

Europromo. Sleep tight, but the alarm clock is ticking

9 questions of the poll:

1. Can specialists conducting EU promotion be considered as representing a separate profession?
2. Who are the people responsible for the promotion of EU programmes and projects?
3. What is the biggest obstacle for successful EU promotion?
4. How many EU flags are there in every issue of a typical daily?
5. What do you think when you see the EU flag under an article?
6. What do you think about the promotion campaigns of the EU programmes and projects?
7. What are your needs regarding the intensity of the promotion of the EU programmes and projects?
8. What impression does the EU flag at completed works or purchased goods give you?
9. What is the message the EU promotion aims at conveying?

“Ticking questions”

Having worked as an information officer of one of the EU funded programmes for 4 years already, I have gradually started raising certain questions transcending my routine functions:

- Why do bureaucrats rather than public relations specialists usually work with the promotion of the EU programmes and projects?
- Can the EU promotion be treated as a separate profession, not as one of the trends of communication (or public relations, to be more precise)? [G. Surplys Searching for profession. Europromo?](#)
- Is the phenomenon that the EU attributes overwhelmingly fulfil our press, television and public spaces really that positive?
- Is it good that the messages about the EU funded programmes or projects get media attention only when you buy commercial space or air, which results in the impression of propagandism?
- Why are the results of the EU promotion evaluated bureaucratically („Was the EU flag and mentioning of the EU financing inserted prop-

erly, hasn't the project promotion diverted from its before set quantitative tasks, etc.“)? This results in losses in the fields of creativity and attractiveness.



I created a short questionnaire in order to clarify whether other people also share the same doubts. I sent it via e-mail to two groups of respondents in Lithuania: persons who were not directly involved in the EU promotion, and those who can be called professionals of the EU promotion. This type of opinion poll was aimed at checking whether both groups have the same understanding about particular aspects of the EU promotion.

I received the answers from 117 „amateurs“ and 29 professionals. The main answers are provided in this issue.

IN PURSUIT OF PROFESSION. EUROPROMO?

1. Can specialists conducting EU promotion be considered as representing a separate profession?



Who are the specialists of Europromo?
Photo: Philip.Greenspun.com

The most popular answer to the question of both „amateurs“ and professionals was similar: 55% of the representatives of both groups were sure that the EU promotion (or Europromo, as I call it) specialists are „nothing but public relations specialists“.

However, a third (31%) of professionals was convinced that EU promotion can be regarded as a separate profession. I believe this opinion can be supported by the following arguments:

a) Many of the EU promotion specialists are not public relations specialists in perception, but rather typical employees of their organisations with the function of EU promotion prescribed to them. Considering the fact that the EU promotion specialists often have to operate a huge amount of specific information, a typical public relations specialist would not necessarily be a better candidate for the position of the EU promotion specialist;

b) There is a significant part of bureaucracy in the EU promotion. The specialists must evaluate the results

of communication in quantitative terms and ensure that the publicity is carried out according to many requirements (e.g. 12 stars in EU flag, not 13);

c) EU promotion specialists (at least on the programme level) usually work (at least they ought to) with European values (e.g. cohesion, freedom, equality, sustainable development, etc.) rather than with definite and obvious products and concepts. That results in the usage of another vocabulary and other means of communication.

17% of „amateurs“ thought that the EU promotion specialists tend to belong to the new profession. On the other hand, 18% of „amateurs“ and 10% of professionals were sure that the EU promotion specialists are „elementary bureaucrats“. This, most probably, comes from extremely accurate and dull attitude of some of the Europromo specialists towards their job. On the other hand, this might be influenced by the lack of theoretical knowledge about their work by the professionals.

