



with the support of Weber Shandwick

Interim Results

Summary

Can EU Hear Me survey was laid out as a thought-provoking, conceptual brainstorming frame intended to provide a structured environment for contributing expert opinion on a wide range of topics. Questions covered general EU-related communication issues, cooperation with external organizations and country specific problems. Consisting of 25 open-ended questions / problem formulation it was aimed to collect professional's freely expressed flow of ideas and not definite answers that characterize opinion polls with strict, pre-determined, close-ended dimensions.

What are the lessons to be learned so far from the first stage of *Can EU Hear Me*?

The single most important issue is that the European government will have to face is an urgent challenge, expressed by both politicians and communication participants as perhaps the biggest communication deficiency in EU history.

The European Commission is perceived as an unfriendly, bureaucratic body, distant from ordinary people, driven by complicated and unclear, sometimes even unreasonable procedures. The language of Brussels' elites is too complex, maybe mysterious, as it is seen to serve themselves rather than citizens. The bureaucratic short-hand expressions that speed up communication of complex issues and processes within and between EU institutions and organizations act as a barrier of communication when reaching a wider constituency.

The strong anti-institutional voice to be heard from *Can EU Hear Me* becomes even more of a surprise as it does not come from average citizens who draw their knowledge of EU from sometimes skeptic or even hostile TV stations and newspapers. Most of our brainstorming partners who contributed their thoughts and diagnosis either partly (45%) or primarily (47%) work on a daily basis with EU-related issues.

To extract and measure sentiments on a large number of collected answers, we used computer-assisted content analysis tools. The on-going software-supported investigations provide us with further major findings.

One is the relationship between respondents' nationality and a tendency to use negative language. The first analysis shows so far for example, that Italian, British and Hungarian *Can EU Hear Me* participants used relatively the most, while Turkish and Dutch

participants the least negative vocabulary.

The other insight has to do with language complexity and “mysticism” of EU institutions, perceived and explicitly expressed by many respondents. Using computer-assisted analysis tools, we find that the degree of dealing with EU in daily work has a serious impact on the usage of both abstract and political vocabulary. The more respondents deal in their daily work full-time with EU institutions and matters, the more abstract and political words they tend to use, to the extent, that it is possible to identify their institutional attachments just by analyzing their use of words and written text.

What is perceived as a mystifying and complex language from outsiders is an amalgamation of political and abstract words, a tendency apparently acquired by coping with EU institutions and organizations.

The more negative language respondents used the more passive their vocabulary tended to be. On the opposite side, usage of more positive words was related to an active vocabulary in the sense of using language that is full with actionable suggestions. The relationship between passivity and negativity provides a valuable advice to communication policy makers, as may indicate a need for more proactive and yet simple message to be heard from EU institutions.

Certain characteristics of language were found to be related to the sector of respondents’ employment as well. Economic terms were used mostly by employees from the corporate and – interestingly the media world, while political terms dominated the arguments used by workers of NGOs and EU bodies.

The second stage of our e-dialog will follow-up and ask the feedback on some of the emerging patterns of suggestions and proposals based on the first wave of information gathering. The summary analysis of this unique European-wide expert “e-brainstorming is planned to be finalized by September.

Characteristics of Respondents

SAMPLE SIZE

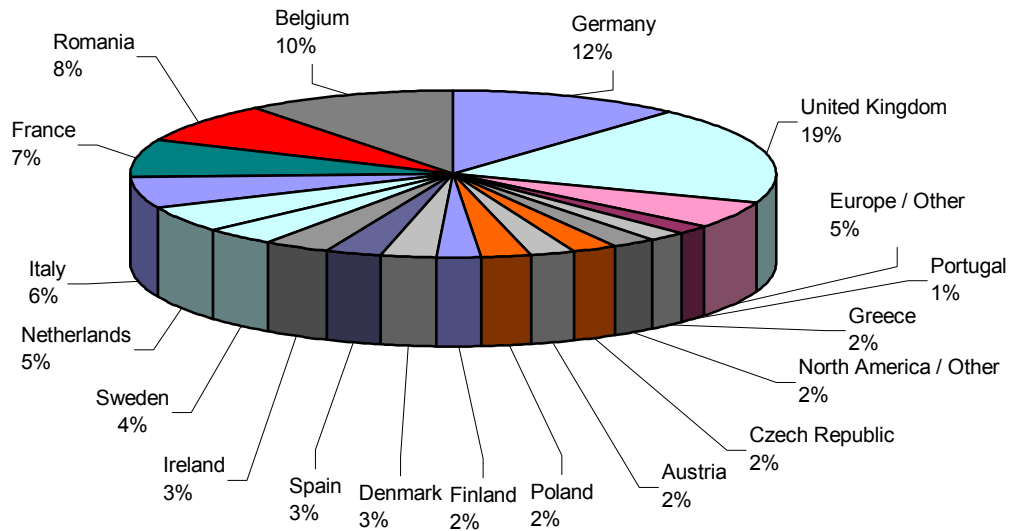
Research was based upon 30 000 emails database provided mostly by Euractiv portal. To all this addresses we sent invitations describing the research and asking for participation, followed by reminders, sent two weeks later.

To this day (26.05), 782 questionnaires were completed.

COUNTRY OF NATIONALITY

As *Can EU Hear Me* was not a representative sample based study, the structure of respondents does not reflect EU citizenship by nationality. There is a large overrepresentation of the British, Belgian and what is interesting, Romanians, more numerous than French. It could indicate that Euractiv portal that provided email database has more British, Romanian and Belgian audience, or perhaps people from these countries are more interested in EU related issues.

