

United in diversity:**ANTHEMS AND FLAGS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,**

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In my capacity both as a minister in my own country's government and as a European commissioner, I have found myself speaking on numerous occasions in places decked with the flags of Portugal and of the European Union (EU), or after listening to "A Portuguesa" or the "Ode to Joy".

Naturally I am familiar with the story of my own country's flag, which was adopted by the Republic in 1911 and which is noteworthy, in particular, for its escutcheon containing five shields echoing at once both Christian and royal references. And I have certainly lost count of the number of times I have sung the anthem written by my fellow countryman Henrique Lopes de Medonça and set to music by Alfredo Keil, although I realise he may not be as famous as Ludwig van Beethoven!

I must confess, however, that, like most Europeans, I am infinitely less familiar with the story and meaning of the flags and anthems of the EU's other member states. Thus it was with immense joy that I read this study produced under the guiding hand of Pierre-Robert Cloet, because it enabled me not only to fill many of the gaps in my knowledge but also to gain a deeper understanding of the history that has forged the individual character of so many countries "united in their diversity".

The Jacques Delors Institute is perhaps the institute best placed to publish such a study inasmuch as it perfectly illustrates the concept of a "European federation of nation states" promoted by our founder president. The construction of Europe has laid the groundwork for lasting reconciliation among the countries in the EU, to the point where the fiercest showdowns between them these days are of the sporting variety! The Union makes sense in a globalising world, yet in its partners' and competitors view "Europe" is growing old and shrinking. The answer is not to build a new nation or superstate but to forge greater unity among countries and peoples while continuing to respect their unique characteristics and features.

I was particularly struck by the symbolic tension that was sparked by the work done by the "Convention on the Future of Europe", in which Michel Barnier and I represented the European Commission. Not only was the attempt to give the EU a "Constitution", with implicit reference to the United States of America, eventually thwarted, but the Treaty of Lisbon even had to forgo referring to the European flag and anthem as symbols indicating membership of the EU in order to ensure its unanimous ratification by all member states. These signs of symbolic reticence are, I feel, all the more regrettable in that, in my view, it is perfectly possible to feel more than one sense of belonging, on different levels. I myself, for instance, am perfectly comfortable feeling "Lisboeta", Portuguese, European and even a "citizen of the world". While I consider it an illusion to call for the demise of national sentiment, I think it is not only possible but actually desirable to feel an attachment both to one's country and to the EU.

A feeling of belonging is something you build, it is a result result of imaginary interpretation and needs to be rooted first and foremost in a political project, but it can also be usefully rooted in such tools as flags and national anthems. In the EU's case it is not simply a matter of getting the peoples of Europe to feel greater attachment to the star-spangled flag or to the "Ode to Joy". It is also necessary to help them learn more about the flags towards which their "European compatriots" turn and the anthems they entone on ceremonial occasions, at European sporting events or during the Olympic Games.

Bearing all of this in mind, this study has the merit of homing in on the nitty-gritty, of getting straight to the heart of the matter, condensing in a few lines the reasons why certain colours, words and tunes make our neighbours' hearts beat that little bit faster. It is particularly useful, and even unique, in that it does not make do with simply introducing the EU countries' symbols in alphabetical order, it also illustrates the historical context that led to the development and adoption of the flags and anthems, grouping them together in like categories. So for instance, as you leaf through the pages you can discover those anthems that *"pay tribute to the monarchy and the homeland or to the people, that extol the beauty of the landscape, that adopt a martial tone or that appeal for harmony, freedom and justice"*. You can then go on to decipher the flags on the basis of their primary source of inspiration, for instance *"regions, provinces or intra-national entities, national symbols, the colours of the monarchy (or) of sources shared by a number of different countries"*.

I am especially pleased that the Jacques Delors Institute publishes this study at a time when the EU is criss-crossed with social and political tension of unprecedented magnitude and based frequently on caricature and stereotype, and shortly before all of us go to the polls to elect our European parliamentarians in May 2014. I warmly recommend this unique and valuable study to all those Europeans who are eager to find out more about the neighbours with whom, together, they form this equally unique and precious Union.

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