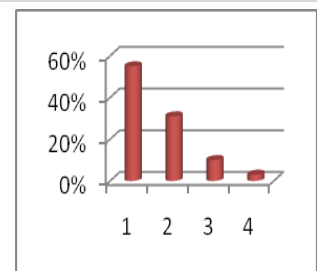
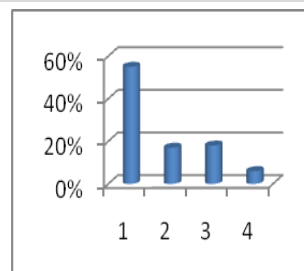
Treating Europromo as a separate profession would strongly contribute to its development and self-confidence of its representatives.

Can specialists conducting EU promotion be considered as representing separate profession?

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1. No, they are nothing but public relations specialists.
2. Yes, because the requirements and principles applicable to them differ from the ones applicable to other PR specialists.
3. They are elementary bureaucrats.
4. I do not think so. They are people without profession.



2. Who are the people responsible for the promotion of EU programmes and projects?

Both groups also agreed regarding this question. 39% of „amateurs“ and 34% of professionals thought that they are „bureaucrats who are forced to be public relations specialists“. However the second most popular answer among the „amateurs“ read as: „experienced and eager for new

ideas experts in public relations“ (22%), and the professionals were not so praising for themselves. They chose the option „ordinary public relations specialists“ (31%)“ as a second most popular. This leads to a prediction that the Europromo activities are treated more positively from outside than from inside.

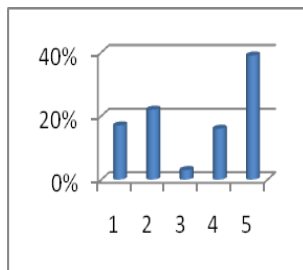


A bureaucrat or a PR pro?
Photo: griffinross.com

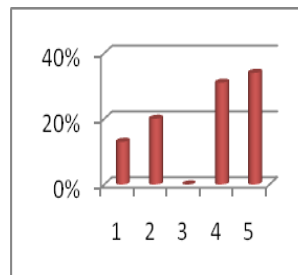
Who are the people responsible for the promotion of EU programmes and projects?

1. Public relations experts with huge experience
2. Experienced and eager for new ideas experts in public relations
3. PR pioneers
4. Ordinary public relations specialists
5. Bureaucrats who are forced to be public relations specialists

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Europromo activities are treated more positively from outside than from inside

3. What is the biggest obstacle for successful EU promotion?

Most „amateurs“ were convinced that the biggest problem is the „non-professionalism of professionals“ (36%). And the professionals were assured that the biggest difficulty lies in the fact that „the mass media know that the EU has money for promotion“ (51%). This means the professionals have experienced that

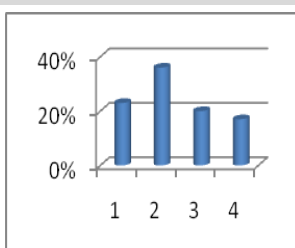
the journalists deliberately refuse to publish anything unless they are paid.

It is worth emphasising the 2nd most popular response of the „amateurs“ stating that a big obstacle for the success of Europromo is the „Euro jargon – surreal vocabulary of EU bureaucrats“ (23% of „amateurs“ share this opinion).

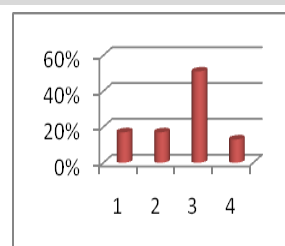
What is the biggest obstacle for successful EU promotion?

1. Euro jargon – surreal vocabulary of EU
2. Non-professionalism of professionals
3. Mass media know the EU has money for them
4. No obstacles

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Euro-jargon annoys the EU audiences
Photo: thehanley.co.uk

IN PURSUIT OF EFFICIENCY. QUANTITY VS. QUALITY?

It has been quite a while the EU promotion resembles a soviet-times joke about generalissimos Brezhnev to me:

A guy who lost a lot of weight quickly explained himself:

I switch on my TV – I see Brezhnev, on my radio I hear Brezhnev. Now, I dare not opening my fridge.

