

## Communicating Europe: a social semiotic approach

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### Abstract

The failure of the referenda in France and the Netherlands in May and June 2005 plunged the EU into its deepest and most serious crisis since its foundation. During the ‘period of reflection’ declared by the European Council in June 2005, EU institutions clearly recognized the need to understand this lack of democratic legitimacy in terms of communicative action, thus paving the way ‘to close the gap’ with citizens and face this sense of alienation felt from Brussels. In addition, the recent trend of globalization has had a great impact on a variety of different domains; the result being that the contemporary world has been fostering the formation of a corporate-model to increase profit-making opportunities. The paper sets out to investigate the diachronic changes of the rhetorical and pragmatic-linguistic strategies from the point of view of «the key dimensions of social semiotics» (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 91), namely discourse, genre and style, and uncover displacement of «communicative» practices with «strategic action» (HABERMAS 1987: 333), which in turn entails a purely instrumental rationale. In particular, EU discourse *pre-* and *post-* the referendum *fiasco* is investigated in terms of how it constructs representations of the social world and the EU political and institutional process itself; how it contributes as a means of EU institutional process; and how it conveys a particular EU identity connected to particular values.

**Key words:** social semiotics, genre, discourse, style, critical discourse analysis.

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### 1. Introduction

Aspects concerning communication between the EU and its citizens have always been a fertile domain of investigation in the field of language analysis and specialized discourse. Attention to the ways the EU communicates with its citizens became particularly interesting after the Post-Constitution vote in 2005, which showed that the ‘European project’ lacked the support of the majority of Dutch and French citizens. The rejection of the Constitution in two Member States – and two of the founding ones – has brought to the fore the feeling of euro-skepticism which seems to be creeping through some other Members of the EU. In other words, there was, and there probably still is, a problem with how European citizens perceive the EU. For this reason, the Commission drafted what is called a Plan-D in synergy with another slightly earlier document, the «Action Plan», which «seeks to improve the way in which the Commission presents its activities» (COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES 2005: 2). Specifically, the main innovation in this new communication policy is the increased emphasis on using direct and understandable ‘language’ in all EU public communication.

In the wake of the disappointing results of the referenda called in France and the Netherlands in 2005, this contribution illustrates the EU’s new communication mode and the linguistic strategies adopted by EU institutions to guarantee an effective and sustainable communication policy. Broadly speaking, EU communication initiatives revolve around the idea that a new EU image needs to be created and made available to the general public through simple yet compelling communication strategies and materials.

## 2. Methodology and Corpus

### 2.1. Theoretical framework, method and aims

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is social semiotics. As the main instrument of social semiotic analysis this study adopts critical discourse analysis. CDA is a theory according to which language incorporates a kind of dialectical relationship between semiotics (discourse) and the non-semiotic (social) (FAIRCLOUGH 1995a). CDA conceptualizes language functionally, arguing that the grammar of a language is a network of systems corresponding to the three major social functions of a language: the construction of reality, as well as the enactment and negotiation of social relations and identities (FAIRCLOUGH 1989). According to this type of critical linguistics framework, language is therefore a part of every social practice (FAIRCLOUGH 2000). First, when the focus is on how a text figures and contributes to social action and interaction in social events, «the question of ‘genre’ always arises [...] because social action is always interaction and interaction always involves communication» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 156). To put it differently, the concept of genre «is the key to studying how semiotic resources are used to enact communicative interactions» VAN LEEUWEN (2005: 156). In addition, there is no action which does not involve reflection: social action always includes not only a representation of the world as it constitutes its context and frame, but also «reflexive self-representation» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 156), that is representation by those people involved in the action of what they are doing. To quote VAN LEEUWEN (2005: 91), «discourse is the key to studying how semiotic resources are used to construct representations of what is going on in the world». Lastly, semiotics also involves style, which is «the key to studying how people use semiotic resources to ‘perform’ genres» (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 91).

The paper aims to examine this «interdiscursive character» (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 67) of the European Commission’s discourse, namely the particular mix of genres, discourses and styles as realized in lexical, grammatical and semantic features at various levels of text organization. More specifically, the aim is to see how social change has affected EU discourse, and how the particular combination of discourses, genres, and styles, which constitute the language elements of EU social practice, have changed over time. In this respect, for instance, the recent trend of globalization - as a social change - has had a great impact on a new form of communitarian discourses: the result being that EU institutions have been fostering the formation of corporate-model discourses of consumerism (i.e. efficiency, competitiveness, etc.); at the same time, changes in methods of administration have brought about changes in the set of genres employed by EU institutions: for example, from informative-oriented to promotional-oriented genre; and thirdly, EU institutional style as a form of public style is increasingly becoming private style. These three dimensions of semiotic resource analysis will be discussed one by one, although they are always simultaneously in operation and never occur separately: they are all part of every communicative event and semiotic act (FAIRCLOUGH 1989; FAIRCLOUGH 2000; VAN LEEUWEN 2005).

### 2.2. Corpus description and selection

The Corpus consists of a series of informative publications on the European Union. These booklets are part of *Europe on the move*<sup>1</sup>, a series of booklets on the key facts

<sup>1</sup> The *Europe on the move* booklet series can also be read and downloaded in at least 11 different

concerning the EU, its origins, values and history, but also its achievements, goals, policies and the way it works.

The time-span for data collection starts on February 28, 2001, the day on which Valéry Giscard d'Estaing announced the project for achieving «broad consensus» on a «constitutional Treaty for Europe» (TCE) during the inaugural session of the Convention of the Future of Europe. In the subsequent months, at the summit meeting during the Belgian presidency (December 2001), the Declaration of Laeken officially introduced the word «constitution» in EU official documents. Although high hopes and grand visions could be felt at that time, subsequent to a series of positive votes by national parliaments<sup>2</sup> and a plebiscite in Spain, the ratification process came to a standstill when the French and Dutch electorate turned down the Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe during the referenda called, respectively, on May 29 and June 1, 2005.

In order to analyze discursive strategies enacted by the EU *pre-* and *post-*referendum, it was decided to examine the series of informative publication *Europe on the move*. In particular, these informative booklets were chosen for two main reasons. First, they offer the most comprehensive informative overview for the EU audience on a large scale. Secondly, since some of them have been republished subsequent to 2005, and many of them even published *ex novo* after that date, this, as well as a synchronic analysis, has enabled a longitudinal linguistic analysis of the evolution concerning the communicative modalities and the discourse practices adopted by EU institutions when communicating with citizens. Consequently, by comparing the most recent republished versions with the previous ones, it is possible to focus on some longitudinal changes in the EU discourse system and then find confirmation of the occurrences of certain linguistic elements and communicative purposes which emerge and which can also be found in those booklets published *ex novo* after the referendum failure (listed as 'new' in Table 1).

As Table 1 shows, the booklets have been divided into two different groups according to time reference: those belonging to the 'old' generation, which are dated 2001-2005 and those dated 2005-2009 ('new' generation booklets).

In order to better comprehend the linguistic evolution of the discourse practices adopted by EU institutions, it was deliberately decided to harmonize the time-span under investigation up until 2009: four years previous and four years subsequent to the referenda held in France and the Netherlands in 2005.

language versions at: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/publications>. In addition, these booklets are also available in printed copies and can be obtained at EU info points all over Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxemburg, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain had ratified the TCE.

Table 1. The corpus under investigation.

‘Old’ (published before 2005)	Word number	‘New’ (published after 2005)	Word number
A community of cultures (2001)	7278	Better off in Europe (2005)	5606
European solidarity victims crises (2001)	5549	A quality environment (2005)	6555
		Investing in our common future (2006)	5293
Choices for a greener future (2002)	11076	In touch with the EU (2006)	3673
		Europe and you (2006)	2660
It’s a better life (2002)	6255	The EU in the world (2007)	5229
Towards a knowledge-based Europe (2002)	5488	Key facts and figures (2007)	10230
Europe on the move (2003)	5552	Europe and you (2007)	2561
It’s your Europe (2003)	5379	50 ways forward (2007)	18261
More unity and more diversity (2003)	5653	Your rights as a consumers (2007)	5837
Going for growth (2003)	5605	Combating climate change (2007)	5462
Europe at crossroad (2003)	5554	The state of the Union (2009)	8689
From farm to fork (2004)	5221	EU information and assistance (2009)	5521
Looking beyond tomorrow (2004)	5302	Your guide to the Lisbon Treaty (2009)	5347
Many tongues, one family (2004)	5356	An opportunity and a challenge (2009)	6783
		<b>Re-edited after 2005</b>	
Travelling in Europe (2002)	21945	Travelling in Europe (2007)	4403
Serving the people of Europe (2002)	10776	Serving the people of Europe (2005)	10776
How the European Union works (2003)	14413	How the European Union works (2007)	12954
Panorama of the European Union (2003)	3123	Panorama of the European Union (2007)	2845
Europe in 12 lessons (2003)	23182	Europe in 12 lessons (2006)	16991
TOTAL	139870	TOTAL	119336

The longitudinal analysis also involves a corpus linguistics approach. The corpus has been examined and data is used to confirm pre-set linguistics explanations and assumptions. More specifically, the approach used in this study is the corpus-based approach: appropriate material has been extracted to support intuitive knowledge, to verify expectations, and to allow linguistic phenomena to be studied not only qualitatively, but also quantitatively.

