Towards a democratic EU

- Online communication in an organisational
  and civil context

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Abstract
This study examined how a supranational organisation, the European Union, utilized online communication tools to communicate with young Finnish citizens and to what extent young people are familiar with the EU's online communication means. Additional focus was on independent citizen blogs and how they were utilized. The aims were to discover the possible differences in the use of the organisation's online communication means compared to the citizen blogs and whether attitude and knowledge towards the EU influenced the use of the communication mean. Also the role of Non-governmental organisations as intermediary organisation was examined. The focus of this study was young Finnish people of 20 to 30 years old.

The methodology consisted of online surveys, to which 39 young adults responded, and of five individual follow-up interviews, as well as of a content analysis, which focused on the flow and style of the pre-chosen EU related independent citizen blogs. The two surveys focused on the use and perception of the EU's and individual online communication tools, while the interviews provided a better understanding of youth's opinions concerning EU's own online communication means as well as online citizen blogs. The interviewed youth were invited to visit the pre-chosen citizen blogs, which concentrated on EU and political issues, and the EU's online communication means and analyse the discussion. Further more a three phone interviews were conducted with representative from the European Commission from Brussels and Helsinki.

The results of this study indicated that the youth is interested in the EU, but lacks the knowledge of the organisation and its online communication means. This in turn hurts the perception of the organisation and thus makes the EU harder to be reached. Based on the empirical study, the Finnish youth uses internet and blogs many hours per day, but the threshold to get in contact with the EU, is too strong. The EU itself sees it important to maintain a good contact with the youth, but is lacking proper online communication tools to do this. Thus intermediary cooperations between the EU and NGOs could bring the youth closer to the EU, since intermediary organisations may be more easily approachable, than big organisations. In these joint-projects online communication means should be utilized, given that the multinational target segments, especially the youth, can be reached easily via online communication.

Keywords
organisational communication, online communication, the European Union, Non-governmental organisations, target group communication

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Tiivistelmä
Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää miten monikansallinen organisaatio, Euroopan Unioni, hyödyntää sähköisiä viestintätyökaluja internetissä ollakseen yhteydessä suomalaisten nuorten kanssa. Lisäksi tavoitteena oli selvittää ovatko nuoret tietoisia organisaation sähköisistä viestintätyökaluista, miten nuoret hyödyntävät kansalaisblogeja ja mitä suomalaiset nuoret ajattelevat EU:sta. Tutkimuksen kohderyhmä olivat 20–30-vuotiaat suomalaiset nuoret. Myös organisaatioita jotka voisivat toimia välittäjinä EU:n ja nuorten kesken, tutkittiin. Tutkimuksessa keskityttiin kansalaisjärjestöihin ja sähköisen viestinnän mahdollista hyödyntämistä EU:n ja kansalaisjärjestöjen yhteistyöprojekteissa tarkasteltiin.

Kohderyhmätutkimusta varten luotiin kaksi sähköistä kyselykaavaketta, joihin vastasi 39 nuorta. Kyselyjen tarkoituksena oli saada lisätietoa suomalaisten nuorten mielipiteistä EU:sta, sähköisistä viestintätyökaluista ja niiden laajemmasta käytöstä. Kasvotusten suoritetut viisi haastattelua nuorten kanssa antoivat syvempää lisätietoa kohderyhmän mielipiteistä EU:n viestintätyökaluista ja internetin käytöstä. Tämän jälkeen haastatellut nuoret aikuiset kutsuttiin arvioimaan tutkimuksen tekijän ennalta valittuja kansalaisblogeja sekä EU:n viestintätyökaluja. Opiskelija itse suoritti sisällön ja viestinnänlaadun analyysin ennalta valitsemiin blogeihin sekä EU:n olemassa oleviin sähköisiin viestintätyökaluihin. Monikansallisen organisaation näkökulman tutkimukseen toi Euroopan Komission Brysselin ja Helsingin edustajien kanssa tehdyt puhelinhaastattelut.

Empiirinen tutkimus viittaa siihen että suomalainen nuoriso on kiinnostunut Euroopan Unionista, mutta nuorten mielipiteet organisaatiosta vieraannuttava heidät organisaatiosta. Tämä heikentää myös mielenkiintoa EU:n sähköisiä viestintätyökaluja kohtaan. EU kokee tärkeäksi olla lähellä nuoria aikuisia, mutta toimivia viestintäkanavia ei ole. Tutkimuksesta ilmeni että nuoriso ei ole käyttänyt olemassa olevia sähköisiä viestintätyökaluja hyödyksi, vaikka kuitenkin nuoret hyödyntävät kansalaisblogeja ja keskustelupalstoja usean tunnin ajan päivittäin. Kolmannet osapuolet, kuten kansalaisjärjestöt, voivat kuitenkin tuoda nuorisoa lähemmäksi EU:ta, sillä nuorison on luultavammin helpompaa lähestyä pieniä organisaatioita, kuin suuria. Yhteistyöprojektien lomassa sähköisiä työkaluja tulisi hyödyntää, sillä tutkimustulokset osoittavat että nuoret voidaan tavoittaa hyvin internetin välityksellä.

Asiasanat Euroopan Unioni, kansalaisjärjestöt, kohderyhmätutkimus, sähköinen viestintä, sisäinen viestintä
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1 INTRODUCTION

Online communication has become a universal tool in public communication in the last decades. Nowadays Internet is equivalent to TV, radio and newspapers as a means of communication. Supranational organisations and civil groups such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have developed communication tools for online purposes as have the citizens. Blogs and discussion forums are common discussion forums where as face-to-face communication used to be in the previous decades.

The impact that the European Union (EU) has on the lives of its citizens in its member states is often unvalued or even underestimated especially by young people. This may be due to lack of knowledge and or interest towards to the Union or towards political decision-making. Valentini (2006, 80) argues that in the last five years EU has increased its authority in various issues, as well as its visibility and impact. If the EU is unable to reach its younger target audience, the gap between the youth and the organisation will enlarge. Communication, however, may play an essential role in narrowing the gap between the two parties. In addition the role of NGOs as intermediary organisations and can they assist in the process where the youth would get closer to the EU, will be looked at.

The European Union is one of the organisations that have adopted the new communication means when trying to reach their several target groups. Therefore the research on the use of EU's online communication means is highly relevant. As evident in Valentini's study (2006, 86) concludes based on EU's image research study, the Eurobarometer, that the image of EU in terms

of trust towards European Parliament and European Commission, had declined in the period spring 2002 to autumn 2005. The European Commission presented a communication policy plan called 'The White Paper', in which it outlined the future communication strategies for EU (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). Given that at the time of Valentini's study, the attitude of citizens towards EU was quite critical, the new online communication tools, established after the publication of the White Paper, came in need.

<u>**Objectives**</u>
The objective for this study is to investigate how the EU utilizes online communication tools to communicate with young Finnish citizens and to what extent young people are familiar with these communication tools. In addition the independent citizen blogs will be analysed, to see how these are being utilized to give this study a reference of the possible differences compared to the use of organisation's online tool and citizen blogs. The focus is on the young people of 20 to 30 years old in Finland, to see how the young Finns perceives and uses the organisational and independent online communication means. Moreover an objective is whether the attitudes and knowledge towards the EU influences the use of the organisation's communication means.

For this purpose two online surveys were designed and individual follow-up interviews were conducted with a few of the respondents from the first online survey. These interviewed young adults also answered the second survey after being interviewed. The two surveys focused on the use and perception of these communication tools, while the interviews provided a better understanding of youth's opinions concerning EU's own online communication means as well as online citizen blogs. Additionally a content analysis, of a chosen independent citizen blogs, which concentrated on particular issue of EU and politics in EU, was conducted.

The EU could consider cooperating with NGOs to better connect with young citizens. In joint projects online communication channels could be developed. Internet communication has been known to mobilise youth, given that youth is familiar with the online communication channels. This way, the organisations may reach segments of the public which could not be reached via more traditional channels. The study will investigate possibilities to use internet communication for projects aimed at youth. In addition independent citizen blogs will be studied. Research questions for this study are how do the online communication tools help the European Union to reach the Finnish youth? Could the potentially increasing use of EU's communication tools bring the EU and the young Finns closer to one another? And could cooperation with NGOs and other intermediaries help the EU to better connect with youth?

2 THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union is a financial and political cooperation based organisation between numerous European States. The EU is a supranational organisation, since it is formed my number of states and their parliaments. There are elements within the EU which all have their own functions and the challenge for the EU is to me its decision-making more democratic and open in the eyes of the public. The EU's excising online communication tools may be used to reach its multiple target groups.

According to Lane (2002, 22) the owners of the EU are the nation-states of Western Europe, however the EU now has already expanded to the Eastern Europe, thus it can be argued that the EU is a developing and expanding union of European states. Lord and Magnette state that the European Union is an unusual political organisation which lacks the power of coercion and linkage to a geographical territory that is typical for national states (cited in Micossi 2008, 3). The governance of the EU is divided into sections, presented in the figure 1 below.
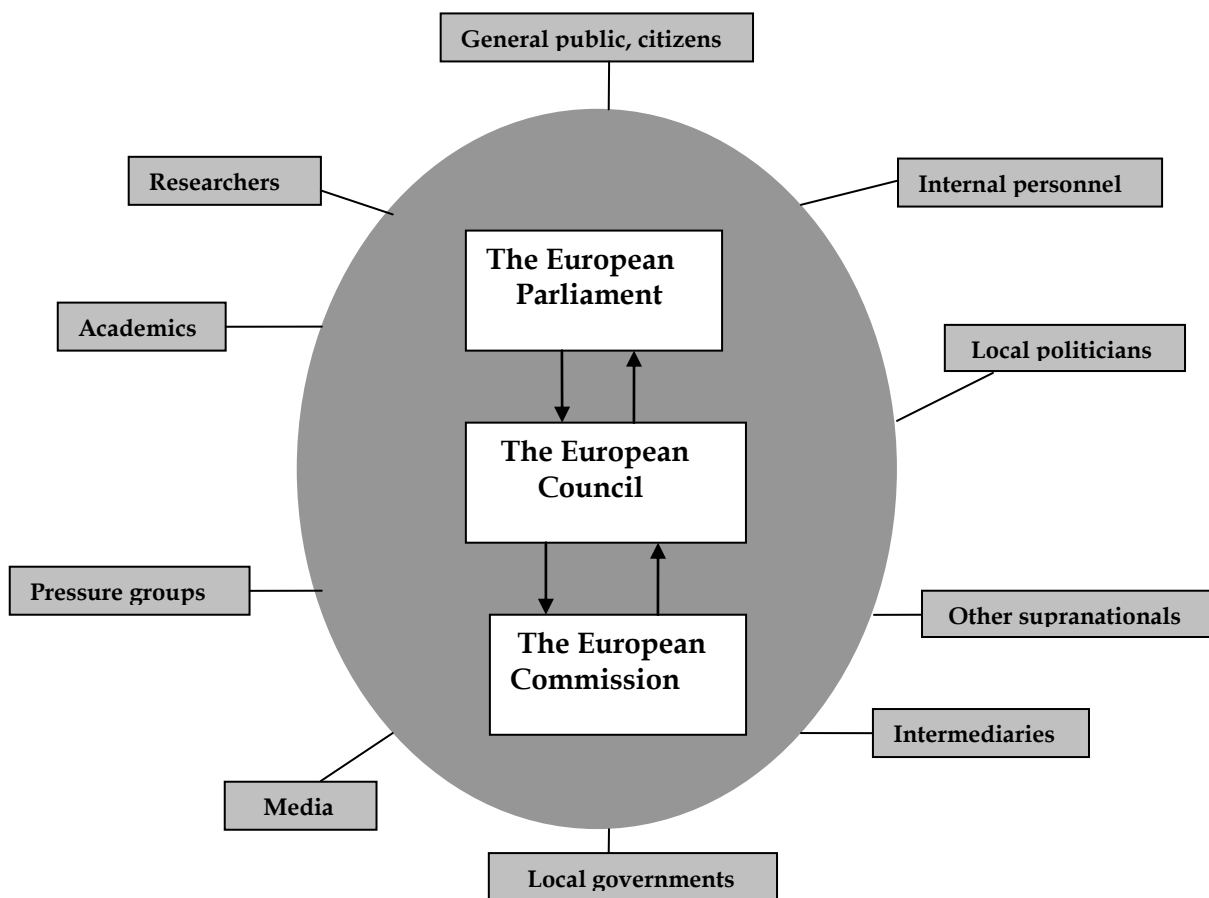
Figure 1. EU's structure

In the figure 1 the structure of the EU can be seen in the centre with the Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The members of the European Parliament are elected by the citizens, thus the parliament represents the individuals from each country and their interests within the EU. The Council acts as the ministry council of European Parliament, which accepts the laws and its main function is the foreign policy and the security policy. Therefore, it is also the main voice of the parliaments from each member state. The European Commission aims to function independently of the national interests and represents the EU as a whole. The Commissioners are chosen by each of the member states. The Commission makes proposals for new European laws, which it presents to the European Parliament and to the Council. It manages the day-to-day business of implementing EU policies and the spending of EU funds. The Commission also keeps an eye out to see that everyone abides by the European treaties and laws. It can act against rule-breakers, taking them to the Court of Justice if necessary. Most of the communication tools online have been created by the European Commission and the Directories for the Commission, as it is the representative of the EU citizens. (European Union 2009)

2.1 SUPRANATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

As a supranational organisation EU's communication is partially organised via its member states, as well as directly to its citizens. National level organisations, such as EU's information offices may have a role in designing communication processes. "Knowledge of the market, clients, problems and opportunities abroad are acquired by operating in the foreign market "(Pedersen, Petersen and Sharma 2003, 4), therefore organisations should have representation where its markets are, or at least study the area. Valentini (2008, 117) explains that EU programmes, aiming at communicating with publics from more than one country, should take into consideration local and cultural priorities by using research to create possibilities of two-way communications with publics.

In addition to nationally or locally supported communication, also direct communication with citizens in member states should be utilized. For this purpose communication situated on online environments are very suitable because the web does not have geographic boundaries, although there may be language barriers. The EU benefits from online communication means when it comes to cross-border communication, because with these channels citizens in various regions may be reached. Political and economical supranational organisations, such as the European Union, can utilize the information technology in order to reach their multinational publics and to

spread the organisation's messages without the strains of time and physical space.

