

Insights into the European Years' Communication Toolboxes

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Abstract: Since 1983 the European syntagm “unity in diversity” has been implemented in the European Years’ communication campaigns. Dependent on subsidiarity and decentralization, European Years focus on a specific issue which constitutes the subject of a year-long awareness campaign. Beyond the involvement of Europe’s citizens through their local, regional and national authorities in the implementation of the European Years’ policies, there is a unity at the level of the visual communication of the EU by two important image-building elements: EY logos and communication toolboxes. The European Years’ communication toolboxes can be considered signs of inclusion since every organization is expected to customize the templates in the official campaign design of the European Year. The analysis will focus on the image-building elements of three European Years (2010, 2011, 2012). Having social semiotics as the qualitative research method and the analytical framework based on the distinction between design resources and representational resources, I will analyze the double layers of the high intensity point of inclusion: (1) the European Years’ branding process; (2) the visual deontic modality within the visual guidelines of the EY communication toolbox.

Keywords: EY branding, visual markers, representational resources, graphic resources, multiplicity, genericity.

The dualities “menace versus model” and “top-down versus bottom-up” prevail in the studies on Europeanization. There have been many ways¹ of approaching this

¹ The state of the art regarding Europeanization mainly focuses on (print) media, especially quality media: the visibility of the 1999 European elections on national television news (de Vrees 2003); the symbolic images of the EU reflected in the Hungarian front page newspapers and the first EU election in 2004 (Kapitány, Kapitány 2006); visualization of Europe in election campaigns for the enlargement and the European Parliament in Austria, Hungary, and Slovakia (Pribesky 2006); a meta-analysis on the Europeanization of media reporting (Machill, Beiler, Fischer 2006); the Europeanization of public discourse by policy domain (Della Porta, Caiani 2006); the Romanian media discourse before and after Romania’s EU Accession Treaty (Beciu, Perpelea 2007); the framing of European issues (modernization of the Romanian society, implementation of the economic, political, social, and cultural reforms etc.) within the 2004 local election campaigns in Romania (Pătruț 2011).

ambivalence of Europeanization, from political, economic, social studies up to cultural studies. The main conclusions of these studies on what Europeanization means focus on three aspects: (1) the promotion of a descriptive, expert-like discourse mainly focused on the “high diplomacy” pattern and the political elites; (2) the discursive framing of a symbolic distance between Central and Eastern Europeans and Western Europeans; (3) the sign of emptiness (Pribersky 2006) that Central European campaigns invested Europe with.

These negative perceptions are also reflected in Eurobarometers. For example, in the 2005 *Action plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission*¹, it was mentioned that although the membership of the EU was still supported by 54% of EU citizens, the image of the EU had steadily worsened in citizens’ eyes (only 47% of respondents giving a positive response). As Giorgia Aiello (2012: 483) highlights, the “European project” still has the support of the majority of European citizens, but it has been a decrease in the EU’s image and its citizens’ trust. There is a twofold consequence of this lack of trust (Eurobarometer 73, vol.2, 2010): a) a minimum involvement in the construction of the European identity (2%), and b) nationality as the main determinant of the Europeans’ identity (46%).

Several attempts have been made in order to reduce the symbolic deficit associated with the European Union: Koolhaas’ barcode concept proposal for the EU flag in 2004 (Pribersky 2006, Aiello 2007), the *European Capital of Culture* (Aiello, Thurlow 2006), or the EU birthday logo competition in 2007 (Aiello 2012).

At the same time, the 2005 *Action plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission* highlighted the fact that “communication is more than information” (p. 2). Starting from three major weaknesses (continuous fragmentation of communication; messages reflecting political priorities but not necessarily linked to the citizens’ interests, needs and preoccupations; inadequate implementation, pp. 2-3), the Commission has had a new approach to gain the people’s interest and trust. This approach has focused on listening, communicating and connecting with citizens by “going local” (pp. 3-4). These three strategic principles constitute the conceptual backbone of the European Years. Each year, since 1983, the European Union has chosen a theme of action² in order to educate the widest possible audience, to attract the attention of the Member States’ governments on a particular issue, and to change their attitudes or behaviours.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/communication_com_en.pdf (accessed May 10, 2012)

² <http://en.strasbourg-europe.eu/european-year,27569,en.html> (accessed May 13, 2012)

1. The European Years – embodiments of “going local”

The European authorities choose the diverse topics several years in advance. For example, the three European Years that this study will focus on were jointly adopted by the European Parliament and the Council:

- in 2008 (L 298/ 20, decision No 1098): European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010);
- in 2009 (L 17/ 43, decision No 37): European Year of Volunteering (2011);
- in 2011 (L 246/5, decision No 940): European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (2012).