The premise as a basis for the idea behind the change in EU discourse system is that the disappointing results of the European Constitution referendum acted as a catalyst for the evolution in EU discourse and provided the impetus for these changes in EU communication policy. In other words, the main objective of EU institutions was, and still is, that of ‘recruiting Euro-skeptics’ and win them over in order to make them adhere to the European project (PIGA 2011, CALIENDO and PIGA forthcoming). In this respect, the EU saw the need to create and sell the «product Europe» (PIGA 2013: 39) by adopting new strategies: no longer a merely informative-oriented genre approach, but a persuasive combination of corporate discourse and promotional-oriented genre.

### 3. Discourse

For the purpose of this study, the term *discourse* is built upon Foucault’s conception of *discourse*. Paraphrasing FOUCAULT (1977), discourse is the «socially shaped knowledge of a given aspect of reality». By ‘socially shaped’ it is intended that which can be said or symbolized within a specific, identified domain. Discourse serves the interests of the institution, country, people, etc. in which the relevant texts are produced. These discourses not only represent the world as it is, but they are also imaginaries and projective, as they represent ‘potential’ and possible worlds which are different from the

actual world, and which discourses project to change in a particular direction (VAN LEEUWEN 2005).

The concern in this Section is with how reality is represented from the point of view of EU institutions. This includes representation of reality as it was *pre-* and *post-* the Referendum failure, as well as of reality as it might or should be. Looked at from a language perspective, different representations of reality give rise to different ‘discourses’ (FAIRCLOUGH 1989).

In addition, discourses are also constituted by the underlying ideological principles which shape them (FAIRCLOUGH 1989). The aim is to proceed by looking at the ideological principles underlying the institutional discourse of the European Union. This logic begins from an assumption about globalization, which leads to an emphasis on the competitiveness of *The EU in the world* (2007), which foregrounds the aim of strengthening cohesion among all Member States, and on consequent advantages, benefits, and profits for all its citizens. In other words, opportunities provided by the new global economy will strengthen enterprise in the new knowledge-based economy and will be the means of achieving great social justice through affluence and prosperity all over Europe.

### 3.1. Nominalizations and abstract agents

The concern in this paragraph is to outline the vision of the contemporary global economy as constructed in the institutional discourse of the EU. EU institutional discourse is based on certain presuppositions about the nature of the contemporary global economy. In this respect, the following examples are of some interest since they all focus on the global economy and on what, according to the texts, globalization entails: namely, competitiveness, challenge, etc. From a closer analysis of the texts, what is interesting to note is that although international corporations and their activities dominate the global economy, they are not directly represented as agents (BOURDIEU 1998, FAIRCLOUGH 2000), nor are they explicitly present in the texts under investigation:

(1) *The new global economy [...] offers every chance of sustainable economic growth, job creation, and better living standards. (Looking beyond tomorrow, 2004)*

(2) *Globalisation has led inexorably to a more interdependent and interconnected world. Globalisation brings a new challenge. (The state of the Union, 2009)*

(3) *[...] globalisation can boost economic growth [...]. Larger and more open markets mean increased competition between businesses and also between countries. (The state of the Union, 2009)*

(4) *[...] pressures inside Europe were matched by a growing realisation of the importance of globalisation. As new global powers emerged [...], Europe could not allow itself to neglect the new realities of the new global economy. (The state of the Union, 2009)*

(5) *In the age of Globalisation goods and services flow, capital and technologies are spreading worldwide, as countries everywhere open up to wider contact with each other. So globalisation can create more wealth for everybody. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2007)*

All the examples presented thus far are about processes represented as actions, but all of these processes have no responsible social actors. Example (5) (*goods and services flow, capital and technologies are spreading worldwide*) is perhaps the most significant: it is represented as an action, but *goods and services* as well as *capital and technology* are described as if they were the agents involved in the processes of *flowing* and *spreading*, rather than being the «affected» entities (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 163) upon which someone or something is acting (i.e. multinational corporations). There seem to be no explicit agents in the global economy as represented by EU institutions; nevertheless, there are ‘alternative agents’ which are explicit and which have an «abstract character» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 25). In the light of these considerations, the examples (1)-(3) seen above (*The new global economy offers every chance [...] in example (1), Globalisation has led inexorably to a more interdependent [...] world, example (2); globalisation can boost economic growth [...] in example (3); etc.*), the processes involved are organized in configurations that provide agents of a more abstract and impersonal character, namely *the new global economy, globalisation, etc.*

As can be noticed, *globalisation* (or *the new global economy*) is a «nominalization» (FAIRCLOUGH 1989: 50), which means that it is worded as a process noun and therefore made to function as a nominal group in the clause. Otherwise stated, rather than representing economic processes as involving people who apply means to material objects or entities to produce things; the real processes, people involved in those processes and the things produced, are demoted and put in the background, with the result that *the new economy* (or *globalisation*) is the only explicit «doer» (PARROTT 2000: 288) that does the deed (FAIRCLOUGH 2000). The sentence *the new global economy offers every chance [...]* in example (1) above, ‘says without saying’ that there is a new global economy, presupposing it as a simple fact of life that we all know. Globalization (or new global economy) is pervasively presupposed and extensively used in the discourse of EU institutions, especially as far as the ‘new’ booklets are concerned, as it occurs 69 times in the ‘new’ generation of booklets and only 7 times in the ‘old’ booklets. Presuppositions of *global economy* are marked in various ways in the texts: the most common marker is the definite article *the*. For instance, in example 4 above [...] *Europe could not allow itself to neglect the new realities of the new global economy*, presupposes that there are *new realities* brought about by *the new global economy* – thus that *the new global economy* exists. The definite article *the* is used to signal to the reader that he knows what is being referred to: «It triggers the listener or the reader to search for the most obvious area of common ground in order to identify this» (PARROT 2000: 47). In other words, the definite article is used with a noun to refer backwards to our shared experience or general knowledge (PARROT 2000). In each of the examples above, *the* signals that we all know which *global economy* is being talked about.

Another strategy pervasively adopted to presuppose globalization as something given and part of an inevitable process is the one which exploits the potential between information structure and thematic structure (HALLIDAY and MATTHIESSEN 2004); this is reflected in the unmarked relationship between the two. A given information unit is «co-extensive with one (ranking) clause»; and, in such a case «the ordering of «Given ^ New (‘unmarked tonicity’) means that the Theme falls within the Given, while the New falls within the Rheme» (HALLIDAY and MATTHIESSEN 2004: 93). Example (2) *Globalisation has led inexorably to a more interdependent and interconnected world* (as well as examples (1) and (3), is an instance of unmarked information focus, in which the theme (*globalisation, the new global economy*) falls within the given: it is information that is presented «as recoverable (Given)»; it is something like: “globalization is not

news”. What is treated as recoverable may be so because «the speaker wants to present as Given for rhetorical purposes. The meaning is: this is not news» (HALLIDAY and MATTHIESSEN 2004: 91).

BOURDIEU (1998) points out that powerful sections of the existing economy, including banks and governments that support them ordinarily represent global economy as already in existence – that is they presuppose it as something given and undisputable, as, in this specific case, the EU does.

In the corpus under investigation *change* is also used as a noun and not as a verb: it is «nominalized» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 26). As examples (6)-(11) which follow illustrate, although the concept of change most obviously implies a complex series of processes, *change* is not represented as a process but rather as «a causal entity in other processes» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 26):

(6) *Change enables our societies to embrace growth, employment, new job opportunities. (It's a better life, 2002)*

(7) *[...] technological change is revolutionising the way we live. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2007)*

(8) *In a world of rapid change, the EU is increasingly active in helping European research to achieve scientific excellence. (The EU in the world, 2007)*

(9) *Economic and structural change has a direct knock-on to growth and jobs. (The state of the Union, 2009)*

(10) *Structural change does not leave people behind. (Serving the peoples of Europe, 2005)*

(11) *The pace of structural and economic change in the world is too great. (50 ways forward, 2007)*

As can be noted in all the examples, there is no specification of agency and causality, of whom or what causes *change*, and in some cases, as in examples (6) and (8), there is not even specification of who or what is changing. As pointed out by FAIRCLOUGH (2000: 26) «Nominalisation involves [...] a backgrounding of the processes of change themselves, and a foregrounding of their effects». In other words, the absence of responsible agents contributes to constructing change as inevitable (BOURDIEU 1998).

What is interesting to note is that, in some cases, *globalisation* and *change* become not only naturally occurring phenomena that can be observed to happen or exist, but they have also been personified as ‘friends’ which *Europe* must welcome and *embrace* and start supporting and believing in.