New online communication means can be highly cost-effective, given that the same tools can reach multiple target audiences. The downside of cost-effectiveness is that the same online communication tools may not be used for all the target groups, since translations and national approaches need to be designed, thus the increase of expenses may influence the cost-effectiveness in a negative matter. However the online communication means should hold the role in the EU's communication activities. This is much do to the fact which Van Dijk (1999, 84) mentioned that online communication can shape politics of their own and bypass the government's coordinating role in a given territory. Unlike state information communication technology has no frontiers.

The EU has multiple stakeholders, even as their citizens. It is clear that organisations cannot fulfil all responsibilities towards each primary stakeholder group to an equal extent. Jawahar & McLaughlin (2001, 397) explains that organisations are likely to fulfil economic and noneconomic responsibilities towards some primary stakeholders and the responsibilities towards each stakeholder can be fulfilled to varying extents. Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997, 872) states that stakeholders may be identified based on the possession of the following attributes: power, legitimacy and urgency. Therefore, stakeholder analyses can be conducted to further identify EU's stakeholder groups and to prioritise the importance and urgency that should be reached.

Given that the EU has multiple stakeholders it cannot be assumed that young citizens hold a unique position in the stakeholder map. However, EU's Plan D (Commission of the European Communities 2005, 9) states that special attention should be given to communication with the youth, because that this would raise awareness for the European integration and promote active citizenship. Thus young people are an important stakeholder group due to the fact that they need to learn to understand EU as an organisation. Online tools may be an effective tool in reaching especially these younger stakeholder segments. The young people are accustomed to use online communication tools, given that online chat rooms, programs for discussion, such as Skype, MSN messenger and Yahoo instant message, are widely used. Thus, not only the well educated youth but also other young adults may be reached by online tools. In addition, according to Rushkoff (cited in Richards 2000, 63) the youth feels at home with online media and they increasingly tend to be interactive users instead of passive consumers. Probably the Finnish youth is no exception to this and is just as well accustomed to using online communication means.

The cooperation between the organisation and its younger target group is the key for the organisation's future. Peltokorpi, Alho, Kujala, Aitamurto and Parvinen (2008, 423) states that communication between the stakeholders might require new information channels and informal networks and force stakeholders to consider organisational activities from a more comprehensive point-of-view. Therefore the European Union and its younger target groups may gain more understanding of each others while communicating.

A threat that EU is facing when there is not understanding or dialogue with young citizens, in the future this segment of the public will have become estranged from the EU organisations and activities. The Eurobarometer study of December 2005 (European Commission 2005, 4) makes clear that only 55% of European youth aged between 20-24 years thinks that in five years time they would like EU to play a more important role in their lives. The same study indicates that only 40% of this age group feels that their voice is heard in the European Union. Two-way communication can play an important part in this process. There are chances too, because the same study showed that 61% of this age group is interested in politics and current affairs. Therefore, EU communication should be aimed at increasing knowledge and discussion among the younger age groups.

2.1.1 Supranational decision-making

The decision-making is a primary characteristic for any democratic organisation. Nieminen (article in Kivikuru and Kurnelius 1998, 275) states that any form of democratic decision-making and the prior discussions about the possible decisions is impossible without the communications system that serves the discussion process. Nieminen continues that the decisions made based on the will of the majority of the people are impossible without a public debate and that this is also the key of protecting the will of the minorities.

Green stated "leaving aside issues of media imperialism, there is a western tradition of linking free communication with spread of democracy" (Green 2002, 144). In order to create a democratic supranational organisation, the flow of communication is indeed needed. In large multinational organisations the stakeholders may have relatively little power to influence the decisions. In the EU decision-making process the public groups can only comment the decisions towards their national legislative bodies – mostly via the domestic public debate and by voting in elections.

Raunio (2007, 149) states that the main problem in the European Union's political system is that the views and visions of everyday people cannot be directed towards EU's decision-making. Naturally individual voices may not be heard in the EU's decision-making process so easily, though the larger problem is when an entire group of people feels that it is not being heard.

It is highly important for any organisation to have well functioning communication platforms when it is hoping to create an open communication with the public in order to be credited the notion of democracy and serve legitimacy. In the EU's case, these are open communication networks between the organisations itself and the various national audiences, but whether these create an opportunity for a dialogue and are being utilized to the fullest must be researched.

2.2 ONLINE COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The EU is a supranational organisation, an organisation which is formed of several national parliaments. For this reason the organisation has several target groups of which some may be hard to reach. The EU has four main online communication channels: EU Debate, EU ParlTV, EUTube and EuropaGo. The online communication means are all different and together they include several different interactive functions as well as they are aimed for different target groups.

EU Debate
EU Debate is the main discussion site of the European Union. The aim of this online tool is to listen to people and hear what their opinions are. Each member country has its own section in its own language, as the countries have on the European Commission web portal as well. The aim of this site is for EU citizens to freely discuss issues concerning EU. The lay-out follows a basic discussion forum style: there is a menu of topics available for discussion, such as:

- Climate change and energy
- The future of EU
- Intercultural dialogue
- European Elections
- Miscellaneous.

On EU Debate a moderator follows the discussion and what is being said on the forum. The moderator can start a discussion, but also registered users can raise topics for discussion under the topics in the menu. If someone wishes to participate in the discussion he/she has to register name and email address, and agree to the terms of the website. After this, the username and password will be sent to the person and afterwards he/she is free to comment on the site. Depending on the topic and language some issues raised plenty of discussion from several users while other topics, as in all online discussions, hardly raise any discussion.

EU ParlTV
EU ParlTV is the main information tool of European Parliament. On the internet users can follow live plenary sessions and other meetings from the Parliament and participate in the sessions as an on-looker. There are four sections on the site and on there users can post their own video material via the "Your Europe" channel. There are several videos posted on the site weekly and the aim of the site is to help the information flow between the parliament and the citizens. The videos cover topics such as decision-making in the Parliament, its actors and current issues in EU. Special attention has been paid to young people, in order to get them interested in the EU.

EUTube
EUTube is the video-information platform, in YouTube, for the EU, it's maintained by the Commission. On EUTube the Commission posts videos of current issues which deal with the life of EU citizens. These videos are produced in high quality and cover a diversity of issues, from foreign affairs in a humoristic way, support for research careers in a video which showcases different elements forming chemicals via relationships and close contacts, to a video of showing how important crime control online is ensuring the safety of young surfers.

The videos on the site are in English, but French and German sister sites offer the same content with French or German subtitles. The videos can be viewed by everyone who visits the EUTube site on YouTube. The comment section is available for those who have created a YouTube profile, and monitored by the Commission to make sure that there is "no xenophobic or hate speech, predatory behaviour, threats or harassment, or spam" posted. EUTube's purpose is to connect with young adults, since most of youth uses YouTube, and may be reached via the online communication channel.

EuropaGo!
EuropaGo is the website designed for young Europeans of 10 to 14 years old. It is a playful website with interactive games and tools, where children can play and learn issues about EU countries as well. The tools on the site have been designed as competitive games where the best players are shown in a scale. The website belongs to the Commission who arranges the maintenance of the site.

3 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Organisational communication aims to reach the organisation's target groups. Internal communication and the internal cultural environment affect the quality of the external activities. Stakeholders and intermediary groups should be known by the organisation to obtain a good level of the organisational operations and maintain stakeholder relations. Synergy between the organisation and its publics is an important point of attention in the external activities. The multicultural environment of an organisation calls for an understanding of cultural differences of stakeholders. For big international organisations NGOs may work as intermediary organisations that may bring people closer to the big organisations.

3.1 A STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

Stakeholders are the organisations, civil groups or individuals which are somehow connected to the organisation. Stakeholders exist in both the internal and the external environment. They may be influenced by the organisation's actions or the outcomes of the actions. Organisational communication aims to reach large publics and masses and it is a form of public communication.

Organisations do not operate alone, as they need publics and intermediaries to function. Organisations have multiple stakeholders which have for instance a role in the operational activities. Both external and internal groups influence the organisation, thus all should be taken into account when formulating business strategies as well as in everyday business activities. The classical definition of a stakeholder comes from Freeman (1984, 46): a stakeholder consists of any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organisation's objectives. According to Mitchell et al. (1997, 855) persons, groups, neighbourhoods, organisations, institutions, societies, and even the natural environment are thought to qualify as actual or potential stakeholders. Conti, Kondo and Watson (2003, 5) define stakeholders as groups of somewhat homogeneous classes of subjects whose interests are in several ways bound to the organisation's results.

Stakeholder analysis is important for all organisations given that "stakeholder analysis is part of the network analysis that gives attention to the flow of stakes, information about them, coordination of their exchange, and perception of stakes across networks (Heath 1994, 153). However the stakeholder theory is judged to be too static (Mitchell et al. 1997) and Key (1999, 321) states that perhaps stakeholder groups cannot be identified, but rather the interests that the group represent can be identified. Therefore, the

developments in the field of forces must be investigated and how this affects the stakeholder relations (Vos and Schoemaker 2006, 93); the importance is not only in the relationship that the stakeholders have towards the organisation, but also in the interrelations of the stakeholders groups.

Freeman (1984, 53) state that an organisation should understand its stakeholder map and the stakes of each group, to enable an organisational process to take these groups and their stakes into account routinely as part of the standard operating procedures of the organisation and to implement a set of transactions to balance the interests of these stakeholders and achieve the organisation's purposes." Zambon and Del Bello (2005, 137) suggested that it is likely that the stakeholder responsibility approaches will focus on the interests responsibility. Key (1999, 322) argued that organisation's placing themselves, the organisation, as the dominant player in terms of strategy in stakeholder approach is psychologically narcissistic view. Therefore in the stakeholder approach the organisations should not rely only on them being the dominant player, but also see themselves as connected to the stakeholders and maybe placing the environment in which all stakeholders operate in the dominant place.

3.2 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND SYNERGY

According to Fearing (1954, 166) mass communication means any communication produced by a single source which is capable of being transmitted to an infinitely large audience. In mass communication and public communication campaigns also internal communication processes are a key factor to realise successful external communication.

Internal communication means communication that occurs inside the organisation between several actors, thus it is communication aimed at the groups of the public in the internal environment of the organisation. Internal communication assistance helps the organisation to function better as a whole. It supports of the primary process and cooperation by arranging the exchange of information between several departments, it, promotes involvement and motivation and supports processes of change (Vos and Schoemaker 2005, 79).

Without internal communication a silo mentality can develop inside the organisation. Silo mentality, which is also referred as island mentality, works against an integrated organisational culture. According to Atkinson (2004, 13) it is the state of the organisation when departments do not know what the others are doing, the managers are not known and the directory of the organisation's structure is missing. Yilmaz and Sevil (2006, 19) emphasize that a silo mentality works against the organisation, given that it means that

the integration of key components are missed inside the organisation. Thus, it is questionable if these islands of departments are formed, that the organisation is still able to function in a competitive market. If a competitor's internal communication functions better, it can be argued that it has a stronger position in the market.

When organisations are lacking an integrated approach to the organisation's activities, a silo mentality in the internal atmosphere can grow and operational functions may suffer. "Organisational silos and other structural boundaries, including narrowly defined jobs, prevent integration" (Black 2003, 2). In addition, the preface of the silo mentality inside an organisation, as Cline (2007, 5) states, can be formed by miscommunication, different policies and priorities, which will eventually lead to a lack of trust between groups and possibly conflicts. For organisations such as the EU, that have to communicate actively with many external publics and seek new ways to do so, trust in the internal relations in the organisation is an essential factor. Without person to person trust there cannot be trust in the external communication development process.

Trust is important in preventing a silo mentality, given that when actors inside the several departments in the organisation believe in each other, separate silos, cannot be formed. Trust can be reflected in the way the top managers communicate with subordinates in the office or in subsidiaries. Silo mentality can occur also when several departments have the same external goal, but the departments work individually without integration or cooperation. If the organisation's departments send out simultaneous messages to reach the audiences, they won't be able to get a clear picture of the messages received. Integrated communication needs synergy within the organisation, as this will reduce the amount of miscommunication and uncertainty among employees and can increase the commitment towards the organisation.

It can be stated that when a silo mentality exists among the departments, there is no synergy between the activities of the organisation and cooperation and organisational communication activities are hindered. Keegan et al. (cited in Gurău 2008, 171) states that integrated communication is the strategic coordination of all messages and media used by an organisation to collectively influence its perceived brand value. Therefore, all messages coming from the organisation have to be created consistent with the main communication strategies, to ensure image sustainability of the organisation.

3.2.1 Synergy
Organisations are formed by networks and in order for the organisations to function they need cooperation and a stakeholder awareness which includes all of the players from the stakeholder map. "Synergy through networks is important for all organisations" (Conti et al. 2003, 15). For synergy to be

most effective, strategies should be created in order to achieve the best possible value for the relationships between the organisations and its stakeholders.

Responsibility for the organisation's actions and its consequences should be a key issue in an organisational strategy. Organisations must carry out consistent operations, which call for external synergy. Zambon and Del Bello (2005, 131) state that it is not possible to be socially responsible or sustainable without identifying the stakeholder targets. Thus organisations should identify the possible stakeholders, in order for the organisation to be responsible toward the groups. Managers may be unaware of the necessity of synergy and thus the organisations may settle for one way communication, in which the organisation itself is the main message sender and the stakeholders will be just silent receivers of the messages without the possibility to interact. Conti et al. (2003, 13) explained the importance of managers knowledge and visions in creating possibilities for cooperation with stakeholders, since wisdom from the CEO and the board in creating the magic balance among stakeholders that leads to maximum synergy is the key to excellence.

Big organisations as well as the NGOs should create projects that include both the organisation as well as its stakeholders in order to prevent an enlargement of the gap between the organisation and the target groups. Strengthening the interrelations with NGOs by creating joint projects online may result in better EU understanding among the younger target groups, given that they might be estranged from the EU but more connected to NGOs. If the EU wishes to reach the target segments then possible intermediaries may be welcomed as partners for the organisation. Shumate & Dewitt (2008, 407) explain that information technologies are increasingly providing new ways for organisations to cooperate with one another. Therefore EU and NGOs may seek ways for cooperation in order to reach common goals in the target group's and organisations' interests.

3.3 THE MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

After the end of World War II globalisation has opened the door for organisations to conduct businesses outside the traditional national boarders. These multinational organisations operate in many countries in order to expand their markets, target groups and/or profit margins. Lehtonen (article in Kivikuru and Kurnelius 1998, 302) argues corporate globalisation, which means the expansion of the organisations actions, has enhanced their interest towards multicultural communication. In organisational cultures the country of origin of workers may not influence as much as their believes given that "the difference between cultures are not so much matters of difference rituals

or different gestural signals or different modes of dress, although these elements can be clues to cultural differences; they are matters of what people believe they are doing when engaging in their normal, everyday practises" (Banks 1995, 11). These everyday practices which are influenced by the national aspects are issues, which are not often recognised and as a result they, without identifying, lead to problems in organisational communication.