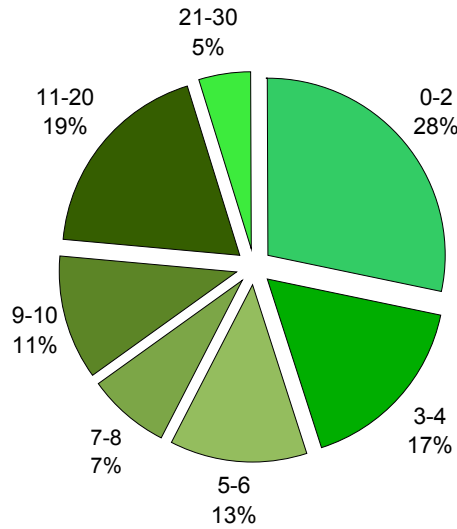
Nationality of respondents



YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN EU-RELATED TASKS

Nearly one third (28%) of respondents were relatively new to EU issues as their experience did not exceed two years. On the other hand, almost 20% had sound background of 11-20 years dealing with EU tasks.

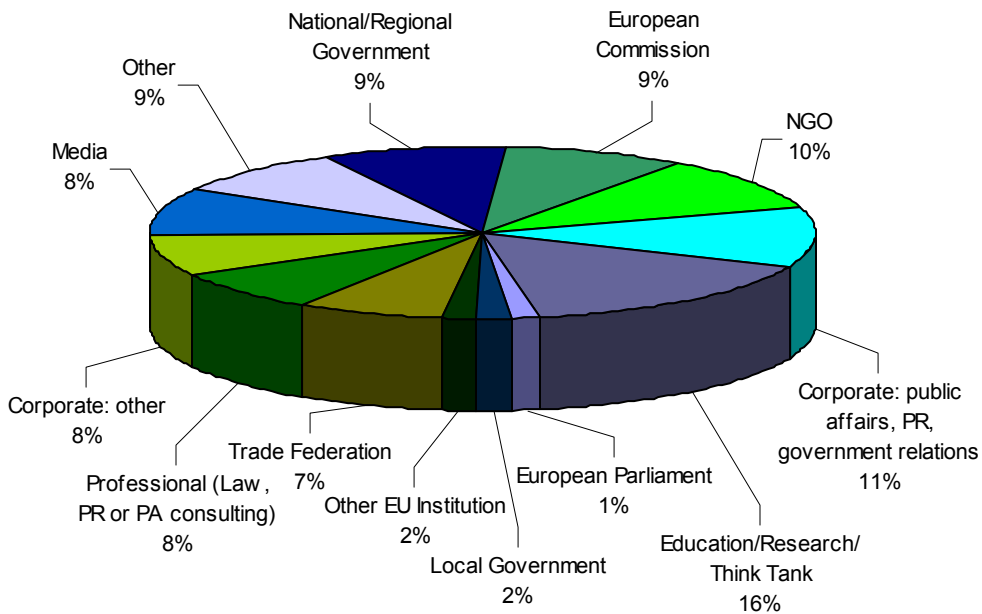
Years of experience in EU related tasks



WHAT SECTOR DO YOU WORK IN?

Around 28% of respondents were corporate employees and professionals, altogether 12% worked directly for EU bodies (EU Commission, EU Parliament and other institutions), 11% for non-EU governments of different levels, 8% for media.

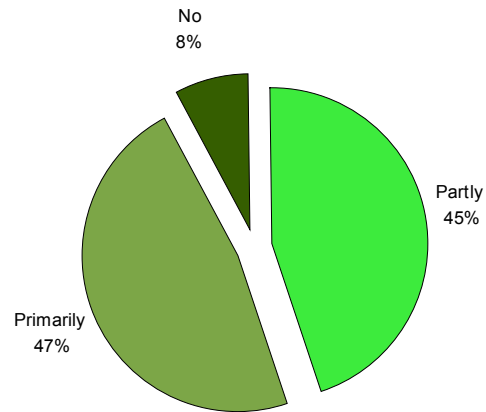
What sector do you work in?



DOES YOUR DAILY WORK INVOLVE DEALING WITH EU ISSUES?

Most respondents either partly (45%) or primarily (47%) worked on a daily basis with EU-related issues.

Does your daily work involve dealing with EU issues?



General Inquirer-based Content Analysis

Introduction to General Inquirer

Analysis of large amounts of text answers requires sophisticated content analysis instruments and methods. One of the best such tools used at Gallup Europe is the General Inquirer, designed and developed by Harvard's professor Phil Stone.

It can be described as an instrument for mapping texts with counts on dictionary-supplied categories. The version we used combines the "Harvard IV-4" dictionary content-analysis categories and the "Lasswell" dictionary content-analysis categories. In addition to that, General Inquirer software has built-in disambiguation capabilities that distinguish word meanings from context, for example between "race" as a contest, "race" as moving rapidly, "race" as a group of people of common descent, and "race" in the idiom "rat race".