In every Lithuanian daily you will find a bunch of articles with “Order No”

and the “EU flag” written in a boring language. But if a message about EU appears as a cover story in a popular issue, but it is not marked with the “EU flag”, the auditors have problems approving it as eligible. This way, I think, the EU communication starts resembling propaganda and might soon antagonize our audiences.

Surprisingly though, the answers to my poll indicate Lithuanians are not fed up with the EU yet.

4. How many EU flags are there in every issue of a typical daily?

43% of „amateurs“ do not notice EU flags in the newspapers and 39% of them think that there are „no more

than 3“ „flags“ in a typical issue of a typical daily newspaper.

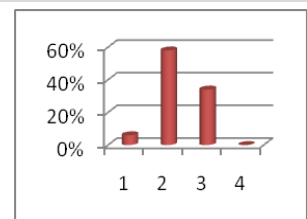
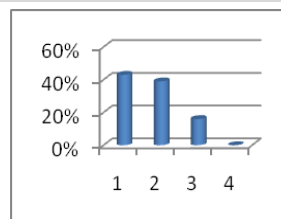
15% of „amateur respondents suspect have the impression of propaganda when they see an EU flag in press

How many EU flags are there in every issue of a typical daily?

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1. I do not notice any
2. No more than 3
3. From 3 up to 10
4. A lot



5. What do you think when you see the EU flag under an article?

Even if the „amateurs“ see the EU flags in press, it does not seem to result in their negative feelings. 57% of „amateurs“ „do not pay attention

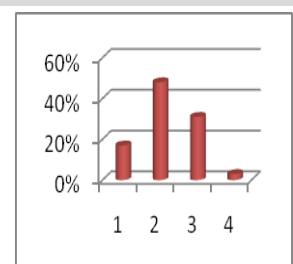
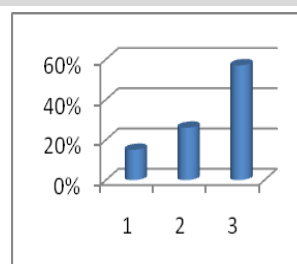
to them, what matters is if the article is interesting“. However, 15% suspect propaganda if they see EU flag.

What do you think when you see the EU flag under an article?

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1. Propaganda
2. It is very interesting what more the EU has supported
3. I do not pay attention to them, what matters is an interesting article
- (4. Maybe it is a good job offer) – only for professionals



The more the better?
Photo: brusselsjournal.com

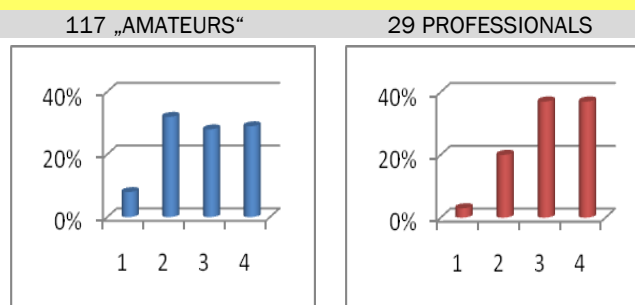
6. What do you think about the promotion campaigns of the EU programmes and projects?

37% of professionals chose each of the two impressions: „much money and little creativity“ and „sometimes they surprise as innovative and creative“. The „amateurs“ were more critical in this case. Majority of them stated that the Europromo specialists

„have to do that but they do it without passion“ (32%). 29% also acknowledged the innovative and creative character of some of the campaigns and 28% think that too much money is spent and too little creativity employed.

What do you think about the promotion campaigns of the EU programmes and projects?