These topics are of general interest to the European institutions and Member States and the Eurobarometers provide the reasons for these thematic choices. At the macro-level, the European Commission and some appointed Directorate Generals are responsible for their implementation. The goal of the European Years is to go beyond the macro-level and raise awareness, and to encourage actions on the part of national authorities at the micro-level. Christine Pütz (2002: 106) considers that the implementation of European Years is dependent on two principles: subsidiarity and decentralization. These two governing principles highlight the fact that a matter should be handled at the smallest and lowest level. There can be established a stronger relationship and a more efficient dialogue with the European citizens by involving them, through their local, regional and national authorities, in the implementation of European Years.

The choice of the same topic to be annually implemented by Member States constitutes one of the conditions that Thomas Risse (2003: 2) considers to be important for an ideal typical European public sphere: “(...) [if and when] the same (European) themes [should be] discussed at the same time at similar levels of attention across national public spheres and media”. Thus, European Years become “a social construction constituting a community of communication” since “communicating about the same issues at the same time is a definitional requirement for a public sphere” (Risse 2003: 7). The communities of communication established through European Years’ annual themes become visible by means of the public communication campaigns. Considered “strategies of social control” (Paisley 2001: 5-6), public communication campaigns can be defined in terms of: (1) objectives, focusing on one group’s intention to change another group’s beliefs or behaviour; (2) methods, focusing on a conventional and innovative mix of traditional, new and social media.

The objectives of the three European Years that this study will focus on are stipulated in the Official Journal of the European Union:

EUROPEAN YEARS	OBJECTIVES¹
European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognition of rights; - shared responsibility and participation; - cohesion; - commitment and concrete action.
European Year of Volunteering (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work towards an enabling environment for volunteering in the EU; - empower organisers of voluntary activities to improve the quality of voluntary activities; - recognise voluntary activities; - raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering.
European Year for Active Aging and Solidarity between Generations (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to raise general awareness of the value of active ageing and its various dimensions; - to stimulate debate, to exchange information and to develop mutual learning between Member States and stakeholders at all levels; - to offer a framework for commitment and concrete action to enable the Union, Member States and stakeholders at all levels; - to promote activities which will help to combat age discrimination, to overcome age-related stereotypes and to remove barriers, particularly with regard to employability.

These general objectives frame a metaphorical representation of the European Years as catalysts. This connotative definition is to be found in the Official Journal of the European Union L 298/ 20/ 2008. The substance that speeds a reaction and that is not consumed by this is the ground on which the conceptual mapping (Lakoff, Johnson 1981) from a source domain belonging to chemistry onto a target domain belonging to

¹ A detailed version of the objectives of the three European Years can be found at the following links: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:298:0020:0029:EN:PDF>; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:017:0043:0049:EN:PDF>; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:246:0005:0010:EN:PDF> (accessed July 24, 2012).

social and political practices is performed. This speeding and non-consuming substance through which the European Years are metaphorically framed implies raising awareness, building momentum and exchanging best practices between the Member States, local and regional authorities and international organizations involved in the social issues.

2. The European Years' communication toolboxes – signs of inclusion

The decisions by which each year is designated a European Year also stipulates the types of actions that should be taken on a community scale. For example, the information and promotional campaigns for the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion should involve among other elements, “the development of a logo, available in a variety of formats, and slogans for the European Year, for use in connection with any action linked to the European Year” (The Official Journal of the European Union, L 298/ 20/ 2008, p. 7). Despite the cultural and social diversity that the EU is based on, there is a unity at the level of the visual implementation of the campaign actions which bring high visibility for sharing local, regional and national experience and good practices.

European discourses should be dealt with in terms of “inclusion” and “exclusion” (Wodak 2007) because these two concepts presuppose the existence of some “scales” “ranging from explicit legal and economic restrictions to implicit discursive negotiations and decisions” (Wodak 2007: 656). The latter part involves what Ruth Wodak labels as “a European nexus”, namely “the ongoing negotiation of meanings of, and belongings to Europe in many different public spaces occurring in a whole range of genres, and in many languages” (Wodak 2007: 659). I consider that this European nexus can be associated with the European Years because the sharing of local, regional and national experiences implies a low intensity point of inclusion whereas all types of restrictions and regulations concerning the implementation of the European Years and imposed on the Member States are to be placed on the scale towards the high intensity point of inclusion.