(12) *Europe must not only concentrate on its own development but also **embrace globalisation** [...]. [emphasis mine] (Europe in 12 lessons, 2006)*

(13) *Europe must not only concentrate on raising economic performance and innovation but also **embrace change** [...]. [emphasis mine] (Europe in 12 lessons, 2006)*

From a semantic and pragmatic point of view, in both cases the verb *must* seems to

express dynamic necessity. This «neutral must» (PALMER 1990: 116) in examples (12) and (13) can be paraphrased as ‘it is necessary for Europe to develop and to be involved in globalization and change’. The metaphor *Europe must [...] embrace globalisation* seems to convey the idea of globalization as a positive phenomenon, and that a personified *Europe* must take measures to recognize the signs of the times that are inexorably changing and thus conform to globalization. In this respect, examples (12) and (13) seem to suggest a transformation of the contingency of changing times into necessity, and also necessity into the virtue of accepting globalization and change as an opportunity for the sake of Europe.

A pervasive effect of nominalization is, as can be noticed throughout the corpus, the fact that people are never ‘protagonists in the play’; ‘change’ and people are constructed as two discrete entities that are radically separated from each other (FAIRCLOUGH 2000). Change (including global economy, etc.) is something which we/people undergo and that comes to ‘us’ from outside (FAIRCLOUGH 2000, 2003), and of which we are not the ‘central characters’. This is evident in the examples (6) (*Change enables our societies [...]*), (7) (*Technological change is revolutionising the way we live*) and (10) (*Structural change does not leave people behind*) above, in which *our/we/people* «are confronted with change as effects without agency, rather than being participants in change able to effect its direction» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 27).

From a quantitative analysis perspective, there are 108 occurrences of *change* in the overall corpus<sup>3</sup>; 31 occurrences in the ‘old’ corpus and 77, more than double compared with the ‘old’ instances, in the ‘new’ corpus. The most frequent context words are related to lexemes connected with ‘technology’, a total of 41 (*Technological change*, *Change in technology*, etc.); ‘economy’ 29 (*economic change*); ‘structure’ 27 (*structural change*); ‘society’ 11 occurrences (*societal change*)<sup>4</sup>. According to FAIRCLOUGH (2000: 28) this «cascade of change» has the effect of signifying that the world is changing, and therefore by implication, to persuade us to accept this change and convince us that we are obliged to change too.

### 3.2. Agents in EU discourse

As already noted above, international corporations are never represented as agents in the discourse of EU institutions; they are omitted, perhaps as a way of obfuscating agency and responsibility.

As it is possible to see in the work of FAIRCLOUGH (2000) on the language of New Labour in the UK, the role of multinationals is also obfuscated, and the global economy is pervasively represented as an arena of competition between nation-states, «with Britain as protagonist [...]» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 29). This also seems to be a crucial step in constructing the logic of the EU discourse: the EU (or Europe) is the central protagonist in the process of competition in a globalized world. For instance, as example (8) above illustrates (*In a world of rapid change, the EU is increasingly active in helping European research to achieve scientific excellence*), the circumstantial element *in a world of rapid change* operates as a sort of premise in which global change

<sup>3</sup> The occurrences of *change* with items related to climate have not been included in the list, since climate change falls beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to point out that there are also 29 occurrences of *change* represented as a process in the overall corpus: 21 occurrences in the ‘old’ corpus and only 9 occurrences in the ‘new’ corpus. In both corpora, however, these processes are vague and unspecific; in other words, they do not specify details of processes such as who is involved and in what ways (as well as details of place and time, etc.), i.e. *The world is changing fast [...]* (*Your guide to the Lisbon Treaty* 2009).



is represented as a phenomenon whose nature is unquestionable and unchangeable. In *this world of rapid change* the EU is forced into increasingly intensive competition where ‘making the EU much more competitive’ to *achieve [...] excellence* becomes the primary task.

3.2.1. *The EU versus Europe. Who is the real agent?* The image of the EU as a protagonist in the competition on a global scale is constantly based on the equivalence between *EU* and *Europe*. The synecdoche *totum pro parte* EU = Europe is a perfectly routine and rather frequent equivalence in EU discourses. This double denotation *Europe/EU* seems to convey different visions and conceptions of EU institutions. It can be said that the *EU*, generally, seems to possess a connotation which focuses much more on technical and institutional aspects. On the other hand, *Europe*, at least in part, seems to be broadly understood and designated by non-institutional and non-strictly political features and connotations (PIGA 2013). In this respect, it seems to be endowed with some profound and deeper meaning involving ‘European *demos*’, namely both, common EU citizens and those EU citizens working for EU institutions, as being ‘in the same boat’. What seems to be implicitly set up is the following equivalences: EU = Europe = *demos* = we. This is a very striking feature in the discourses of the EU: it marks a difference between speaking ‘within’ the discourse of the EU and speaking ‘about’ the discourse of the EU; otherwise stated, it marks a difference between speaking ‘as Europe’ and speaking ‘about Europe’. This is made clear in the following example:

(14) *Effective competition means high quality at low cost. As **Europe**, we will only derive full benefit from the frontier-free single market if suppliers and service providers can compete fairly for **our** business.* [emphasis mine] (*Europe on the move*, 2003)

As can be seen, *Europe* and *we* are perfect equivalents, and, like synonyms, can be substituted for each other: *our business* is ‘Europe’s business’ and *vice versa*. In other words, by using *Europe* there seems to be a convergence of identities between EU institutions and citizens as working in the mutual interest in the competition of a global scale. The growing need on the part of EU institutional discourse to incorporate *Europe* as its synonym and thus to convince EU citizens that the meaning of EU may be equated with that of all over Europe is also demonstrated by the synchronic, and longitudinal quantitative analysis shown in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively. The synchronic quantitative analysis (Table 2), which has been carried out throughout the overall corpus, compares the occurrences of *Europe* with the occurrences of *EU*. As can be noted, the occurrences of *Europe* are higher, achieving a significant percentage of 0.058:

Table 2. Synchronic quantitative analysis of Europe/EU.

Occurrences	Number of occurrences	%
<i>Europe</i>	593	0.058
<i>The EU</i>	188	0.0108

In Table 3 below, on the other hand, the quantitative analysis is more specific, it compares the occurrences of *Europe* in the ‘old’ and ‘new’ generation of booklets:

Table 3. Occurrences of Europe in the ‘old’ and ‘new’ generation of the booklets.

Versions	Number of occurrences	%
‘Old’	255	0.026
‘New’	338	0.032

As can be seen, there is a slight increase in the occurrences of *Europe* after 2005. The data displayed above in Table 2 and 3 are also in line with what has been propounded by KRZYŻANOWSKI and OBERHUBER (2007), who point out that the EU-discourse of recent years tend to converge Europe as a clear synonym of the EU. By claiming that *Europe* stands for the *EU* and, in certain a way (through its alleged integration), embodies the aspirations of the whole of Europe, European citizens are supposed to rebuild their faith and belief in the current everyday role and significance of EU institutions in their everyday lives and in the functioning and future of the whole continent of Europe (KRZYŻANOWSKI and OBERHUBER 2007).

### 3.3. Discourse blending: competition and solidarity

The description of the new global economy as an arena of «competition between businesses and between countries» (Example 3) entails therefore a priority for EU institutions: making the whole continent of Europe much more competitive. Indeed, there is an explicit commitment on the part of EU institutions to a politics oriented to «the needs and benefits of the *whole* continent of Europe» [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006), without any sharp internal division, neither people nor countries excluded, as the following examples demonstrate:

(15) *The process of European integration now affects the whole continent of Europe.* (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006)

(16) *The interests of Europeans demand a strong global Europe as much as the 21st century world needs a strong Europe.* (*The EU in the world*, 2007)

(17) *The bigger the EU, the greater the benefits.* (*Going for growth*, 2003)

There is a striking, underlined rationale in EU discourse that provides the basis of its cohesive and inclusive politics: «Europe-wide free *competition* must be counterbalanced by Europe-wide *solidarity*, expressed in practical help for ordinary people and regions in difficulty» [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons* 2006). *Competition* and *solidarity* are therefore the central themes in the discourses of EU institutions. In this respect, there is a widespread «discourse blending» (SCOLLON 2008: 80) of lexemes which widely take over corporate discourse, on the one hand (i.e. *stimulate competition*, *improve efficiency*, etc.); and social justice discourse, on the other hand (i.e. *fight unemployment*, *fight against poverty*, etc.), as the following examples illustrate:

(18) *Europe has put in place the building blocks for **prosperity and social justice** [...].* [emphasis mine] (*The state of the Union*, 2009)

(19) *The Cohesion Fund focuses on improving competition [...] **but also** on regional and local development [...] including areas of the EU where below average per capita*

*income is particularly high. [emphasis mine] (50 ways forward, 2007)*

(20) *The Cohesion Fund is used to finance innovation and research of European interest **but also** [...] **projects in EU countries** whose GDP per capita is lower than 90 % of the EU average. [emphasis mine] (Europe in 12 lessons, 2006)*

(21) *The European Investment Bank (EIB) lends money for projects of European interest. It **also** provides finance for economic development in candidate countries and the developing world. [emphasis mine] (How the EU works, 2007)*