1. Example of boredom
2. These people have to do that but they do it without passion
3. Much money and little creativity
4. Sometimes they surprise as innovative and creative



7. What are your needs regarding the intensity of the promotion of the EU programmes and projects?

The answers of the „amateurs“ range as follows:

- 49% would like that „there were less information, but it was more interesting, useful and professional“
- 25% would be satisfied if „there were more information about the possibility of receiving an EU grant rather than about the results of the EU programmes or projects“

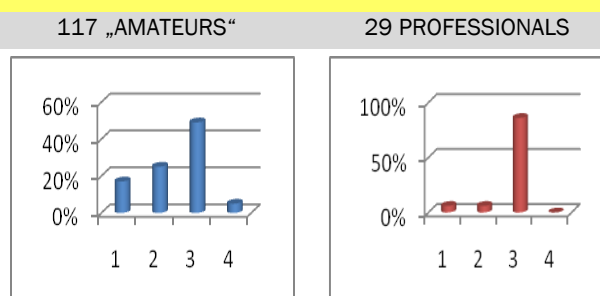
- 17% wish that „there were more information regarding the contribution of the EU to our welfare“
- 5% do not treat this question as actual.

The majority of professionals (86%) also agree that „there should be less information, but it should be more interesting, useful and professional“.

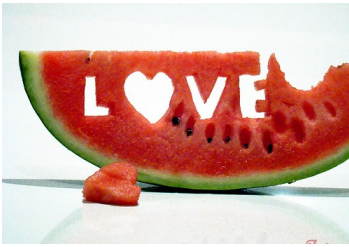
There should be more information about the possibility of receiving an EU grant rather than about the results of the EU programmes or projects

What are your needs regarding the intensity of promotion of EU programmes and projects?

1. There should be more information regarding the contribution of the EU to our welfare
2. There should be more information about the possibility of receiving an EU grant rather than about the results of the EU programmes or projects
3. There should be less information, but it was more interesting, useful and professional
4. The question is not actual



IN PURSUIT OF MEANING. ROMANCE GOES ON?



Will love end?
Photo: flickr.com

According to the data of the Eurobarometre, over 70% of Lithuanians are satisfied with Lithuania's mem-

bership in the EU.

The results of the poll absolutely confirm this.

8. What impression does the EU flag at completed works or purchased goods give you?

The biggest share of the representatives of both groups (47% of „amateurs“ and 44% of professionals) are convinced by the EU attributes that „It is good we joined the EU“. Only 5% of „amateurs“ have a thought: „money for nothing“ when they see the EU flag. A fifth of

„amateurs“ and 27% of professionals associate the EU flag with quality.

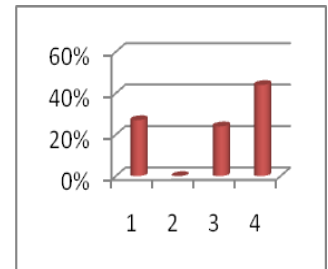
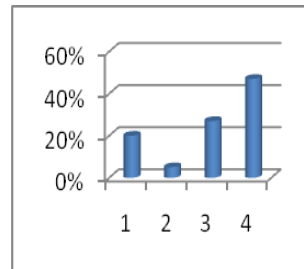
It might seem a bit worrying, though that 27% of „amateurs“ and 24% of professionals think that “without the EU we wouldn't have had it and we wouldn't have needed it”.

What impression does the EU flag at completed works or purchased goods give you?

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1. A symbol of quality
2. Money for nothing
3. Without EU we wouldn't have had it and we wouldn't have needed it
4. It is good we joined EU



It might seem a bit worrying that 27% of „amateurs“ and 24% of professionals think that “without the EU we wouldn't have had it and we wouldn't have needed it”.

