

Creating a collective European identity and European Public Sphere

EU Communication policy and strategy in reflection

Dr Neeta Inamdar

Head – Manipal Centre for European Studies

Manipal University

Manipal

(Dr Neeta Inamdar is a PhD in Communication and has been teaching media and communication strategy for over a decade. She has culture and communication dynamics as her research focus and has been working in this field with a special focus on Europe. She was actively involved in the establishment of Manipal Centre for European Studies (MCES), which she presently heads. She also takes care of the master program in European Studies and works closely with universities in Germany, France, Belgium, Poland, Latvia, Czech Republic and others that offer courses in European Studies.

Areas of Interest in teaching : Communication research, Communication strategies, intercultural communication, organizational anthropology, diversity management.)

Europe as a Single Cultural Complex¹ is still a dream that a few functionalists cherish. European Union, which was termed by the former Commission president Jacques Delors as an ‘unidentified political object’ is continuously evolving and is in the process of imparting a new identity to its citizens who, often than not, have strong allegiances to their national symbols, heroes, and cultures in general than to the newly imparted, collective identity of being a European. EU member states have had their identities over centuries and for them to accept a newer, larger identity is like forfeiting the national identity built strongly on centuries of experiences with each other. However, without a unified cultural and social identity, EU will remain a mere monetary and economic union. Identity dynamics, thus, demands an undivided attention.

*The **White Paper on A European Communication Policy (2006)** states that the ‘public sphere’ within which political life takes place in Europe is largely a ‘national sphere’ and there exists a void in terms of a strong European identity. In the present paper, efforts of EU in creating a collective identity and European public sphere with communication policy and strategy as measures are analysed and discussed. Emphasis is on studying these initiatives as processes rather than holding an outcome approach. The paper also takes a look at the position of this unified, collective identity among the multiple identities that people carry in the backdrop of multiculturalism that defines Europe.*

Research on cultural integration has remained a distant third option in European integrational studies; the first and second positions occupied by economic and political unification unquestionably. Even in

the works like that of Haas (1958)² of neo-functional theory, identity dynamics did not appear as ideas were based more on elite and group-centred politics of the European unification. It was also because neo-functionalism made pluralists theory a basis for its ahistorical view of politics. Cultural integration of EU for long remained devoid of attention by the policy makers as it was believed that respective governments represented the wills of the people. However, differences between realists and functionalists, Eurosceptics and Europhiles when became more evident as differences between masses and the elite, a need for taking people into account was felt by the policy makers. In the last decade, EU has certainly made a remarkable change in its approach towards people who make it. It is realizing the need to push the new European identity as an umbrella that holds and provides space for national identities as well. However, the strength of national identities rarely makes room for a supranational identity among people. Efforts of EU in this direction continue, though success stories are hard to come by.

Europeanism

"Identity" is a keyword of contemporary society and a central focus of social psychological theorizing and research. At earlier historical moments, identity was not so much an issue; when societies were more stable, identity was to a great extent assigned, rather than selected or adopted. In current times, however, the concept of identity carries the full weight of the need for a sense of who one is, together with an often overwhelming pace of changing surroundings, social contexts-changes in the groups, and networks in which people and their identities are embedded and in the societal structures and practices in which those networks are themselves embedded.³

Identities refer to shared representation of a collective self as reflected in public debate, political symbols, collective memories, and elite competition for power. They consist also of collective beliefs about the definition of the group and its membership that are shared by most group members. We understand identities to be revealed by social practices as well as by political attitudes, shaped by social and geographical structure and national contexts.⁴ Checkel and Katzenstein make a distinction between cosmopolitan and populist conceptions of identity. They believe, cosmopolitan conceptions appeal to and are motivated by elite-level politics. Populist conceptions reflect and respond to mass politics. Cosmopolitan conceptions focus on political citizenship and rights, whereas, populist conceptions center on issues of social citizenship and cultural authenticity.

Europeanism is defined as the attitude which sees the well-being, destiny and institutions of the major European states as so closely linked by geographical and historical circumstances that no cogent political action can be successfully pursued in one state without some reference to, and attempt to achieve integration with others'.⁵ Though it looks like an ideal situation, it is not easily achievable despite the optimism of neo-functionalists.

