policy process. Next to policy experts, having staff who understand the policy process enables IOs to implement effective advocacy strategies and provide decision-makers with the information they need. It is staff with previous experience in the public sector that has accumulated such process-oriented expertise.

In sum, while policy expertise is important for managing complex technical aspects of a specific policy issue, process-oriented expertise is an additional asset that reduces the uncertainty of the policy process and can translate into tangible political opportunities for certain types of IOs. Below, we argue that, specifically in the EU, uncertainty has risen over time, intensifying the need for process-oriented expertise, and creating conditions under which certain types of interest groups have an increased propensity to employ staff with public sector experience.

The relevance of process-oriented expertise in the EU

The EU and the US political systems are considered to be similar because they both strongly depend on the input of societal organisations (Mahoney, 2007; Mahoney & Baumgartner, 2008). Yet, the systems also differ. In the US, the increase of revolving door cases has been associated with a decline in access points to the government (LaPira & Thomas, 2017). The increased impenetrability of the government and the increased unpredictability of the policy process have

spurred IOs to value *process-oriented expertise* as equally crucial as, or even more important than, *policy expertise* and hence to adapt their hiring strategies accordingly (Lazarus & McKay, 2012).

At first glance, the EU renders process-based expertise less necessary as its profound multilevel character implies a profound fragmentation of access points for IOs (Eising, 2007). Moreover, initiatives such as the *White Paper on European Governance* have stimulated policymakers to consult with organised interests (Kohler-Koch & Finke, 2007), while the limited number of EC staff triggers frequent consultations with interest groups (Crombez, 2002). Finally, the EU partially relies on interest groups to increase its input and output legitimacy (Coen & Katsaitis, 2013; Scharpf, 2009). All this seems to make European IOs less prone to seek process-oriented knowledge through revolving door practices. However, other conditions of the opportunity structure increased uncertainty and complexity and therefore direct interest groups to highly value process-oriented expertise.

First, the 2004/7 enlargement substantially increased the scope of EU regulations and opened policy networks to more actors (Mahoney, 2007). Second, the Lisbon Treaty has created more complexity by allocating power across more policy venues, making it more difficult for IOs to identify the locus of power and to anticipate policy initiatives (Eising, 2007; Grande, 1996). As a result, interest groups increasingly need to invest substantial resources in monitoring decision-making processes. Process-oriented expertise is more crucial under circumstances of such an unpredictable policy agenda: organisations with insider knowledge and procedural expertise are more likely to be informed about the policy options at stake. More importantly, such organisations can act faster, which increases their chance to swiftly translate investment in

monitoring into political opportunities. In doing so, those organisations may have more access as they become more effective in providing valuable information to policymakers.

In short, we argue that more complexity leads to higher uncertainty of the policy agenda, which triggers the need for process-oriented expertise that can be acquired by hiring staff from the public sector. However, policy complexity and uncertainty do not affect interest groups in a uniform way as organisations have divergent needs and capacity to employ personnel with public sector experience.

In the following, we start from the assumption that former public sector officials have strong credentials when it comes to process-oriented expertise. We are aware that the reasons for hiring former politicians and former civil servants may differ. Yet, we argue that both types of background, compared with other experiences, provide more process-oriented expertise. In the next section, we examine the conditions that shape the variation in hiring such public officials by IOs.

Factors determining revolving door practices

Our theoretical framework connects interest groups' varying needs to hire from the public sector with organisational and contextual factors. We argue that (1) resource endowment, (2) group type, (3) degree of political engagement, and (4) degree of perceived complexity of the policy process affects the need for process-oriented expertise and are key factors to explain the propensity to hire from the public sector.

To begin, there are several reasons to expect that a high degree of resource endowment is associated with hiring professionals with public sector backgrounds. First, organisational studies have shown that human resource diversification maximises organisational effectiveness

(Mueller, 1996). Thus, when an organisation increases its budget, one of the first steps is to enlarge and diversify its staff resources. This also applies to IOs in the process of building political capabilities. Organisations with higher budgets have fewer constraints in hiring and selecting experts, including former public officials. Second, monitoring the political process requires substantial resources, which might not immediately translate into lobbying success. Continuous monitoring is essential to reduce the uncertainty of the environment in which organisations operate and is more likely to be adopted by resourceful organisations (Klüver 2012). We argue that organisations that have financial means and allocate their budget to enlarge their paid staff, will be more likely to target employees with experience in the public sector who can provide them with additional process-oriented expertise.