(22) **Not only** will Europe continue improving conditions for trade and investment, **but it will also now** be able to play a much fuller role in fighting against poverty. [emphasis mine] (*The EU in the world*, 2007)

(23) *the EU can [...] respond [...] with the right mix of instruments. Promoting trade and business is **one side** [...] Lifting people and poor countries out of poverty is **the other**. [emphasis mine] (The EU in the world, 2007)*

(24) *Europe uses the European Social Fund [...] **not just through** jobs and growth **but also through** policies aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion. [emphasis mine] (Investing in our common future, 2006)*

As can be noted, all the examples (18)-(24) above present formulations expressing relations of «extension» (HALLIDAY and MATTHIESSEN 2004: 422) between two items of information which seem to be irreconcilable. Addition links such as *and* in example (18), *but also* in example (19), focusing adverbs such as [...] *also* in (21), two-part conjunctions such as *not only will [...] but will also* in example (22), *not just through [...] but also through* in (24), etc. occur pervasively in the discourses of EU institutions. As pointed out by FAIRCLOUGH (2000: 45), «Such expressions draw attention to assumed incompatibilities while at the same time denying them – they go against the expectation of audience or readers, they elicit surprise». Not only are these «quite different pairings of ‘themes’» presented as no longer in conflict, but they are also expressed as perfectly equivalent. A kind of rhetoric which is effective in persuading people that the ‘antagonism’ between the *one side* and *the other* (Example 23) can be transcended, against the expectations of readers/citizens. The implicit statement is that Europe is founded on the values in which the needs and necessities of every individual are fulfilled and in which there are opportunities for all, no socially excluded, no ‘us and them’.

From a quantitative analysis perspective, there is a significant difference between the earlier and the more recent EU corpus. For example, as far as the most frequent lexemes related to ‘competition’ is concerned, there is a total of 280 instances of *competition* in the overall corpus: *competition* occurs 194 times on the more recent corpus, and 86 times on the earlier corpus. The predominant «semantic sequences» (HUNSTON 2008: 273) both in the ‘old’ and in the ‘new’ generation of booklets are with the verbs *stimulate*, *improve*, and *promote*. The lexeme *trade* is also pervasively used throughout the corpus: it occurs 98 times in the ‘old’ booklets and 329 times in the ‘new’ ones. Its most recurrent context is with the verbs *stimulate* and with the verb *encourage*. *Growth* occurs 87 times in the earlier corpus and 129 in the more recent corpus. Its predominant collocation is again with *encourage*, *stimulate*, and with the verb *improve*. *Innovation* is also widely adopted in EU discourse: it occurs 14 times (‘old’ corpus) and 54 (‘new’

corpus); again, it mainly collocates with *encourage* and with *stimulate*.

As far as the most frequent lexemes connected to ‘solidarity’ is concerned, there is a total of 77 instances of the term *solidarity* itself; 26 on the earlier corpus and 51 on the more recent one. The lexeme *solidarity* occurs mainly with the verb *show*, *support* and *reinforce*. There are 40 instances of the term *poverty* in the overall corpus, 10 in the ‘old’ and 30 in the ‘new’; and 62 instances of the term *unemployment*; 20 in the ‘old’ and 42 in the ‘new’ corpus. It is interesting to note the metaphorical character of the construction of *poverty* and *unemployment* in the corpus, implying that *poverty* and *unemployment* are enemies. Therefore, these evils, pervasively occur in collocations with lexemes related to the ‘discourse of war’, i.e. *combat*, *fight*, *overcome*, etc. *Poverty* in certain cases also occurs with *eradication*. *Assistance* occurs 20 times in the ‘old’ booklets and 80 times in the ‘new’ booklets. *Assistance*, both on the earlier and more recent corpus, collocates in the main with *financial*, *practical* and *humanitarian*. Lexemes related to corporate discourses and lexemes related to social justice discourses occur systematically throughout the corpus. Although it can be argued that this is not ‘new’ politics, as it is perfectly conventional for EU institutions to make such claims, there is a dramatic increase of these instances in the more recent corpus. Therefore, this can be much more rhetorically effective in persuading people through the increment and abundance of examples.

### 3.4. A knowledge-based Europe

The key policy area for simultaneously achieving this double aim of *competition and solidarity* is that of a knowledge-based economy. Otherwise stated: «investing in human capital» (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006). To support this view, at the Lisbon Summit, EU leaders acknowledged that future «eradication of poverty and competitiveness depended on a renovated education policy including “e-learning” and life-long vocational training».

This emerges clearly when one looks at the way in which knowledge and learning are represented in the *corpus*, i.e. *pathway to growth*, *key to prosperity*, etc.:

(25) [...] *Knowledge and skills are the key to prosperity. (It's your Europe, 2003)*

(26) [...] *education and lifelong learning [...] as a pathway to growth. (The State of the Union, 2009)*

(27) [...] *Lifelong learning is crucial to increase the pace of economic development. (An opportunity and a challenge, 2009)*

(28) [...] *lifelong learning as a basic component of prosperity and development. (Invest in our common future, 2006)*

In all the examples the key term is *lifelong learning*. *Lifelong learning* occurs 154 times throughout the corpus (74 times in the ‘old’ booklets and 80 times in the ‘new’ ones), in all occurrences it seems to be part of economic discourse rather than educational discourse, «as if ‘learning’ had become an economic rather than an educational process» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 75).

«Human capital discourse» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 49) is also overwhelmingly present in the corpus, although only in the ‘new’ corpus (it occurs 20 times). *Human capital* always occurs with lexemes related to ‘investment’: *investing in people and skills*,

*investing in human capital, investment in human capital, investing in physical and human capital*, etc. The term *investment* is widely used in business, management, and corporate discourse in general (FAIRCLOUGH 2000). Similarly, analogous to any form of corporation, the 'EU enterprise' 'invests' in order to obtain competitive advantages, and in a knowledge-based economy the primary means is investing in human capital.

The representation of a knowledge-based economy as the primary means for competition of «The EU in the world» leads, in some cases, even to expressions denoting certain forms of «nationalist discourse» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 35). Indeed, there is a strong commitment on the part of EU institutions to the 'European temperament':

(29) *Think European. Europe has a proud tradition of scientific excellence and technological innovation. (It's your Europe, 2003)*

(30) *Europe means education and culture. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2006)*

And in most cases the representations even appeal to the European 'attitude' as being 'the best in the world':

(31) *The overall goal EU leaders set themselves at Lisbon is to make the European Union the world's most competitive knowledge-based society. (Towards a knowledge-based Europe, 2002)*

(32) *Europe wishes to become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. (Towards a knowledge-based economy, 2002)*

(33) [...] *Europe is pushing to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. (Towards a knowledge based economy, 2002)*

### 3.5. (Re)Building the European community

One of the abiding problems that EU institutions have to face is the fact that Europe lacks a genuine sense of congruency, due to its multiple identities and social fragmentation. It is possibly this sense of «dispersed self» (RUTHERFORD 2004: 144) that might explain a constant obsession on the part of EU institutions about the continuous and unremitting efforts to make or, 'remake', a sense of European community. The attempt to build a sense of social congruency is not only based on economic factors and utilitarian grounds, as noticed above, but also on noble and deeper values such as: history, common roots, common heritage of values, humanistic ideals, etc. This kind of «moral discourse» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 39), although it is almost absent in the early generation of booklets, is pervasively used in the more recent publications. As pointed out in one booklet published after the Referendum failure and called *Europe in 12 lessons* (2006): «A sense of belonging together and having a common destiny cannot be manufactured. It can only arise from a shared cultural awareness, which is why Europe now needs to focus its attention not just on economics but also on citizenship and culture».