Deliberative and normative political theories have used the topic of the politicization of European identity as a provocation to inquire into questions of citizenship and European public sphere. Scholars interrogate both the contents and challenges to European solidarities as they are affected by principles of voluntarism, the effects of migration, constitution-making practices, the resurgence of religious politics, and the global impact of rights revolution.⁶

The continuously evolving geographical boundaries of Europe make it difficult for people to define Europeanism. Probably, Europe remains an only entity which has its map redrawn more often than any other in the last century. Every change in its contours influences identity dynamics of Europe to an extent. The efforts of EU to create a pan-European identity that transcends the idea of nation-state, includes the complexities of transnational and immigrant problems, and involves the necessity to find a commonality in the midst of diversity.

The European states can no longer be seen as a community that can itself determine who are citizens ("we") and who are not ("they"). The European Union does invest in the establishment of new common traditions ("invented traditions") in order to become a community ("imagined community"), but this has not yet led to a European nation. Creating a nation does not operate upon command. Despite all the information and propaganda, despite EU symbols including a flag, an anthem, a passport, a currency, the European dimension in education through the Erasmus programme, the activities of citizenship such as the right of petition and voting rights for the European Parliament, despite the introduction of a legal European citizenship through the European Union treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, despite all this the ideology of European "nationalism", has not yet caught on.⁷

Tonnies was right when he distinguished *Gemeinschaft* (community) from *Gesellschaft* (society): all kinds of social co-existence that are familiar, comfortable and exclusive are to be understood as belonging to *Gemeinschaft*... In *Gemeinschaft*, we are united from the moment of our birth with our own folk for better or for worse. We go into *Gesellschaft* as if into a foreign land.⁸ This explains why there is a reluctance to accept the over-arching European identity. This identity would emerge at a time a

citizen compares himself with people outside of Europe. However, fortress Europe has become so inward looking that invariably people engage more with their own, rather than outsiders whose decision of acceptance of their new identity can actually make a difference.

To add to these complications are the subcultures within national cultures, or the national minorities that are sometime so distinct that they prefer aligning with other larger (in this case, European) culture than the mainstream or the dominant culture of their own region. This, though adds to excitement of Europhiles, becomes a challenge to deal with for making the system much more multicultural.

Defining Europe and European has never been simple, thanks to disagreements about the outer limits of the region and the inner character of its inhabitants. The rise of the EU has added a new dimension to the challenge, obliging us to think of the inhabitants of the region not just as Spaniards or Belgians or Poles or Latvians, a macro-integration has been accompanied by a micro-level loosening of ties as national minorities in several countries – such as the Scots in Britain, the Catalans in Spain, the Flemings and Walloons in Belgium, and multiple nationalities in the Balkans - express themselves more vocally, and remind us that European identity is being re-formed not only from above but also from below.⁹

Multiculturalism

What role does multiculturalism play in determining the identities that people hold? Does it have the strength as a concept to break the strong cultural identities that monocultures and subcultures may provide in bargain for belongingness?... A multicultural society needs to find ways of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity, of achieving political unity without cultural uniformity, and cultivating among its citizens both a common sense of belonging and a willingness to respect and cherish deep cultural differences. Though the idea of multiculturalism created a great sense of enthusiasm in U.S. and European Union in the 1970's, it has gradually shown signs of moral and emotional disorientation in the face of increasing minority demands for recognition and equality.¹⁰

A closer observation would reveal that the idea is limited as there are distracters in the process of multicultural integration in the European context. The major distracters such as nationalistic tendencies in many European countries, failed integration of immigrants from outside of the EU, and a seemingly lacking common European identity remain as stumbling blocks in the process of integration.¹¹

The repeated reordering of territorial lines over the centuries has bequeathed to almost every European state a multinational society, and has left several national groups – such as the German, the Poles, the Basques and Irish – divided by national frontiers. Many states have also seen large influxes of

immigrants since the 1950s, including Algerians to France, Turks to Germany and South Asians to Britain. Not only is there no dominant culture, but most Europeans rightly shudder at the thought of their separate identities being subordinated to some kinds of homogenized Euroculture; at least part of the resistance to integration is generated by concerns about threats to national cultural identity.¹²

National identities which were acquired by people historically continue to overpower a newly created identity. Finally, the rational human minds make a choice that is wise, based on relative advantage that one identity would provide them over the other. It is at this point that EU should intervene with its policies that speak loudly and clearly about the relative advantage of the new identity. However, only an inward looking approach will not help EU at this point as the newly created identity needs recognition, acceptance and approval of the outer world. EU's efforts should thus be in both directions. Though enough attention is paid to internal dynamics of integration, understanding global contexts in which to function becomes imperative.