In addition, IOs with large financial capacities are attractive employers for public sector officials, since they will offer better job conditions. In this respect, the US literature has shown that former public officials generate rent from their public sector experience (Bertrand et al., 2014; Blanes i Vidal et al., 2012; McCrain, 2018). Salaries for EU public servants are competitive and often supplemented with additional allowances, benefits, and fiscal deductions (Brans & Peters, 2012). In other words, the financial incentives of private actors must be substantial to compete with the lucrative perspective of a career in the European civil service. We therefore hypothesise:

H1: Organisations with more financial capacities are more likely to hire staff with public sector backgrounds.

Second, we argue that the propensity to access process-oriented expertise by hiring employees with public sector experience depends on group type. In line with current literature, we differentiate between business, professional and citizen groups (Eising, 2004; Klüver, 2013;

Weiler et al., 2019). Among these actors we identify citizen groups as the actors which could benefit more from process-oriented expertise as they might face more challenges in reducing risks associated with the EU policy process (LaPira & Thomas 2017).

Business and professional organisations have been crucial in establishing the internal market. EU institutions have since long involved business groups and professional organisations more frequently than organisations such as citizen groups (Bouwen, 2004; Coen & Katsaitis, 2013; Sandholtz & Zysman, 1989). As business and professional organisations are so well connected, they have been able to accumulate substantial process-oriented expertise over a long period of time. Furthermore, compared to citizen groups, they tend to hire more often consultancies – who might also have acquired process-oriented expertise - to manage their lobbying activities . Because of all this, business organisations may be less inclined to hire staff from the public sector.

Things play differently for citizen organisations which – for a long time – have been weakly represented in EU decision-making (Rasmussen & Carroll, 2014). In fact, to balance their strong reliance on business groups, European institutions have fostered citizen groups' engagement and participation by financing them (Mahoney & Beckstrand, 2011). Many citizen organisations are relative newcomers to the EU system and face challenges in building networks, which is essential for accessing policymakers (Coen, 2007; Coen & Richardson, 2009). Additionally, citizen groups must learn to work with public officials who expect IOs to possess 'policy credibility', which is assessed by the efficiency and quality in the provision of information (Coen & Vannoni, 2018). To build such effective political capabilities, citizen groups may rely on attracting process-oriented expertise. We therefore expect that citizen groups are more prone to recruit staff with public sector experience. We also suppose that financial

capabilities affect the hiring behaviour of citizen and business organisations differently. As citizen organizations face maintenance pressure (Berkhout, et al. 2021), having substantial financial resources can decrease the gap with business and professional groups and reduce risks associated with the EU policy process. Hence:

H2: Compared to professional and business groups, citizen groups are more likely to hire from the public sector.

H3: Compared to business and professional groups, citizen groups are more likely to hire from the public sector when their level of financial resources increases.

Third, we argue that the degree of an organisation's involvement with EU institutions affects their propensity to hire from the public sector. We define involvement as the extent to which organisations engage in 'inside' lobbying with EU institutions, such as participating in open consultations, attending expert committees, and providing written evidence to policymakers (Halpin & Fraussen, 2017). Organisations vary regarding the extent to which they establish such regular and formalised relations with policymakers (Beyers, 2004; Binderkrantz, 2005; Fraussen et al., 2015). We argue that the degree of involvement in inside strategies shapes the inclination to hire from the public sector as organisations that engage in inside strategies have a greater need to understand the ins and outs of the policy process. Such understanding is provided by staff who worked for the European institutions. This type of employee plans for and works towards long-term outcomes, such as building trustworthy relationships with policymakers (Broscheid & Coen, 2003). Second, organisations that engage in inside strategies benefit from aiding like-minded legislators in doing their work. In the EU context, this means being able to subsidise policymakers promptly and effectively with information (Chalmers, 2013). Hiring staff with a

public sector background helps organisations since experience of such staff of being lobbied helps them gain a better sense of when to lobby whom and what information to deliver. Based on these arguments, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H4: The more frequently organisations engage with European institutions, the more likely they are to hire staff with public sector backgrounds.

