

European identity: symbols to sport



European File

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It is 30 years since the signature, in Rome on 25 March 1957, of the treaty which is more or less the constitution of the European Community. The Community continues to strengthen its identity and to make progress towards one of its fundamental objectives: a Europe that is more united and closer to its people. Symbols and the gestures of sport can help.

There is a clear need for steps to strengthen the Community's identity. It will be remembered that in the last European elections in June 1984, only 60% of the electorate actually voted; many people felt little involvement and preferred to go fishing or whatever. Perhaps even more worrying is the fact that Europe and the European Parliament were often ignored in the election campaign.

Some days after the elections, at Fontainebleau on 26 June 1984, the Heads of State or Government of the Community celebrated the success of their 'summit'. They had not only solved current problems but had laid the foundation for the Community of tomorrow. The aims: to initiate new common policies, to move forward with the political unification of the Old Continent and also to make its people more aware of the European Community.

To give concrete expression to these grand designs, the participants at Fontainebleau set up an 'ad hoc' committee on a People's Europe. This body was chaired by Pietro Adonnino, representing Bettino Craxi, the President of the Italian Council of Ministers. It submitted two reports to the European Council: the first in March 1985, the second in June of the same year. The Council approved them and asked the Community institutions and the Member States to implement their conclusions rapidly.

The reports contain a series of recommendations dealing in particular with the free circulation of persons and goods, with culture, communications, youth and health, and with the strengthening of the Community's image and identity among its people and in the wider world.¹

This last aspect — the promotion of the Community's identity — is what the following pages are about. In concrete terms, it involves the adoption of a European flag and anthem, celebrating a 'Europe Day', issuing a European passport and supporting European sporting activity. Apart from the suggestions made by the 'Adonnino Committee', this file will also discuss the organizing of 'European weeks', the introduction of a Community driving licence and the development of European journeys of awareness.

The Community has its flag and its anthem

The European Community can now make itself known and recognized by all. The first two proposals of the People's Europe Committee to be put into effect were for the adoption of a European flag and anthem.

¹ See *European File*, No 3/86: 'Towards a People's Europe'.

- A crown of 12 gold five-pointed stars on an azure background: the new flag of the Community, of all its institutions and of its 322 million European citizens, was hoisted for the first time on 29 May 1986 in the forecourt of the Berlaymont (the building in Brussels occupied by the European Commission), alongside the flags of the 12 Member States.

This solemn ceremony took place in an atmosphere of festivity and youth: schoolchildren waving small European flags, Community civil servants in relaxed mood, astonished passers-by and Sandra Kim, the young Belgian singer from an Italian family, performing her song 'J'aime la vie', which won the 1986 Eurovision song contest.

There were some speeches: Jacques Delors, the President of the European Commission, expressed the wish that the blue and gold flag 'might be a symbol for Europeans of endless hope nurtured by our ideal and our struggle'. Pierre Pflimlin, then President of the European Parliament, proclaimed the wish that this emblem be 'the symbol of peaceful struggle for European Union'.

The European flag and emblem can also be used at national and international functions and ceremonies, as well as on other occasions when public attention needs to be drawn to the existence of the Community.

An important example of such an occasion is when one is crossing a border between two Community countries. In 1988, road signs showing the European flag with the name of the Member State being entered will replace the 'customs' signs which have become an anachronism since the abolition of customs duties between Member States. (The collection of VAT and excise duties at borders should end by 1992: the deadline set for the Community to become an area truly without internal frontiers.)

The 12 stars might be thought to symbolize, on the lines of the star-spangled banner of the United States, the 12 member countries of the European Community. In fact it is a pure coincidence that the number of stars is 12. The blue and gold flag has been in existence since 1955, but up to now has only been used by the Council of Europe, of which all the democratic countries of the Continent are members. Now it is also the emblem of the institutions of the European Community. Any extension of the Community's family circle in the future will not require modification of the flag.

- The European anthem: the raising of the Community colours on 29 May 1986 was accompanied by the European anthem, sung by the Communities' choir. The anthem is simply the prelude of the well-known 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

The music of this song of joy and hope had already been used officially at Community functions since 1972. The Council of Europe has also recognized this anthem as an expression of the European ideal.

9 May: Europe Day

1986 was certainly a year of 'firsts'. Some days before the ceremony to mark the adoption of the European flag, the first 'Europe Day' was officially celebrated. Every year from now on, the ninth of May will be Europe Day, just as each country has its own national holiday.

Why the ninth of May? Because it was on that day in 1950 that Robert Schuman, then France's Minister for Foreign Affairs, made the famous speech which led, a year later, to the creation of the first European Community, the European Coal and Steel Community. Also, 1986 was the centenary of the birth of this founding father of Europe.

Europe Day 1986 was celebrated in all the countries of the Community in very different ways:

- In Brussels a benefit concert was given in the Palais des Beaux-Arts by the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, which played works by Verdi, Debussy and Brahms and, of course, Beethoven's Ode to Joy. Profits from this concert went to the European Organization for Cancer Research and Treatment.
- In other Community capitals, the ninth of May was the occasion for issuing new publications on the Community, holding colloquia, seminars and open days, broadcasting television programmes on Europe and launching Community poster campaigns. The establishment of a Europe Day should instigate every year a renewed awakening of European awareness, particularly by the distribution of information in schools and on television.

There is no doubt that 1987 will see further development and greater popularization of this Europe Day, which is a day for all the citizens of the Community.