As pointed out in the White Paper on a European Communication Policy (2006)¹³ the 'public sphere' within which political life takes place in Europe is largely a 'national sphere'. The media remain largely national, there are few meeting places where Europeans from different member states can get to know each other and address issues of common interest. Yet many of the policy decisions that affect daily life for people in the EU are taken at European level. People feel remote from these decisions, the decision-making process and EU institutions. Despite exercising the right to elect members of the European Parliament, citizens often feel that they themselves have little opportunity to make their voices heard on European issues. Efforts like Eurobarometer, Europe by Satellite, and others tried to bridge the gap that exists between the public and policy makers of EU in communication. However, it is stated that the institutional communication policy, though steadily improving, has not been sufficient to break the boundary of nations and create a pan-European identity.

The public sphere is well suited for the examination of political identity projects because, contrary to treaties like the European Constitution, it offers access to the diversity of elite viewpoints on which these treaties rest. In addition, contrary to the information that one would obtain through interview with the elites, discourse in the public sphere is the actual interface between elite views and citizen reactions to these views, thus allowing for a better interpretation of a phenomenon such as the French and Dutch "No" votes to the European Constitution and the crisis that followed.¹⁴

Following the negative votes, on June 18, 2005, Heads of State and Government adopted a declaration “*the ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe which called for a period of reflection. It said, “the period of reflection will be used to engage a broad debate to take place in each of our countries, involving citizens, civil society, social partners, national parliaments and political parties”*”.¹⁵

Action Plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission

Action Plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission brought out on July 20, 2005, made communication one of the strategic objectives for its term of office, recognizing it fully as a policy in its own right. Commission decided to proceed in two phases: First to adapt an internal **Action Plan** with concrete measures to be taken within the Commission and Secondly, to draw up a **White Paper** to engage all stakeholders, setting out the policy vision and the initiative to be undertaken in the medium and long term, in cooperation with the other institutions and stakeholders.

The main objective of the Action Plan was to ensure more effective communication about Europe supported within the Commission by a modern and more professional approach across all departments. It was based on an understanding that communication was more than information, and that to establish a relationship with European citizens through dialogue, to listen carefully and to connect with people was not a neutral exercise devoid of value, but an essential part of the political process.

The new approach was non-linear i.e., involved **listening** to citizen’s expressing their opinions and to their voices, thus enhancing democratization of the processes and **communicating** EU policies and activities, as well as their impact on everyday lives to citizens and connecting with citizens by “**going local**”.

The Commission decided to focus on the following priority action in the first phase:

- Establishing communication priorities and providing core messages in order to ensure consistency
- Establishing a network of Directorates General’s Communication units to actively coordinate activities across Commission to maximize efforts and use communication tools better assisted by DG Communication
- Reinforcement of some Representations as part of clearly targeted pilot projects in order to achieve impact
- Better use of communication tools
- Describing tangible benefits of EU policies through short and simple introductions to key Commission proposals

- Becoming more professional in communicating through specific training and recruitment of communication specialists

It also focused on presenting a single face to evolve towards a unified Commission presentation through contact centres for public awareness purposes under a few, if not a single umbrella. It also emphasized on improving dialogue to publicize consultation to ensure full transparency and wider public participation. The Plan also sought to identify target audiences, and to understand the country through direct contact with national, regional and local decision-makers and authorities through regular media monitoring, and through public opinion polls.

An analysis of the around 15-page document brings out the urgency in which communication was taken up as a strategic focus though more as a response to the crisis created by the “No” votes. It was focused completely on internal operational communication of the Commission as the time necessitated it, without giving any heed to external communication. Though a shift from unidirectional flow of information to a bidirectional communication was a significant step forward, a lot more was left to be done in the White Paper to come.

An important realization for Commission was an awareness that not all was well with its communication strategies with too many people speaking in too many voices generating confusion among its undefined audiences. An awareness that creation of European public sphere was a necessity to generate dialogue and its audience to have any idea of belongingness set a new way-forward for identity creation efforts.

Changes happened in quick succession since then. On October 13, 2005, a communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee on the Regions was brought out with an idea of Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate as Commission’s contribution to the period of reflection and beyond.

Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate¹⁶

The Commission maintained that the proposed Plan D was not a rescue operation for the Constitution, but was to stimulate a wider debate between the European Union’s democratic institutions and citizens. It was to be seen as complementary to the already existing or proposed initiatives and program such as those in the field of education, youth, culture and in promoting active European citizenship.

During this time, the then latest Eurobarometer survey had showed that the public approval of the EU had steadily declined. European institutions were too often the scapegoats for unpopular decisions and often seen as remote and bureaucratic. Commission believed that debates should go beyond the political leaders, the traditional stakeholders to involve “civil society, social partners, national parliaments and political parties” and also found added value in listening to specific target groups, such as young people or minority groups that were not reached

during the referendum campaigns. It also recognized the importance of engaging with the mass media particularly television and Internet for stimulating debates.

Plan D was not limited to the period of reflection but was to be made an exercise that must run throughout the lifetime of the Commission and beyond. The then crisis could be overcome by creating a new consensus on the European project, anchored in citizen's expectations.

With this, there was a shift *from listening to further involvement*. The objective of the Commission was to stimulate debate and seek recognition for the added value that the European Union could provide. The democratic renewal process meant that EU citizens must have the right to have their voices heard.

Organization of national debates became an immediate action point out of this discourse and Commission decided to assist rather than replace Member States in the organization of national debates by funding such events. The European Parliament was also to play a key role in national debate, both in terms of working with national institutions and through the involvement of individual members of the European Parliament. Models like National Forum on Europe in Ireland, and Platform for Europe in Spain were offered as inspirations to other Member States.

Plan D set out a structured process to stimulate a public debate making it a two-way process: informing people about Europe's role through concrete achievements and projects and listening to people's expectations about what should be done in the future and also introducing a feedback process. The debate included the following themes:

- Europe's economic and social development (jobs, global competition, sustainable development, etc.)
- Feeling towards Europe and the Union's tasks (previous achievements on food safety, Erasmus, single currency, consumer protection, internal market)
- Europe's borders and its role in the world (Europe in a globalized world, trade, environment, mobility, security, development etc.)

Commission's initiatives at community level included partnership with the European institutions and bodies. For stimulating a wider public debate, it included visits by Commissioners to Member States, Commissioners availability to National Parliaments, representations opened to public, utilization of Europe Direct centres for regional events, European Round Table for Democracy, and European Goodwill Ambassadors on the lines of UN.

For promoting citizens' participation in the democratic process, it focused on effective consultation, supporting European citizens' projects, creating greater openness, and increasing voter participation.

As tools to generate a dialogue on European policies, the Commission decided to focus on Specific Eurobarometer on the future of Europe, involving a state-of-the-art Internet technology for debates, and undertaking targeted focus group work on specific European themes.

A keen look into the Plan D reveals a focus on the consensus building. It looks like a theoretically sound proposition though a lot would be determined by implementation of actions that emerge from this thesis. It is interesting to recognize the patience with which EU deals with failures and also its emphasis on consensus than on compulsions or coercion even at times of crisis. It comes across as a sophisticated approach towards creation of European public sphere though effectiveness is yet to be determined.

For the first time, it sought its audiences' view on its engagement with the larger world. However, even here, there was no evidence of focus on creating presence of EU in the external world. Even at the stage of Plan D, it appeared EU was still focusing on collecting information from its key stakeholders than actually coming out with solutions or actions for creating European public sphere. However, due to a higher level of involvement of people, the process initiated by Plan D was perceived to add significantly to the belongingness quotient of citizens, thus creating a ground for the European identity.

Though Plan D comes across as an interesting proposition, it was observed during an international conference on European Studies that a sizable number of delegates had not even heard of it. If this was the case with people who closely and keenly study European integration, how could it be expected to reach general public? This probably is the problem with most of EU's initiatives that they get lost among loads of information that flow from Brussels.

White Paper on a European Communication Policy

On February 1, 2006 White Paper on a European Communication Policy was presented by the Commission. The opening of the White Paper itself was on *closing the gap* that was found to exist between European Union and its citizens in the earlier initiatives. It believed that a partnership approach was essential and that success depended on involvement of all the key players – the other EU institutions and bodies; the national, regional and local authorities in the Member States; European political parties; and the civil society.