Finally, we expect that the extent to which interest IOs hire from the public sector depends on the degree of perceived complexity of the political environment. All organisations adapt their strategies to the political environment in which they operate (Mahoney & Baumgartner, 2008). The EU's multilevel nature (Eising, 2004; Nugent & Saurugger, 2002; Pollack, 1997) and the extensive issue overlap between policy venues (Ackrill et al., 2013) make the political environment very complex, generating high levels of uncertainty for IOs. In this context, IOs struggle to select lobby venues (Grande, 1996) and to assess the timing of lobbying (Chalmers, 2013). We argue that organisations vary in the way they perceive the complexity of the policy environment, and that this variation can affect their inclination to seek process-oriented expertise. Organisations which perceive the policy environment as complex are more likely to rely on employees who can understand how the timing and provision of information functions across policy venues. Hence, our final hypothesis:

H5: Organisations that perceive a high degree of complexity of the EU decision-making process hire more frequently from the public sector.

Data and methods

To study the propensity to hire from the public sector, we use data from the CIG-survey that was implemented in a sample of EU-level IOs which are defined as organisations that aim to influence public policy, do not seek elections, and are formally or informally member based. The

survey was designed to explore the organisational design, demographics, resources, strategies, levels of institutionalisation, and political activities of member-based IOs. Data collection occurred between March and July 2015. More than 2,000 organisations were selected from the EU Transparency Registry, the OECKL Directory and the INTEREURO project. The survey resulted in a dataset of 896 IOs, a response rate of 36% (Beyers et al., 2020).[1] The sample includes organisations that declared to have full-time paid employees and external professionals, as well as organisations which rely on interns and volunteers. The category of organisations without paid staff represents only 13% (N=123) of the original dataset (N=896) and is fairly distributed across group type (see Appendix A1). In addition, we do not include groups representing institutions (N=90), as we are interested in the hiring behaviour of private organisations. After removing all missing values, we obtained a sample of 516 observations.

Our dependent variable is the work experience of staff, measured by the following survey questions: 'What are the typical backgrounds of your paid staff members? Please tick all boxes that apply'. The items capture the variation of employees' backgrounds across IOs. The quality of this measurement is indicated by the fact that the selected items cover the relevant staff profiles, while the response categories 'Other' (12%) and 'I do not know' (3%) are relatively small. To provide a general description of hiring patterns, items were grouped into five categories. We collapsed highly correlated items.[2]

Table 1 shows staff backgrounds for responding organisations. Although the observed variation shows that EU-level IOs hire from various backgrounds, professionals with backgrounds in the private sector are most prevalent. Yet, the descriptive analysis also shows that professionals with backgrounds in the public sector are more prevalent than those with

[1] Information about the survey is available at https://www.cigsurvey.eu/data/.

[2] Steps were taken by analysing the polychronic correlation matrix (see Appendix A2).

backgrounds in the non-profit sector. Our aim is to explain the varying hiring strategies of IOs and identify which factors increase the propensity to hire staff with public sector backgrounds.

Table 1. Classification of Typical Staff Background (N= 516)

STAFF BACKGROUND	DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCIES	%
Private Sector Background	Private sector and business organisations	279	54 %
Public Sector Background	Governmental agency or politcal party	189	36%
Non-Profit Background	Voluntary organisation and/ or charity	172	33%
Research Background	Research institute, think tank or higher education	166	32%
First Job	No previous background	120	23 %

We constructed the dependent variable by treating the item 'public sector background' as a dichotomous categorical variable: possessing staff with public sector backgrounds (N=189) and not possessing staff with public sector backgrounds (N=327).[3]

Although we are aware of the cognitive bias which self-reported measures can generate, survey data on staff backgrounds allow to capture hiring preferences of a wide range of EU IOs as it captures all types of previous public sector experiences for a large sample. Contrary to career background data, this measurement does not provide information about the type and the duration of public sector experience. Additionally, there is a tension between explaining the composition of staff and whether groups have any staff members with a past in the public sector. Our measure does not provide information about the share of staff with a public sector background within organisations. While the latter is not necessary for our aim to determine the

[3] We ran two models without the categories 'Background in Party Politics', which constitute just the 7 % of our sample. Results were consistent with the chosen models (see Appendix A9).

extent to which organisations hire from the public sector, the scope of our data needs to be considered when interpreting the results.

We expect that financial capacity, group type, degree of involvement, and perceived complexity of decision-making process affect the propensity to hire from the public sector. Financial capacity is measured using annual operating budgets, based on the question, 'What was the annual operating budget of your organisation in 2013 in Euros?'. We coded this variable into three categories indicating whether the annual operating budget is below (N=149), equal to (N=191), or above (N=176) the median category. We categorised organisations with more financial capabilities versus organisations with less, as the latter face more challenges to invest in hiring professionals and engaging in lobbying activities.