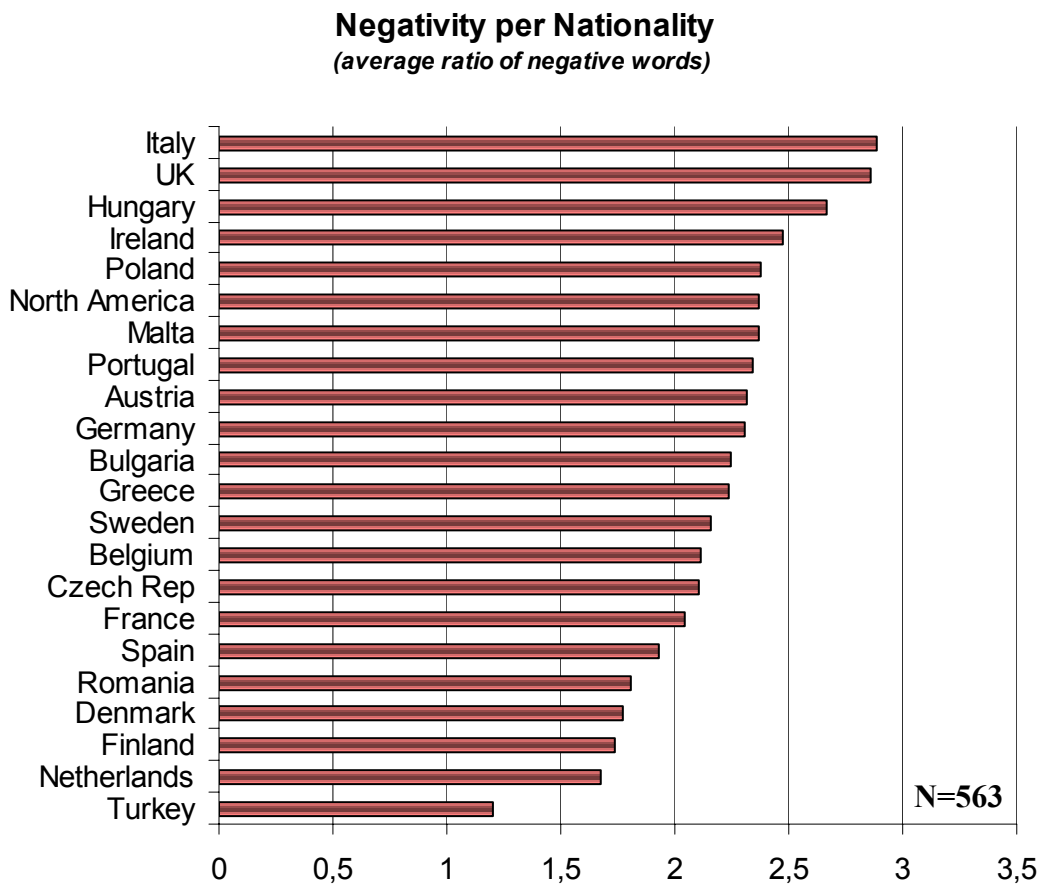
In our analysis, we used following categories:

- Negative - 2,291 words of negative outlook (not including the separate category of refusal).
- Solve - 189 words (mostly verbs) referring to the mental processes associated with problem solving.
- Abstract - 185 words reflecting tendency to use abstract vocabulary.
- Political - 263 words having a clear political character, including political roles, collectivities, acts, ideas, ideologies, and symbols.
- Economic - 510 words of an economic, commercial, industrial, or business orientation, including roles, collectivities, acts, abstract ideas, and symbols, including references to money. Includes names of common commodities in business.

Probably the most pressing question we faced analyzing the data was what can we say about people who used anti-institutional, anti-bureaucratic phrases? What groups do they belong to, what is their experience in terms of EU-related matters?

Among multiple General Inquirer categories, only few provide meaningful results for analyzing answers to open-ended *Can EU Hear Me*. We tried to answer these questions measuring relative quantities of negative words, appearing in answers of participant’s different nationalities.

The analysis shows that Italian, British and Hungarian *Can EU Hear Me* participants used relatively the most, while Turkish the least proportion of negative vocabulary. Large negativity coming from Brits could be a related to the recent growth of support for anti-EU parties.

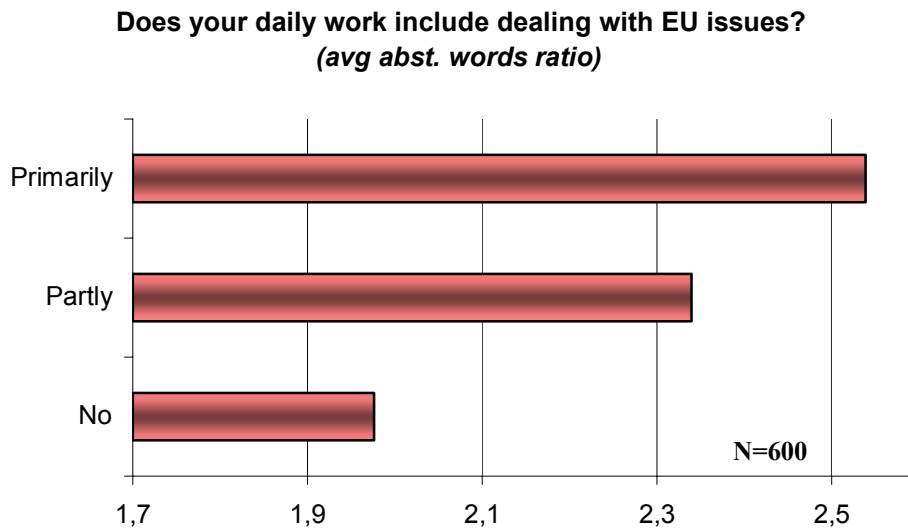
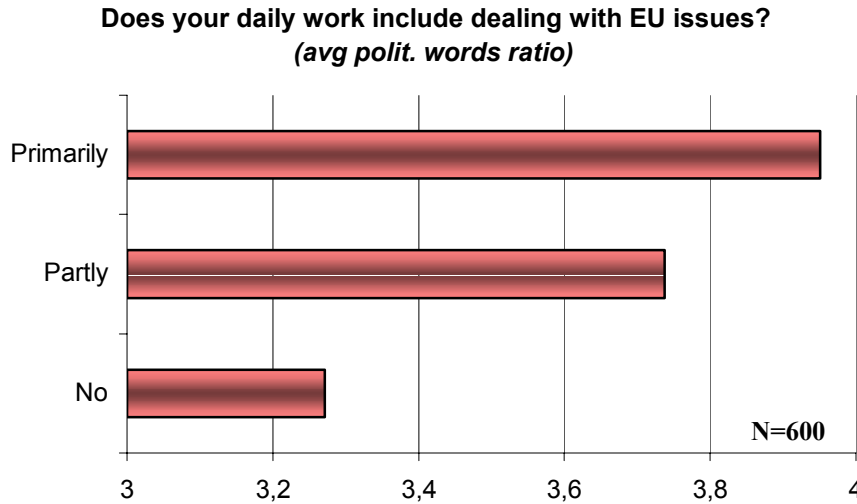


We observed a significant tendency to use negative words together with vocabulary indicating passive orientation: the more “negative” participants were, the more passivity they exhibited in their statements.