It must be observed here that civil society appeared last in the list of 'key' players, the first obviously remaining EU institutions. This raises concerns about the perceived bureaucracy of EU and its impact on its processes.

The White Paper was to go beyond the scope of the Commission's own Action Plan and sought to involve all levels of government and organizations in the Member States in a long-term time horizon. It was presented in two parts: part I to set out the Commission's vision of what an EU communication policy should be and do, and part II to identify the key areas for consultation and future actions.

The Parliament, the Council and the other EU institutions and bodies were invited to respond to White Paper through normal **institutional channels** and European citizens were invited to respond by **logging on to a multilingual website** within a period of six months. This period of consultation was to be followed by a special series of Eurobarometer polls.

Though the White Paper invited people's participation in its development, it was only a few people who were aware of this and responded. Even today, millions of Europeans might not even know that an exercise of this kind was initiated by EU.

The Commission also decided to organize a series of stakeholder forums in cooperation with other EU institutions, as presented in the Paper.

The Paper recognized that communication for long had remained a 'Brussels affair'. It was linear and focused largely on telling people what the EU does than listening to people's views. The European Commission was therefore proposing a fundamentally new approach – a decisive move away from one-way communication to reinforced dialogue, from an institution-centred to a citizen-centred communication, from a Brussels-based to a more decentralized approach.

The Paper noted that people learned about politics and political issues largely through education systems and through their national, regional or local media which were discussed again in their own community. Thus the public sphere was largely a national sphere. A sense of alienation from Brussels, partly mirrored the disenchantment with politics in general.

A major problem is the lack awareness among journalists who more often have vague ideas of EU institutions and fail to distinguish between those that are intergovernmental from those which are supranational. Multiple institutions with different roles confuse and lead to questioning of decisions of institutions without even knowing the mandate of such actions and institutions. There is an immediate need to train journalists about the functioning of the EU. Most of the journalists often start analysing every decision from their national perspective rather than supranational. This dilutes the very essence of EU's existence and functioning. Though the process of accrediting journalists has been put in place, it has not resulted in any significant change in the coverage of EU affairs.

The Paper highlighted that Europe needed to find its place in the existing national, regional, and local 'public spheres' and that public discussion across Member States should be deepened. However, the Paper went on to say "it is the responsibility of the government at national, regional and local level to consult and inform citizens about European policies". This is how Commission passes on its responsibility to the Member State. However, the ruling party in a Member State may filter information according to its ideological or political needs while passing

it on to the public. As governments change in Member States, both the quantum and the dimension of the information provided to people changes leading to information chaos among Europe's citizenry.

In part II, the Paper defined common principles as follows:

- The right to information and freedom of expression as starting point for shared vision for an EU Communication Policy
- Inclusiveness – particularly important in case of minorities, disabled citizens and other groups that might systematically be excluded otherwise from participation in public sphere
- Diversity – respecting full range of views on the public debate
- Participation – citizens with rights to express their views to be heard and have an opportunity for dialogue with the decision makers

The Paper also suggested for framework document with above principles enshrined in a **European Charter** or **Code of Conduct on Communication**. This would engage all actors - EU institution, national, regional and local governments, non-governmental organizations.

The Paper also proposed the launch of a special web-based citizens' forum to seek views on the desirability, purpose and content of such a framework document. At the end of the consultation period, the Commission would present the results of the consultation and then consider whether to propose a Charter, a Code of Conduct or another instrument.

Thus, one document leads to another document, that leading to one more and all with considerable number of annexures, enclosures, and glossaries and again one quoting another. This leads to information overload where actions find little space. It should also be observed that seeking views of public at every step is also a time-consuming exercise. Such an approach brings EU a tag of being bureaucratic and blame for being process-intensive than outcome focused, though intentions are at their best.

Towards empowering citizens, the Paper had three main objectives:

- Improving civic education (which is the responsibility of the Member States is crucial in enabling people to exercise their civic rights and foster programs like Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates, Erasmus, Youth in Action etc.
- Connecting citizens with each other (using both communication technologies and face-to-face meetings with initiatives like *Plan D*, *Youth in Action*, and *Culture* creating meeting places for civic debate; adoption of *Citizens for Europe* program to connect citizens and support Europe-wide civil society organizations to run trans-national projects)

- Connecting the citizens and public institutions (good two-way communication between citizens and EU institutions with institutions being more *responsive, open and accessible*)

The Paper also mentioned multilingualism is an integral aspect on the legitimacy, transparency and democracy of the European project. To this effect, the Commission had already introduced **minimum standards for consultation**. It had also introduced its own **European Transparency Initiative**.