To measure group type, we classified organisations into four main categories: business organisations (N=251), professionals (N=74), citizen organisations (N=159) and other (N =32). This classification distinguishes between organisations that represent business or professions from those that represent citizens (see Appendix A3; see Grömping & Halpin, 2019; Heylen et al., 2018, 2020; Fraussen & Halpin, 2016 for similar classifications of group type).

The degree of political involvement concerns the extent to which IOs actively engage in insider strategies with EU public policymaking. This is measured with the question, 'During the last 12 months, how often has your organisation been involved in any of the following activities?' Respondents were presented a list of seven activities. Based on their responses, we constructed an index measuring the frequency with which organisations selected the following options: (1) 'responded to open consultations organised by the EC', (2) 'served on advisory committees at the EU level', and (3) 'presented research results or technical information to EU-level policymakers' (Cronbach's alpha=0.73).

To measure the perceived complexity of the decision-making process, the following question was used: 'How important are the following challenges for your organisation?'. Respondents were presented with a list of nine potential challenges. We selected the item 'The complexity of the decision-making procedures in the EU' (Likert scale). The variable was coded in three categories, measuring organisations' perception of the policy environment as equal ('important', N=341), below ('neutral', 'not important', and 'not important at all', N=214), or above ('very important', N=161) the median category.

In addition to the four hypotheses, we introduced several control variables: the age of the organisation and its breadth of policy engagement as these characteristics contribute to lobbying success (Beyers & Braun, 2014; Braun, 2012) and can affect propensity to hire from the public sector. Age captures variation between organisations which are more established and have accumulated reputation, credibility, and network position overtime. To control for age, we used the question, 'In what year was your organisation founded?'. The distribution of this variable is left skewed, so we logarithmically transformed the measurement.

We further control for breadth of policy engagement, measured by the number of policy areas in which organisations are involved It is plausible that organisations involved in multiple policy domains face higher levels of uncertainty and struggle more to anticipate government actions than organisations working in only one or two policy domains. We constructed a single additive scale variable from a list of 21 policy areas. Appendix A4 outlines the summary statistics of the variables included in the models.

Due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, our hypotheses were tested via a logistic regression model. In a robustness check for the measurement of resources we replaced annual operating budget with number of employees. Additionally, we conducted a parallel

analysis using different staff background categories as dependent variable. We compared the different factors affecting the propensity to hire from private, non-profit and research sectors. In Appendix A5 we present the summary statistics for the variables not introduced in the main models.

Results

The sample contains more business organisations than citizen groups, which reflects the existing strong presence of business organisations in the EU system of interest representation (Coen & Richardson, 2009; Greenwood, 2017; Rasmussen & Carroll, 2014). Figure 1 shows substantial variation in the hiring behaviour by business and citizen organisations. Of the 227 organisations declaring to hire employees with public sector background, 33% are business organisations, while 34% are citizen groups. In relative terms, this result shows that over 159 citizens groups almost 50% declares to hire from the public sector. The significant difference between the hiring behaviour of different types of IOs (χ^2=140.274, p<.05, df=5) invites an exploration of the conditions under which IOs decide to hire from the public sector.

Figure 1. Distribution of Type of Organisations Across Typical Employees Career Backgrounds (N=516)