Gupta and Govindarajan (1991, 771) state that national aspects will affect the flow of knowledge and capital. Thus, it can be argued that the culture of the country where the subsidiary is located should be in the policy designing process to ensure the proper tone of strategy planning. Boudreau, Loch, Robey and Straub (1998, 6) argues that an international approach calls for a more horizontal structure and established strategic linkages between the various countries in which an organisation operates at. Therefore, the costs of communication means are higher for a multinational organisation and coordination is more complex.

Coordination of communication activities should become a priority for multinational organisations, to ensure that all necessary actions have been taken when formulating communication activities. Gurău (2008, 177) specifies that messages need to be adapted to the cultural context of the various public groups. Thus, organisations such as EU need a well coordinated structure and a national approach when designing and using communication means online.

In order for the organisation's managers to function and direct the organisational activities, a multicultural identity has to be adopted by the managers. Hofstede (2005, 341) states people working between the headquarters and local offices need to create trustful relationships in at least two cultures: with both the main country and its cultural habits and subsidiary office's culture. However, many supranational organisations do not have a main culture; since offices may be located in multiple cities there are already different cultures in the mix. Therefore, problems with the many nationalities in terms of multicultural communication may occur.

Problems may also be seen in designing new communication means, which are targeted for multinational publics. When producing communication tools the various cultural backgrounds of the target segments cannot be forgotten, this makes it hard to produce communication means. Multicultural organisations may have difficulties assuring people that their voices are being heard. As the audience are large, it can be questioned how these supranational organisations can ensure the opportunities for dialogue with the multiple public groups. In addition the position of language and especially what language to use, has to be thought of. The position of English as lingua franca in international business has been strengthened by the

internet and this is assisted by the widespread use of English as a second language in many countries (Fletcher 2006, 260). Thus the online will eventually affect the position of native languages of countries' and strengthen the position of English as an online language.

3.4 INTERMEDIARIES

Organisations may have intermediaries which are as third parties working between the original parties. The function of these intermediaries is to transfer information or maintain working relations between the parties which are originally engaging in cooperation. When formulating the field of forces map, Vos and Schoemaker (2006, 93) state that organisations should consider which intermediary persons or organisations are involved. Bailey and Bakos (1997, 11) argue that traditional physical markets are often brokered by intermediaries or parties that facilitate market transactions by providing intermediation services. However, they continue to argue that because on www-marketing and internet mediums the role of the intermediaries in their traditional position is changing.

Consumer organisations are an important intermediary for any organisation. The consumer organisations are direct links between the organisation and its target groups, since consumer organisations represent the consumers in towards the suppliers and sellers. Several unions such as workers unions and trade unions work as links between the organisation and its workers and the suppliers.

For the EU intermediaries can be national offices of the EU, such as the European Commission's Representative office in all the member states. In addition in many cities across the member states there are offices of Eurooppatiedostus (European Information offices) which distributes official information about the EU and its actions, policies and regulations. In addition there are phone lines and Europe Day 9th of May events, during which information is being distributed to the publics. The media can be considered as an intermediary for the EU, since it informs the public about the EU decisions and related matters. Thru the media there are several channels available, where the public can choose the one for then and thru that be informed about EU issues.

3.4.1 NGOs
Non-governmental organisations have the possibility to function as intermediaries between public organisations and the general publics. Simmons (1998, 87) states that NGOs often make the impossible possible by doing what governments cannot or will not. Given this, the European Union can consider to strengthen its cooperation with NGOs. These projects may be

able to involve people who are not reached or simply refuse to be reached by governmental organisations. In addition, NGOs may have strong ties to communities. Scolte (2004, 5) mentions that NGOs mobilise the general public for citizen participation such as writing letters, petitions, demonstrations and user boycotts. Thus, it would be valuable for big organisations to pursue cooperation with NGOs, as this could connect the organisation with the publics that are difficult to reach and the EU could benefit from the NGO mobilisation skills.

There could be several reasons why some target groups might feel more connected to NGOs than the European Union, and therefore be more willing to be in contact with NGOs in matters regarding EU and its actions. Publics might view NGOs as being closer to them than official or governmental organisations, since "NGOs' offices or their representatives are often located closer to where beneficiaries live than is the case for public agencies"(Scott & Hopkins 1999, 15). When the physical presence is closer to the people, then the mental presence might be as well. In addition to closeness, Simmons (1998, 95) states that NGOs operative ways might be something of a source for governmental organisations, given that governments, and multilateral institutions need to devise systems of public participation that draw on the expertise and resources of NGOs, their grassroots connections, sense of purpose and commitment, and freedom from bureaucratic constraints.

3.4.2 NGO definition
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are independent citizen managed organisations which have no immediate connections to governments and political power-holders. Willetts (2002) mention that clearly an NGO must be independent from the direct control of any government. NGOs, civil groups or citizen organisations are synonyms which are often used of these non-governmental groups. These groups appear on all levels of society and can work for various issues from environmental, human rights to lobbying nuclear power. Scholte (1999, 3) uses civil society as a synonym to NGOs and states that "Civil society bodies are not companies or parts of firms; nor do they seek to make profits".

 In addition Scholte (1999, 4) mentions that negative terminology like '*non*-governmental organisation' and '*non*profit body' is in this respect not very precise or helpful. NGOs are often referred to third sector, second sector being the government bodies and first sector the market, profit-making sector. In this research, the concept of NGOs will be mainly used to describe these non-governmental and civil groups.

There are different views in studies which define NGO marketing and financing. Blood (2004, 122) argues that non-governmental organisations function different from corporations, since "the purpose of corporations is to

make profits, NGOs want to make a political impacts" (Blood, 2004, 122). However, in terms of tactics, civic associations often use a wide variety of means to pursue their aims as do corporate organisations, as for instance many groups directly lobby official agencies and market actors (Scholte 1999, 5). In addition to marketing, these NGO groups do need to finance all operations, because some employ free labour of volunteers and receive financial contributions of independent donators or organisations. It can be argued that "unlike a standard tax, resource contributions from the beneficiaries of an NGO-led project generate benefits to target group members directly and within a relatively short period of time" (Scott & Hopkins 1999, 15).

If NGOs receive money from a governmental agency, such as EU or local counterparts, then these are perhaps less independent from governments. If organisations have connections to political parties or profit-making corporations the same problem may occur. It can be argued that NGOs are often seen as ethical organisations. "There are thus ethical qualities or values that are essential in the character and behaviour of non-profit, especially philanthropic, organisations. They are expected to be – and should be – organisations that demonstrate integrity, openness, accountability, service, and a caring demour" (Ott 2001, 111). There is an evident problem when civic groups operating on the basis of NGO statuses have, at the same time, strong ties to profitable, religious organisations or governmental groups. In these circumstances the agenda of the NGO is not clear.

3.4.3 NGO governance
There are no universal definitions as to what size the NGOs are or should be. There are NGOs of different sizes that work in the local or national level, as well as those which have become multinational organisations. In small local NGOs the group can be operated by a few individuals, where larger NGOs have committees and directors on many levels. The structure of the multinational NGOs resembles that of a corporation with senior directories and lower level managers. Blood (2004, 120) states that NGOs have never had a constitutional status and thus differ from other organisations. He mentions the difference between NGOs and trade unions, which had to overcome laws and regulations that put even the union members to illegal position. Townsend (1999, 617) states that "there are no global maps of flows of funds into and within the NGO community, nor any systematic comparison of the way things work in different regions or countries, let alone accounts of the flows of ideas, information or NGO workers".

Organisations and their actions should be monitored to ensure law-binding activities, that no misconduct is taking place in the governance of the organisations. In addition, leaders of NGO's may not be chosen via elections and "can therefore react quickly to opportunities" (Blood 2004, 121). This

may lead to personal interest driven NGO policies, rather than issue driven policies, which may eventually harm the NGO and its reputation. Yet, Blood (2004, 121) states that absence of elections also allows continuity of policies, which might help NGOs to seek change in the society on the long run. Simmons argues that there are some difficulties with NGOs and how they operate once given the possibility to influence societies or change projects, "when these groups acquire the access and influence that they have long sought, they must not lose the qualities that have made them a source of innovation and progress" (Simmons 1998, 94).

The internationalization of organisations involves NGOs as well as profitable organisations. "Like corporations, NGOs have successfully internationalised" (Blood 2004, 124). Therefore, the globalisation and benefits of global markets have influenced the field of non-governmental work just as well as it has done for profit-making organisations. NGOs such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International are well-known in many parts of the world and these organisations have developed agendas for each of the continents. An organisation such as Attac operates on five continents (Attac 2009). Other NGOs oppose globalization and the capitalistic systems that have been formed. Many NGOs share a culture of resistance to Westernization and to capitalism (Townsend 199, 620). Thus it can be argued that the positioning and development of NGOs is an ongoing process and there still are problematic issues and paradoxes present such oppose globalisation but, to be a multinational NGO nevertheless.

3.4.4 Cooperation
Cooperation of EU with NGOs could be seen as a tool in giving a voice in society to younger citizens who feel they are not being heard by their governments. Stone (2002, 362) argues that alternative or parallel institutions should be created to represent the weaker political groups inside the dominant institutions. These alternative institutions could be utilized by the EU given that the EU and NGO cooperation would assist in building up these institutions or projects which would represent the interests of young target groups in Europe.

NGOs may provide new ideas and different ways of approaching issues to the EU, and Scholte (1999, 4) argued that civil society includes formally constituted and officially registered groups as well as informal associations that do not appear in any directory, which is where many development and constructive ideas and criticism could come from to the EU. Blood (2004, 125) argue that NGOs must have cooperation with supranational organisations to ensure the views of ordinary citizens are heard and to counterbalance governments and multinational corporations.

Many organisations are seeking cause-related marketing alliances with NGOs hoping that a nonprofit's image will define, enhance, or even repair

their own. (Ott 2001, 227) Ott continues to argue that NGOs can offer organisations much more than its image, since the co-operation might not need that much publicity, since the NGO ties alone bring plenty of publicity and free PR opportunities.

European Union needs to listen to the field of the online communication as well intermediaries given that these three actors together – organisation, citizen voices and public groups can all benefit from the cooperation. Intermediaries may have the most power to influence the EU and create synergy among the stakeholders, given that NGOs can "NGOs affect national governments, multilateral institutions, and national and multinational corporations in four ways: setting agendas, negotiating outcomes, conferring legitimacy, and implementing solutions (Simmons 1998, 84). In addition many NGOs hire staff members who belong to other organisation's target groups, and this may facilitate communication and may create trust between beneficiaries and the intervention agency (Scott & Hopkins 1999, 16).

Raunio (2007, 152) specified that the decisions made in the EU level are secondary in the lives of the people in EU, which reflects the interest towards the EU's decision-making. Therefore to make the EU to appear more human-like and to make its decision more concrete and important, the intermediary coopearations which utilizes online communication means should be engaged. Yet, if big organisations do not feel the need to connect with the public or seek intermediary connections, they may appear less democratic. Lehtonen states that "Organisation functions as their own way, given that they do not see any reason to change. This may lead to problems." (article in Kivikuru and Kurnelius 1998 302).

Communication between the organisations should be effective to benefit the NGO and the supranational as well as the target groups. Effectiveness according to Herman & Renz stated (1999, 109) is idea of importance in the integrated approach of reaching the younger target groups, given that it can be argued that stakeholders care about effectiveness since it is real and real in its consequences in the same way that "race" is a (socially constructed) reality with real consequences.

When joint projects are made between organisations the question arises who should be they be accountable for. Unerman and O'Dweyer (2006, 351) studied organisational accountability and conclude that accountability applies to NGOs as it does to all organisations. The impact that NGOs can have when cooperating with the EU may go beyond the NGO's original target groups. Thus NGOs can reach new public segments when cooperating with EU. NGOs might be considered accountable "only to the social, environmental and/or ethical values and expectations of those stakeholders who have the ability to influence the NGOs likely ability to achieve its

mission" (Unerman and O'Dweyer 2006, 357). In the broader view of NGO accountability, the organisation is accountable to all people who are influenced by its actions. Therefore, in the projects that the EU and NGOs engage in, both organisations should be accountable for the outcomes.

4 ONLINE COMMUNICATION

Online communication is a recently developed form of communication that involves complex networks and platforms where organisations and individual citizens can communicate without the traditional concept of time and space.

It is important to point out the definitions which will be used in the study. There are many definitions of internet and cyberspace, a suiting one for this research comes from Green (2002, 199): "cyberspace is intellectual and emotional interactional space within the digital realm". Morris and Ogan (1996) stated that while the Internet is a mass medium, it can fulfil interpersonal needs. Many interpersonal needs can be gratified by Internet use including, both informational and social need (cited in Trammel, Tarkowski, Hofmokl and Sapp 2006, 705). Mannermaa 2007, 109) explains that the primary driving force for the information society until the new millennium has been technology. Thus technological developments enable the societies to utilize online communication means, which were not available for previous generations.

 Given that internet is used by corporations and non-profit organisations as well as by citizens it is important to understand what is meant by internet communication in the thesis. According to December (1996) ´internet-based´ refers to a particular set of data communications protocols: "A protocol is a set of rules for exchanging information. Computer networks use protocols to enable computers connected to a network to send and receive messages". The set of protocols defines the rules for data exchange on the Internet and integrates a set of services (including electronic mail, file transfer, and remote log-in) that can occur on local or wide-area networks.

Nowadays the Internet is an extremely complex network of thousands of geographically dispersed networks including more than 100,000 individual computer networks owned by governments, corporations, universities and non-profit groups (K.-Kakabadse, Kouzmin and A, K.-Kakabadse 2000, 133). The definition for interactive communication media comes from Markus (1987, 492): "An interactive medium is a vehicle that enables and constrains multidirectional communication flows among the members of a social unit with two or more members: examples are telephone, paper mail, electronic

mail, and voice mail and computer conferencing". Online communication tools are used as interactive media between an organisation and its stakeholders. Websites that facilitates two-way communication enable mutual feedback, response and adaptation (Leichty and Esrock 2001).