9. What is the message the EU promotion aims at conveying?

The scale of the answers of the „amateurs“:

- EU contributes to the improvement of quality of our life (37%)
- This or that was financed by the EU (29%)
- EU is one family who solves its problems together (21%)
- Money talks (5%)
- EU is cool (4%)
- EU is a rich men's club who can pay us (1%)

All the answers of the professionals fit into 3 options:

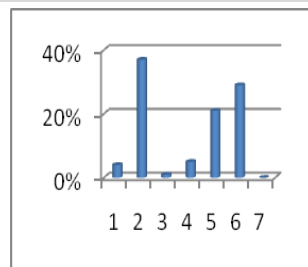
- EU contributes to the improvement of quality of our life (65%)
- This or that was financed by the EU (24%)
- EU is one family who solves its problems together (10%)

The fact that both the professionals of the Europromo and their audience perceive the message of the EU promotion similarly, indicates the EU promotion in qualitative terms achieves its goals and the „amateurs“ understand the main idea behind it.

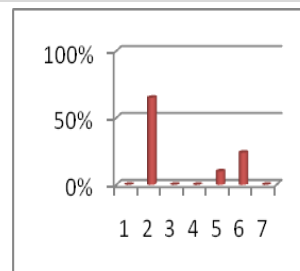
What is the message the EU promotion aims at conveying?

1. EU is cool
2. EU contributes to the improvement of quality of our life
3. EU is a rich men's club who can pay us
4. Money talks
5. EU is one family who solves its problems together
6. This or that was financed by the EU
7. EU is a heaven on earth

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IN PURSUIT OF RESUME

As you can see from the answers to my questionnaire, Lithuanians are still romantic about the EU. However, some early warning indicators can already be seen in some of their answers, showing that some of the people already feel the EU has a lot of money and not always spends it keeping to the principle “value for money”. On the other hand, the answers clearly show a lack of professionalism among the Euro-promo specialists, which is observed by the specialists themselves and by their audiences.

Three main outcomes of the poll are as follows:

- Even though the EU is not an orphan of the public relations, it has its own peculiarities. A more active and thorough investigation of these features could strongly improve the quality of the EU promotion and last, but not least, the self-confidence of the professionals.
- Despite the fact that the EU

stars have become strongly dominating the life of the Euro-promo professionals, common people of Lithuania are not fed up with the information about the benefit that the EU membership brings to the country, yet. On the other hand, they are very much interested in the „active“ information about the EU: how to receive the funding.

- We are still in love with the EU and we basically do not trace any propaganda in the promotion of the results of the EU funded programmes and projects.

In the meantime, I feel happy my negative presumptions have failed, considering the answers to my questionnaire. But I am afraid the same poll may provide different answers in other EU countries or later in Lithuania if no steps are taken in order to prevent people treating EU promotion as boring and non-professional propaganda without ambition.

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Passionate for Europe**

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Giedrius Surplys is the Information officer of the ENPI CBC programme Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus, Public adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, public writer and public relations consultant. He is also a member of DG Regio INFORM network and an external expert of INTERACT ENPI.

From 2005 to 2009 Mr. Surplys had worked as the information officer of the INTERREG IIIA/TACIS Lithuania, Poland, Kaliningrad Region Neighbourhood Programme and the ETC CBC programme Lithuania-Poland and had been teaching diplomacy at the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania.

Recently, Mr. Surplys has started a company specialising in creative, innovative and efficient promotion of the EU funded programmes and projects, as well as Europromo research and training.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Giedrius Surplys would like to offer you his services in carrying out an EU wide research regarding the promotion under the EU funded programmes and projects. The research would consist of opinion polls and interviews with the professionals of the Europromo, working for various programmes and projects.

It would answer the following questions:

- Do the specialists of Europromo feel professional enough in their field?
- Isn't the quantity of the Europromo belittling its quantity?
- Aren't the European audiences associating the Europromo with propaganda yet?
- Why is it so difficult to attract mass media without paying them?
- What are the alternatives to bureaucratic assessment of Europromo results?

Giedrius Surplys can guaranty:

- Quick work (results would be ready within the period of 3 months)
- Low price (the cost of labour in Lithuania is cheap compared to the EU average. Besides, much work would be conducted via internet).
- A qualified team of Europromo and communication professionals from Lithuania and EU as well as representatives of Lithuanian academia.



Photo: edu.euro26.by