Level of daily involvement with EU affects language used

Many *Can EU Hear Me* participants complained about complex, incomprehensible political jargon of EU bodies. The question we posed then was what language characteristics can be observed among respondents that deal in their work with EU-related matters. In short, how dealing with EU affects language?

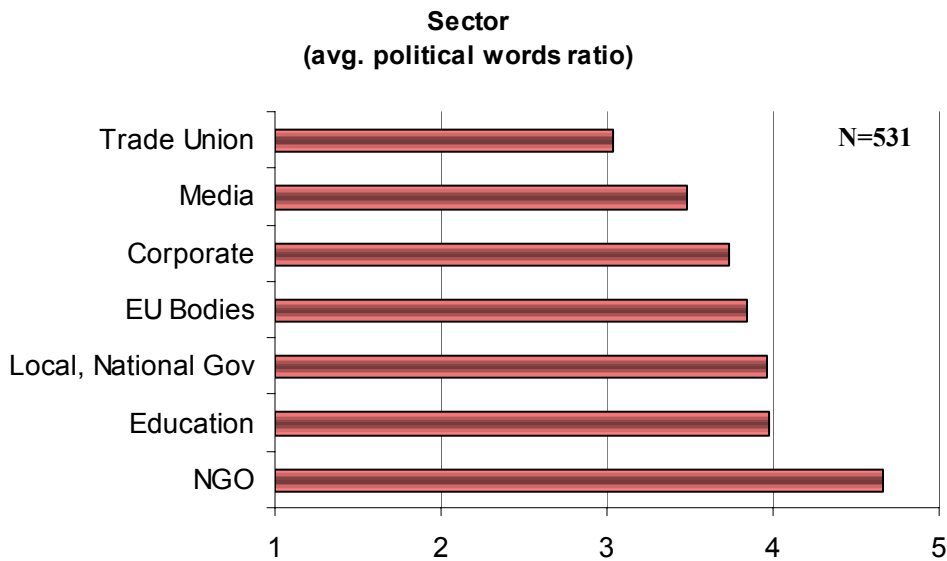
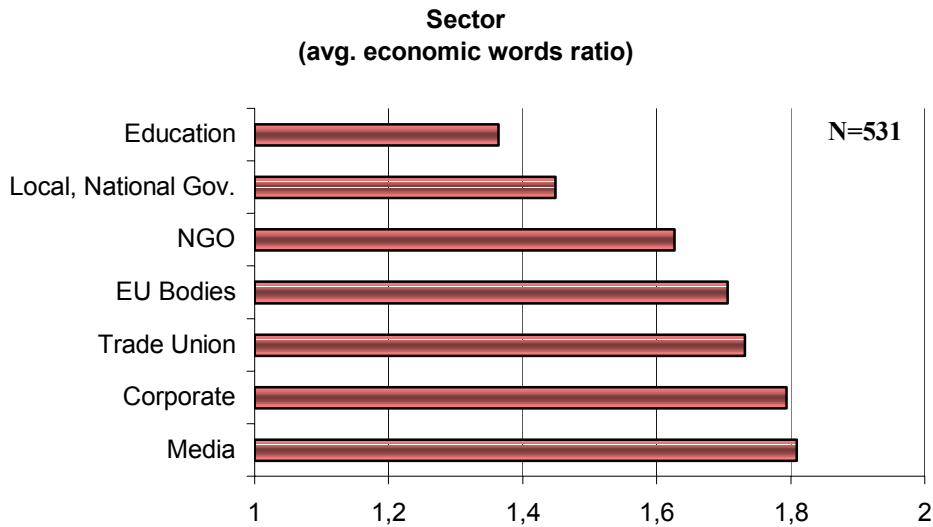
Charts below present average proportion of political and abstract words between groups of respondents selected by the degree of dealing with EU matters.



The more respondents deal with EU in their work, the more political and abstract vocabulary they tend to use.

Sector of employment

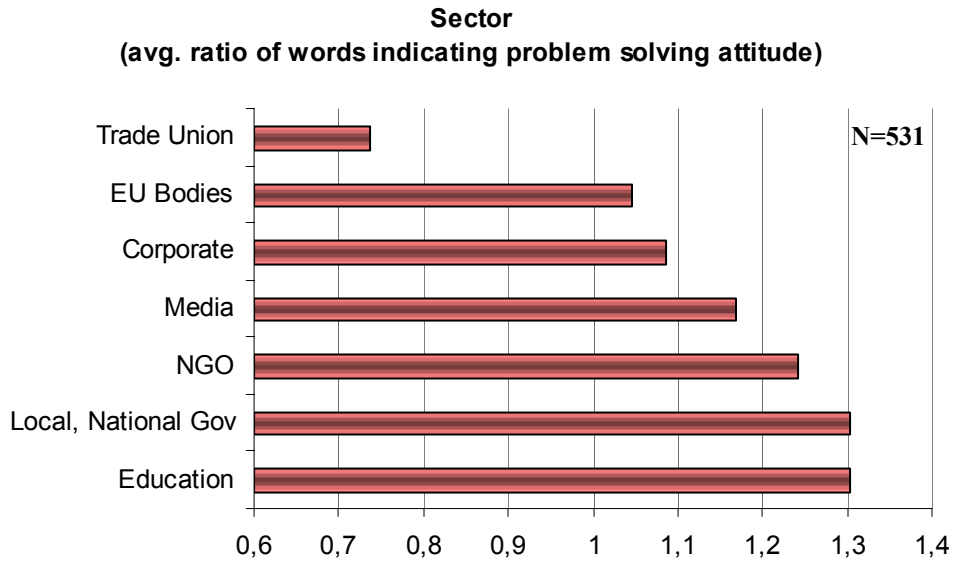
Certain characteristics of language were found to be related to the sector of respondents' employment. Following charts demonstrate the proportion of average economic and political terms among participants from different sectors:



Economic terms were used mostly by employees from the corporate and – interestingly the media world, while political terms dominated the arguments used by workers of NGOs. Education and political institutions (incl. EU Bodies) employees followed shortly.