Striving for high visibility through the implementation of the European Years' public communication campaigns, the EU has introduced two important image-building elements: (1) European Years' logos and (2) Communication toolboxes (2010 – Logos and Goodies, 2011 – Campaign Toolbox, 2012 – Press and media). The purpose of these European Years' communication toolboxes coincides with the intention of the Commission to present a single face of Europe: “(...) presentation and visual communication in all policy areas will evolve towards a unified Commission

presentation to enhance recognition and avoid confusion in all material addressing and visible to the general public. Slogans and symbols should be simple and repetitive.” (*Action plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission, 2005: 6*)

The visual unification and inclusion intended in promoting Europe through the European Years are accomplished by the obligatory use of certain visual variables in the promotional materials used in the national, regional and local social campaigns. Thus, every organization is expected to customize the templates in the official campaign design of the European Year in question. Table 1 illustrates the presence (‘1’) and the absence (‘0’) of the generic visual variables in the communication toolboxes posted on the websites¹ of each European Year.

Visual variables	2010 EY <i>Logos and goodies</i>	2011 EY <i>Campaign toolbox</i>	2012 EY <i>Press and media</i>
Banner	0	1	1
Flash Banners	1	0	0
Gadgets	1	1	0
Jingle	0	1	0
Leaflets	0	1	1
Logo	1	1	1
Posters	1	1	1
PPT presentation	0	1	0
Roll-up	0	0	1
Slogan	0	1	0
Templates	0	1	0
Video	0	1	1
Visual/ Graphic guidelines	0	1	1
TOTAL	4	11	7

Table 1. The visual variables of EY communication toolboxes

As observed in the table above, the communication toolboxes for the three European Years include 13 visual variables that every national, regional and local organization promoting social campaigns on EY issues has to visually include in their advertising materials. A discrepancy can be noticed in the use of these visual variables in the EY

¹ European Year 2010 http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/2010againstpoverty/mediagallery/goodies_en.htm (accessed May 20, 2012)

European Year 2011 - <http://europa.eu/volunteering/en/press-media/campaign-toolbox> (accessed May 20, 2012)

European Year 2012 - <http://europa.eu/ey2012/ey2012main.jsp?catId=974&langId=en> (accessed May 20, 2012).

communication toolboxes. The 2011 EY campaign toolbox included visual references to 11 variables. Unlike the 2010 and 2012 EY toolboxes which used only some of the visual variables, the 2011 EY toolbox seems to have been very restrictive on the use of the official campaign design. It embedded the terms and conditions of use which focused on the description and purpose of uploading materials, the type of information to be collected, the way of accessing the posted information, types of inappropriate content, and disciplinary rules in case of rule infraction.

2.1. Social semiotics – a qualitative research method

In the visual communication of the European Union through European Years, I will analyze the double layers of the high intensity point of inclusion:

- the European Years' branding process;
- the visual deontic modality within the visual guidelines of each EY communication toolbox.

I will use social semiotics as a qualitative research method (Kress, Van Leeuwen [1996] 2006, Vannini 2007) since (1) it places human beings as participants within context-bound and conflict-laden interpersonal interactions, (2) it attributes meaning to power, (3) it investigates how semiotic resources are used in "specific historical, cultural, and institutional contexts" (Van Leeuwen 2005: 3), (4) it provides a twofold potential: a theoretical semiotic potential (past and potential future uses) and an actual semiotic potential (uses known by specific users, e.g. Member States, with specific needs in specific contexts).

Starting from M.A.K. Halliday's idea that the grammar of a language is not a code and not a set of rules for producing correct sentences, but 'a resource for making meanings', Theo Van Leeuwen (2005: 3) defines semiotic resources as "(...) the actions and artefacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically – with our vocal apparatus; with the muscles we use to create facial expressions and gestures, etc. – or by means of technologies – with pen, ink and paper; with computer hardware and software; with fabrics, scissors and sewing machines." Thus, the visual discourse from a social semiotics perspective can be defined as follows: "visual discourse is the deployment of resources (rather than codes) for social actions, and whose meaning potentials (rather than meanings) may be exploited for political, economic and ideological ends" (Aiello, Thurlow 2006: 150).




After joining the European Union, Member States have to comply themselves at a visual level to the European Years' communication toolboxes which impose specific semiotic

resources that must be used in order to verbally and visually frame the respective European issue. In the analysis of the visual resources used in the EY communication toolboxes, I will use the analytical framework based on the distinction between design resources and representational resources (Aiello, Thurlow 2006, Aiello 2007, Aiello 2012). Whereas representational resources refer to the ‘raw’ material, namely to the visual content, to the visual resources that are included or excluded, design resources focus on “the more abstract principles used to arrange or style a given set of representational resources” (Aiello 2012: 59).