This proliferation of morally loaded terms is noteworthy in itself; it indicates that there is a major preoccupation for EU institutions: the absence of a real community in Europe and a genuine sense of «social identity» (HERRMANN ET AL. 2004: 5) among its citizens. In order to face this lack of 'empathic attachment', a strategy widely adopted by EU institutions is to stress common roots and common heritage of values among its

citizens. In this respect, history is a significant element, and therefore, it is given great emphasis. In the example (34) below, history, for instance, is used as an identity-constitutive element, which in this specific case is the remote Greek and Roman history and cultures, in which Europe and Europeans initially put down their roots. In the other examples (35) and (36), ideas concern the *common heritage of values* whereby Europeans are united:

(34) *The peoples of Europe with their diverse traditions. Their historic heritage is charted in prehistoric cave paintings, Greek and Roman antiquities, Moorish architecture, medieval fortresses, Renaissance palaces and baroque churches.* [emphasis mine] (*Travelling in Europe*, 2008)

(35) *Europeans are united by their common heritage of values that distinguishes Europeans from the rest of the world.* [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2003)

(36) *So the EU stands for a view of humanity and a model of society [...]. Europeans cherish their rich heritage of values, which includes a belief in human rights, social solidarity, the right to a protected environment, respect for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity and a harmonious blend of tradition and progress.* [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006)

In examples (37) and (38) below, ideas concern the attractiveness of European diversity and tradition, its multiculturalism and multilingualism, framed in its beautiful scenery *a rich tapestry of landscapes from rocky coastlines to sandy beaches [...]* (38), *or in its vibrant cities, colourful cultural festivities [...]* and *varied cuisine* (37), expressions which are also very likely to be found in texts such as advertising campaigns for tourism:

(37) *The modern Europe with their diverse tradition, cultures and languages attracts the traveller with its vibrant cities, colourful cultural festivities, winter and summer sports, and varied cuisine.* [emphasis mine] (*Travelling in Europe*, 2008)

(38) *The European Union stretches over the continent of Europe: a rich tapestry of landscapes from rocky coastlines to sandy beaches, from fertile pastureland to arid plains, from lakes and forests to arctic tundra.* [emphasis mine] (*Travelling in Europe*, 2008)

In examples (39)-(42) below, emphasis is placed on the same roots and humanistic ideals discourses (39) that inspire all European countries, as well as on the hope for the continuity of these ideals at an inter-national (and intra-national) level on the basis of ‘collective memory’ and ‘*historia magistra vitae*’ discourse (examples (39) and (42)). However, there is also a sense of rejection and therefore of discontinuity and ‘rebirth’ from the tragedy caused by the Second World War, and the creation of a sort of parallelism uniting all the European countries by means of ‘shared suffering’ and ‘common sorrow’ discourse (41).

(39) *Before becoming a real political objective, the idea of uniting Europe was just a dream in the minds of philosophers and visionaries. Victor Hugo, for example, imagined a peaceful ‘United States of Europe’ inspired by humanistic ideals. The dream was shattered by the terrible wars that ravaged the continent during the first half*

of the 20th century. However, a new kind of **hope emerged from the rubble of World War Two**. People who had resisted totalitarianism during the war were determined to **put an end to international conflicts**. [emphasis mine] (*Europe in lessons*, 2006)

(40) ‘**A day will come when all the nations of this continent, without losing their distinct qualities or their glorious individuality, will fuse together in a higher unity and form the European brotherhood. A day will come when the only battlefield will be the marketplace for competing ideas. A day will come when bullets and bombs will be replaced by votes**’. Victor Hugo spoke those prophetic words in 1849, but it took more than a century for his utopian predictions to start coming true. [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006)

(41) *Two world wars and countless other conflicts on European soil caused millions of deaths and there were times when all hope seemed lost. Today, the first decade of the 21st century offers brighter prospects*. [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006)

(42) *Europe touches on things that Europeans care most deeply about: **peace, democracy, justice and solidarity. This pact is being strengthened and confirmed all across Europe: half a billion people have chosen to live under the rule of law and in accordance with age-old values centred on humanity and human dignity***. [emphasis mine] (*Europe 12 lessons*, 2006)

#### 4. Genre

The previous section dealt with discourse as a social semiotic approach to studying the «‘what’ of communication» (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 117). In this section the aim is to look at EU discourse as a semiotic approach to studying the «‘how’ of communication» (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 117), that is a resource for structuring the interaction through which the content is communicated (VAN LEEUWEN 2000). For the purpose of the present study, in this section the concepts of «face systems» (SCOLLON and SCOLLON 2000: 125) and modality will be taken into consideration.

##### 4.1. Face systems in EU discourse

The concern in this section is to represent EU «face relationships» (SCOLLON and SCOLLON 2000: 99) with citizens as something which is changing and developing over time. This requires showing the contrast between the earlier and more recent EU corpus from both qualitative and quantitative linguistic analysis. More specifically, face relationships between EU institutions and citizens will be investigated in order to demonstrate that this interpersonal face relationship closely resembles that enacted in advertising genre between producer/advertiser and consumer.

FAIRCLOUGH (1989) claims that advertising is a form of «public» discourse in the sense that it entails an indeterminate and massive audience, which in this specific case are the citizens of the EU. At the same time, this relationship is also complex from the point of view of the producer, in the sense that it involves many people, i.e. the staff working for the ‘advertising agency’ of the European Commission - the Directorate-General for Press and Communication - responsible for EU publications. The indeterminate and massive nature of the audience on the one hand and the complex nature of the producer/advertiser on the other, pose a challenge to the advertiser: he «needs to direct an appeal, presupposing a determinate appealer, to individual audience

members» (FAIRCLOUGH 1989: 203). Both the producer (European Commission) and the citizen-audience need to be «personalized» (FAIRCLOUGH 1989: 203), and since the concrete and real situation of the producer and of the interpreter are variable, this personalization has to be «synthetic» (FAIRCLOUGH 1989: 203): individual audience members are directly addressed by simulating an individual addressee: *you*

(43) *With 'eu', you can show that you are a European, too! You can register your personal website or that of your school, club or organization. [emphasis mine] (50 Ways forward, 2007).*

As can be seen, and as is discussed in more detail below, an apparent relation of 'intimacy' with the citizen is achieved by adopting a kind of «personal language» (KRESS and VAN LEEUWEN 1996: 31), which, like in advertising, would only be spoken by the members of a family or friends. This simulated 'equality' between interactants is widely adopted in advertising discourse in order to exert manipulation.

The use of the personal pronoun is an element contributing to the idea of «democratization» (FAIRCLOUGH 1992: 201) of EU institutional discourse, which implies the deletion of overt markers of hierarchy and power asymmetry between citizens and EU institutions. This restructuring of boundaries between public and private draws upon a tendency towards increasing control over people's «lifeworld» (HABERMAS 1987: 153) through systems such as Institution and State (HABERMAS 1987).

In the EU booklets, as well as on the official EUROPA website, audience/citizens are directly addressed and involved in a simulated face-to-face interaction, whose purpose is both strategic and instrumental:

(44) *There are no limits on what you can buy and take with you when you travel between EU countries as long as it is for personal use and not for resale. [emphasis mine] (Travelling in Europe, 2008)*

(45) *If you are European, you are part of a family [...]. Have you ever stopped to wonder what the European Union has done for you? Now is your chance to find out. [emphasis mine] (50 ways forward, 2007)*

(46) *If you have an unresolved dispute with a trader, do not despair! There are a number of options you can take for advice or help. [emphasis mine] (Your rights as a consumer, 2007)*

As demonstrated in the examples (43)-(46) above, and as emerges from the quantitative data shown in Table 4, synthetic personalization is extensively used throughout the corpus. Furthermore, as can be noted in Table 4, its use increases dramatically after 2005, reaching a remarkably high percentage in the last three years (2007-2009). In advertising discourse, direct address through the pronoun *you* is very common (cf. FAIRCLOUGH 1992; BHATIA 1993; VAN LEEUWEN 2005), and all the examples above illustrate how synthetic personalization is adopted also in institutional mass communication, namely when there are not only real, but potential addressees whose identity is unknown to the addresser. In the light of this perspective, as evidenced in the examples (47)-(50) below, in the 'old' generation of booklets the relational meaning projected by the EU institutions is more impersonal, distant and well established. Indeed, there are no instances of synthetic personalization and EU citizens



are addressed by adopting a more institutionalized conservative genre, i.e. simply named as «citizens». The quantitative analysis shown in Table 5 below shows that the number of occurrences of «citizen/s» decreases dramatically from a percentage of 0.49 to only 0.12 in the ‘new’ generation of booklets.

Table 4. Quantitative longitudinal analysis of synthetic personalization *you*.

Year	Number of occurrences	%
2001	2	0.014
2002	8	0.15
2003	10	0.32
2004	6	0.11
2005 (I part)	14	0.15
2005 (II part)	58	0.53
2006	87	0.74
2007	153	0.90
2008	157	0.95
2009	161	0.97

Table 5. Comparison of the occurrences of “citizen/s” between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ versions.

Versions	Number of occurrences	%
‘Old’	567	0.49
‘New’	125	0.12

(47) *The Commission takes many decisions which directly affect the lives of its **citizens** [...] enabling **citizens** to obtain information on items that concern them.* [emphasis mine] (*Serving the people of Europe*, 2005)

(48) *EU countries recognise professional qualifications that **citizens** have obtained in another EU country. EU **citizens** living in another member state can vote in local and European (but not national) elections in their country of residence.* [emphasis mine] (*Better off in Europe*, 2005)

(49) *The European Charter of Fundamental Rights brings together all the separate documents about the rights of European **citizens** [...].* [emphasis mine] (*50 ways forward*, 2003)

(50) *It is a basic principle that all citizens must have access to all EU documents in the official language of their country [...] the EU ensures that there is no discrimination between **citizens** from big countries and the others, however small they are.* [emphasis mine] (*Serving the people of Europe*, 2004)

As can be noted, all the examples above have, in a certain sense and from a semantic point of view, the effect of distancing EU institutions from their citizens, marking EU

institutions as having a special authority. This is certainly in marked contrast to the use of synthetic personalization in the ‘new’ generation of booklets, as has previously been referred to. Indeed, as can be noted in all the examples (47)-(50) above, the institutional voice of the EU is that of a traditional institution, in the sense that the communicative purpose is typically informative, there seems to be no promotional features in examples (47)-(50): what is at issue is only people’s rights as citizens, not their manipulation as consumers.