Another interesting language property that varied between sectors was the inclination to use terms referring to problem solving and mental processes associated with it.

By far the least ratio of problem solving oriented words was observed among participants employed by Trade Unions. The second lowest sector were EU bodies. For various reasons, we shall not comment on this finding.



Some examples of the contributions

This section contains most typical and most relevant answers, obtained with purely qualitative methods.

Questioning the premises

Is the Commission's political role as driving force for EU legislation consistent with its communications role?

- **Commission means bureaucracy:**
 - *The Commission is not perceived as political, but as a bureaucracy*
 - *Many people only see the Commission as a bureaucracy issuing legislation which regulates the size of tractor seats etc.*
 - *The Commission is buried in procedures ... and likes it!!!*
- **Both activities should be merged:**
 - *Role as an initiator of legislation requires it to have a proactive role in communicating the reasons of such initiatives*
 - *Communications role should be precisely to explain its so-called political role as driving force for EU legislation*
- **Distance from “average citizen”:**
 - *Average EU citizens have no clue about what the Commission does*
 - *The Commission often likes to roll in its mysticism and closed door meetings*
 - *Too technical (“EU-jargon”) and strictly limited to a Brussels elite*
 - *Yes, as long as it remains conscious that the goal is to serve the citizen and not itself.*

Should the objectives of EU communications policies remain a matter for EU civil service to decide, or is a wider consensus-building mechanism needed?

- **Consensus-building fits politics while communication requires professional approach. Professionals should interact with the public and societies:**
 - *Consensus building is suitable for policy proposals, but surely not for communications goals*
 - *A body consisting of professionals should work with the public on this issue.*
 - *Professionals should prepare the communication policy, after consulting societies.*
- **Consensus-building DOESN'T work**
 - *For now EU is unable to reach that consensus, so civil service decisions are the most objectified ones.*
 - *Communications should be based on actions and not window dressing: civil servants should take the lead on the basis of European policy*
- **Consensus-building DOES work:**
 - *Avoids the dry style of communication which has been the character of past communications policies*
 - *Another mechanism can be scaring us.*
 - *Otherwise they would be talking to walls*
 - *Consensus-building mechanism, since the EU civil service is not necessarily representative of the EU public.*

How can communication be put higher on the political agendas (by eg creating specific Ministerial posts for information, by letting the Commission president make state of the union speeches in National Parliaments etc)?

- **Heavy opposition against creating dedicated, administrative central bodies on information:**
 - *NO Ministerial posts - we have enough functionaries/bureaucracy*
 - *Not more layers of bureaucracy or speeches*
 - *Any new receptor/transmitter can bias/delay the message*
 - *More bureaucracy does not help*
 - *God forbid that it be by such bureaucratic devices*
 - *No way should there be a Minister for Information - it sounds Orwellian*
- **Work on country level. Cooperate with regional political or media bodies:**
 - *creating a network of Commission and member state communication services*
 - *collaborating with the media in all member and candidate countries*

- *National governments and media need to put the EU and civic education on the EU higher on their agenda e.g. school curricula, national awards (media and educational), training for municipal officials, reporting to national parliaments by EU officials and parliamentarians.*
- *Involve national politicians in each member country.*
- **Commission's President**
 - *Is still too anonymous for the European public. The EU institutions should give him or her more importance inside the EU, refer to him more often and - if necessary - criticize him publicly. Always stimulate debates.*
 - *should however make a public statement quite possibly on widely distributed TV - like the Eurovision Song Contest*
 - *has to be more visible and active than Prodi*

Evaluation & best practices

What process for evaluating EU-level information and communications efforts might be envisaged? What information audits exist in Member States and EU Institutions?

- **Elections**
 - *Best evaluation on how good communication was, remains elections.*
 - *participation rate at European elections*
 - *Overall turnout of the last elections does not tell lies.*
 - *level of participation in European elections*
- **Opinion surveys**
 - *do some good opinion polling*
 - *Regular opinion polls which look at the level of public opinion knowledge are good, if they are taken account by the EC.*
 - *poll in main national regions questioning people about current issues in the EU*
 - *opinion polls on basic knowledge about the EU are necessary for a better assessment of the EU information*
 - *Eurobarometer polling maybe?*
- **Media monitoring**
 - *Just look at the column inches the EU gets in the main EU newspapers, or the minutes of TV air time - and see what gets covered, on what page, and with what impact.*
 - *semantic analysis made on press articles on issues of trans-national importance;*
- **Hard to recall a specific audit**
 - *I do not know what information audits exist in member states.*
 - *I did not even know that communication audit and evaluation existed*

How effective are the current inter-institutional bodies in dealing with information and communications, and how satisfactory is collaboration with Member States? Are there any best practices?