2.2. The branding process of the European Years

Considered by Carlos Scolari (2008: 170) “a semiotic device able to produce a discourse, give it meaning, and communicate this to the addressees”, brands create “possible worlds” (Eco [1976] 1979) which embed different narratives. The branding process is built in time, adding “a layer to an already existing meaning” (Thellefsen, Sorensen, Vetner, & Andersen 2006: 374).

Brands lie on the verbal and visual representation of a logo which does not only represent a combination of mere letters, lines and colours. They are invested with an added value which turns an object into a semiotic resource. The vectors of determination and representation that characterize an object and, respectively, a logo, are governed by a flow from representational resources towards design resources. The European Years’ logos are actually semiotic resources of an already existing meaning, namely the European syntagm, “unity in diversity”.

	2010 EY	2011 EY	2012 EY
			
Visual elements	straight lines colours	diagonal lines colours	curved lines colours
Representational resources	bricks	holding arms balloons	A smaller person (younger) & a bigger person (older)

Design resources	<i>Position of bricks</i> ↓ Building together → Unity	<i>Lines</i> ↓ Communication, power of working together → Unity	<i>Lines</i> ↓ people connecting ↓ Unity
	<i>Unequal form of coloured bricks</i> ↓ Building together ↓ Diversity	<i>Differently coloured hands and balloons</i> ↓ Diversity	<i>Unequal form of the figure- shapes</i> ↓ Diversity

The branding process of European Years

The lines and colours as visual elements used in the three EY logos are actually formal semiotic devices meant “to provide cohesion and coherence” (Kress, Van Leeuwen [2001] 2010: 58). At this stage, these two semiotic devices, colours and lines, exist as mere substances, as modes of being without any reference to any subject or object.

Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen ([2001] 2010: 58) consider that a semiotic device can be fully a mode if it turns into a resource for making signs, namely it has “to be the signifier-material (...) which can be used to carry the signifieds (...) of sign-makers”. Thus the colours and lines used are the semiotic modes for the design of EY logos since they become resources for making signs. Acquiring the status of signifier-materials, colours and lines shape three distinct European Years’ representational resources: bricks (EY 2010), arms and balloons (2011) and human figures (2012).

The potential for meaning of colours and lines is provided by their materiality and interactivity. The representational resources become design resources of the European syntagm “unity in diversity”. Unity and diversity are rendered through the ideational metafunction of colours and lines. Starting from M.A.K. Halliday’s functional grammar, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen ([1996] 2006: 42) consider that “the semiotic mode has to be able to represent aspects of the world as it is experienced by humans”. In the case of European Years, the logos are European experiences of combating poverty and social exclusion, volunteering, and solidarity between generation and active ageing. Unity is acquired through some unifying processes of interaction: bricks being placed one upon the other in order to build together (2010), hands holding together and helping each other (2011) and people connecting (2012).

Diversity is rendered through four pervasive colours (red, yellow, blue, green) which have different degrees of saturation. The colour scheme used in the EY logos belongs to the modernist ‘Mondrian’ colour scheme (Kress, Van Leeuwen [1996] 2006: 238), which is based on purity and high saturation. The interpretation of the EY colours can be linked to the colour scheme provided by M.A.K. Halliday (2004) to the representational processes: red (*material process* – our experience of the material world, doing and happening, the raspberry and plum colours for EY 2012 standing for warmth and energy), yellow (*relational process* – means of characterization and identification), blue (*mental process* – our experience of the world of our consciousness, sensing), green (*verbal process* – creating narratives).

2.3. The visual deontic modality of the European Years’ communication toolboxes

Beyond the three processes of interaction (building, helping, and connecting) that the EY logos may tell a story about, there are created some possible worlds where the 27 Member States should become active participants. Within the “contractual process” that the construction of meaning (Scaroli 2008: 172) is based on, the EU sets up some visual regulations to which each participant has to comply if it wants to become a member of the EY “brand discourse community” (Thellefsen, Sorensen, Vetner, & Andersen 2006: 373).

I will analyse these restrictions in terms of a visual deontic modality. The concept of deontic modality presupposes the existence of at least two discursive participants that are to be found on a scale of authority intensity (Palmer 1990: 16): the speaker/ the writer, the one providing some instance of permission or demand (in our case, the European Union) and the addressee, the one that is capable of producing the suggested/ ordered act (in our case, the EU Member States). The interpersonal and ideational metafunctions can be found in modality since the addresser “imposes” his/ her representation of reality on the addressee who may have the freedom of choice. Thus, the definition of deontic modality actually embeds the twofold aspect of modality mentioned by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen ([1996] 2006: 172):

- modality is interactive since it is “a system of social deixis which ‘addresses’ a particular kind of viewer, or a particular social/ cultural group”;
- modality is ideational since it “provides through its system of modality markers an image of the cultural, conceptual and cognitive position of the addressee”.

