

United in diversity:

ANTHEMS AND FLAGS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

by Pierre-Robert Cloet, Bénédicte Legué and Kerstin Martel

Studies & Reports No 102, Jacques Delors Institute, December 2013.

The Federal Republic of Germany

1. Flag

- Created in 1816 and adopted in 1919 then in 1949



The flag consisting of three equal horizontal bands of black-red-gold reflects the national colours of the Federal Republic of Germany and is the only symbol rooted in German Basic Law. This is not the case for the national anthem or for the heraldic eagle.

The exact origin of the use of the black-red-gold tricolour is uncertain. In 1815, after the wars of liberation against Napoleonic France, the three colours were associated with the black uniforms with their red lapels, decorated with the gold-coloured buttons of the Lützow Free Corps, a volunteer force of the Prussian army made up mainly of students and intellectuals. The 1816 flag of the corporation of Jena students, made up of members of the Free Corps, shows a golden oak branch on a red-black-red background.

In the mid-19th century, these three colours were mistakenly taken to be the colours of the former German Empire, even though they appeared in the coat of arms of the Holy Roman Germanic Empire. They were displayed on the flags of the revolutionaries who demanded a unified and free Germany before and during the “Springtime of the Peoples” in 1848, and were declared symbol of the German Confederation in 1848.

The black-white-red tricolour (Prussian and Hanseatic colours) was used after the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and became the symbolic colours of the German Empire after German Unification, from 1871 to 1919 and from 1933 to 1945.

Today’s black-red-gold colours were adopted in 1919 by the Weimar Republic and readopted in 1949 for the FRG (West Germany) and the GDR (East Germany). It was not until 1959 that East Germany added its coat of arms (hammer, compass and ring of rye), this act being perceived by the West as a desire to distance the two Germanies.

In October 1990, the flag became that of Unified Germany. Its use is relatively limited, being for official occasions or international sporting events. The Germans however seemed to have less of a complex regarding the use of their flag during the 2006 FIFA World Cup, which was organised in Germany.

2. Anthem

- *Lied der Deutschen/Deutschlandlied*
(Song of the Germans/of Germany)
- Written by August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben
- Composed by Joseph Haydn
- Composed in 1841
and adopted in 1991

In 1841, at a time when the German Confederation was composed of 39 independent States, August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben, a German writer who set hundreds of popular songs and children's songs to music, wrote the "Song of the Germans" on Helgoland island. He associated it with the melody of Haydn's *Kaiserlied* of 1797 and in it he expressed the political will dear to him and to other intellectuals of his time, that of a united and free Germany.

<i>Lied der Deutschen/Deutschlandlied</i>	Song of the Germans/of Germany
<i>Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit für das Deutsche Vaterland! Danach laßt uns alle streben, brüderlich mit Herz und Hand! Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit sind des Glückes Unterpfand: blühe im Glanze dieses Glückes, blühe, deutsches Vaterland! (bis)</i>	Unity and justice and freedom For the German fatherland; For these let us all strive, Brotherly with heart and hand; Unity and justice and freedom Are the pledge of happiness Flourish in this fortune's blessing, Flourish German fatherland! (bis)

Thirty years later, in 1871, the German Empire was founded under Bismarck and the "Song of the Germans" was officially represented for the first time in 1890, before becoming the national anthem of the Weimar Republic in 1922.

The first verse *Deutschland über alles*, which in the mid-19th century formulated a simple wish for unity, was the only verse sung under the National Socialist dictatorship between 1933 and 1945, where it took on a nuance of domination. As a consequence, it was banished after World War II.

In postwar Germany, the Allied Powers initially banned any use of the anthem, and the German political leaders did not agree on its future. In 1950, the attempt to create a new anthem failed. After several years of exchange between Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and President Theodor Heuss, Germany's entry in the 1952 Olympic Games led to an agreement, that of using just the third verse of the "Song of the Germans".

This third verse was originally associated with the right for human and civil rights, especially during the years of the "Springtime of the Peoples" before the German Revolution of 1848. It formulates three main pillars that should be the basis for the happiness of the people: unity, justice and freedom (*Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit*).

After reunification of the GDR and the FRG, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Richard von Weizsäcker stated in their declaration in 1991, that this third verse "expressed solidly the values to which we feel committed as Germans, as Europeans and as members of the Community of peoples". Thus, the third verse of Hoffmann von Fallersleben's song was declared national anthem of the Federal Republic of Germany.