The ideas are high-sounding and noble. What's important however is the way they are put into action.

Interestingly, this White Paper also had some suggestions for actions. It suggested that Member States could be invited to bring together European teachers through existing structures like the *College of Europe* or a new structure with a view to exchanging ideas on innovative approaches to civic education. It also proposed transformation of libraries in Member States into *digitally connected European libraries* that could work as information and learning centres.

The Paper suggested other EU institutions to complement EU website with online forums or *virtual meeting places*. It also advised three main institutions to consider organizing joint open debates to complement Parliamentary debates, taking questions from the public or journalists.

The Paper mentioned that in recent years, all European institutions had made considerable efforts to improve the way they had been interacting with media. With over a thousand accredited journalists in Brussels, new energy is devoted to ensure press is informed of key decisions in real time. *Europe by Satellite* supplied video, sound and images to the media and the European Parliament plans to open itself to the public through web TV, with Europa being the world's largest website.

Despite these efforts, the coverage of EU in media is dismally low. This is mainly because the EU fails to realize that 'information' like any other commodity gets its value based on the exclusivity of possession in the media market. If every information is shared equally among all the accredited journalists and put up on the website, it loses its value even before it is created. Some blogs on not-very-effective coverage of EU actions are popular enough to garner hundreds of responses.

The Paper offered a few actions as solution to this problem by *giving Europe a human face*, by providing *national, regional and local dimension to European issues*, and by exploiting the potential of new technologies with actions like *i2010 initiative*.

The Paper maintained that European communication policy should encourage public bodies at European, national and regional level to offer media with high-quality news and current affairs material, work closely with broadcasters and media operators and pro-actively use new technologies.

For this purpose, the Paper advised producing high-quality audio-visual content and to upgrade *Europe by Satellite*. It also suggested a European program for *Training in Public Communication* for officials from European and national institutions. Though such ideas sound good, they hardly lead to any changes in the outcome.

Interestingly, the Paper argued EU institutions should explore with a wide-range of media players pan-European, national and local. It is surprising that the international media does not even get a passing mention. BBC remains a single window to the world of EU affairs. Then, generally the “Europeans” make comments on the *English view* of the European world that people in other countries hold. But people in outer world rarely get any other information about EU from any other source. This is something that EU needs to attend to immediately.

The Paper also suggested measure to gauge European opinion with the help of Eurobarometer surveys and ways of disseminating its results. It also proposed a creation of *network of national experts* in public opinion research. It further suggested setting up of an independent *Observatory of European Public Opinion*.

Though efforts were made in this White Paper to make it exhaustive in approaching the communication strategy for creation of the European Public Sphere, it still appears to be in a study mode – to know its audience, rather than act and reach out to its publics. Though it appears theoretically sound, and saintly in its intent, it misses out on understanding media competition for information dissemination. It also feels that in one Paper leading to another document, the meaning gets vaporized; it gets lost in long lines of communication if not in translations.

One must, however, also appreciate the efforts of EU for persisting with actions. The Commission on October 3, 2007 adopted **Communicating Europe in Partnership**¹⁷ that made the Commission to launch a new Internet strategy. This needed a complete overhauling of the EUROPA website. Today, their toolbox made available to all webmasters includes content management and collaboration, multimedia, interactive services, syndications tools, transaction services and workstation tools. If content management includes user-friendly web content management system, powerful search engine, wiki and collaborative workspace, multimedia options includes multi-platform web-streaming, web-conferencing, video viewer, geographical interface and image and video repository. Interactive services include feedback form, blog, e-polling, online survey while transaction services include event registration, e-tendering, e-procurement etc.

EUROPA, the European Union’s web portal accessible through the address <http://europa.eu> is managed by the European Commission (DG COMM) in coordination with all EU institutions. However, European Commission’s own website is hosted at the address <http://ec.europa.eu> and is composed of the corporate sites and specialized website and portals under the responsibility of the line DGs.

This, though may sound simple to people very much part of EU, may not sound convenient to others wanting to access information on EU. The efforts of Commission have continued in this direction with **A Common Visual Identity for the Commission** in November 2011 and **Rationalization of the European Commission's Public Websites** in February 2012. Outcome of all these efforts is yet to be realized.