The Visual Guidelines can be considered the discursive instances of deontic modality to be found in each European Year Communication Toolbox since they impose some restrictions on the visual communication of European Years by each Member State. I will focus on the analysis of the visual modality markers used in The Visual Guidelines in two European Years (2011 and 2012).

Our empirical data include: *The European Year of Volunteering 2011 Visual Guidelines* (the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry etc.) and *The European Year of Solidarity between Generations and Active Ageing 2012 Graphic Guidelines* (designed by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and published by the European Commission). The communication toolbox for the European Year 2010 (the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) did not include any visual guidelines.

The coding was performed by two coders and the inter-coder reliability was 0.91 (pi value). The coding procedure focused on the identification of the six visual markers of deontic modality: logo size, logo colour, logo brandspace, layout colour, logo position, and typography. The next step within the coding procedure was to identify the visual references to the proper use of these six visual markers. Our analysis will focus on the salience of the visual markers of deontic modality which appear in the Visual and Graphic Guidelines of the European Year 2011 and 2012.

Following Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's theory ([1996] 2006) on conceptual representations, I will interpret the visual markers of deontic modality used in the European Years' Visual/ Graphic Guidelines in terms of two types of processes: analytical processes and classificational processes.

Analytical processes "relate participants in terms of a part-whole structure" (Kress, Van Leeuwen [1996] 2006: 87). Within the European Years' logos, the Carrier (the whole) is the representational resources of the logo (bricks, hands, balloons, human figures) and the Possessive Attributes (the parts) are the size, colour, position of the respective Carrier. These analytical processes embed two categories:

- a) *unstructured analytical processes*, showing the Possessive Attributes of the Carriers (bricks, hands, balloons, human figures), but not the Carrier itself. Thus colours or typefaces are shown as parts (as visual elements), without visually rendering the way in which these parts fit together to make up the Carrier.
- b) *structured analytical processes*, showing a coherent visual Carrier with all its

Possessive Attributes fitting together and emphasizing the (brand) space around the respective Carrier. The brand space represents the protective zone around the Carrier, in this case the European Years' or European Union's logos or images, which "rules out any visual competition with other design elements in its immediate proximity"¹. Another important aspect of a structured analytical process can be identified in terms of the logo size. Each European Year's Visual Guideline mentions the minimum recommended size of the logo for good visibility (e.g. 2011 – 45 mm). The 2012 Graphic Guidelines present two sizes (M size – 100% and S size – 50%).

Classificational processes "relate participants to each other in terms of 'a kind' of relation, a taxonomy" (Kress, Van Leeuwen [1996] 2006: 79). I identified the participants as visual embodiments of the European representational resources/Carriers for each Member State. The 2011 and 2012 Visual and Graphic Guidelines provide two types of taxonomies: a) taxonomies of the logo designs and language adaptations for the Member States, and b) taxonomies of colour schemes to be used.

I will associate analytical processes with a type modality since they provide standard European Years' images to be used by all organizations from the Member States in their promotional materials and the classificational processes with a token modality since they render taxonomies of the European Years' logo images for different Member States and image samples of promotional materials.

Table 2 and Table 3 illustrate the salience of visual markers of deontic modality. The 2011 and 2012 EY Visual and Graphic Guidelines embed 146 references regarding the use of visual markers of deontic modality: 91 references for type modality (62%) and 55 references for token modality (38%).

The four most salient visual markers for type visual deontic modality (Table 2) are the following: logo colour (40%), logo size (21%), logo position (17%), typography (13%). The same consistency in the use of visual markers (logo colour, size, position and typography) can be observed in both European Years' Visual and Graphic Guidelines. One discrepancy in the use of type visual markers is to be noticed at the level of "Don'ts" visual references for the 2012 EY Graphical Guidelines, 31% visual markers referring to bad practices of the visual communication of European Years.

¹ *European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, Style Guide*, p. 4.

Visual markers		2011 EY	2012 EY	Total
Logo	Size	9	5 5 (Don'ts)	19 (21%)
	Colour	17	15 4 (Don'ts)	36 (40%)
	Brand space	1	2 1 (Don'ts)	4 (4%)
	Layout colour	1	0	1 (1%)
	Logo position	7	8	15 (17%)
	Background	1	2 1 (Don'ts)	4 (4%)
Typography	Theme fonts/ Type face	6	2 4 (Don'ts)	12 (13%)
Total		41	49	91 (100%)

Tabel 2. Type visual deontic modality

The two most salient visual markers for token visual deontic modality (Tabel 3) are the following: logo colour and size (65%) and logo position (27%). The dominance of logo size and colour in the graphic guidelines for the 2012 EY is associated with the taxonomy of logos visually presented in 23 European languages.