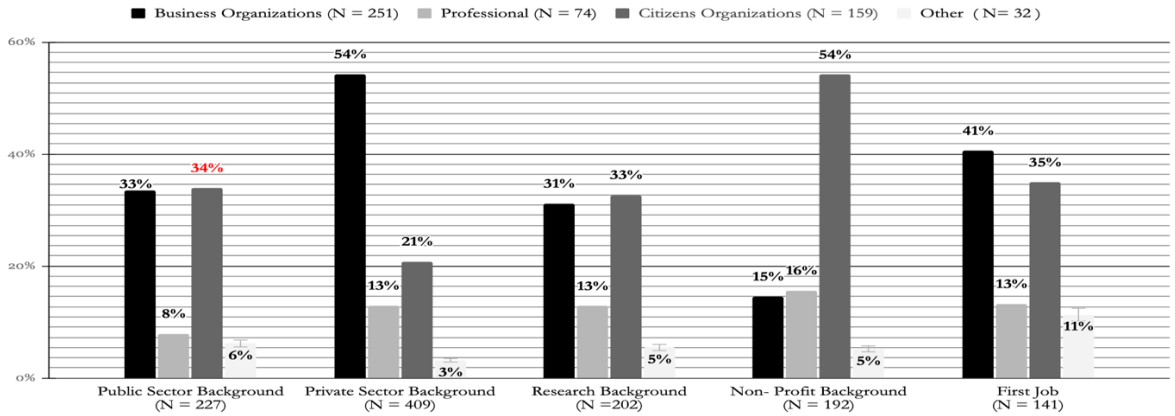


Table 2 presents the results of the logistic regression. To facilitate the interpretation of the interaction term, continuous variables were standardised by subtracting the mean and dividing it

by two times the standard deviation (Gelman, 2008). Moving one unit of analysis of the continuous variable corresponds to one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean.

Model 1 suggests a strong and significant positive relationship between resource endowment and the propensity to hire from the public sector. Organisations with annual budgets above the average are almost three times more likely to have staff with public sector backgrounds, compared to organisations with annual budgets at the average (Model 1: b=0.95, SE=0.28, odds ratio=2.59, p<.0). Financial resources enable IOs to access process-oriented expertise from the public sector, confirming our first hypothesis. Yet, we acknowledge that the effect of resources might reflect that less resourceful groups have fewer employees of any kind. In this regard our findings might suggest that organisations which cannot or do not want to allocate budget to paid employees have less access to process-oriented expertise and, more broadly, to expert knowledge. Replacing 'annual operating budget' with 'staff size' gives us the same results (see Appendix A8).

Moving on to the second hypothesis, Model 1 demonstrates a significant positive relationship between group type and hiring strategies: citizen groups are more likely to hire employees with public sector backgrounds. The odds ratio provides an indication of the size of the effect: citizen organisations are over two times more likely to have staff with public sector backgrounds, compared to business and professional organisations (Model 1: b=0.82, SE=0.23, odds ratio=2.28, p<.0). This finding challenges the general belief that revolving door practices are not a strategy of non-profit organisations and confirms the second hypothesis. We also observe a significant positive relation between the category "Other" and propensity to hire form

the public sector. This less strong effect might be driven by the presence of lobbying firms in the latter category (see Appendix A3).

Model 2 adds the interaction term between resources and group type. The relationships between citizen groups and propensity to hire from the public sector is moderated by resource endowment. The factor 'being a citizen group' has a significant association with 'median level of resources' (b= .87, SE=0.59, odds ratio=6.55 $p<.05$), (Figure 2). The curvilinear interaction effect shows that the effect of group type on the propensity to hire from the public sector holds for the median category, while it does not hold for the higher category.

Citizen groups appear more resources-sensitive when hiring professionals from the public sector: their propensity to do so decreases substantially when their annual budget drops below the average. We can thus confirm our third hypothesis, which states that citizen groups are more prone to hire from the public sector at higher level of resources. One interpretation of this finding is that the demand for public sector expertise is high for citizen groups, but it can be satisfied just at a certain level of financial capacity. A second interpretation of the curvilinear interaction effect relates to our theoretical understanding of revolving door as a form of political insurance. At the median level of resources citizen groups engage in strategic hiring preferences in the attempt to reduce risks associated with the policy process (LaPira & Thomas, 2017).

Another thing to consider is that the citizen groups in the sample are particularly resourceful (see Table in Appendix A7). Thus, this effect could be the product of the fact that EU citizen groups receive substantial financial support from the EU. Hence, financial support from the EU could affect the revolving door practices of citizen groups, thereby explaining this important – and still specific to the EU context – finding.

Our models point to other contextual factors affecting this hiring behaviour. An increase in the degree of political involvement in inside lobbying of two standard deviations is associated with an increase of the odds of hiring from the public sector (Model 2: b=0.09, SE=0.04, odds ratio=1.10, p<.05).