- **Not effective!**
 - *Because of competition, misunderstanding, political struggles between EU institutions.*
 - *They give the impression they exist only for themselves, creating thus a new bureaucracy.*
 - *there is no CENTRAL place to ask questions*
 - *information has not yet arrived to the "end consumer"*
 - *Information being conveyed is written in such a boring style.*
- **Requires improvement.**
 - *is weak if existent. The collaboration with the member states often leads to little baronies, which are amateurish at best*
 - *member states should be willing to give more control to the EU*
 - *Decentralisation could bring some relief.*
- **Best practices:**
 - *there is a inter-institutional group to evaluate campaigns*
 - *Very likely Germany is best practice.*
 - *Making use of the EU-website for informing the public*
 - *Leaflets distributed by the offices (in Greece) of the European Parliament and the Commission. Those leaflets draw the attention of the citizens.*
 - *particularly with DG PRESS*
 - *frankness tends to disarm, and absolute frankness disarms absolutely*
 - *Be more political.*

If information deficit or communications inefficiency is only part of the problem in the lower election turnouts, how can/should the other symptoms be taken into consideration in drafting communication policies? Has there been an analysis of the different election turnouts per country in the various European elections?

- **Causes of low turnout:**
 - *"ordinary people" feel EU matters are not their concern, it is "too far away", "too incomprehensive"*
 - *Europeans are tired of their politicians and the way Europe leads its economic, political and social activities.*
 - *lack of real democracy within political parties, as we saw in the decisions taken on the Iraqi war in UK, Spain, Italy*
 - *feeling that the Parliament has a limited real power*

- **Analyses:**
 - *IDEA in Sweden has done significant turnout analyses*
 - *As far as I know since 1979. (...) European elections are viewed along national issues and not along European ones.*
 - *Book on the EP by David Earnshaw & Judge.*
 - *Analyses have been done locally on different election turnouts in some Member States, but also statistical analyses (Eurostat) have been done.*

What are the lessons to be learnt from the massive information campaigns around the euro and around enlargement, both in the Member States and the Accession countries?

- **Campaign feedback and evaluation is needed:**
 - *"massive information campaigns" results should be assessed (via opinion polls)*
 - *campaigns are of limited value if not coupled with adequate feedback mechanisms*
 - *I have not seen an evaluation of the effectiveness*
- **Positive opinions about the euro campaign:**
 - *well relayed and simple to understand*
 - *successful, as there was heavy involvement by the Member States*
 - *thanks to the banks which have money and good communication consultancies to serve their interests*
- **Large criticism of the enlargement campaign:**
 - *It would appear to most people that Enlargement is beyond their control or input. No consultation of the public took place.*
 - *Issues like enlargement are issues that people know, but don't know enough to give a comprehensive opinion.*
 - *It was much too little and far too late due to a dinosaur approach in the Commission.*
 - *effects on local/national life have not been clearly explained*

Formulating a communications strategy

Should there be an emergency plan to stimulate voter interest in the mid-2004 EP elections, and what might it consist of?

- **Media campaigns:**
 - *Broadcasts on television in each country*
 - *The MEP should only be more present on TV screens everywhere. I do not see them on French, Belgium, and British television.*
 - *Good websites & information channels for the public via the internet*
 - *advertising campaigns at national level giving examples in very clear and direct language as to which questions and issues the new Commission and Parliament should deal with*
 - *EU media campaign, where national politicians present a cohesive and EU -minded picture, starting from as uniform as possible EU standpoints*
- **Voices of frustration and distrust:**
 - *EU is not very good at emergency plans. We are in April; elections take place in June, forget about it and think about ... 2009!*
 - *Yes - a plan! Then there could be lots of meetings in Strasbourg and Brussels, and meetings about meetings, and agendas, and coffee, and press releases, and conferences, and debates and deliberation, and then maybe an implementation strategy with another plan for that too! Wonderful! Then the MEPs could claim lots and lots of travel allowance.*
- **Innovation!**
 - *make number of seats and/or salary of MEPs dependent on voter turnout*

What longer-term strategy could be envisaged for bringing radical reform to the EU institutions' efforts to engage public opinion, and what would be the budgetary implications of that?

- **Common EU school level education**
 - *Start with awareness campaigns in schools and universities perhaps?*
 - *Why not a course devoted to EU in schools?!*
- **Other ideas**
 - *Incentive-based strategy, emphasising the advantage of the EU vs. the disadvantages of fragmentation*
 - *Tackle immigration, defence, internal security, education, research. Confront multinational lobbies. Reach out to hearts and minds.*

- .. and omni-present anti-bureaucratic stanzas
 - *The EU needs to eliminate the commonly-held perception, that it does not listen to ordinary citizens*
 - *Reclaiming the political agenda, loosing the image of overpaid technocratic institutions who are dealing with issues that concerns nobody.*
 - *Much more human touch - and humour.... Neither is very expensive!*

Will a different approach be needed for information and communications efforts aimed at the accession countries, and if so what should it be?

- **More communication needed for new countries:**
 - *Accession countries require special attention as they are new to this game. More emphasis should be placed in educating the public at large as to what the EU is, how it works and how they can influence decision-making*
 - *They start from scratch, and it is even more important to be realistic about what can be done and hence can be hoped for. Disappointments are probable.*
- **Member countries citizens reluctant toward newcomers**
 - *They are still cheap labour instead of fully European citizens. Give them rights and they will give us attention.*
 - *TO SHOW THEM THAT THE 15 IS NOT THE "MISSING PARADISE" WHICH IS FORBIDDEN TO THEM.*

Should future thinking on EU information and communication be based on separating "technical" issues (industrial policy etc) from "consumer" issues that are more interesting to the man-in-the-street? Or do environmental and food safety issues, for instance, demonstrate the impossibility of that?

- **Separate target audience, not issues**
 - *There are no "technical" or "consumer" issues to be separated.*
 - *Separation by targeted audience on any issue is the better way.*
 - *Make targeted messages in terms of the target audience.*

Should the EU Institutions draw-up an information and communications "Charter" that would set out the aims of these efforts, the thinking behind them and the political interests being served?