Visual markers		2011 EY	2012 EY	Total
Logo	Size	1	23	36 (65%)
	Colour	12		
	Logo position	10	4 1 (Don'ts)	15 (27%)
	Background	1	1	2 (4%)
Typography	Theme fonts/ Type face	2	0	2 (4%)
Total		26	29	55 (100%)

Tabel 3. Token visual deontic modality

Besides the dominance of colour as a visual marker, two more logo possessive attributes are important in the visual deontic modality of the European Years, namely position and typography.

Logo position plays a significant role in the discourse of European Years since the type and token EY images can be interpreted as “socially constructed knowledges of (some aspect) of reality” (Kress, Van Leeuwen [1996] 2006: 24). In this case, “the some aspect of reality” refers to the power relations established through visibility between three generic participants (European Year, European Union and Member State) which are visually included by means of their logos. The 30 visual references to logo positions in type and token visual deontic modality emphasize the importance laid on the position of the EY logos within the image space. Rudolph Arnheim (1988: 37) highlights the tendency of perceiving the area in the left corner of a visual field as the point of departure and the viewer’s eye will proceed toward the lower right, passing through the optical centre. The Visual Guidelines provide covert taxonomies on the specific position of the three participants’ logos. Within the visual distribution of the EY, EU, and MS logos, the 2011 and 2012 EY logo (Fig.1) is always the last one in the distribution line, being placed on the right-hand bottom position, thus being the last visual item to be remembered.

2.3.2. The meaning potential of European Years’ typography

Within the material production of a visual text, alongside with colours, typography is another semiotic mode (Van Leeuwen 2006: 154) since it has textual, ideational and interpersonal meaning and it is multimodal and systemic. Each European Year is assigned a typeface and a theme font: ITC Lubalin Graph and Interstate for EYV 2011 and Verdana and Century Gothic for 2012. These four typefaces are, firstly, presented as a medium, there being highlighted their provenance (designers, release years), applications, and possible variants. Whereas ITC Lubalin Graph, Interstate, and Century Gothic are typefaces associated with “a traditional feel”¹, Verdana is one of the most contested typefaces despite the fact that it was nominated² for the Best of British Design Award on BBC Two’s *The Culture Show* in 2006. The controversy about the Verdana typeface is to be linked to the typography change made by IKEA from Futura to Verdana in 2009. Perceived as “a symbol of homogeneity in popular typography”³,

¹ <http://www.aisleone.net/2008/typography/itc-lubalin-graph/> (accessed June 17, 2012)

² <http://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/verdanagate.php> (accessed June 17, 2012)

³ <http://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/verdanagate.php> (accessed June 17, 2012)

the Verdana typeface seems to be hated¹ by designers not so much for its design, but for its meaning potential of mass production.

The choice of these typefaces lies on their humanistic characteristics as mentioned in every European Year Visual Guidelines. Theo Van Leeuwen (2006: 148) identifies seven features of typography: weight, expansion, slope, curvature, connectivity, orientation, regularity. Besides the humanistic characteristics, the choice of these typefaces lies on legibility. All EY visual representations being the official standpoint of the European Union, reading and formality should be two significant aspects to be transmitted. Alongside with pictures and logos, the EY visual materials also include titles, subtitles and texts. We consider that weight, expansion, slope, and connectivity (Van Leeuwen 2006: 148-149) are the four features of typography which carry the meaning potential of a formal style that European Union wants to impose upon the Member States through Visual and Graphic Guidelines.

The typeface Verdana, invented by Microsoft, provides legibility by the expansion feature. Simon l'Anson², the creative director at *Made by Many*, claims that the open, wide letterforms with lots of space between letters aid legibility at small sizes on screen, but they do not “exhibit any elegance or visual rhythm when set at large sizes”. The wide spacing between letters is also the reason for the choice of Interstate as the official typeface for the 2011 EY.