Online communication means provide opportunities to circulate topical information to multiple stakeholders and engage stakeholders in an interactive dialogue (Gill, Dickinson and Scharl 2008, 257). When organisations have communication means online, they can also technically offer the option that the users can comment and write their own responses. The commenting-sections call for maintenance, thus the option is not often used by organisations

Online communication offers possibilities for communication and interactivity. When discussing interactivity here, it covers much more than simply "clicking and browsing" the web pages. It can be argued that clicking on links and navigating through websites does not amount to as interactive activity, given that a communication tool is not interactive itself. Only the use of the communication means can make these tools interactive. "While media and communication channels set some upper bounds for interactivity, it is the actual use of a medium that determines the level of interactivity in each particular situation" (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn and Ganesh 2004, 368). Nakajima, Tatemura, Hino, Hara and Tanaka (2005) state that the web can be a place for discussion, not just a place for documents; therefore it is a new kind communication arena. Fast global connections can be made by this new medium, since multiple conversations and topics may rise simultaneously across the internet at the same time.

Internet offers possibilities for organisations and individuals to engage in two-way communication, in a way that was not possible in previous decades. According to Barnes (2001, 40) a difference between computer networks and forms of written communication is the interactive nature of the medium and the various directions into which information is exchanged. The web provides opportunities to communicate at home with people from other places at any time. Van Dijk suggested (1999, 196) that traditional communication means are mostly used individually, yet the new online communication tools are also used collectively for chatting and holding teleconferences.

Online communication channels are seen as communication means, which have the possibility of two-way communication, but this may not always be used, since "to some extent, a good share of this form of mass self-communication is closer to ´electronic autism' than to actual communication" (Castells 2007, 247). Van Dijk (1999, 19) argues that new media is artificial, thus they can never replace face-to-face communication, which is the true

interactive medium. "The user does not (inter)act much; rather chooses from menus and reacts…fully fledged conversation in the new media is lacking". Yet Barnes (2001, 41) states that internet does offer possibilities for interactive purposes, since "depending on the group, you can expect to receive anywhere from several messages per week to 50 messages per day".

However, not all people are interested in engaging in such communication. Some are indifferent to it, although they may have the same potential exposure to sent information, and these uninterested groups may require totally different communication strategies and tactics (Mendelsohn, 1973, 50). Selective exposure is even more of influence in online environments. Unlike most traditional media texts, researchers cannot assume that because two people visited the same web site, they were exposed to the same content (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001, 372).

Organisation can design communication means that are reachable by large audiences, but the meanings of the communicated messages can change according to the person's previous believes or opinions. "Perhaps the more homogenous the product the more fragmented are the meanings taken from it" (Green 2002, 70). Many scholars (Hyman & Sheatsley, 1947; Fearing, 1954; Stiff & Mongeau, 2003) have stated, that people are interested in content which is in line with their previous believes, attitudes and understanding of the world. Ferguson (1999, 149) explained that audiences attend to messages that appear close at hand, personally relevant, and important to their lives in physical and psychological terms. They make unconscious decisions about which kind of information they expose themselves to.

4.1 ORGANISATIONAL ONLINE COMMUNICATION

As shown in previous sections, online communication is beneficial to any organisation, both non-governmental and supranational organisations. Chaffee & Metzger (2001, 371) explained, new media seriously challenge the core assumptions of traditional empirical and critical mass communication, thus it will be a challenge for an organisation to create a well functioning online communication means.

However, As K.-Kakabadse et al. (2000, 135) stated organisations are still lagging behind in the generation of ideas and ways of doing business utilizing the capabilities offered by IT. Yet improvements have been done in the last few years and Lehtonen (article in van Ruler and Verčič 2004, 116) states it is hard to imagine any organisation not having electronic communication means which they can utilize. Websites and online forums created by organisations are part of the organisation's communication

strategy; therefore they should be given as much attention as is being given to other communication and marketing efforts by the organisation.

Leichty and Esrock (2001) say "Corporate signature websites represent and personify the corporation to a variety of publics". Online communication is a new type of medium and it offers organisations such chances to reach new segments of the public. Gerbner states (1967, 42) that new media of communication provides new ways of selecting, composing, and sharing perspectives. New institutions of communication create new publics across boundaries of time, space, and status. "Internet offers a variety of degrees of interactivity within the technocultural contexts from simple access (consumption) to full content creation (production) as part of the communication exchange" (Green 2002, 197). This study will show that Internet alone can be used for various communication tools and discussion forums, in addition to other multimedia content.

Designing communication means and using the possible benefits of online communication means does not thus benefit only the organisation itself, but the target groups as well. Many organisations have utilized online communication, given that their younger target groups are accustomed to using web. Thus, the online communication agendas can be done highly cost-effectively via internet. Palm & Sandberg (cited in Peltola 2006, 111) stated that cost-effectiveness is higher in the case of those communication channels that require citizens own activity (e.g. telephone conversations, meetings, and interactive web-pages)

Many organisations have started to utilize online communication tools. The main reason for doing so may be as Van Dijk (1999, 91) concludes that technology can be used as a tool to gain information about policies and decision-making, as the publics can use the online communication means to inform political actors, which is called interactive policy-making. Also supranational organisations benefit of communication forms that give the target groups more control over the communication process (Zaidman, Te'eni and Schwartz 2008, 270).

Mannermaa (2007, 113) suggests: "The question is how the constantly developing and complexifying (virtual) net effects change in the real world. And of course, which public and private players are effective and competitive in this at the global and other levels." Organisations should make sure that the needs and interests of the organisation's presented identity are the same as the identity experienced in real life. Organisations also promote themselves online with the communication tools, thus they must represent the same ideology as the organisations have in real life.

Chaffee and Metzger (2001, 370) state: "Tight control over access to the media by elites and professional gatekeepers is waning, as individuals and organisations with modest means become content selectors and editors in their own right". Thus, communication tools online are supposed to be highly appreciated among several stakeholders and a necessity to create a good image of the organisation. For this purpose Dervin (1989, 68) suggests: "Find ways to make the campaign's prescribed actions real to the individual, and buy as much redundancy as you can afford.… Get the media gatekeepers on the campaign's side to get the boost of media hype and incorporate networking and community-based programmes as part of the campaign."

However it can be questioned how well the online communication tools actually promote discussion and two-way communication between non-governmental organisations and target groups, given that a website alone is not dialogue per se. That requires reply from the receiver, which cannot be done if the tools or the message does not enable this process. Fletcher mentioned (2006, 266) that organisations have to decide what they want to use the online tools for, since the extent to which culture will need to be taken into account in design and content of the web site will depend on whether the purpose of the site is to merely provide information or whether it is to be used as a vehicle for marketing.

Nowadays communication channels are networks, rather than something like a pipeline. These networks have the potential to fill the gap between institutions and audience. (Gurău 2008, 173). Leichty and Esrock (2001) stated companies should not provide interactive features in their websites, unless they are willing to support them, like they do other modes of communication, such as letters. The online community is growing and it nowadays includes many more than young well educated people that participate in the discussions. However, there still are segments in the public that cannot use online media. For instance people who do not have internet access because they live in areas where the connections are not yet available or because they lack capabilities.

4.2 BLOGS

According to Long and Baecker (1997, 8) the web is used as a broadcast medium used by people who construct web pages representing their interests or themselves and make them available to browsing by other web users. This is especially accurate when discussing the use of citizen blogs. The blog can be said to be a journal or discussion forum online, where a person or persons can write and comment other's writing. According to Nakajima et al (2005) a blog entry is a primitive entity of blog content and

typically has links to web pages or other blog entries, creating a conversational web through multiple blog sites.

(Taricani 2007) stated that online there are no editors, and for this reason internet offers large audiences and one has a timeless access, thus it can be used anytime anywhere. In addition creating online communication tools is relatively easy and effortless. "Beyond the economics of time and resources, it is also clear that one of the defining elements of blogs is the relative freedom from the norms and conventions of journalistic practice and objectivity that bloggers enjoy as compared to traditional journalists" (Xenos 2008, 490).

Independent citizen blogs and other discussion sites allow users to comment freely simply with a few clicks. A blog is a journal that is written and maintained online, over the internet; it is frequently updated and open for the public to read, while individuals can post entries without much difficulty (Taricani 2007). On independent citizen blogs, comment features are often also available; however the administrator (blogger) owns the right to control the comment-sections. "Many blog software services enable the blogger to solicit ''comments'' as an optional feature (Trammell et al. 2006, 707). Thus the real discussion is not on the actual blog text but on the comment-section rather.

Bloggers bring a new atmosphere to the communication arena; blogging can be defined as personal or individual organisational communication. "Bloggers may actively synthesize and represent focal points of broader political discussions as professional communicators (or in most cases, semi-professional or amateur communicators), while also directly engaging in discussion of points highlighted by more traditional political content providers of the public sphere in the mass media" (Xenos 2008, 487). Thus, bloggers and participating individuals in discussion forums have the ability of raising new issues regarding the EU and NGO policies into the discussion field, which then may be pick up the organisation itself.

Citizen participation is a necessity for an organisation that wants to contribute to the democratic mandate and to gain trust of the civilians. Therefore, creating interaction or at least monitoring what is being said on the blogs is important for the EU. Castells (2007, 241) mention that traditional media have their own internal controls in terms of their capacity to influence the audience, because they are primarily a business, but independent citizen blogs have changed this scenario, given that online there anyone can produce content as he/she wishes to.

Whether addressing Finnish blogs, international blogs or users of the official organisation's online communication means, the cultural backgrounds of

these audiences must not be forgotten. Dervin (1989, 74) critically analysed: "As various new communication technologies are introduced, the gaps between the managed and the managers grow larger and those who wish to move in the communication 'fast lane' have to sacrifice their uniqueness and cultural diversity to do so". Fastness is the key for the internet, and especially the power of Google, as Caldas, Schroeder, Mesch and Dutton (2008, 771) pointed out that Google is the most used search engine among researchers. This example indicates that online tools can replace the traditional ways of doing things and finding required information and material, but also creating new ways dialogue.

Conversely there are problems when it comes to blogging. Can blogging reach people? As blogging is a form of citizen journalism, blogging is a really type of personal advertising, given that bloggers are promoting themselves or their views of official issues. Sundar, Edwards, Hu and Stavrositu (2007, 85) call this phenomenon 'me-ness'. It is when the person him or herself is the source of the information. In addition when particular blogs become too popular the possibilities for the audience to have a dialogue with the blogger may decrease. Reese, Rutigliano, Hyun and Jeong (2007, 239) explains that while the audience for blogs or web sites grows it becomes more complicated to manage and control its feedback. This may eventually lower the interactivity of blogs.

Additional problems can occur when bloggers are not independent due payments received from a second party, such as organisations or individuals. Organisations can utilize this when they wish bloggers to publish favourable information on their blogs on organisations behalf. Naturally bloggers are all influenced by something or someone, but when they are bought specifically by an organisation as undercover PR publishers, this causes problems. When this type of blogging occurs then bloggers become intermediaries working for behalf of the organisation and their independency as bloggers can be hence questioned.

Barnes (2001, 185) mentioned groups which normally would not come together in a physical space can meet safely in cyberspace. This may bring groups of racists or criminals together as well. Van Dijk (1999, 115) stated that the tragedy itself, particularly existing legislation, is being undermined by network technology and the current laws regarding online safety and crime prevention is lacking behind the use of online tools. Problem with content of the blogs may arise as Sundar et al. (2007, 83) explains, that since blogs are not professionally gate kept by traditional media, but they rely on the users. Dangers are present in the traditional communication means as well, thus the moral panic, which Green (2002, 148) is talking of, is a bit harsh if at the same time the dangers of traditional communication channels are forgotten. "Disruptive acts are more easily tied to and individual and such

acts can put an individual's group membership in jeopardy "(Long and Baecker 1997, 4).

5 METHODS

Primarily a mixed methods approach was used in this study. This was chosen to get better view and understanding of the complex subject matter, a wide research approach was thus justified. To investigate the use of EU related blogs and EU's own communication means a limited target group study was conducted among Finnish young people, students, of 20 to 30 years old. The study included an online survey and follow-up interviews. In addition citizen blog discussion was monitored and analysed in order to research how the communication online is utilized and in which manner. Additional interviews with actors from the European Commission from Brussels and in Helsinki were done. The mixed method approach provides a better understanding of the research topic, given that only analysing blogs and their content or only interviewing young Finnish adults and actors from the EU, would have provided a one sided data for the research.

5.1 TARGET GROUP STUDY

To understand how the youth felt about the European Union and online communication is was important to do a target group research. Invitations to take part in the target group study were sent via email to various email lists in Finland, mainly to University of Jyväskylä student's organisations email lists in the autumn of 2008. As a result 39 students answered to an online survey. This is a limited sample of the Finnish youth, yet it gives some idea of the youth's behaviour online.

Answers that were submitted by a person less than 20 years old or over 30 years old were disregarded in order to stay in the frame of the studied age group. The questions dealt with the focus group's everyday use of internet, blogging and posting own comments online, as well as opinions of online communication means in general. In addition, questions about the EU were asked.

5.1.1 Online survey
The Finnish language survey was designed to distinguish the use of EU's communication tools compared to independent citizen blogs and discussion sites. The order of the questions proceeded from personal info, to opinions about EU as a whole, to the use of independent citizen blogs and other online communication tools. The emphasis was on how often the respondent uses these online tools and what kind of information and/or use would he/she

wished to gain from online communication means. Next, the questionnaire focused on whether the youth had used additional EU's communication channels e.g. phone lines, brochures, or if they had participated into the EU Day 9th of May events. Lastly, interviewees were asked to answer what their opinion is of how well the EU has been able to return the membership fee in the form of communication means. In the questionnaire name and contact information were asked, however this was an optional answer question, thus it was possible to answer the questionnaire anonymously. Students who filled in their contact info were contacted to get permission to interview them face-to-face (see appendix 1.).

5.1.2 Follow-up interviews

The follow-up interviews were done face-to-face and took place within a few weeks after the original questionnaire was submitted online. The interviewer and interviewee met in the facilities of the University of Jyväskylä, as this kept the situation neutral and ensured that the interviewees would feel comfortable answering questions. The interviews were all conducted in Finnish and recorded or written done for later analysis purposes. The face-to-face interviews took place in the main building or main library and lasted approximately 30-60 minutes. Some EU-related questions were asked in order to get the interview started, but based on the flow of communication and answers given, additional questions were made (see appendix 2). The objective was to conduct the interview in a form of a more free discussion. During the interview questions were asked about how the EU should reach the younger target group in Finland and whether the respondents would be interested in a two-way dialogue with the organisation. Based on the answers given, additional questions were asked to get more detailed answers and opinions of the person.