- **Immense anti-institutional opposition**
 - *No, this is nonsense and a typical technocratic approach*
 - *I am afraid that Brussels bureaucrats will not be able to handle that properly.*
 - *I don't think that another paper could improve something.*
 - *No, this is centralist thinking*
 - *The less charters, declarations, conventions and so on - the better. People would like to see more concrete everyday ways and fewer formalities.*
- **What then? A strategy rather than a charter**
 - *Its more a matter of political strategy, vision, and of course style than of new charters etc.*
 - *A good information and communication strategy should be able to reveal the thinking and political interests it serves.*
 - *Drafting a real communication and PR strategy would be the best way, however, not as vague as the current communication strategy paper of the Commission.*

Should there be an overall PR strategy to sell Europe as a "brand", to complement the often ad hoc vertical approach of different Directorates-General in the Commission? How can communication efforts be streamlined so that the process becomes more important than ad hoc campaigns?

- **Europe should not be a "brand"**
 - *It is absolutely no good and in fact, dishonest to the public, to just put ad-hoc glossy wrappers around outdated practices.*
 - *EU is not a brand is a way of thinking.*
 - *This will look like another cynical PR exercise.*
 - *EU Institutions' objectives and role are legislative and not commercial*
 - *Does this marketing term not show that you really want to sell something?*
- **"Branding" can further deteriorate the situation**
 - *If we start creating Europe as a brand, more nationalism will arise...*
 - *a PR strategy with the present scepticism among the public might have a boomerang effect.*
 - *The cause of the EU's present unpopularity is that the "(wo)man in the street" (..) is increasingly convinced - (..) - That s/he is being taken for a ride. "Selling Europe as a brand" will only make that worse.*

- **Some agree upon the “brand” metaphor**
 - *Europe is a brand. It may not be a popular brand, but it exists as a brand, and has done so for 50 years*
 - *I think Europe is already a brand. It is just the image of the brand is not good.*
 - *Europe is already a brand, so is the EU...what does it stand for today?*
 - *It is sold as a brand and each DG already has to work within that brand anyway - but there may be scope to improve branding!*
- **Focusing communication flows**
 - *Ad-hoc campaigns should be under a bigger umbrella campaign.*
 - *Perhaps each DG should select two issues per year to be communicated?*
 - *Emphasis has to be on improving accountability and transparency in the institutions itself and then having a communications policy that goes hand in hand with this*
 - *The DGs should compete and find the best practice, not be put under general cap which would cut off the best edges.*

What is the impact of the new financial rules in the Commission on information and communication initiatives?

- **Slowdown, growth of internal complexity**
 - *The only impact is internally. For the average man in the street there is still incompetence and corruption in the Commission. The Commission was badly hurt by the Andersen report which it chose to ignore.*
 - *The impact is slow down in implementing many programmes, because the financial rules are very complicated. There may be need some flexibility but accountable.*
 - *The new financial rules are stricter; therefore make it more difficult to be proactive and very reactive to events and the news.*

What can realistically be expected from EU Governments and Institutions in terms of a pro-active communication strategy and a geographical outreach to regions and even cities?

- **Expectations from media and new technologies**
 - *A lot, if they make more and better use of new technologies. Their internet presence has taken giant leaps forward, particularly as regards making documents available to the general public*
 - *Bulletins (short) via Internet. EU TV and data channels via broadband cable connecting ALL EU institutions and Agencies with the outside world. Every EU citizen should have access to that.*

- *having European TV with regional, national, and EU-wide programs, creating European print (possibly through a joint efforts with existing newspapers - but far more extensively than already existing), offering regular information (and maybe edutainment)*
- **Ubiquitous scepticism**
 - *Very little. this issue is not exciting and does not command votes*
 - *Very little if the EU-institutions continue to dysfunction or are perceived to dysfunction.*
 - *Very little. They do not care*
 - *Very little. Governments are to communications what the military are to music.*

Working with external actors

What [if anything] needs to be done to improve Commission and Parliament procedures for sub-contracting information and communications contracts?

- **Flexibility, readability, transparency**
 - *Introduce more efficient and flexible procedures*
 - *A more flexible way for companies to find out their intentions. A database - at national level - with companies, organizations and professionals able to cooperate will be good.*
 - *The calls for tender should be more widely disseminated, the tender documents should be more understandable, and the deadlines for requesting and submitting documents should be much longer.*
 - *The system is now so complex that the only way contracts can be awarded is by unethical behaviour so please make them simpler and more transparent!*

Is the process by which EU officials are appointed to information and communications jobs within the institutions satisfactory, or should the system be changed with a view to bringing in outside experts to occupy senior policy making positions?

- **Lack of professional skills among current staff**
 - *In my experience, INFOCOM people often have little skills or expertise in the area*
 - *As a general rule, persons responsible for communication must be experts in communication, not lawyers or administrators*
 - *One of the major shortcomings of the communication flaws is that NONE, or indeed very few of the army of communication officers have received ANY training for the job they are doing. They are clever lawyers, political scientists or even economists, but are learning the communication job inside the Commission*

- **External experts not to be involved internally**
 - *The communicator has to be a member of the commission and not an external person.*
 - *Outside experts should be consulted and remain outside.*
 - *Outside experts are needed as outside experts.*
- **Their opinions should be present**
 - *Should at least be used for advice.*
 - *After too much time spent within the EU institutions, officials tend to lose touch with reality on the ground.*

If EU information and communication were to be gradually removed from the tight control of the EU Institutions, what balance might there be in work sub-contracted to professional agencies and to NGOs and other civil society players?