Titles and subtitles are provided with a bold weight, wide expansion, upright slope and disconnection in order to highlight the important aspects of the information to be sent. Unlike the text which has a regular weight and condensed expansion, titles and subtitles also become visible through another semiotic mode, namely colour, thus emphasizing the importance of multimodality in the visual representations of the European Years. Whereas the linguistic logo of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 activates the semiotic mode of a unique colour (blue), the linguistic logo of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012 is a threefold combination (see Fig. 2): a) a colour mix of the official 2012 EY colours (raspberry for “Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations” and plum for “European Year for”); b) a typeface mix (Verdana for the text and Century Gothic for the year 2012); c) a weight mix (regular for “European Year for” and bold for “Active

¹ Idem

² <http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1919127,00.html> (accessed June 17, 2012)

Ageing and Solidarity between Generations” and “2012”). The meaning potential of the two uses of typography for the EY logos can be explained in terms of the inversely proportional relationship created between the linguistic and visual logo for each European Year. Whereas the simplicity of the 2011 EY linguistic logo is correlated with the abundance of colourful balloons and hands, the abundance of the 2012 EY linguistic logo is correlated with the simplicity of two colourful human figures.

2.3.3. Visual instances of genericity and multiplicity

Besides the type modality of the European Years’ logos, typography and colour schemes, the 2011 and 2012 Visual and Graphic Guidelines also include instances of token modality visually embedded in image examples of EY promotional materials. These standard images can be considered a bridge within the discourse of inclusion promoted by the EY national, regional and local social campaigns. They constitute a bridge between the unity represented at the macro-level through a shared social issue and the diversity represented at the micro-level through the verbal and visual framings of the respective issue at a national level (Cmeci 2012: 241). These examples of promotional materials (Fig. 3-4 – 2011 EY, Fig. 5-8 – 2012 EY) are expressions of an ostensive production (Eco [1976] 1979: 225) since these images are “shown as the expression of the class” of which they are a member. In the case of the EY social campaigns, the class is formed of these prototypical images which show how to visually embed the European issue and the logos of the European and national organizations. Thus, they constitute generic visual discursive items which are significant instruments “for the shaping, communication and consolidations of European identity” (Aiello 2012). Within the context of a culture of branding, David Machin (2004: 317) highlights one important shift that has taken place in visual communication: from photography as witness to photography as a symbolic system. Thus, a cognitive flow takes place from the functionality of products and services to the meaning and value potentials of the products or services in question.

The diversity that the European Union wants to promote is based on an appearance of diversity at the visual level. Giorgia Aiello (2007: 158) considers that there is a limited set of representational resources designed to maximize the appearance of diversity and that multiplicity is the most recurrent design resource in the visual European discourse. Despite the fact that multiplicity is a presentation style which includes multiple variations of a given mode of representation, in the visual communication of Europe it exploits “the smallest effective difference: minimal variations in representational material to achieve maximum effects of differentiation” (Aiello 2007: 165).

In the analysis of the token images in the 2011 and 2012 EY Visual and Graphic Guidelines, I will focus on two aspects: (1) the representational resources of genericity, and (2) the degree of diversity in the design resource of multiplicity.

Analyzing image-bank photographs (Getty images), David Machin (2004) considers that decontextualization, generic settings and models as generic people are key aspects of representing photographic genericity. The EY prototypical images (Fig. 3-8) mainly use decontextualized settings, the background being totally eliminated (see Fig. 3, 5, 6, 7). This type of image production focuses on the represented participants and on their attributes. In the above-mentioned figures, close-up and medium close-up shots are the most salient ones. The role of decontextualized settings is to impose “an abstract coding orientation” which “reduces the individual to the general, and the concrete to its essential qualities” (Kress, Van Leeuwen [1996] 2006: 165). This emphasis on generic persons can be associated with Richard Dyer’s definition of “a type”: “ (...) any simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded and change or ‘development’ is kept to a minimum” (Dyer 1977, cited in Hall [1997] 2011: 257). The main attributes or traits which are foregrounded in the EY promotional materials have a socio-demographic nature and they constitute identification traits for every European citizen (Cmeci 2012: 250). Whereas the 2011 EY images (Fig. 3 & 4) use gender, age, and race as attributes, the 2012 EY images (Fig. 5-8) use only age as a prop. The role of these generic socio-demographic attributes is to communicate the visual representation of types of volunteers (2011 EY) and of types of old persons (2012 EY) and not of individual identities. Whereas the 2011 EY official poster (Fig. 3) represents nine men and nine women as generic instances of diversity and equality, the 2012 EY promotional materials (Fig. 5, 6, 7) visually embed the type image of an old lady or that of a binary opposition between an old man and a young person (a child).