5.1.3 Follow-up analysis of blogs

After the interviews had taken place, the interviewees were also invited to visit the online communication means of the EU and some citizen blogs pre-chosen by the researcher. (The same blogs were used for the content analysis, for an explanation see the next paragraph.) The interviewees visited both the EU's own online tools and the independent citizen blogs, after which they were asked to comment these sites. For this an additional online questionnaire was used that addressed the youth's opinion of the layout, the content of the websites, what was good or bad in their opinion, and how they saw the possibility of two-way dialogue with the EU and its actors via EU's own communication means (see appendix 3).

After a period of three months, the online surveys were closed. The survey results were analysed during this time together with the answers from the follow-up interviews to maintain the relation between the survey results and

the interview results, given that the surveys and the face-to-face interviews complimented each other. The analysis took place in the late fall 2008.

5.2. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF BLOGS

An addition a content analysis of EU-related blogs was conducted during three months in the summer of 2008. The focus was to discover how the citizen blogs functioned and what kinds of issues were communicated on the sites. In addition, the ongoing discussion was studied. There were six blogs which were visited three times per week to evaluate the content, lay-out, the flow and style of the communication. All discussed topics were read and monitored to see whether they instigated any comments or discussion.

The blogs were chosen randomly by searching on online blog lists using Google search (see Table 1 for blog list). One criterium in selecting the Finnish blogs was that they had to be maintained by a Finn to ensure the Finnish point of view of politics. The second criterium was that the blog content had to be about EU and other political and social issues, since blogs with other content such as entertainment industry or gossip would not have been useful to the study. The final criterium was that various sides of the political arena had to be covered to ensure a more complete analysis and presentation of ideology.

Finnish blogs
Anna Mikkolan blogi http://annamikkola.wordpress.com/
Eurooppanuorten blogi http://www.eurooppanuoret.fi/blogi.html
Politiikkaa ja polemiikkia http://ninasuomalainen.wordpress.com/
International blogs
Blogactiv (All European) http://english.blogactiv.eu/
Julien Frisch (Germany) http://julienfrisch.blogspot.com/
Nosemonkey's EUtopia (UK) http://www.jcm.org.uk/blog/

Table 1. The list of analysed blogs

The selection was done after studying the tone in the blog, and statements made by the bloggers such as active participation in a political party. These particular blogs were chosen since four of the blogs were diary-like blogs, which meant that the bloggers expressed opinions towards EU related

matters, and this was useful to the analysis process. The blogs allowed the reader to see what the opinions of the bloggers really were. It was important that the bloggers had views related to political arena and EU policies, but that they weren't active in politicians in parliaments or governments at the time of the blog analysis, since the purpose was to analyse citizen blogs not politician's blogs. The group blogs had ties to EU policies and thus they were chosen.

The group blogs ensured that organisation's that had EU related activities would be included in the analysis. All the international blogs were chosen to show the international aspects of independent European blogging on EU and other political matters. One blog was chosen randomly to present a so-called old-European citizen's English language blog. A third blog was the all-European blog portal, which includes multiple blogs to ensure a multicultural perspective. The hypothesis for the content analysis was that there might be differences between Central European and Finnish blogging, since the nationality might affect the opinions of the people, it was important to select so-called old-European blogs and Finnish blogs to study the possible differences of tones and opinions of the blog and bloggers.

The content analysis was done according to the same questions for all of the blogs. The blogs were visited all during the same days: Monday, Wednesday and Friday in May, June and July 2008, expect Julien Frisch's blog was monitored from June till August. The questions were designed before the blogs were chosen to maintain objectivity when analysing the blogs' content (see Table 2). The questions were the same for each week and the answers were written down for later analysis.

Analysis questions
How easy was the blog found
Who operates the blog
Description of the blogger/bloggers
Style of the layout
The blog's topic
Estimation of the blog users
Discussed issues
Is the nationality of bloggers present in blogging
Do opinions change over time
Knowledge of the bloggers based on the comments
The tone of the bloggers

Table 2. The questions for the blog research.

5.2.1 Analysed Finnish blogs

Anna Mikkolan blogi

This blog is a diary blog, without any clear agenda presented. The blogger had ties to EU politics, because she worked as an assistant to a member of EU parliament Esko Seppänen. Since the observation period the blogger herself announced her candidacy in the EU elections 2009. This blog had a very simple layout with the blogger's picture displayed on the site. The colours used on the blog where gray, white and black. The right and left sides of the blog where empty, and in the middle section there was the blog text, with a search tool, navigation for the latest's entries and comments, related blogs and internet sites links, category and tag search links located all on the right middle hand side of the blog. On the top of the page there was a link to get more information about the blogger herself. This blog had no logo or a slogan attached to it. The blog was created using wordpress.com.

Eurooppanuoret blogi

The blog is a community blog for the Eurooppanuoret -Young European Federalists Finland, which is a non-religious and politically independent organisation for the youth. This group blog was connected to the organisations website, but the analysed part was only the blog, given that it was the only relevant part for this study. The blog followed a same structure as the rest of the site. The middle section was the actual blog, which had blog entries written by several bloggers, who mostly were members of the organisation. The colours used on the site were yellow, white, blue and black. On some blog entries there were a picture of the blogger placed beside of the blog. The right side had information and navigation bars for the entire site, and the left side had the same for the blog. There were navigation bars for the latest blog entries and links to related blogs and websites.

Politiikkaa ja polemiikkia

This Finnish blog is an independent blog of a Finn, living in Helsinki. The blogger had ties to a Finnish political party Kansallinen Kokoomus, The National Coalition Party and she became member of Helsinki city council in 2009. The blog appeared to be a diary blog for personal promotion, given that no agenda was presented on the blog. This blog was designed via wordpress.com and thus it followed the lay-out of many online blogs created by Wordpress. The colours used on the side were gray, orange, blue and black as well as white. The right hand side had a navigation menu of recent posts separated by year and months, links to other websites and blogs, the left side and the middle was the area for the blog text and the top of the page had links for the author herself and along with a home-link.

5.2.2 Analysed international blogs

Blogactiv

As mentioned in previous chapter, the international blogs were chosen randomly, only criteria were that they had to be in English and to cover EU politics. As in Finnish counterparts, there were two blogs from independent bloggers and one blog from a group of bloggers. Blogactiv is a group blogging web portal which is a multi-European blog. Stated in the Blogactiv's website:

> "Blogactiv is the blog platform dedicated to European affairs. It is managed by Blogactiv SPRL, an autonomous subsidiary of EurActiv PLC. It has been launched early 2008 as complementary service to EurActiv.com with the objective to give the opportunity to Europeans to better engage online in the political debate on key European issues. Blogactiv is building on EurActiv's readership to become the premier source for opinions, discussions and views on EU affairs". (Blogactiv 2009)

From the Blogactiv-site anyone who wished to start their own EU related blog, could. For this reason the blog itself was creating the platform for a discussion of EU issues. In the blog there were blog-sections covering all topics of EU policies as well as three languages to choose from. Colours used on the site were yellow, blue, white, black, green and gray. On the right hand side there was a selections of creating one's own blog, recent comments section, partner online forums, a media partner display, advertisements and a search tool. On the left hand side there was the topic selection bar, blogger selection and the most active blog navigation menus. On the top of the page there were the language selection, and an information and search navigation about the blog. The middle section of the page was reserved for the actual blog-text, with a comment selection places on the main page of the Blogactiv webportal.

Julien Frisch - Watching Europe

Julien Frisch is a German independent blogger from Berlin. She appeared to have a strong European Union related knowledge given that "I have worked for different national and European governmental and non-governmental organisations on different spots of the European continent" (http://julienfrisch.blogspot.com/). She stated on her blog that she is trying to understand what keeps Europe moving, which might have been why she was blogging in English, to ensure multinational audience to her ideas. The blog was published via Blogger (https://www.blogger.com/) which is an online tool via with individuals can publish their own blog, and the slogan for this blog was "Julien Frisch Watching Europe". This blog was set up in June 2008, thus the monitoring period of this blog was extended to

September 2008, to ensure the whole 3-month period what was the analysis period for the other blogs.

The layout on blog appeared simply, but this might have been due to the fact that these temples and lay-outs were chosen from the Blogger.com selection of possible blog lay-outs. Colours used on the site were white, gray, orange and black. On the left hand side of the blog there was the menu for general information about the blogger herself, blogger.com info, and navigation bar of previous blog entries as well as links to other blogs. The bottom of the blog was reserved for the list of recent comments. On the right hand side there was nothing, the top of the page only had links to blogger.com main page, search tool and login and "create your own blog-link. As often on blogs, the blog text itself was on the middle of blog.

Nosemonkey's EUTOPIA

Nosemonkey's EUtopia is a blog from the United Kindon, an Anglo-Saxon blog, and is owned by J Clive Matthews. Written in the website the author is" a writer, editor and online content consultant. His political knowledge comes from a couple of stints as researcher to a (then) member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee at the House of Commons, a short period working at the European Commission in Brussels, a post grad degree in history, and an obsession with current affairs and international relations". This blog was powered by a wordpress.org. The slogan for the blog was "in search of European identity".

The layout of this blog seemed very dark and thus the website looked very full. In addition the blog was full of navigation bars, text and some pictures. The colours used on the site were the several shades of blue, yellow/orange, black and white. On the op of the page there was the navigation for the blog itself: short navigations for the broader themes, info on the blog and testimonial links as well as a search tool. In addition there was a blog's theme: a picture of a nose monkey. On the left side of the blog there were the navigation bars for the recent posts, categories, archives per month/year, resent comments, links to other blogs and community websites such as Twitter and Facebook. The right-hand of the page was empty and as normally, middle sections had the blog texts.

5.3 EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Two experts were interviewed, in addition to the material gathered as described above, to hear more about the objectives and plans of the EU with online communication. One expert was situated in Brussels and the other in Helsinki.

The experts were interviewed to clarify the side of the EU Commission was Mr. Claus Sørensen, the Director-General Communication. The Directorate General Communication works under the authority of the President Jose Manuel Barroso and Vice President Margot Wallstrom. The Director-General works in Brussels in the EU Commission and activities include:
- coordinating the activities of the Representations in the Member States;
- centralising the contacts with the media;
- ensuring a coherent approach to communication and information issues within the Commission, in contact with A) Directorates-General and Services within the Commission that have information units responsible for sectoral information, and B) the DGs responsible for external relations that provide information to citizens of third countries including information for the general public in applicant States. (The Directorate General Communication, 2009)

In addition vice manager Paavo Mäkinen from the European Commission Representative office in Helsinki was interviewed to get more detailed information about the national aspects of the Commission's opinions about online communication and communication towards the younger target segments. The Representative office's activities include informing the media and the publics about the EU Commissions activities in Finland as well as maintain connections with politicians, intermediaries and individual stakeholders.

The interviews with the Director-General were done as phone interviews after sending a list of questions by email. The interviews took place 11.7.2008, 28.11.2008 and 17.3.2009. The interview with European Commission's representative from Brussels was done in English and the interview with representative from Helsinki was done in Finnish. The phone calls were not recorded, but they were documented with notes.

6. RESULTS

The results from this study will be presented in this chapter. All the results will be presented in the same order as they were presented in the previous chapter in this study.

6.1 TARGET GROUP STUDY RESULTS

It was crucial for the study to make sure that the required age group would be the one that answered the survey. Thus sending the survey to the student's email-lists seemed rational. As table 3 shows, the age diversity among the respondents was large and provided a good sample of the opinions of the age group of 20-30 year old. Most of the respondents were over 22 years old; however, younger people were also among the respondents. The largest group of the respondents was formed by the 23 years olds.

Age in years	%
20	6
21	9
22	12
23	17
24	12
25	14
26	9
27	6
28	9
29	6
20-30 (n=39)	100

Table 3.   Age distribution of respondents

Figure 2 shows how many hours the respondents were online on a daily basis. For most of the respondents this was 3-4 hours a day. This high number of hours indicates that the Finnish target group was using internet many hours a day, therefore, the possibilities for online communication appeared to be vast.
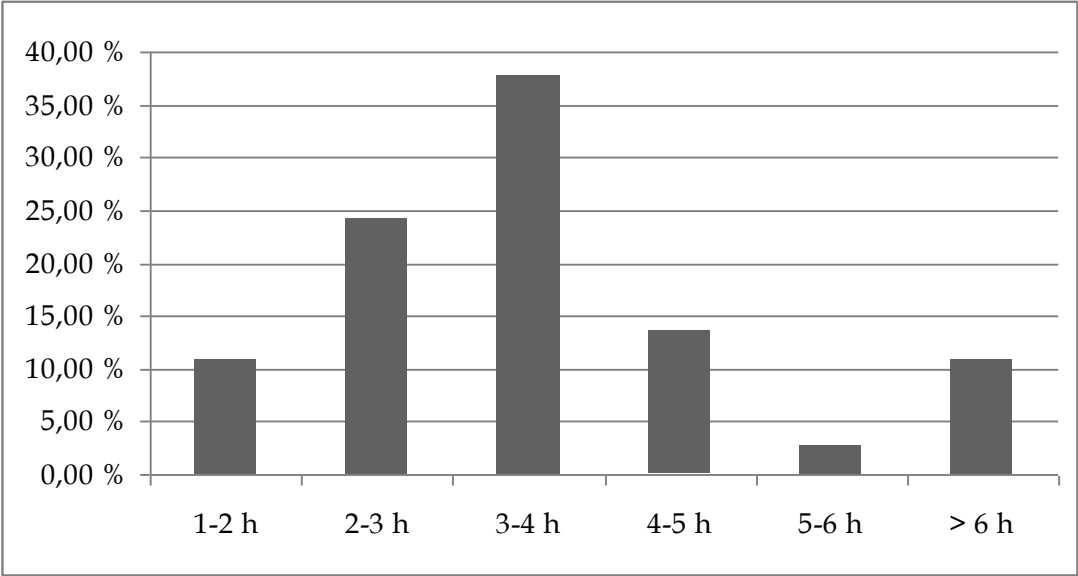
Figure 2. Internet use in hours per day