In addition, an interesting point to consider is that a clear emergence of the synthetic personalization communicative model has been noted especially in booklets that have been re-edited after 2005 (cf. CALIENDO and PIGA forthcoming).

Table 6. Emergence of synthetic personalization in booklets re-edited after 2005.

<b>Former version</b>	How the European Union works. A citizens’ guide to the EU (2003)	Serving the people of Europe. How the Commission works (2005)
<b>Current version</b>	How the European Union works. <i>Your</i> guide to the EU institutions (2007)	Serving the people of Europe. What the Commission does for <i>you</i> (2007)

Conversely, synthetic personalization is not only widely adopted in the ‘new generation’ publications, as has been extensively illustrated in Table 4 and in the examples (43)-(46) above, but also emerges from a more external analysis of the titles of the most recent publications:

(51) *Better off in Europe – How the EU’s single market benefits **you***. (2005) [emphasis mine]

(52) *In touch with the EU – Ask **your** questions - have **your** say*. (2006) [emphasis mine]

(53) **Your** rights as a consumer – How the European Union protects **your** interests. (2007) [emphasis mine]

In order to emphasize dialogue between ‘equals’ advertising genre is also replete with imperative sentences (FAIRCLOUGH 1989). This is also the case in EU discourse: audience members are directly addressed through imperative sentences, which are once again associated with the adoption of synthetic personalization:

(54) ***Join the debate on Europe!** You can discuss the issues that are important to you with other European citizens*. [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006)

(55) ***Do shopping within the EU!** There are no limits on what you can buy and take with you when you travel between EU countries [...]*. [emphasis mine] (*Travelling in Europe*, 2008)

(56) ***Improve the distribution of information about the EU** in a way which is adapted to local and regional needs; give yourself the chance to send feedback*. [emphasis mine] (*In touch with the EU*, 2006)

(57) ***It’s up to you!** What do you want the EU to do and not to do? **Discuss the issues with your friends, your family, your colleagues**. Then **tell what you think***. [emphasis mine]

mine] (*Travelling in Europe*, 2008)

As can be seen from the quantitative analysis shown in Table 7 below, the number of imperatives rises after the second half of 2005. In spite of the very small increase in the percentage during the ‘transition period’, namely between the second part of 2005 and 2006, from 2007 the number of imperatives rises dramatically, reaching a percentage of 0.18 in 2009.

Table 7. Quantitative longitudinal analysis of the use of imperatives,

Year	Number of occurrences	%
2001	1	0.0025
2002	2	0.0013
2003	2	0.0015
2004	1	0.0021
2005 (I part)	2	0.0018
2005 (II part)	7	0.02
2006	9	0.03
2007	12	0.05
2008	28	0.09
2009	31	0.18

As can be seen, all these examples (54)-(57) above are highly representative of the colonization of institutional genre by the genre of advertising. The numerous uses of the imperative mood i.e. *Join the debate on Europe* in (54), *Do shopping within the EU!* (55), etc., witness a personalized institution-audience relationship through the simulation of a conversational tone. Therefore, being relatively personal, informal and supportive, the imperative mood fosters a relationship based on equality between EU institutions and citizens.

Following FAIRCLOUGH (1989), the adoption of synthetic personalization and the imperative mood on the part of the producer in order to identify a supposed individual addressee, also presupposes a personification on the part of the addresser. In this respect, the corpus under investigation seems to draw on discursive elements of corporate discourse, widely adopting the «corporate we» (FAIRCLOUGH 1989: 205) in order to identify the supposed addresser as a spokesperson for the ‘EU-company’ producing the ‘commodities’:

(58) *Have you got a query about a European Union policy or activity? – we are here to help you! Our service has more than 40 dedicated, multilingual staff to handle questions on a range of issues relating to the EU.* [emphasis mine] (50 ways forward, 2007)

(59) *We can help you understand the opportunities and rights [...]. For example, we are often asked about how best to get qualifications recognised in other Member States.* [emphasis mine] (50 ways forward, 2007)

(60) *We are pretty efficient here at Europe Direct: surveys show we provide the answers people need [...]. But don't worry if your query is complex – we promise to find*

*you an expert. [emphasis mine] (50 ways forward, 2007)*

(61) *Where to find us? So if you have a question, please give us a call from any of the 27 Member States. Our website also shows you how to email us and use our real-time web assistance service [...]. [emphasis mine] (50 ways forward, 2007)*

(62) *[...] it is vital that we listen to the citizens' points of view if we are to succeed in meeting their expectations. [emphasis mine] (Europe in 12 lessons, 2006)*

As can be noted, EU institutions make an extensive use of the corporate *we*, as well as its related forms such as, for example, its equivalent direct and indirect complement *us* and its possessive adjective and pronoun *our*. This personalizes EU institutions, in contrast to the impersonal constructions generally used in institutional genre. This personification is typical of the persuasive nature of the new booklets, in which, because of the use of *we*, the addressee feels within the discourse and not just 'about' the discourse, and therefore, in a certain sense, even part of the narration. This is even more evident as far as the composited *we* is concerned (which will be discussed in more detail below), in which the identification of EU institutions with all the EU citizens as being 'in the same boat' is even more emphasized. On the other hand, because of the more informative nature of the old booklets, there is a narrative voice which creates a sort of detachment that depersonalizes the narration. This is evident from the widespread use of *institution/s* in the early booklets, which allows the diagnosis of a shift from the depersonalization of the 'old' generation of booklets to the personification (*we*) of the most recent ones. This aspect also emerges and finds confirmation in the quantitative analysis carried out between the 'early' and 'new' booklets. As can be seen in Table 8 below, the frequency of *we* rises considerably in the 'new' booklets achieving a percentage of 0.19. On the other hand, the use of *institution/s* used both as a subject or as an object drops dramatically in the 'new' booklets from 0.18 to 0.02. The increase in the use of the personal pronoun *we* to substitute the more neutral and impersonal noun *institution/s* highlights the EU's intent to emphasize proximity and therefore reliability and presence of the institutions in citizens' lives.

Table 8. Comparison of the occurrence of *we* and *institution/s* in the 'Old' and 'New' booklets

'Old' booklets		'New' booklets
Type of occurrence	Frequency %	Frequency %
<i>we</i>	0.01	0.19
<i>institution/s</i>	0.18	0.02

As shown in Table 9 below, *we* increases dramatically after 2005, achieving its highest number of occurrences from 2007 to 2009:

Table 9. Quantitative longitudinal analysis of the pronoun *we*.

Year	Number of occurrences	%
2001	9	0.0070
2002	13	0.0075
2003	18	0.03
2004	14	0.08
2005 (I part)	5	0.05
2005 (II part)	49	0.3
2006	82	0.7
2007	127	0.9
2008	112	0.9
2009	147	0.7

As can be noted from all the examples of synthetic personalization seen in (43)-(46) and (51)-(53), and corporate *we* seen in (58)-(62) above, the addresser(s) is talking to *you* about *us* (exclusive). In addition to this, as can be seen in the examples (63)-(67) below, the addresser(s) is also talking to *you* about *we* (inclusive), extending in so doing its implicitly claimed co-membership to the audience lifeworld (HABERMAS 1987).

The construction of a shared membership of a common sense lifeworld (namely realized in a conversationalized, public-colloquial style, using *we* and *you*) can be seen as instrumental and aiming at the achievement of teleological effects (HABERMAS 1987). In other words, EU institutions implicitly claim a shared membership of the same lifeworld with their citizens, and in so doing implicitly negate the differences of subject positions, perspectives and interests. In this respect, it is also possible to witness a slippage between the corporate-exclusive *we* and the «composited» (FAIRCLOUGH 1989: 128) inclusive *we*, creating ambivalence between EU institutions and ordinary citizens. The corporate *we*, as already discussed above, is the exclusive *we* which only refers to the addresser, but does not include the addressee(s); the composited *we*, on the contrary, is the inclusive *we* and shows identification with all of the EU citizens as being ‘in the same boat’. In this respect, all the examples below illustrate the use of the composited *we*, which stresses the unity and equality of institutions and citizens and ignores differences in interests and identities:

(63) [...] *the ease of shopping and doing business in the Single Market helps us all expand our horizons as we talk into our Finnish mobile phones, wear our Italian suits, drive our Czech cars [...].* [emphasis mine] (*50 ways forward*, 2007)

(64) *The European Union has rules and standards in place to ensure that all the food we eat is of high quality [...].* [emphasis mine] (*Your right as a consumer*, 2007)

(65) *The choices we make as consumers have a real impact on greenhouse gas emissions from energy use and production.* [emphasis mine] (*Combating climate change*, 2007)

(66) *The EU is striving to narrow the gap between its rich and poor members, strengthen the European economy, make it more competitive and create more jobs so we can all enjoy a better quality of life.* [emphasis mine] (*Key facts and figures*, 2007)

(67) *Fossil fuels, which we burn to provide power and transport, are a particular culprit, [...] warm the Earth's surface.* [emphasis mine] (*A quality environment*, 2005)

Examples (63)-(67) above are cases of composited *we* (also strengthened by the presence of the possessive adjective *our*), being inclusive of the institution itself as well as of the readers/citizens. As already mentioned above, this inclusion is relationally significant because it represents the institutions and the audience, and everyone else as being 'in the same boat'. In these specific cases, the composited *we* seems to even belong to philosophical or sociological genre as being inclusive of all humankind, "we, human beings" as in examples (65), (67), or "we, members of European society" as in, (63), (64) and (66).