- **Control is still needed**
 - *The EU should keep a coordination and regulation role, in order for the information to be spread everywhere equally and on all issues equally.*
 - *There should be some control over NGOs and other players, who sometimes tend to focus too much on "their" issues.*
 - *Control by EU institutions should be tighter!*
 - *EU information and communication should not be removed from the "tight control" of the EU institutions. Work is already being subcontracted to professional agencies as required - sometimes with disastrous results*
- **Number proposals**
 - *As it is now the case for EPSO and PMO offices, 25% of officials and 75 % of contractual agents within the EU IA*
 - *50% Commission and 50% other agencies and NGOs.*
 - *The balance can be 50% -50%.*
 - *EU 60% : NGO'S 40%*
 - *Professional agencies : 30% - NGOs : 70%*

How can TV channels play a more prominent role in providing background information to Europe's citizens? What is the impact and approach of "specialist" TV channels such as Euronews? Would a European C-Span have a viable role in Europe?

- **More entertainment needed**
 - *Euronews is too boring for the average citizen. It is good for the news. There should be more interesting cultural programmes.*
 - *Bad impact of Euronews: too much focused, not even known by the man on the street*
 - *Euronews is worse than FOX, does anyone watch it?*
 - *Euronews is monotonous, slow, repetitive, and does not cover the global issues from European standpoint, and does not have breaking news.*
 - *Make the information interesting and people will beat to your door!!*
- **To be changed:**
 - *There is a lot of education (training) to do with the journalists in order them to better understand the European challenges, relations with local authorities, the EP agenda etc.*
 - *The present TV channels are too selective in providing information to the people.*
 - *Basic information on EU PROJECTS should be briefly explained on TV Channels, and more details should be given on Euronews.*
 - *Perhaps a "big brother" series with Commissioners and MEPs would boost interest, but seriously: the effect of EU policy on the lives of various sectors could well be captured in interesting documentaries.*

Does the information flow to youth organizations and through educational packages need to be improved? How can regional and local bodies become better integrated in the communication system?

- **National level school EU programme**
 - *There needs to be an EU education pack which schools can use. Education on EU topics, its institutions etc... should be compulsory and be put on the national education plans.*
 - *Every effort in this area should be made: through schools , national programmes etc*
 - *The schools are not enough engaged in EU process. We should introduce 1 hour a week of EU lessons from secondary level on.*

How can collaboration with specialist media as well as regional, national and international press be better coordinated?

- **Create dedicated institutional bodies**
 - *Create a centre of information for any EP and commission subjects and encourage newswires , local one included, to create a dedicated channel*
 - *Have a top class EU press centre with credible, knowledgeable and respected (internally and externally) EU servants.*
 - *To organise the press department in pools: one for each EU-country.*
 - *Permanent advisory group for COM.*
 - *Perhaps through a centralised Communications Office.*
 - *create special DG Communication*
- **Meetings, exchanges and more attention for journalists**
 - *cross country/regions exchange of media, study tours for regional journalists, commissioned articles*
 - *Exchange of information but also on personal level.*
 - *organising specialised events where goals for each country/region are being set and means to achieve them discussed*
 - *Maybe through staff exchanges and a pan-European media agency offering ready-to-print (or to hear, or to watch) dossiers on news*

The National Perspective

What do you see to be the most imminent communications challenges in your own country?

- **Country-specific issues**
 - *The biggest problem is biased press. In the Netherlands the press is not neutral on many issues. In Belgium this is much more the case.*
 - *To get rid of SPD. It has generated such distrust to our country.*
 - *UK is bored stiff with the EU - need to make it more interesting and relevant in a positive way.*
 - *Rupert Murdoch*
 - *France (where I live): The tendency for editorial writers to succumb to a heard mentality.*
- **General problems**
 - *Internet replacing newspapers.*
 - *Reaching the ordinary citizens in a language they can understand.*
 - *to reach the target public with a decent message*
 - *The restrictions of freedom of expression.*
 - *To bring Europe closer to the citizens.*

What will be the topics in your country that will be on citizens' minds most in the next months and years?

- **Few examples**
 - *Iraq, Terrorism, EU Constitution, Euro, CAP reform, fishing policy, asylum and immigration.*
 - *Economy. War in Iraq. Trust in the Government. Immigration and asylum.*
 - *enlargement of EU, terrorism, position of USA in the world, environmental issues, energy savings, maintaining of level of wealth (pensions etc.) in aging population*
 - *On EU: The new constitution, and Turkey's application for membership*

Would you rate your government better or worse than the "average European government" in communicating EU policies? Why?

- **Better, because ...**
 - *there are a lot of campaigns running*
 - *Few other countries are more willing to adopt EU-regulations than my country, although not a member.*
 - *of its awareness of a rather euro sceptic public*
 - *Spaniards are aware of the benefits of EU funded infrastructure projects and regional development schemes.*
 - *Austria has consolidated its budget, started reforming the health-sector, the railways, the retirement, etc.*
- **Worse, because ...**
 - *The "foreigners" are always wrong.*
 - *In Sweden, we have not developed a vision of what we want with our membership.*
 - *Too willing to strategically put the blame on the EU to benefit from short term interests.*
 - *they don't know how to explain to the population the EU policies*
 - *Gerhard is not comparable to anybody else.*

Do you think the official languages of the EU should be limited to, say, five to save costs, with responsibility for the national governments to translate and make available relevant documents?

- **Lack of common ground**
 - *The official language should be one for all: LATIN*
 - *Yes one is enough. Most of people in Europe is speaking English*
 - *Yes, but then I am British*
 - *Five will do that as well as just one-English. But the France and Germany, not mentioning Spain will be against. So, let us have five for the start.*
 - *The official languages should be limited to three*
 - *Yes, absolutely, Swedish, Finnish Estonian, Latin and Esperanto...*
 - *Which five???*