The image production of the promotional materials for the two European Years (2011 and 2012) is also different. On the one hand, the 2011 EY posters (Fig. 3 & 4) use a grid-like layout of 38 squares, half of them embedding human faces and half a multicolour scheme. Despite the fact that the dominance of grids favours the eccentric system (Arnheim 1988: 196), the geometric centre is visually dominated by a young white male person. The 2011 EY poster highlights what Giorgia Aiello (2007: 164) mentions about the multiplicity of images related to the visual communication of Europe: “(...) this multiplicity of images does not necessarily correspond to a high degree of variety or diversity in the representational content of such images”. Despite the attributes of race, gender, and age which may qualify as indexical signs of variety,

the dominant human figures reveal uniformity by the dominance of young white persons. On the other hand, the 2012 posters (Fig. 5-8) focus on a single type of an old person, visually presented alone or in an opposition with another type belonging to the category of young people. As mentioned, the European issue of active ageing and solidarity between generations was mainly represented by the visual dichotomy between two types: old versus young persons. Visual metaphors are another type of visual framing of the 2012 European issue. Fig. 6 is an instance of a visual metaphor *in absentia conjoined* (Groupe μ 1992): the perceived element (a child's heart-shaped sunglasses) totally substitutes the element that should have belonged to the context in question (an old lady's glasses). The perceived element acts as a prop which projects onto the old beholder of these unusual child-like objects, traits such as dynamism and force. At the same time, this unconventional use of props belonging to young persons in the context of activities characterizing old persons has the role of breaking some social stereotypes (Cmeciu 2012: 251). For example, the 2012 EY official poster whose slogan is "Never too old to ... be young at heart" depicts an old lady singing and playing in a band, thus highlighting that not only young people are capable of performing in a band.

Despite the predominance of decontextualization as a means of rendering genericity both in the 2011 and 2012 EY posters, there are two instances (Fig. 4 and Fig. 8) of contextualizing the types within some generic settings by means of some visual indicators. Besides the multiplicity of faces in Figure 4, the French version of the 2011 EY poster is built on a linguistic specificity ("Pour en savoir plus" or "Pour participer") and on a generic setting rendered by several props (hospital beds, doctor's white gown), which act as indexical signs of a hospital.

Unlike the 2011 EY poster where multiplicity was visually represented by the grid-like layouts of 38 squares embedding human faces and colours, the 2012 EY poster uses this design resource in a different way. Figure 8 is made up of the grid-like layouts of three rectangles which represent one visual instance of active ageing and two visual instances of solidarity between generations. Props such as an automatic wheelchair, engineering equipment and a microphone are indexical signs of settings and of activities (driving, sharing experience, and singing) which emphasize the two 2012 European issues.

Conclusion

The European Years can be interpreted as social practices of avoiding the European Union to be regarded as a centre. But despite this desire of involving the European citizens within the EY awareness campaigns, the Directorates-General that work on the EY communication toolboxes, practise a visual discourse of uniformity. The analysis focused on the vertical Europeanization, namely the two layers of the European discourse of inclusion and uniformity: the EY branding process and the visual deontic modality within the visual guidelines of the two EY communication toolboxes. The descriptive analysis of the 2010, 2011, and 2012 EY logos revealed that the semiotic mode of colour is responsible for the visual representation of “diversity”, whereas lines form shapes involved in different social practices (building, helping, and connecting) which signify “unity”.

The European authority is also represented through visual markers of deontic modality. The logo position, colour and typography are the most salient visual markers to which references are made in the EY visual guidelines. This salience suggested that power relations among participants (EU, EY, and Member States) should also be drawn at a visual level by imposing a dominance of indexical signs of EU and EY. The analysis of typography as a semiotic mode within the context of the three European Years showed a prevalence of those distinctive features (bold/ regular weight, wide/ condensed expansion, upright slope, disconnection) which connote legibility and formality.

The critical analysis of the examples of 2011 and 2012 EY promotional materials shows that human faces as close-up shots have been the most frequent visual instances of genericity. Whereas the multiplicity of these human faces is salient in the framing of different types of volunteering, the type of a grey-haired old lady and the dichotomy old versus young persons are salient in the framing of active ageing and solidarity between generations. Despite attributes such as age, race, and sex used to render a visual multiplicity of volunteers, the variations in the representational resources provide a maximum effect of differentiation due to the high number of grid-like layout of 38 squares and of human faces (nine men and nine women). But these variations are minimal since at a close look at the 2011 EY poster the prototypical image of young white (male) persons is salient. Thus these generic images included within the visual and graphic guidelines of European Years focus on what Giorgia Aiello (2007) mentions as “an appearance of diversity” which visually exploits “the smallest effective difference”.

Despite the high potential of creativity that the visual metaphors used in the 2012 EY promotional materials may have, the visual embedding of old persons within the social contexts specific to young persons may arouse some humorous effects. The rhetorical device of a hyperbole, visually represented by an old lady playing in a band, may trigger a negative connotation by mentally activating the well-known syntagm “to be weak-minded”.

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Annex



Fig.1



Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4



Fig. 5



Fig.6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8