As can be seen in the figure 3 the respondents were familiar with blogs in general. 92% of the youth who responded to the survey said they utilize blogs. The majority of the respondents that visited frequently online blogs were mostly interested in topics related to fashion, travel, nature and well-known people. However, a small number of respondents did visit citizen blogs that provide EU-related content. Thus it can be assumed that the young respondents, at least to some extent, were interested in EU-related blogs.
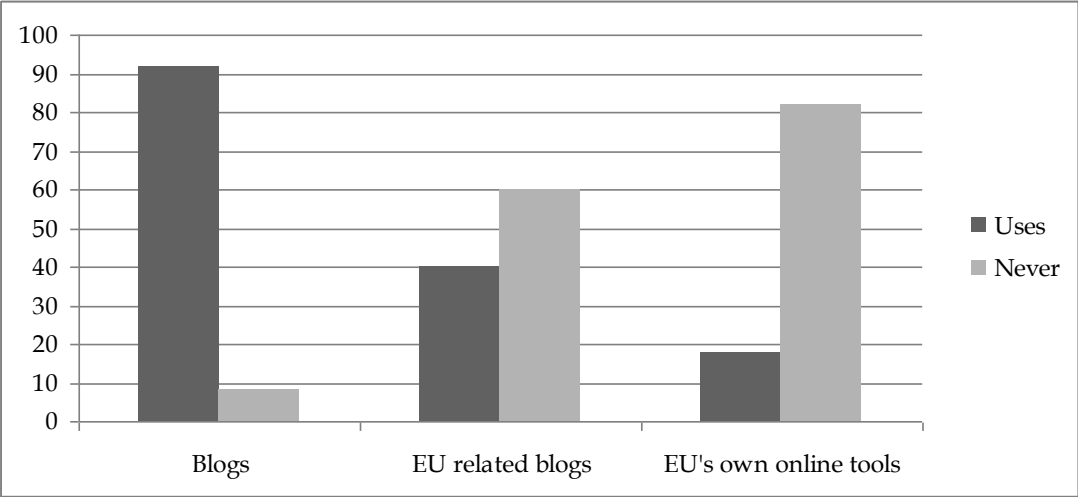

Figure 3. Use of online communication tools

However, 82% of the respondents had never seen EU's own communication tools online. According to the answers, many respondents were not aware of EU's own online communication means, and did not know that there would be any interesting information freely available for all users. Others stated that they didn't know where to start looking for certain information about the EU, and preferred to use search engines like Google rather than directly

looking for EU Websites. Another issue which was mentioned by the respondents was that the EU's communication means were too complicated and the information search would end up in navigation problems. One respondent expected that the language in EU's online tools would most likely be too complicated to understand; therefore it seemed to be unrealistic to visit them. Wikipedia was considered a more suitable source for information, since that provided information in a better format than was expected in EU's communication tools.

Opinions about the EU were asked to be clarified in short essay answers. Positive issues mentioned about the EU were the freedom of movement, EURO currency and cooperation between countries. A few students stated that the fact that Finland is now being thought of as European and not Russian was a positive issue, and another said that the cross-cultural understanding between nations is a positive fact of the EU. An often mentioned positive aspect of the EU was the possibility of working and studying abroad. Also the monitoring of common interests in e.g. the quality of food was raised as a positive issue.

However, many of the responses indicated that the youth felt that the EU itself or its decision-making were too bureaucratic and undemocratic, that rules and laws were being created for the reason of making laws on the expense of the content of the laws. One respondent stated that directives and regulations often cannot be applied to all member states, thus it weakens the Union. The position of Finland and that other smaller member states are often forgotten in EU decisions was a fact that was mentioned multiple times as a negative feature of the EU. Freedom of capital and market competition was mentioned as being both a positive and a negative aspect of the EU, and one respondent said to feel nothing other than neutrality towards the EU.

To the question "What additional information would you like to receive from EU through its online communication means?" 71% responded that they would be interested in news and background information on EU policies, decisions and regulations (see table 4). Information on other member states was furthermore called for, as well as background facts and discussion. In addition EU's expansion and development projects raised an interest of 46% of the respondents.

Information type	%
News of policies and projects	71%
Background and discussion	57%
Links	14%
EU's internal governance	29%
EU's developments/ expansion	46%
Membership state info	37%
Other	23%

Table 4. Information preferences about the EU

The respondents expressed a wish for higher quality communication means as well as better structured information, so it would be easier to navigate through the available online information. Of the recipients 66% did not know to what extent European Union has been able to create communication tools online. One respondent mentioned that lack of advertising about the EU's communication means indicated, that most likely there were no online communication means available. Another respondent expressed disappointment towards EU, stating that people may disregard EU's communication channels, because of disappointment about EU's ability to act in the global political arena.

Follow-up interviews
In addition to the survey, follow-up interviews were conducted with five of the respondents that were willing to participate in these. The interviews focused on opinions that the respondents had towards the EU and its communication means and on the use of online communication.

The respondents stated that in general they were interested in the EU, but they hadn't made the effort to get to know the EU better, since they simply were not aware that there are channels to communicate with the EU. One of the interviewed young Finns said that there is no need for a dialogue between the Finnish citizen and EU's officials, given that common people cannot communicate on the same level as EU's actors. Other respondent mentioned the need to be able to locate official texts and EU files, as young people should learn how to read the official organisational sources. It was said that with information found in a quick and easy-to-read format, it would not be a negative issue.

The idea that easily understandable basic information would be situated on the main pages of the online communication tools and that clicking would navigate the user to more detailed information, was seen as an interesting

option for online communication purposes. The idea of trendy, advertising and slogan based websites was, however, labelled as horrible and not appealing by four of the young adults.

When asked about the language of the communication tools, 4 of the interviewed expressed that there was no need for that, since most of the Finns can speak and write in English. However, one student said that without native language communication means online, it is no wonder that youth is no longer loyal towards the EU. In addition, two interviewed Finns mentioned that if the communication tools are not made in separate languages then it will be commonly accepted not to translate all information into Finnish or other languages beside English. A counter argument was made by another interviewee who stated, that if the EU itself only works in English and French, so that many cannot use their own language in official meetings or in the EU contexts, also the French and British would have to use each other's language.

The individuals, who were interviewed, were invited to visit the pre-chosen citizen blogs online as well as EU's own online communication tools Debate Europe, EUTube, EuropaGo and EuroparlTV, after the interviews. Subsequently, the interviewees were asked to answer an additional questionnaire, which focused in detail on the EU's communication tools as well as the visited citizen blogs.

Firstly, the citizen blogs were addressed. Three out of five interviewees had not visited the particular blogs before. Four respondents said that they did not find the layout of the blogs attractive but rather amateur like; this was not deemed a negative issue, as the written content itself was not on a superior level either. Those that felt the content was more informative also appreciated the lay-out and bright colours of the websites more.

It seemed that the more content and references there were to official documents and sources, the less interested the interviewees were in reading the blogs. It was stated that there was so much difficult and official text that it was not interesting to read it, since it was not fun. One person claimed that the perception of EU will not change when unknown people blog online, whose blogs are not even interesting, but that the real challenges for the EU were the security issues. Four of the interviewed stated that the blog writing was either practical or highly official. The bloggers were said to be informed about EU related issues as was reflected in the blog writing, even if some issues were dealt with in a superficial matter.

Secondly, EU's own internet communication tools were discussed. 2 of the interviewees felt that the tools were useful, the same number as those that were hesitant about this, or didn't know. Three of the youth felt that maybe

they can have a dialogue with EU's actors via online communication means; while the others believed that there is no possibility for two-way communication. Five out of six interviewees stated, that they would maybe visit EU's online communication tools again another time, especially when they need to find information related to the EU and its actions. Reasons mentioned for the additional visit were particularly the informative and interesting content on EUTube. One of the respondents said they would not expect to visit the online tools again. Two interviewees mentioned that part of the independent blogs had good quality, so that it couldn't be difficult for a large organisation as the EU to also provide good online tools. Better navigation was said to be helpful in finding the kind of information that they were looking for on EU's online communication channels, instead of less relevant information.

6.2 CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

A content analysis of EU-related blogs was done. An overview of the issues discussed is given in table 5. Then afterwards the discussions found, is described.

Finnish blogs	Issues discussed
Anna Mikkolan blogi http://annamikkola.wordpress.com/	EU policies, Lisbon treaty, Finland in EU, corruption, Russia/Georgia – tone is critical
Eurooppanuorten blogi http://www.eurooppanuoret.fi/blogi.html	EU policies and the Lisbon treaty. tone is positive and issues discussed in positive way
Politiikkaa ja polemiikkia http://ninasuomalainen.wordpress.com/	EU politics and policies that affect Finland, transatlantic politics. tone is mostly positive
International blogs	
Blogactiv (All European) http://english.blogactiv.eu/	EU politics, NATO, transatlantic relations, global warming, Euro 2009 elections
Julien Frisch (Germany) http://julienfrisch.blogspot.com/	European Community, Russia/Georgia war, human rights in the EU, corruption in the EU, the expansion of the EU to new states
Nosemonkey's EUtopia (UK) http://www.jcm.org.uk/blog/	The EU/Russia/Georgia, EU identify crisis, Lisbon treaty – tone changed after the Russia-Georgia war

Table 5. Content of the monitored blogs

After the blogs had been chosen and the lay-out and the style analysis of these selected Finnish and international blogs had been done, a content analysis of the communication was conducted. This was done by monitoring the websites from May 2008 to end of August 2008. The blogs were visited 3 times per week to examine what topics had been discussed and how and whether any form of dialogue had occurred. The most of the blogs were updated approximately 1-4 times a week; one blog had less updates, only two times per month.

The blogger or blogger groups were the ones with the authorization to write the main entries for the site. In five blogs the writers used either their own name or their alias when writing. On one of the international blogs only the alias was used. However the alias' blogger's real name could be found on the blog. In most of the blogs the blogger or their alias' was the identity for the blog. In one of the Finnish blogs and also in one international blog the identity was not the authors, given that these blogs were the community blog portals, hence the identity came from the group's name and agenda.

All the independent bloggers presented their full name and personal info on the site, thus it made the personal blogs to appear like a diary. On the group's blog the blogger's name was presented, and contact info was found on the site. Read-and-react commenting options were available on all the blogs. Required information was the commentator's name, email address and possible website. Thus it was relatively easy to comment on the blog text or opinions expressed on the website. Therefore there was a possibility to start an online discussion between bloggers and readers. Word verification was asked on two of the independent blogs in order to prove that span scripts were not used to spread spam mails thru the blogs. On one of the blogs the commentators could register with their personal blog information, which meant that readers could identify themselves typing in their possible blog information. However, additionally the visitor could just write by their name, thus one's own blog was not an essential requirement for commenting.

There was not as many comments posted on the blogs as it was expected in a hypothesis when the monitoring period started. During the summer it appeared quieter that it had been in the previous months. This could be done by looking at posts made on the blogs during the previous months form history section. The quietness could be explained easily that people were on holiday and not spending time online. As it was a summer time, or simply that people did not wish to comment of these blogs, the comment feature was not heavily used: only 1-3 comments per entry were placed and some entries did not receive any comments. On one of the international blogs, people could start their own blog, if a commenting feature was not appealing for them, or if they simply had a desire to begin blogging. This blog would

not be an actual comment-only site to the main blog, rather it would, be a sister blog.

An estimation of the knowledge of the blog users and bloggers themselves could be made according to the supposed fact statements mentioned on the blog discussions and on the data that the bloggers based their opinions on. The knowledge of the bloggers and commentators seemed relatively good on some posts, given that the style of text and statements given to back up the opinions seemed reliable to the reader. However on the Finnish blogs not all the facts were supported by statements from the EU, other organisations or with official documents.

Some of the commentators had just opinions to express and not really questions to ask or critique to be placed. Despite the missing links on some Finnish blog posts, most of the bloggers, especially in the foreign independent blogs, had links to news, statements, policies and articles presented frequently to validate one's point of view. Yet in some instances opinions were only expressed without any factual background on the foreign blogs also. After checking the sources, the readers could draw their own conclusions of the topics discussed and whether the blogger had made relevant conclusions on issues.

As the blogs concentrated on political and sociological issues, during the observation period many discussed issues were linked to European Union and its policies, as seen in table 5. The most discussed issues were EU's policies, the energy politics in EU, the war between Russia and Georgia, climate change, cultural difficulties in Europe, the Lisbon treaty as well as Ireland's NO-vote for the treaty. It seemed that the nationality of the blogger affected the tone of the blog texts. On the international blogs the all-European structure of the EU and European sense of togetherness were seen, for e.g. stating that there should be the European Union policy how to deal with Russia and that it is not a bad for Europe if the bigger nations lead this process. In the Finnish blogs this issue was discussed in the Finnish perspective of possible angering Russia with Finnish NATO discussion and how this might affect the neighbouring relations with Russia. Yet the demand for all European wide policy for Russia was presented.

In the domestic blogs the written entries often reflected the political flavour of the Finnish political parties, as bloggers had connections to political parties, belonged to a specific party in Finland or shared ideology with a political movement. What was evident on the two of the three Finnish blogs was the clear effect of the national politics, since the bloggers often made it clear thru writing which party they supported and many times the opposite party was blamed for several issues. The blogs were a great example of how

the national level politics and the requirement for the national priority in EU negotiations and meetings can be linked with the EU level politics.

On the Finnish organisation's blog, the Finnish politics was combined to EU politics for e.g. asking for mutual EU politics among the EU member states and then arguing that it might be impossible to achieve this since there are too many nationalities in the EU, thus everyone is playing on behalf of their own countries' interests, not for all-European identity. The slogan "Suomen eduksi/Suomen etu/Kansallinen etu" (Benefit of Finland/National priority) was seen on the Finnish blogs often, which also emphasised the call for national politics in EU contexts. All of the Finnish blogs, least to some extent, argued that there was a problem in the EU and that all nations precede the issues with their own country and its benefits in mind, thus the "all European Identity" seemed really farfetched, least judging by the Finnish blogs.

On the international blogs, the British blog in particular reflected most of the postings based on the Anglo-Saxon point of views. The one issue that came out from the both independent foreign citizen blogs was that EU is in trouble. One possible cure for the trouble was that if the EU would remember that it was set up for the economical stability reasons foremost, the EU should learn to crawl (start the curing process) and afterwards learn to walk (continue to new issues following the economical stability). The problem the EU was stated having was that the European Union itself doesn't know what the EU is, then how can the citizens know what it is supposed be of.

On the German blog, human rights issues where often discussed, especially the state of human rights is EU and how the EU deals with human rights of the lack there of in its policies. One issue rose from the German blog, which had not been addressed a lot on the other blogs: the state of equality between men and women on the EU's official jobs. The blogger presented women who hold a position in the EU, as an example of powerful women in office. On the foreign blog portal there were multiple aspects of Europe or EU policies covered, thus multiple opinions and ideas about the EU and EU's polices was found there. Given that there were three languages to choose from in the portal, the look on things could have varied depending on the language chosen.