According to FAIRCLOUGH (1989: 205), the addresser can also be «individualized» through the expressive values of textual elements that a supposed addresser may choose (i.e. lexical choice, etc.). In this respect, it is important to note the structure of the sentences in the body of texts, namely the familiar advertising constituents. Everything is concisely 'packed' into principally short, «snappy sentences» (FAIRCLOUGH 1989: 205), i.e., *Do shopping within the EU! (Travelling in Europe, 2008), It's up to you! (Travelling in Europe, 2008)*, etc. It is thanks to these features that the constructed addresser can be individualized. It is an addresser who appears oriented to the audience, expressing solidarity with the citizens by adopting expressions of informal conversation.

This attempt to present EU institutions as being closer to citizens like ordinary people, 'just like you and me', by means of linguistic elements suggesting equality and solidarity (i.e. imperatives, synthetic personalization, etc.) is, however, a way of manoeuvring them. Indeed, with reference to BELL and VAN LEEUWEN (1994: 36), the realization of proximity through informal, colloquial language and private conversation is a mode of social control: «A new form of public speech developed [...] mixed it with elements of informal, private conversation – in a planned and deliberate way, and in order to develop a new mode of social control».

In EU institutional discourse this also seems the case: the traditional boundary between the public and the private has been erased, and it is possible to witness a colonization of the former by the latter (HABERMAS 1987; RUTHERFORD 2004). This tendency can be construed as a particular discursive manifestation related to the process of marketization of institutional genre, which also affects EU institutions, witnessing, therefore, a widespread instrumentalization of EU discursive practices. In other words, conversationalization of EU discourse, namely the simulation of person-to-person communication of ordinary conversation, is an intentional and deliberate way to create a flavour of equality and similarity between EU and citizens in order to favour the veiled attempt of manipulating interpersonal function for strategic and instrumental purposes, namely creating consensus and popular support around the European project.

In the light of this perspective, what is also important to point out is that, from a longitudinal perspective the early booklets are much more informative-oriented in nature, whereas in the most recent ones the communicative purpose of promotional genre prevails. Indeed, as can be observed in examples (47)-(50) above, as well as in Table 5 above, many of the occurrences of *citizen/s* emerge in those booklets which were published before 2005; on the other hand, the majority of promotional linguistic features, i.e. synthetic personalization, imperatives, exclamation marks, etc., emerge in the most recent publications (2007-2009), as seen in examples (43)-(46) and (51)-(57) above, as well as from the quantitative analysis shown in Tables 4-9 above. This might demonstrate that from 2005 onwards there is a progressive shift in the communicative

purpose of EU discourse, leading from the informative-oriented nature of the ‘early’ generation of booklets to the persuasive nature of the ‘new’ generation.

#### 4.2. A note on hedging: modality

Another way in which the EU is changing its way of relating to citizens is by means of hedging. Hedging is a further example of democratization of discourse, and it can account for the incursion of promotion and advertising genre into the orders of discourse of institutions in general (FAIRCLOUGH 1989, 1995a) and EU institutions. Indeed, according to FAIRCLOUGH (1995b: 147), the avoidance of «explicit obligational modalities» is perfectly in line with the dominance of promotional function as it marks a significant slippage in authority relations. In this respect, promotional genre addresses readerships as consumers or clients; when someone is selling something to a client, the client is supposed to be in a position of authority. This is generally valid as far as advertising genre is concerned, which is in evident contradiction with the traditional position of authority which institutions have over citizens.

As pointed out by CALIENDO and PIGA (forthcoming), in the booklets the EU is in some way redefining and scaling down its position of authority by abandoning a self-assertive and confident promotion of the institutions’ activities. This is demonstrated by the new version of the booklet *Europe in 12 lessons* (2006), where language used to gain public support is less confident and more ‘hedged’ and cautious in its wording.

A different use of modality has been observed, for instance, as more tentative meanings have been privileged in the ‘new generation’ booklets when compared to their earlier version. In example (68a), for instance, EU objectives, with reference to human values, are presented as a common and shared ‘wish’ rather than as an institutional and top-down decision as in (68):

(68) *The EU **wants** to promote human values and social progress.* [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2003)

(68a) *The EU **wishes** to promote humanitarian and progressive values [...].* [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006)

Again, when comparing the language used in (69) and (69a) below, it can be noticed that the EU stance in example (69a) becomes less domineering and self-important. The institutions mitigate their attitude by toning down their assertive and forceful statements: the expression of the obligation involved shifts from a «high modal operator» (*must meet*) to a verbal operator of medium level (*should fulfil*) (HALLIDAY 1985: 75).

(69) *At the same time, the European Council laid down three major criteria that candidate countries **must meet** before helping regions lagging behind [...].* [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2003)

(69a) *[...] the European Council laid down three criteria they **should fulfil** so as to become members.* [emphasis mine] (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006)

It is evident from these attenuations that the EU is trying to win support and consensus rather than taking it for granted. The mitigations of «relational modality» (Fairclough 1989: 127) suggest a change and a new configuration in the relationship

between EU institutions and citizens (CALIENDO and PIGA forthcoming). The modality that predominates in examples (68) and (69) is based on the use of verbs expressing relational meaning of imposition and authority (*want*, *must*), which is in marked contrast with examples (68a) and (69a), where there is a step back «from top-down authoritativeness to a more muted position» (CALIENDO and PIGA forthcoming).

## 5. Style

As pointed out in Section 2.1 above, «the concept of style is the key to studying how people use semiotic resources to ‘perform’ genres, and to express their identities and values in doing so» VAN LEEUWEN (2005: 139). In this Section the aim is to analyze the *Europe on the move* booklet series as a combination of hybrid styles. The most evident styles on which *Europe on the move* series draw are: (a) advertising style, (b) the style of the expert, (c) and conversational style. Of course, these diverse styles combine to different degrees with traditional informative feature writing style, namely the traditional socially ‘appropriate’ styles for informative booklets.

### 5.1. Advertising style

Advertising style was the first «corporate» (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 149) language variety which has played a key role in what FAIRCLOUGH (1992: 99) defined «marketization» of discourse. It is rapidly proliferating beyond the boundaries of actual advertisements and colonizing different genres, for instance the information genre of brochures, the burgeoning lifestyle sections of printed media, the «advertorials» (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 149) of magazines, etc. In this section two aspects of advertising style which are to be found in the corpus under investigation will be discussed in more detail: direct address and evaluative adjectives.

*5.1.1. Direct address.* As pervasively seen and discussed in Section 4.1 above, EU institutions make, especially in the ‘new’ booklets, a great deal of use of direct address, which is a ‘remnant’ of proper advertising-like style. The purpose of direct address is twofold: ideological and practical (VAN LEEUWEN 2005). Ideologically, advertisements have always sought to address *you*, personally in order to transcend its nature as a mass medium. Practically, it needs to persuade readers and viewers to think or do certain things and thus they are replete with imperatives, whose aim is also to address viewers and readers directly (VAN LEEUWEN 2005). Although the *Europe on the move* booklet series is not advertisement, it makes an abundant use of advertising-like features such as imperatives and instances of second person address. Along with the strategy of addressing the audience directly, there is also another style feature which contributes to EU rhetorical power: it is made up of quite a lot of simple sentences, «which are effective in breaking up the message into easily digestible parts, and which are set off from and related to each other in a clear and pointed way» (FAIRCLOUGH 2000: 86), for example *Call us! It’s up to you! Europe is only a phone call away (In touch with the EU, 2006)*.

*5.1.2. Evaluative adjectives.* Evaluative adjectives play a crucial role in advertising style because of their referential ambiguity. As pointed out by COOK (1992) and VAN LEEUWEN (2005), many adjectives adopted in advertising style convey a key role because they can be applied both to the advertised product – the signifier – and to the values it is supposed to signify. For instance, as can be seen in example (70) below:



(70) *The modern Europe with their diverse tradition, cultures and languages attracts the traveller with its vibrant cities [...].* [emphasis mine] (*Travelling in Europe*, 2008)

*Vibrant* in *vibrant cities* can be interpreted as both a description of the vibrancy and vitality of the European cities – the signifier – and as a ‘mood’ and ‘temperament’ or «personality trait» (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 151) that the potential reader can express by means of living in or visiting the European cities.