Table 2. Logistic Regression Models for Propensity to Hire from the Public Sector

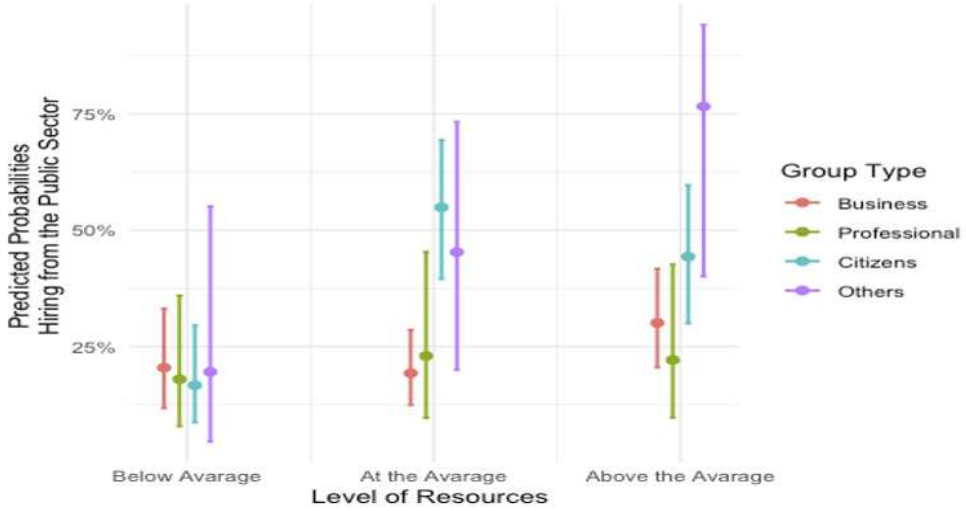
	Direct Effect Model 1	Odds Ratio	Interactions Effect Model 2	Odds Ratio
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES				
Resources (1= below the average, ref.)				
2 = at the average	0.72 (0.26) **	2.07	-0.07(0.33)	0.98
3 = above the average	0.96 (0.28) ***	2.61	0.51 (0.40)	1.67
Group Type (1 = Business org., ref.)				
2 = Professionals	- 0.03 (0.28)	0.96	- 0.16 (0.56)	0.85
3 = Citizens	0.02 (0.23) ***	2.27	- 0.25 (0.47)	0.77
4 = Other	0.67 (0.38) **	3.25	- 0.05 (0.87)	0.94
Index Degree of Involvement	0.09 (0.04) *	1.10	0.10 (0.04) *	1.10
Perceived Complexity (1 = average, Ref.)				
2 = below the average	0.54 (0.23) *	1.72	0.58 (0.23) *	1.80
3 = above the average	0.68 (0.24) **	1.98	0.66 (0.25) **	1.95
CONTROL				
Index Breadth of Policy Engagement	0.07 (0.03) *	1.07	0.09 (0.03) *	1.08
Age Organizations (log)	- 0.05 (0.10)	0.94	- 0.09 (0.11)	0.90
Interaction Group Type X Level of Resources				
Professionals x Av. Level of Resources			0.38 (0.78)	1.46
Professionals x High Level of Resources			-0.25 (0.77)	0.77
Citizens x Av. Level of Resources			1.87 (0.059) **	6.55
Citizens x High Level of Resources			0.86 (0.59)	2.37
Other x Av. Level of Resources			1.29 (1.08)	3.66
Other x High Level of Resources			2.08 (1.20) †	8.04
Constant	-1.86 (0.27) ***		-1.35 (0.33) ***	
Observations	516		516	
Log Likelihood	-304.2523		-268.6749	
AIC	570.77		571.33	
BIC	677.2119		639.2046	
McFadden	0.10		0.12	

Notes: (1) standard errors between brackets; cp<1*, p<0.05 **, p<0.01 ***, p<0.0001; (2) VIF-scores are below 4, suggesting that multi-collinearity is not a problem; (3) Correlation matrix of the explanatory and control variables is provided in the Appendix (A11)

Moving from two standard deviations below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean increases the odds of hiring from the public sector by 11%. As expected, propensity to hire employees with a public sector background increases when organisations need to effectively subsidise policymakers with policy expertise. Our evidence suggests that organisations

consistently investing in inside lobbying with EU institutions are those that highly value process-based expertise. This confirms our fourth hypothesis.

Figure 2. Predicted Probabilities by Level of Resources and Group Type (95% C.I.)



Finally, we observe a significant relation between perceiving the EU decision-making process as complex and hiring from the public sector. IOs which perceive the EU decision-making as highly complex are more likely to have staff with public sector backgrounds, compared to the median interest group, for which complexity is important (Model 2: b=-0.68 SE=0.24, odds ratio= 1.98, p<.01). This finding corroborates existing knowledge demonstrating that organisations adapt to the environment in which they operate (Mahoney & Baumgartner, 2008). When organisations perceive the complexity of public policymaking as challenging, they rely more on employees with a public sector background. This points at the theoretical understanding that the revolving door is driven by challenges organisations face. In other words when organisations see more risks, they take insurance measures, through hiring strategies (LaPira & Thomas, 2017).