6.3 EXPERT INTERVIEWS RESULTS

Interviewed representatives were Mr. Claus Sørensen, the Director-General
DG Communication from Brussels and Mr. Paavo Mäkinen, Assistant
Manager from the European Commission Representative office in Helsinki.
The European Commission is aware of the growing importance of the online
communication in organisational communication settings. According to
Paavo Mäkinen the youth is aware of online communication and is
accustomed to using online communication means. This means that the
previously known discussion forum is changing. The older generations are
more familiar with more traditional communication tools, however if the
organisations sees it important to get in touch with the youth, then the newer
communication means must be utilized. However Claus Sørensen said that is
not adequate anymore to hand out press-releases, simply because the
coverage of paper press-releases is not wide enough. However EU's online
communication tools are not enough alone, the traditional communication
means such as TV, magazines, radio and press-releases are needed, since the
reality is that people spent a great deal of time in front of TV, thus the old
communication tools cannot be left unused

In terms of communicating with the publics, both Mr. Sørensen and Mr.
Mäkinen expressed that a democratic governance needs communication, the
organisation has to communicate with its publics. Therefore the organisation
has to reach its target groups with communication, not to distance itself from
the public. Organisation has to inform the public about its activities to
remain its legitimacy and democratic state. In addition the organisation itself
has internal problems, the evident silo mentality, as Mr. Sørensen mentioned.
Several departments are creating their own communication objectives and
tools and this affects the user orientation negatively.

An important issue according to Claus Sørensen is that users of all
demographics need to be reached with online communication means. As of
now the elite is only using EU's online communication tools. The elite consist
of academics and professionals who are interested on the issues due to work
or study. Most of the users are students of upper level institutions and
citizens from middle-class and above. Lower income workers and
uneducated people tend to disregard of the communication tools and
messages. Paavo Mäkinen mentioned that currently the EU has online tools,
which should be developed further, so the youth would discover them and
start using them. Fact remains that there are numerous online tools available
on internet; hence the quality of the organisations online tools must be high,
so they would not be lost in the masses of tools, rather would stand out.

The EU is supranational organisation with multiple nationalities as target groups. In regards to their multinational audiences Mr. Sørensen stated that the cross-border communication can be created if the resources such as funding and personnel are available. As of now human resources are limited and there are not enough personnel to monitor the content all the time. Assistant manager Paavo Mäkinen stated that the designing and use of the new communication tools involves the economical resources to be allocated, in order for the online tools to be taken into account. New assets should be targeted especially to moderating of the online communication means.

Mr. Sørensen told that he is delighted about one online platform, the EU Forum's success story: the Europa web-portal (http://europa.eu/index_en.htm) which is available in all EU membership state's languages. It continues to gather plenty of interested people online to learn about the EU and its activities. Mr. Sørensen stated that the problem with most of the EU's online communication tools is that they are not professional quality; therefore they are not being promoted heavily. Another difficulty with the online communication is that the EU itself is too small of an organisation and the lack of funding influences the quality of the all the communication tools. According to Claus Sørensen the current recession will not influence the budget of the communication department and thus effect negatively to he maintaining of the communication means online, since the budget is solid till 2013. Nevertheless the budget for communication is a small amount compared to other budgets in the EU's governance.

6.3.1 Further developments
According to Claus Sørensen the European Commission and the EU have to go multiplatform when it comes to future communication tools. Mr. Sørensen argued that EUtube and the existing internet based communication tools are not enough to represent the organisation online. EUtube is for younger people to use, but they are not the only core audience. Mr. Sørensen said that new forums outside existing ones, has to be created - Debate Europe and EUtube cannot stand alone. In addition serious material about the European Union and its policies are not found online, nor is core up-to-date information. However, if such materials would be online, it is hardly ever reached by the citizens, since the material is complicated to read, given that it is full of legal slogans as well as it is written in professional language, unknown to everyday people.

National communication tools, such as TV or magazine interviews, spotlights on current issues etc. need to be created with a content which presents national news. Those news peeks would be then shown in different EU-wide national communication channels, with the intention of spreading the multinational news across Europe. However Claus Sørensen mentioned that it is hard to create content on a multinational level, but the cross-boarder

communication needs to sustain the democratic legitimacy, in order for the EU to make the full use of it.

Claus Sørensen presented an aspiring idea for an online platform, which would collect all the websites, blogs and EU related sites all around Europe together and then they would be gathered on an online directory. From this platform the users could find sites in his/her own language as well as links to online platforms, universities, organisations and so on. The vision is "Information about EU under one platform." In addition national communication tools, such as TV or magazine interviews, spotlights on current issues etc. need to be created with a content which presents national news, said by Claus Sørensen. Those news peeks would be then shown in different EU wide national communication channels, with the intention of spreading the multinational news across Europe. The European Commission wishes that the flow of communication becomes better with the future online communication tools, but that this is rather naïve way of thinking, said Mr. Sørensen, adding that he does not know whether the success of the new communication tools will actually happen, given that the reality, as of now is that there is no money to implement these plans.

Challenges for the future, according to Mr. Sørensen are also language issues. Given that English is becoming, whether we want it or not, the national language of the EU, since it is being used widely across the EU in multicultural meetings, projects and discussions. Thus the demand for the communication tools to be in English is growing. Also the five biggest languages (English, French, Spanish, German and Italian) need to be included in the communication tools' languages, since 95% of the population is covered under these main languages. Nevertheless Mr. Mäkinen mentioned that the EU's online tools should not be enforced only in creating All-European identity. The national identity of each member states should retain and the development of the English language online means must not prevent the regional identity and its developments.

It was said by the representatives for the European Commission that every comment submitted on the organisation's online tools is being monitored, but cannot be processed in depth. Thus the existing online means are not actual two-way communication tools for the youth to be used. When it comes to the citizen's use of the online communication tools, EU is not accelerating or feeding the motion or the flow conversation, but it does follow the conversation naturally. Commission wishes to stimulate the pan-European communication, but no one can say what will or will not be discussed. According to Mr. Sørensen, it seems that only certain topics are interested to the publics and some, very relevant ones, are left with no interest on the public's side. The online forums are being checked regularly for racists' comments, or anything that can lead prosecutions and Director-

General Claus Sørensen stated that the tone of the platforms need to be responsible and of good quality.

Based on Mr. Sørensen's statements, the online platforms are useful as a citizen communication arena, but they will never replace the classical way of influencing. To really influence the EU one has to use correct channels, such as stakeholder groups, interest groups and intermediary NGOs. The role of NGOs is still developing in Europe, as Paavo Mäkinen stated. The possibilities for influencing the European Union require the NGOs to be organises and commonly recognised by larger publics. For intermediaries to pass on propositions, they need to be practical so the EU would even consider them. In addition Claus Sørensen stated that opinion polls conducted via Eurobarometer tell the EU and the Commission what the general opinions of the citizen's are. According to those polls, the agenda setting can be done.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim for the study was to discover how the youth used the EU's own communication tools and can online tools provide means for two-way communication as well as how the organisation and citizens provide means for interactivity between the supranational organisation and its stakeholders. Additional focus was placed on NGOs and whether the EU should seek co-operation between itself and NGO's or other intermediaries to gain better understanding from the youth's side. A focus group study was made among the Finnish youth to gain more understanding how the youth uses the EU's online communication tools and other communication means online. In addition interviews with members of the EU's Commission were carried out and a content analysis of the student's pre-chosen blogs was conducted.

7.1 DISCUSSION

This study focused on how the young Finnish youth from 20 to 30 years old utilized online communication means online. A special focus was placed on the European Union's online communication means as well as several Finnish and international citizen blogs. Research questions for the study were how does online communication tools assists the European Union to reach younger target groups and could the possible increasing use of the EU's communication tools bring the EU and the young target groups closer to one another. Additional research question was that can NGOs, or possible other intermediaries and the EU cooperation's aid the EU in making itself more relevant in the lives of the youth and could NGOs offer important knowledge, network and manpower to the EU, as well as could these

projects make the youth feel more connected with the EU. Also focus was placed on online communication and how can online communication help in supranational communication.

Organisational communication focuses on the relations between the organisation itself and its stakeholders. Stakeholders can have direct connections to organisation or the connection can be done via intermediary groups, which can be NGOs or other organisations. In stakeholder relations the priority should be given to synergy and working cooperation between all the parties, given that successful external organisational operations often require cooperation, where all parties can benefit.

For all supranational and smaller organisations not all stakeholder will be the priorities, thus organisations has to prioritise the stakeholders. Who will be the most important one on what particular time? Stakeholders must be categorized and analysed consistently. Accordingly the target groups which have not previously been the important for an organisation, they may become important for the organisation later on. Thus observation of all potential target groups has to be a top priority. Naturally the main responsibility of the stakeholder approach may perhaps be towards to the most prominent stakeholders, since at certain point they will be the key target group to focus on, yet the importance should be creating a symbiotic situation between the stakeholders and the organisation.

An organisation's communication activities reflect the organisation as a whole to the outside publics. If organisation's activities are not integrated, then the communication activities cannot be this either. Therefore, the external communication activities could not be designed to accurately reflect the entire organisation. This would hurt the organisation's operations and also its image. Integrated communication must be utilized inside the organisation, to better the internal flow of communication and to prevent the silo mentality inside the organisation. This is why communication functions have to be embedded within all parts of EU – to ensure integrated approach.

European Union is a supranational organisation which is owned by the member states and it is a union between the member states and their governments. This now 27-member states large organisation was originally an economical cooperation and currently the EU is made democratic by its people. Thus the European Union should utilize online communication means to the fullest extent, since for a big organisation online communication can open great opportunities for strong stakeholder relations. It was emerged from the target group study among the 20-30 year old Finnish youth that in their opinion online communication means may offer great advantages for organisations in reaching their target groups. However these

internet-based communication means need attention from the organisation's side.

When supranational organisation is designing its communication means the organisation has to realise that strategies and policies should never be left standstill. Gurău (2008, 171) argued that "The strategic co-ordination of all marketing tools can lead to a consistent brand message directed towards the target audiences, using effective media planning" thus the development of the future communication means has to be well planned, to ensure the consistency. However people are drawn to be interested in issues which they have previous knowledge or opinions about. Thus online communication is not any different from other forms of communication. In organisational contexts Stone (2002, 215) states that individuals and groups decide which organisation or candidates to supports based on the portrayal of them or the portrayal of issues promoted by the organisation or candidates.

Strategies for online communication should be designed in any supranational organisation, also by the EU. Strategies are never one-timers, which are formulated and afterwards the organisation hopes that they will work. Strategies must be tested, adapted to the external atmosphere and the needs of the audience. However, the needs of the audience, the Finnish youth, are not the only issues that can factor into the change of the strategies. When the world around the Finnish youth changes, so must the strategies for reaching them via online communication means. The needs of the organisation influence the communication policies as well. In the long run the needs of the organisation itself and the needs of the external target groups will complement each other. Strategies cannot function alone; they need internal support from the organisation's managers. Without the internal vision and motivation to execute and monitor those, strategies will be on fragile base.

According to Ungerer (2000, 9) in the framework of overall political goals, as expressed at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, access to the new communications structures in the Internet is of fundamental importance. Therefore, the EU needs to continue the development process of online communication channels that have the capacity of reaching youth in Finland and other EU member states. Micossi, (2008, 15) explains that the European Union will be strong according to its publics if solutions for globalisation, environmental, internal and external security as well as energy based challenges will be achieved. Therefore it seems highly relevant organisation such as the EU to utilize their communication means to listen what the public thinks about issues facing the challenges. Conversely the EU can narrow the possible gaps between the organisation itself and their target audiences, while listening to their ideas and concerns.

Since the EU has already expressed interest towards its younger target groups, stated in the White Paper, thus the assumption that EU does not care about its citizens is false. Another issue is how the organisation expresses the importance of the target group and what actions it takes in reaching the group. Based on this study it can be argued that online communication tools have changed the previous way of communication. Finnish youth has adapted internet as a route for their voice. Formerly TV, radio and newspapers have been the main sources for information and the main communication channel between people and power-holders. It is evident that online communication has changed the previously know communication channels.

The development of content has lagged behind, but is of growing importance now that online tools are featured by the application and people's needs as well. Yet since online communication tools are itself rather new and still developing means, it may be that even organisations, institutions or supranational organisation such as the EU, have not developed their communication tools to the fullest, as Mr. Sørensen stated (Interview with Director-General 11.7. 2008). Nevertheless online communication means are nowadays as common channels for communication to the youth, as were TV, radio and newspapers to the previous generation, thus they should not be overlooked completely by the organisation.

Based on the empirical target group study, the Finnish youth is familiar with internet and blogs online. 92% of the youth were using blogs, either writing blogs or reading them, which proves that there are immense opportunities available online in reaching the young Finnish target group.

According to Claus Sørensen (Interview with Director-General 11.7. 2008) the challenge and opportunity for the EU is to create good quality communication tools which can be navigated easily, and to create a hype over EU's communication channels among the young target groups. This hype has not reached the Finnish youth yet. The young Finnish adults clearly expressed an interest towards European Union and its online communication means, although the current use of EU's online communication means was very restricted, only 18% of the respondents had visited the EU's own communication means.

The number of users needs to improve in order for the online tools to function as a means of creating a dialogue between parties. The target group study in Finland showed that Internet is used 3-4 hours a day, which clearly showed that the youth is using online communication greatly and thus indicates that online communication means have become a reality to younger generation in the late 20th century. The EU should not pass on the opportunity to develop new online communication means which may

improve the flow of communication between younger target group and the organisation.

The Eurobarometer (European Commission 2005, 8) showed that 64% of European 20-24 years olds feels somehow attached to Europe. However in the same study only 40% of the 20-24 years olds felt that their voice counts in the European Union. The empirical research of this study implicated the same trend that there is a visible gap between the Finnish youth and the EU given that majority of the respondents felt that the EU is a large, complicated and bureaucratic organisation which is very difficult to approach and to communicate with the youth. The respondents did not have a good overview of its activities. Therefore it can be stated that there is an evident problem in the relations between the EU and its younger Finnish target group. The reasons for the gap between the youth and the organisation were stated during the interview being that there was no knowledge of the communication tools. If EU wishes to increase the flow of communication with Finnish youth, it should make itself appear on a human scale.