(71) *The modern Europe with their diverse tradition attracts the traveler with its colourful cultural festivities [...].* [emphasis mine] (*Travelling in Europe*, 2008)

Similarly, in example (71) above, adjectives like *colourful* and *cultural* could apply to the European *festivities* as well as the reader who chooses to visit and enjoy these events and celebrations. This ambiguity gives the adjective a key role in advertising, in the sense that it welds and connects together the signifier – *cities* and *festivities* –, but also the frame of mind and the personality traits of the user-making them – the signified – as two sides of the same coin (COOK 1992; VAN LEEUWEN 2005).

Apart from the concept of referential ambiguity, the use of such modifiers is a fundamental requisite of product evaluation in advertising and it is a strategy which is fully exploited by EU style to convey strength and prominence to its activities and operations.

## 5.2. Style shifting: from the style of the expert to conversational style

Public style is «social style», «the style of the expert», which rests on the rule of tradition, or on formal written rules (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 154). Some of the key characteristics of the expert style include a more formal vocabulary with the use of more technical terms. This renders expert information more authoritative and ‘top down’ and expresses more formal knowledge and the use of ‘proper’ style in information-oriented writing. On the other hand, conversational style brings a sense of informality which is essentially private speech, a dialogue between equals. EU Institutions have started to adopt conversational style as part of an attempt to present themselves to citizens (and thus to voters) as ordinary people, «just like you and me» (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 158). Some of these changes are illustrated in the examples below. They include, among others: the shift away from a more formal style and technical language towards a more informal and colloquial one.

The analysis of the following examples will concentrate on the empirical findings drawn from comparison between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ versions of the booklet *Europe in 12 lessons*. It was decided that only this booklet would be taken into consideration since it is the most generic one and because it includes a summary of a large number of topics that are developed in greater detail in the other booklets. A trend towards simplification of EU discourse is confirmed in all the new booklets.

In example (72a) below, for instance, the language used is ‘plain’ everyday language as used by ordinary people, thus becoming more accessible and unproblematic even to the layman reader:

(72) *The Commission acts with complete political independence.* (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2003)

(72a) *The Commission enjoys a substantial degree of independence in exercising its power. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2006)*

It can be noted that in (72) the expression *acts with complete political independence* has been reworded as *enjoys a substantial degree of independence* in (72a). On a semantic level, the meaning of the verb *act* has been transferred to the verb *exercise*. The insertion of the verb *enjoy* shifts the attention to the positive aspects of the European Commission, which enjoys the privileged position of taking decisions in complete autonomy. Apart from this, the expression *enjoys a substantial degree of independence* appears to be more colloquial than *acts with complete political independence*, because its use gives further strength to the idea of a process which implies anthropomorphism of EU institutions (PIGA 2013).

Furthermore, in (72) the rewording goes hand in hand with the semantic restructuring of the relational function. In this respect, in the PP *with a complete political independence*, the adjective *complete* as a pre-modifier of the NP *political independence*, has been toned down in favour of the adjective *substantial* as a modifier of the NP *degree of independence* in (72a), which mitigates the asseveration expressed by the word *complete*. Indeed, the modifier *complete* emphasizes the total and absolute degree of independence of the European Commission in taking its actions, whereas *substantial* «expresses claims with appropriate modesty» (HYLAND 1996: 479) [emphasis mine], in so doing performing a deference and politeness function.

In the following example, the wording has been changed. A contrastive analysis simply based on vocabulary would therefore be impossible:

(73) *Europe's political leaders realized early on that European solidarity means taking actions to strengthen 'economic and social cohesion' [...]. In practice this meant introducing regional and social policies, and these policies have become more important with each successive enlargement of the EU. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2003)*

(73a) *The EU's regional policy is based on transfer of funds from rich to poor countries. The money is used to boost developments in regions lagging behind, to rejuvenate industrial regions in decline - in other words, to narrow the gap between richer and poorer countries. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2006)*

Again, example (73a) shows increasing informality: the second version is more reader-friendly without sacrificing precision and clarity. Higher proximity towards common citizens is represented by the NP *regions lagging behind*, which is a colloquial expression belonging to the spoken medium and which substitutes a more formal VP statement *taking actions to strengthen 'economic and social cohesion'*.

Besides, in the newer version (73a) it is also possible to note a logical-semantic relation of expansion-elaboration, namely a restating *in other words*, whose aim is that of specifying in greater detail and further exemplifying the preceding sentence *the money is used to boost developments in regions lagging behind, to rejuvenate industrial regions in decline*. In more specific terms, what is at issue in (73a) is a logical-semantic relation of «exposition» (HALLIDAY 1985: 203), which does not introduce new information but rather provides a further characterization of a sentence, reformulating and restating it *in other words* i.e. *in other words, to narrow the gap between richer and poorer countries*.

Examples (74) and (74a) refer to sectors of the economy and all the regions of Europe which benefit from 'structural' policies financed by the EU itself:

(74) *The payments are used to boost developments in backward regions, to convert old industrial zones, to help young people and the long-term unemployed find work, to modernise farming and to help less-favoured rural areas. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2003)*

(74a) *The money is used to boost developments in regions lagging behind, to rejuvenate industrial regions in decline, to help young people and the long-term unemployed find work, to modernise farming and to help less-favoured rural areas. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2006)*

From a lexical point of view, the more technical hyponym *the payments* has been changed into the more general, hyperonymic *the money*. In any case, there seems to be a more conversational and commercial-like tone in the VP *to rejuvenate industrial regions* which substitutes the more technical VP *to convert old industrial zones*.

The following examples concern the EU's regional policy and consist essentially of making payments from the EU budget to disadvantaged regions and sections of the population:

(75) *Objective 1 is to help develop regions where the wealth produced divided by the number of inhabitants – technically known as ‘gross domestic product (GDP) per capita - is less than 75% of the EU average. This aid, amounting to €135 billion, is two thirds of all the money allocated to regional policy in 2000-2006. It goes to benefit about 50 regions, representing 22% of the EU population. It is used to get the economy moving in these regions by creating the infrastructure they lack, providing better training for local people and stimulating investments in local business. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2003)*

(75a) *The aim here is to help the least-developed countries and regions catch up more quickly with the EU average by improving conditions for growth and employment. This is done by investing in physical and human capital, innovation, the knowledge society, adaptation to change, the environment and administrative efficiency. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2006)*

Conversationalization probably emerges as more marked and evident from the comparison of the above examples. Indeed, whereas in (75) the language adopted is much more technical with reference to statistical and numerical facts, the newer version (75a) is characterized by a more conversational form of language. It is also possible to note, for example, how a conversationalized feature is realized through the adoption of the more colloquial expression *regions catch up more quickly with the EU average* instead of the more technical and articulated VP *to help develop regions where the wealth produced divided by the number of inhabitants - technically known as ‘gross domestic product (GDP) per capita - is less than 75% of the EU average*. In addition, as can be seen in (75a), the deictic *here* in the NP *the aim here is to help [...]* seems to confer again a colloquial flavour to EU institutional discourse.

Example (76) below refers to the Council of the European Union, which together with the Commission and the European Parliament is one of the EU institutions that compose the ‘institutional triangle’:

(76) *The Council of the European Union is the EU's main decision-making institution. (Europe in 12 lessons, 2003)*

(76a) [*P The Council of the European Union* (*[Q also known as the Council of Ministers]*) is the EU's main decision-making body. (*Europe in 12 lessons*, 2006).

In example (76a) there is some additional information which is placed in brackets. In this case, the apposition within brackets clarifies the NP *The Council of the European Union* supporting it with some form of explanation or explanatory comment 'to be precise' (P viz. Q). This form of apposition provides the reader with some additional information and at the same time confers to the sentence a more 'popularized' nature.

## 6. Conclusions

The EU suffered a major setback when in 2005 the Treaty establishing the Constitution for Europe was rejected via referenda in both France and the Netherlands. Although the rejection of the European Constitution was not the first sign of popular disenchantment with the European project, it was nevertheless decisive in pushing the European Commission in a new direction, characterized by an intensification of the EU image-building process and of its initiatives in the field of communication policy.

In order to face this negative outcome the EU drafted the Action Plan, which seeks «to improve communicating Europe» (COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES 2005: 2) through a direct, understandable and reader-friendly language as well as the presentation of EU institutions as a human-like entity. The shift towards higher informality is significant of two different tendencies: a) increased conversationalization of public institutional matters; b) and increased «commodification» (FAIRCLOUGH 1992: 117) and «marketization» (FAIRCLOUGH 1995a: 130) of institutional discourse. This latter tendency, in a certain sense can be seen as a consequence of the first: simplicity and clarity of language in EU communication is a toolkit used to pursue corporate discourse communication strategies, in particular discursive practices that are typical of advertising genre. The emphasis on a simplified language and consequently the attempt of EU institutions to 'close the gap' with citizens, can therefore be interpreted as a sort of manipulation of relations, contents and identities. In other words, EU institutions are subject to the market logic of competitive business as are other institutions (i.e. universities, clinics), where the attempt is that of 'recruiting' as much consensus as possible, because the involvement of EU citizens and the way they interact with the institutions is essential to the survival of the overall European project in terms of legitimacy, endorsement and identity.

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