



European Economic and Social Committee



Europe III

The voice of Group III
Various Interests
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INTERVIEW: A socially just and cohesive Europe based on our values

IN. Interview



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EUROPE III - What, in your opinion, in general terms is 'Brand EU' - the flag, the colours, the hymn, the motto, the policies, the people - all of these or something else?

Based on our analysis and monitoring of the EU identity, we believe Europe has a serious identity and brand problem due to its size and complexity. In the eyes of the people: the Flag of Europe, the colours, Europe Day, or Beethoven's 9th (Europe's Anthem); these symbols represent a distant, Brussels based, elitist EU, and not the EU of the people. In a world of mass marketing, mobile technology and social media, brands need to be clear, powerful, accessible and friendly. In view of this, we believe that to engage with the people and generate new emotions we need a different approach and symbology about the EU. We also need a new EU content strategy. BRAND EU[®] has developed innovative, unexpected and fun advertising campaigns with a new way of branding the EU. We aim to have the key values of the EU at the core of our brand message: peace, cooperation, and liberty. If we look at the world today, that is still so rare. So to us, the BRAND EU[®] is about unity, peace, tolerance, diversity and the shared values of democracy which underpin our connections to one another as Europeans. But we also want to add a new dimension to the EU brand: we want it to become cool, fun and entertaining for people. With this in mind, BRAND EU[®] aims to become the independent, fun and friendly brand of the EU: a friendly brand to complement the EU flag and the other official EU symbology.

EUROPE III - Where do you see us at the EESC fitting into this overall picture?

The EESC is a historic organisation and a critical EU body in European integration. It plays a key consultative role and acts as the bridge between Europe and its civil society, with an aim to bring Europe closer to its citizens. Europe today is distant from its citizens. Helping civil society organisations to have a voice at a European level is hugely important for fostering greater involvement. We think that the EESC has a role to play in building a greater connection with its citizens and bringing more democratic legitimacy to the EU. We are soon to publish a report which provides key recommendations for how to

foster a greater European identity and engagement from citizens. One of the essential ways to do this is to politicise European issues at a national level, to make seemingly distant issues into domestic ones. The EESC will be crucial for facilitating such a change as it acts as an institutional forum which represents the views of the civil society, and brings up their opinions which may otherwise have not been considered or represented in decision and policy making processes.

The EESC's role of promoting the values on which European integration is founded and advancing is an equally key part of the development of a strong EU Brand. Across Europe, despite our differences, we are united by the cause of democracy, peace and inclusiveness. Promoting these ideals and helping citizens understand how they connect us all is crucial to building a strong EU Brand. EUROPE III - The EESC is harmonising its own visual identity, stepping up its visibility in press and media and simplifying access to on and off-line information - what more can be done at the institutional level?

We believe brands are more than a visual identity. Brands need powerful content. We believe that they need to convey a long term vision of the future. We also believe that the EU suffers from a nomenclature problem which creates confusion and disconnects its institutions from the people. To cite an example, there is great confusion between the names of the European Council, the Council of the European Union (Upper House) and the Council of Europe (non EU institution). On the Wikipedia page, there is a note that says: "European Council: Not to be confused with Council of the European Union or Council of Europe". So we clearly have a big identity problem that needs resolution. Europe is already difficult enough to understand, but this complex and confusing institutional structure and nomenclature makes it even more difficult, if not impossible, to explain to the citizens and the world. The use of acronyms are also a problem (especially when there are so many!) and we would avoid using them (EP, EC, EESC, etc.) as they make the EU more distant. EUROPE III - The Committee has 3 Groups as well as sections and observatories - how can we accommodate these separate identities and still sing from the same song sheet?

The EESC needs one strong brand identity, a powerful vision of the future (destination) and clarity of mission (common purpose) regardless of its internal structure. The EU and its institutions (including the EESC) are part of a complex system of European and international governance, far too complex for the citizens to understand. This does not mean that its organisational structures and the brand identities of its institutions must also be complex. The EESC can benefit from achieving ONE strong brand by clarifying its mission and purpose and simplifying the way it explains itself as an organisation. Though the identities and roles present within the organisation may possess a degree of inherent separation, they must be united under their common ideals and goals; to represent views, to encourage participation, and to promote values. Clear vision. One mission. One team. Mirroring the ideals of Europe, in many ways.

EUROPE III - How can we, as EESC Members, help to improve the visibility of our work both in Brussels and back home in our Member States?

By collaborating: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts! There is a media communications overload and the press are not experts on EU affairs. So how do you attract attention? These audiences need simple messages, from institutions with strong, clear and differentiated brands. Initially, we would aim to clarify the brand vision and positioning of the EESC for the future, in order to build a solid and differentiated platform for communications at the EU level and in member states. From that platform, we would then choose the right policy issues that we believe would carry the most weight in public opinion and media interest.

EUROPE III - What is your one single piece of advice that could help the EESC gain greater recognition for the hugely valuable work carried out by members and staff on a daily basis?

Brand differentiation is the key. The EESC needs to stand out from the myriad of EU institutions, bodies and committees. To do this it requires communicating a clear vision of the future for the organisation. We would place stress on the EESC's consultative role in representing the people.

EUROPE III - What are your main goals and objectives: what do you aim to achieve with 'Brand EU' in the future?

The EU must be protected as a global concept and promoted as what it is: a great global governance success. To achieve this we need the support and emotional involvement of its citizens. With BRAND EU[®] we aim to make people smile and feel good about the raison d'être of the EU. We know that if we manage to make someone smile when they think about the EU, we would have achieved a big step forward in changing people's perceptions and attitudes about the EU.

We aim to create a friendly brand of Europe which is instantly recognisable and that the people and citizens instantly associate with. Much like the way in which BMW, Apple, Nike, Ikea, and many others are instantly recognisable for their brands, and stand for something clear in people's minds. Our goal is to help people understand and connect with Europe on a more personal and rational level, through our activities. We will do this via BRAND EU[®] advertising campaigns, informative and accessible publications, publicised events, viral videos, etc. We ultimately want to create a real EU esprit de corps across Europe. And in the process make the founding fathers of Europe like Jean Monnet, Schuman, Spinelli, Adenauer, Churchill, De Gasperi (to name a few) proud, as without them we would not have achieved peace in Europe.



ON BRAND EU – EUROPEAN UNION BRAND CENTRE:
The mission of the BRAND EU – European Union Brand Centre at Gold Mercury International is to assist in the creation of a powerful EU BRAND identity that connects with citizens and the rest of the world. Via our various programmes, we aim to clarify what the EU really is, its global role and where it is going (vision).

To learn more about the Brand EU Centre please go to:
<http://www.goldmercury.org/brand-eu/>