Some respondents in the online survey stated that there is no need for two-way communication between young Finns and the EU, since the capability for the common people to understand EU or speak in the same level with the organisation's actors in not possible, since the citizens are not in general in the same level as EU's decision makers. It was stated that the possible influencing or communication with the organisation should take place thru work in the local organisations, which may in have influence on the EU or its policies. To the interviewees a two-way communication with EU and its actors, like for instance a member of the European Commission, seemed unrealistic because of differences in hierarchical level, knowledge and language problems. Some suggested that such two-way communication is rather a symbolic act and that it cannot be trusted to be more than that.

It is evident that Finnish youth is interested in EU, but lack knowledge of the organisation. They are aware of basic facts about EU and what it stands for, in general young Finns associate EU with positive aspects like freedom of movement. Also the Euro currency was mentioned positively in the questionnaire and during the follow-up interviews. Yet the role of EU in their everyday life in Finland is not clear to them. Sometimes assumptions seem reality because profound knowledge is missing. The target group suggests that EU should further develop its online communication tools and improve the quality.

Majority of the respondents stated that they will most likely visit the EU's communication tools again, since now they have the knowledge of them. This also indicated that the free communication channels online could be used as a tool in reaching the youth in Finland. The new communication

possibilities create new challenges for EU as well. Internet facilitates a fast exchange of ideas, and thus, supports two-way communication of organisations and public groups, instead of just information by an organisation to its target groups. However the online communication means should be designed to ensure that real two-way communication could occur, rather than the tools being only used as a means for marketing.

Supranational organisations benefit of communication forms that give the target groups more control over the communication process (Zaidman, Te'eni and Schwartz 2008, 270). In online surrounding the citizens can control the flow of communication, which can make internet a free space for an open dialogue. If only designed to benefit one of the multiple target segments then the online communication means would be counter productive and these communication tools would simply be promotional sites. This would result in poor communication and may part the younger target groups from the organisation more.

Naturally organisations have several target segments, thus multiple communication means should be created to support all of the target segments. Additional segmentation for the target groups is needed to decide which target groups is the most important for the organisation in the given time. As the empirical research indicated, the youth does play an important position for the EU. The independent blogs and the interest towards the EU as an organisation itself cannot narrow the gap between the audience and the organisation alone. There needs to be a flow of two-way communication involved, which enables the exchange of ideas and discussion.

In addition supporting and maintaining a good quality of online tools are required in order for them to be an effective tool in an open dialogue. It was stated in the empirical interviews that the European Commission does not have enough manpower to fully utilize the development and maintenance of better quality communication tools, which as of now weakens the online communication means provided by the EU. The Finnish target group used tools like Google than take their time with EU's communication means directly. Users find it difficult to locate information in EU's online sources and this make them more inclined to use other sources like Wikipedia. Fastness and effectiveness seem to be the key issues. As the information flow in internet has grown extensively over the past few years, the audiences have learned to only seek the information they are looking for precisely.

Next to further improved EU online communication tools also monitoring independent citizen blogs will remain useful to express and hear about people's opinions. Blogs are used as citizen journalism purposes and therefore blogs can work as open microphone forum for individuals. Furthermore blogs may be used as a channel to influence the EU by

introducing new issues to the general public and bringing them into a discussion arena.

The empirical content analysis showed that blogs are popular enough to attract visitors, even when visitors can only place comments on the site, reacting to bloggers, rather than posting main content themselves. Individual blogs might be the space to express disappointment towards EU related issues, as they may be preferred in giving direct feedback, compared to official platforms. Online blogs can provide a new communication culture between an organisation and its target groups, but it can also deepen the gap between the two if the online communication means are not used properly. Self advertising can become a trend online, where the blogger rather promotes oneself than big issues, such as EU policies and discussion. If some of the blogs become very popular then the blogger will not have time to respond to all of the messages which will eventually lead to only one way communication instead of a dialogue between the blogger and the commentators.

An important issue is that the national identity does not disappear even when globalisation and multinational project increase. The European Commission is aware of the cultural differences among the EU states. Director-General Claus Sørensen said that the European Commission has to keep in mind the national identity and historical aspects of cultures within EU (Interview with Director-General 28.11. 2008). Some cultures need specific information, because the cultural identity involves itself detailed information and figures. Sørensen mentioned that especially Anglo-Saxon cultures such as in Britain and Ireland, but also countries such as Spain require this detailed information, as cultures which have an unstable history demand broader concepts and an idea of stability, which the EU can provide to the country. Finland may be included in the category, given that since the history of Finland, people want to have stability and secure that the EU might bring to them. However, since the Finnish youth has never experienced war, detailed information may be appealing to the younger target group.

In order to create relations with the young segment of its target groups, EU needs to investigate the younger target group's needs and interests. Since the target groups are most likely to be interested in the issues which they have previous opinions of, these opinions need to be known. National and local institutions need to be involved in the designing and utilizing process, to make sure that cultural differences are taken into account. Given that knowledge of social systems and the target groups is a pre-condition for any organisation, thus the EU should gain knowledge of their target groups.

In the case of Finland, the Finnish national EU office could help in this process, by facilitating a target group study. Involvement of the national offices could facilitate a more differentiated strategy per member state, adding a local touch to gain more effectives.

The European Commission needs data to base the development based of new communication tools on. Objectives are needed, since according to the pre-set objectives and strategies the use and outcome of the communication tools and projects can be evaluated, after the projects are over. Mid-evaluations are useful, given that after certain amount of time, the communication means can be evaluated to see if they are successful and to what extent the target groups have been reached. Research is also needed to better understand how external target groups utilize online networks and how the online world changes the field of mass communication.

In the target group study almost all of the respondents also wished for online communication tools in their native language, but they did not see this as a realistic option. English has become one of most used languages in EU the as Witt (2000) stated. Claus Sørensen (Interview with Director-General 28.11. 2008) mentioned that it a fact that has to be acknowledged that English has become the official language of EU, since English is used across Europe in meetings and as official language. Nevertheless the Finnish youth still called for the need of native language communication tools. For supranational organisation that wants to connect with the foreign target groups the use of native language is the key in successful business, since it gives the image of thoughtful organisation. Therefore the EU should continue the development work in all the current 27official languages for each of the native segments. The full utilization of the online communication channels as a tool for a direct language communication between the two parties needs investment in resources. However EU's future communication leads to importance for the few biggest language of EU. Especially the position of English will increase, if national online communication means will not be developed.

Involvement of the citizens in the EU's decision making process is mandatory. Micossi (2008, 5) argued two points that speak for the demand of citizen involvement in EU's decision-making process: "At the member state level, national parliaments and the public at large need to be kept abreast of the decisions to be taken within European institutions, and put in a position to influence the behaviour of their own national representatives to Council. At the Union level, separate control and legitimisation channels are required since acts and decisions acquire autonomous value with respect to individual member states' contributions". These issues can be addressed in the EU's communication tools. Already EU's policy issues are being discussed in online citizen blogs, but this does not constitute as two-way communication with EU's actors.

The cost-effectiveness of the online communication means speaks on behalf of the communication tools, given that this would require less of financial investment on behalf of the organisation and therefore would be suitable for the EU. Online communication follows its own patterns and language, which has abbreviations and few letters long signals. Thus it can be argued that online communication may not be transparent enough to constitute as effective communication between EU and its target groups. Additional problem that the organisation is facing is that several situations in the markets or the economical recession may play a negative part in the deigning process, which eventually turns into a poor quality communication means or suspension of the communication means.

People who share similar ideas can come together and form online communities and comment in a good matter. Online community may require a better protection and legislation policies, in order for the online communication channels to succeed in becoming an essential part of organisation's communication means. Online community does offer multiple possibilities for organisational communication, but if the atmosphere is unsafe, these communication tools will not prosper. The illegal conduct of racists and online hackers is harming the new online community and its communication channels. Moral panics and new technocultures can prevent the online technology to not be used, and this can be prevented by open creation and citizen participation.

However, the self monitoring and safety network on online forums does often work; because forums where users have to register and use the same username can create a safe environment to communicate. Having a constrained membership leads to more personal accountability for an individual and comments that are being posted. However, without a better legislation the safety on sites where registration is not often needed the possibility for people to misrepresent societies' values just for the sake of creating panic in the websites.

Cooperation with other intermediary organisations, such as NGO's is beneficial to the EU, this way EU could connect to other organisations and their publics. However problems may arise in multicultural cooperations since organisations might be self-centred when it comes to communication with other cultures. Problems may occur in online communication or face-to-face communication. If the EU would develop co-operation projects with intermediaries, it would benefit from the co-operation itself since "from a corporate marketer's point of view, a nonprofit organisation's most valuable asset is its image.

In the possible EU and NGO involvements in publicity or in an awareness campaign, the NGO's own target groups would be eventually exposed to the campaign without much of expensive publicity needed, given that NGOs usually have a strong brand value and the underground information channels. Both NGOs and other intermediary groups and EU's actors want to influence people, which they need communication or at least publicity.

When citizens, who act independently on online surroundings, or within the NGO field, may feel that they are not being heard by the European Union decision makers, the more they probably act against the organisation and its policies but intermediary connections may create mutual trust between the EU and its publics, since NGOs often hire local people to work in them. As all organisations, NGOs should be accountable for their actions. Given that non-governmental organisations do not have the legislative authority to bring new laws and regulation in to action, these organisations could assist in different level. They could help defining problems, supply monitoring aid.

Valentini (2006, 81) stated that supporting an institution means trusting it and feeling involved in its decision-making. Interaction can provide trust and understanding between parties. Therefore, knowledge and understanding of the EU is the key in creating a relationship between Finnish youth and the EU. This relationship will increase the legitimacy and democratic state of the EU. Decision-making should always be supported by the clear communication networks thru which the ordinary people can comment the propositions. If supranational organisations such as the EU are lacking these communication networks which are aimed to the publics, then the decision-making is hardly democratic. Democratic decision-making calls for the publics to be heard, which is where online communication and NGO participation can be used for.

However if the EU will not become as part of their everyday life, its decision-making will be as distant to the public groups as the organisation. Thus it can be concluded that EU has a secondary role in the lives of the Finnish youth, since the empirical study showed that the youth is not connected to the organisation. Empirical research also suggested that a dialogue of between the EU and the young adults has symbolic importance only, if just a limited portion of the youth takes part. The online communication tools should be developed to have enough potential to enhance with dialogue considerable amount of young citizens.

For further research a study of differences between several nationalities should be considered in order for better understand how nationality and traditional culture influences the use of online communication means in both civil and organisational context. Additionally the role of NGO's as an intermediary organisation should be further studied.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

The European Union is a prime example of a supranational organisation which has international markets and multinational target groups in 27 states across Europe. In order for the organisation to maintain its democratic status and legitimacy in its actions, it is important the organisation has the support of its stakeholder groups. The support can be maintained by two-way communication. The empirical research of this study implicated that the Finnish youth lacks the knowledge of the communication tools which can connect them the EU.

Intermediaries can function as assistants between the supranational organisations and the youth, given that organisations such as Non-governmental organisation can be more familiar to the youth and easily approachable than supranational organisation such as the EU. Therefore collaborations between NGOs and the EU can make the EU appear closer and therefore the youth would connect with the organisation. The cooperations should utilize online communication in the process of reaching the youth, since multiple groups can be reached simultaneously online. In addition citizen blogs which have no evident connection to the EU are also an important platform for youth to express their opinions, but in addition important for the EU to monitor opinions and to stay informed about citizen's feelings.

For the EU an open dialogue with young citizens is in the interest of both parties and a necessity for the future development of, not only the European Union, but for the entire culture of Europe. The power-holders must engage in an open and democratic two-way discussion with the youth. This requires carefully developed, high quality, communication means as well as the willingness on behalf of the youth to understand and listen to the Union's actors. The supranational organisation cannot survive alone in the changing world; it needs the participation of its younger citizens. As Hofstede (1993, 345) stated cross-cultural cooperation has become the requirement for the humankind to survive.

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Appendix 1.

Questions on the 1ˢᵗ online survey

1. Age/Contact info:

2. In your opinion, in EU
   a) positive is:
   b) negative is:

3. How many hours/per day do you use internet?
1-2	2-3
3-4	4-5
5-6	>6

4. Have you ever read internet blogs and/or write on them?
   a) no
   b) yes

5. How often have you visited/read or written on EU related blogs or discussion forums?
   a) never
   b) seldom
   c) sometimes
   d) often

6. Have you ever visited EU's own discussion forums, or other online tools?
   a) yes
   b) no

7. What type of information would you like to get from EU via organisation's online tools?

   a) news on projects, policies and events
   b) background and discussion
   c) links
   d) info on internal governance
   e) development of the union
   f) member state information
   g) something else

8. How often have you used EU's other communication means, such as magazines, guides, EU's phone lines, Europe Day 9th of May events or services from the European Information offices?
   a) never
   b) seldom
   c) sometimes
   d) often

9. In your opinion, how well has the EU been able to return the member ship fees in terms of creating services?
   a) poorly
   b) relatively poorly
   c) I don't know
   d) relatively well
   e) well
   f) something else

10. If you have visited EU's online communication tools, what additional services would you like to get?

Appendix 2.

EU-related questions for the face to face interviews
Have you use and/or visited EU's online communication tools? Why/Why not
In your opinion what languages should be used on EU's online communication tools?
In your opinion Would All-European online portal be useful to you?
In your opinion do smaller nations have a say on EU policies/decisions?
In your opinion do you have a say on EU's decisions?
In your opinion what role does communication have in making the democratic EU state?
In your opinion should there be online platforms aimed at the youth? Why/why not?
Do you feel that you can have a two-way dialogue with the organisation?
In your opinion, should the EU advertise their online communication tools? Why/why not?

Appendix 3.

Questions on the 2nd online survey

1. Where the blog pages familiar to you?
   a) yes
   b) no

2. How would you evaluate the layout and style
   a) very stylish
   b) stylish
   c) I don't know
   d) amateur
   e) unstylish/poor
   - Please clarify

3. How would you evaluate the content?

4. How official would you say the blogs were?
   a) very official
   b) official
   c) I don't know
   d) amateur
   e) poor

5. In your opinion, were the bloggers familiar and/or up-to-date with EU-related topics?
   - Please clarify

6. Do you feel that EU's own communication means are useful, now that you have visited them?
   a) yes
   b) maybe
   c) don't know
   d) no
   - Please clarify

7. In your opinion, when you visited EU's own web pages, did you feel that you can engage in two-way dialogue with EU's actors?
   a) yes
   b) maybe
   c) I don't know

      d)   no
      - Please clarify

8. Do you belive that you would visit EU's online communication tools again?
      a)   yes
      b)   maybe
      c)   I don't know
      d)   no
      - Please clarify

Thank you for your time and taking part in this study!