Conclusion

European Union with all good intentions has come up with a communication policy that is naïve and noble and sets the stage for a European public sphere. Though ideas look good on paper, will they be driven by actions that can draw its audience to this stage to participate in the public debate on European issues, is yet to be seen. Little can be achieved with a paper after a paper; need of the hour is action taken in this direction by the Commission, orchestrated by other institutions at national, regional and local level.

However, one serious concern is that it is still focused only on internal audiences completely, neglecting the external world. EU has to realize that the created collective identity also needs an endorsement of the outer world, which can in fact help strengthen it inside Europe as well.

The recent Nobel Peace Prize probably can act as a major catalyst in creating the collective identity. If not many communication activities are seen around it in EU, the video “your peace, your prize” that is released on all the website and EU Tube is attracting some viewership lately.

It should be noted that only communication policy as an enculturation tool is taken here in this paper for analysis whereas, certain other initiatives like Erasmus program could also contribute considerably in creating the collective identity. Over 150000 students who belong to Erasmus network may prove to be the right cultural ambassadors of EU in the times to come.

If multi-level governance with a power shared among supranational, national and subnational can exist and function, why cannot the corresponding identities co-exist among the multiple identities that humans hold anyway? However, the discussion is not as much on the existence of these identities but a priority in which they appear and get expressed among people. The collective European identity may come to forefront if policies are put into action in real time. After all, identity cannot be imparted at one point in time; it has to evolve and efforts have to be treated as processes.

The 19th century French poet and novelist Victor Hugo¹⁸ under the title *My Revenge is Fraternity* wrote “a day will come when your arms will fall even from your hands! A day will come when war will seem as absurd and impossible... A day will come when... you all, nations of the continent, without losing your distinct qualities and your glorious individuality, will be merged closely within a superior unit and you will form the European

brotherhood... A day will come when the only fields of battle will be markets opening up to trade and minds opening up to ideas”.

As EU keeps its hopes alive to realize such a dream, world watches and expects it to open up and identify itself as an active bloc in the world affairs. A caution though is to ensure that too much of emphasis on creation of European identity does not lead to Euro-centrism.

Works Cited

1. Cornell, Tim and John Matthews. *Atlas of the Roman World*. Oxford: Phaidon, 1982.
2. Haas, Earnst B. *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces 1950-57*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958.
3. Howard, Judith A. "Social Psychology of Identities". *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol.26, 2000: 367-393. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/223449>>
4. Checkel, Jeffrey and Katzenstein Peter. 'Politicization of European identities'. *European Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
5. Scruton, Roger. *A Dictionary of Political Thought*, 2nd edn, London: Macmillan, 1996.
6. Pinsky Max. *The Ends of Solidarity: Discourses Theory in Ethics and Politics*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008.
7. Dijkstra Steven, Geuijen Karin, and Ruijter Arie de. 'Multiculturalism and Social Integration in Europe', *International Political Science Review* Vol.22, No.1, 2001: 55-83.
8. Tonnies, Ferdinand. *Community and Civil Society*, ed. Jose Harris; trans. Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
9. McCormick, John. *Understanding the European Union*, 5th edn.UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
10. Parekh Bhikhu. *Rethinking Multiculturalism - Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000
11. Gwizdalski Andrzej. *Failed multiculturalism in the European Union*. Web. <<http://rumaccc.unimelb.edu.au/events/Eurowkshp.pdf>>
12. McCormick, John. *Understanding the European Union*, 5th edn.UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
13. European Commission. "White Paper on a European Communication Policy" Web.1 Feb 2006 <<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52006DC0035:EN:NOT>>
13. Checkel, Jeffrey and Katzenstein Peter. 'Politicization of European identities'. *European Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
14. European Commission. "Action Plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission". Web. 20 Jul 2005. <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/communication_com_en.pdf>
15. European Commission. "Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions". Web. 13 Oct 2005. <<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0494:FIN:EN:PDF>>
16. European Commission. "Communication to the Commission. Communicating about Europe via the Internet: Engaging the citizens". Web. 20 Dec 07. <http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/docs/internet-strategy_en.pdf>
17. Victor Hugo. "My Revenge is Fraternity" *The European Prospect*. Web. <http://www.ellopos.net/politics/eu_hugo.html>