The findings of both models are robust to a series of changes in operationalisation. First, they are not driven by staff size, which are conditioned by resources. Replacing 'annual operating budget' with 'staff size' (logged) gives us the same results as the coefficient for number of employees is positive and statistically significant in both models (see Appendix A8). In addition, we conducted parallel analyses of the different staff categories and compared the factors affecting propensity to hire from private, non-profit and research sectors (see Appendix A10), only to show that group type and resources do drive propensity to hire from other sectors: while citizen groups' propensity to hire from the public sector is driven by the availability of financial resources, we do not see resources being a driving factor for other group type, selecting alternative backgrounds.

Conclusions

This study develops a theoretical approach to shed light on the conditions under which IOs are more likely to hire employees with a public sector background. Specifically, we studied which organisational and contextual factors affect the propensity to hire form the public sector. Our findings inform us about the extent to which IOs are involved in revolving door practices.

Our analysis showed variation regarding the extent to which organisations select employees with a public sector background. We identified several variables that affect the propensity to hire from the public sector. First, we observed the explanatory power of resources, confirming that money is a driving factor for revolving door practices, as it is for hiring in general. Second, employees of citizen groups are more likely to possess previous experience in the public sector than employees of professional and business organisations. Yet, financial

capacities interact with IOs' behaviour differently. Citizen groups are more likely to hire form the public sector when they have substantial financial capacities.

We also showed that when organisations are more involved in insider lobbying activities, they are more likely to hire from the public sector. While we cannot rule out reverse causation, this finding suggests that repeated and formal interaction between policymakers and interest group representatives might favour revolving door practices. Finally, we demonstrated that when organisations perceive EU decision-making as complex, they tend to have more staff with public sector backgrounds. This finding suggests that IOs may select human resources from the public sector based on challenges they believe to face in the policy environment. One possible explanation is that hiring human resources from the public sector is more common for organisations which face more uncertainty. This might be the case of citizen organisations which struggle more in accessing the policymaking. It is plausible that these types of organisations have a good understanding of the value of process-oriented expertise.

Our findings need to be confronted with some limitations related to the research design. First, the study looked at the conditions under which organisations pull human resources from the public sector, not at their ability to hire (e.g., the availability of expertise in the public sector). Further studies could examine to what extent the supply of public sector experience in the labour market meets the demand of organised interests and how this may shape hiring processes. Second, our data do not allow to tap into the question which type of experience in the public sector may be relevant for organised interests (e.g., the position covered in the public sector, the weight of non-EU related experiences in the public sector). Further research should develop a better understanding about the different types of public sector experience and disentangle the extent to which the revolving door is about political connections and process-oriented expertise.

This may be done by integrating organisational data with career backgrounds data. Finally, we are aware that possible omitted variables related to group characteristics could influence the outcome variable 'propensity to hire form the public sector". For instance, hiring behaviour can be triggered by how organisations are internally structured (such as the degree of professionalisation or membership influence).

Despite some limitations related to the research design, the empirical findings have implications for our understanding of revolving door dynamics in the EU system of representation. We added a perspective from the broader population of IOs and provided a better understanding of the conditions spurring them to prefer to hire from the public sector. We showed that revolving dynamics are not so limited across IOs. This complements recent studies which have found that politically active firms in Brussels exhibit limited exchange of personnel with the public sector (Coen and Vannoni 2016).

Additionally, while our findings suggest that under specific circumstances IOs value employees with experience in the public sector, they only constitute a first step towards a deeper understanding of whether hiring from the public sector provides IOs additional access goods to satisfy the demand of information of policymakers. Indirectly, we speak to recent scholarship studying how organisational attributes facilitate access to policy venues (Albareda and Braun 2019). We therefore suggest future research to probe into how the selection of staff by organised interests can facilitate the effective transmission of information to policymakers and ultimately policy success.

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Online Appendix

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed at [**link to source – publisher will add doi at proof**].

Statistical replication materials and data

Supporting data and materials for this article can be accessed at the Comparative Interest Group Survey https://www.cigsurvey.eu/ and are available upon request.

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