

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

**T**he European Union today is made up of 28 countries. Other States express their desire to join this group, while direct neighbours are establishing privileged cooperative relations with the member countries. And yet, many Europeans feel more rooted in their own national or even regional territories, than in this great community. Everyone, in every country, feels strong emotion on hearing the national anthem and on seeing the national flag.

Living together in a vast territory is not just about circulating with ease for some and having a common currency for others. It is also and above all about knowing each other better in order to appreciate each other more and exchange views and ideas. Since the Middle Ages, collections of images have been shared at European level. The common collective imagination is marked by student and teacher exchanges, by the elite travelling to Italy to rub shoulders with humanism, a taste for the sciences and artistic creation. The Europeans are thus heirs of the history of nation-states, but above all of a collective set of knowledge, representations and shared values. It is this collective imagination that serves as a model for society based on the diversity of cultures, while at the same time rediscovering shared hopes through national symbols.

There are endless ways of becoming familiar with each other. One of these, i.e. understanding the origins and meanings borne by the main national symbols and emblems, constitutes a way of touching on what our neighbours feel when they hear the notes and words of their national anthem, when they see their national flag hoisted and blowing in the wind.

Recognising the flags of our neighbours, identifying their national anthem from the very first notes and words. Understanding in what historic context these emblems were created, how and why they were chosen to represent the nation. Trying to grasp the meaning that touches our neighbours so as to be able to position ourselves at the heart of what it is that makes the Italian, Latvian or Irish people what they are. Making visible past histories that intertwine, the various influences that forged shared references between EU countries. Making the values we share more discernible. Such are the ambitions of this study.

## CONCLUSION

*“It is by an awareness of that which links our conflict-based origins to today’s solidarity that the current community of destiny can retroact on Europe’s history and make it shared. It is not a matter here of rereading European history in order to coily paper over its wars and divisions.*

*It is a matter of rewriting history, as each generation has always done, in light of the events experienced today, an exercise which, if we cast our gaze back critically onto the past, will show that history in a new light.”<sup>1</sup>*

As Edgar Morin highlights in this quote, in a history that has seen its fair share of conflict and division, if we are to understand the present it is crucial to be able to look back so that we can forge a new viewpoint.

It is also crucial for us to know our neighbours so that we can lay the groundwork for a common future. Each country has chosen its emblems and symbols, and each people treasures them. We hope that this study will help you to gain a better and deeper knowledge and appreciation of the main symbols of the countries that have joined together in the great adventure of the European Union.

That is what unites us. We cannot end without sharing with you a remark we picked up while conducting our university research on the construction of Europe.

Mirela Carina Sinca, Romanian representative for the Timis region with the Brussels institutions, said: *“I speak of my experience, of the project, of Brussels with my family and my friends. I speak the voice of Europe”.*

Each country in the Union contributes its voice and its colours. The voice of Europe does exist, and its colours appear to shine all the more brilliantly when we observe them all together.

1. Edgard Morin, *Penser l'Europe*, Chapter IV - "La communauté de destin", Paris: Gallimard, 1987, pp. 197-198.