European Weeks

Between 9 May and 29 June (the centenary of Robert Schuman's birth) the European Commission, as part of its information and communication activities, organized a series of special events under the common title 'European Weeks'. These were intended both to make the public aware of Community symbols and to give the Community a greater presence in the daily life of its people.

The first European Weeks began with the grand Europe Day concert in Brussels and culminated with the European flag ceremony on 29 May 1986. Among the other activities were:

- A conference on tomorrow's European television, from 8 to 10 May in Nice. Some 200 media and telecommunications professionals participated and Carlo Ripa di Meana, Member of the European Commission with particular responsi-

bility for information, communications and culture, spoke of the future for European television projects.

- The arrival in Strasbourg on 12 May of the fifth cycling Eurotour: a hundred people turned out to welcome the tour's promoter, European Parliamentarian Dieter Rogalla, on Kehl bridge.
- The 10th anniversary of the European education programme, on 16 May in The Hague: more than 200 people took part in a conference, with the Queen and Prime Minister of The Netherlands present.
- A European passport ceremony on 10 June in Copenhagen: a prize was awarded to a 13-year-old Danish girl, on the issuing of the 250 000th Community passport.
- A European driving licence ceremony on 23 June in The Hague: the granting of the two-millionth Community driving licence was the occasion for drawing people's attention to this new document common to all Community citizens.
- In Brussels on 25 June, a few days early, the commemoration of the Robert Schuman centenary: the choirs of the European Communities sang the Mozart Mass in C Minor at the church of Notre-Dame du Sablon.

This intense information activity will be followed up. European Weeks are due in 1987 as part of the celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. This will be the occasion for the European Commission and European Parliament to launch an information campaign on 30 years of Community progress. The various events begin on 25 March, the anniversary of the signing of the Treaty; the emphasis will be on audiovisual impact.

The European passport

An identity document common to all citizens of the European Community, the European passport is the symbol *par excellence* of membership of that Community.

The idea of creating a European passport was suggested in 1974, but it was not until 1981-82 that the Member States of the Community reached agreement on a 'uniform-model' passport. This 'European' passport remains, in law, a national passport. Only the format (88 mm × 124 mm), the colour (lilac) and the wording 'European Community' (followed by the name of the Member State) have been harmonized. The document does not therefore establish a European citizenship, although it is a step in that direction.

The European passport cannot but help citizens of Member States to feel involvement with a Community identity. It also asserts the Community's personality *vis-à-vis* non-member countries.

The introduction of this new document headed the list of wishes expressed by the Fontainebleau European Council in regard to the People's Europe. The European passport is also part of the set of measures intended to bring about a 'Europe without frontiers' by 1992: a Community in which the movement of persons and goods would be completely free.

To arrive at the definitive presentation of the passport there were long discussions on every detail: format, colour, wording and languages. Even then, complete uniformity was not achieved:

- Only Germany and the United Kingdom came out in favour of a document with a page that could be read by computer. The other countries are issuing traditional passports.
- The cost of the passport is still set by each Member State, with marked price differences as a result.
- The date set for the launching of the new document, 1 January 1985, was respected by only three countries: Luxembourg, Ireland and Denmark. Elsewhere there were delays of up to three years. Several member countries began issuing the passport gradually from the summer of 1985, but citizens often have a lot of trouble getting a European passport as the authorities are first trying to eliminate their stocks of national passports. In Spain and Portugal, the two countries that joined the Community on 1 January 1986, the European passport should be available by the beginning of 1989.

The Community driving licence

On 4 December 1980 the European Council of Ministers adopted a directive on the introduction of a Community driving licence. This was implemented in two stages:

- The first stage took effect on 1 January 1983. Since then Member States of the Community recognize each other's national licences. With a minimum of formalities, they exchange the driving licences of holders who transfer their residence or workplace from one member country to another. This mutual recognition and exchange of licences within the Community were made possible by the fact that the issuing of national licences is conditional on passing a theoretical examination and practical test and meeting medical requirements set out in annexes to the directive.
- The second stage began on 1 January 1986. Since that date driving licences issued by Member States must conform to a Community model. This model meets the requirements of the Vienna International Road Traffic Convention (1968), so that it is valid in non-Community countries that subscribe to the Convention.

The introduction of the Community driving licence has at least three positive effects:

- It facilitates the free circulation and freedom of establishment of Europeans: the obstacle posed by the need to obtain a new licence whenever one moves house to another Community country is eliminated.
- It improves road safety: Member States are obliged to enforce relatively strict requirements for the issuing and renewal of licences.
- It is an important step towards a European citizenship: it is the first personal document of a Community nature; a driving licence is considered in several European countries as an identity paper.

The European Commission would like to bring about further flexibility in procedures for exchanging licences, while at the same time tightening up the conditions for granting and renewing them.

Towards a Europe of sport

The report of the Committee on a People's Europe notes that 'since ancient times sport has been an important forum for communication among peoples'. The first example that comes to mind is, of course, the Olympic Games, which began in Greece nearly three millenia ago. All free men could take part in the Games. To allow them to do so, the Greek city-States observed a sacred truce lasting three months: even at that time sport was a means of overstepping frontiers and, in the last analysis, a factor for peace.

Today sport has become a mass phenomenon. The leisure society gives special importance to physical exercise and tens of millions of Europeans engage in some sport in order to be fit. On another level, major competitions (the World Cup in football, cycling tours, big tennis and golf tournaments, marathons and athletics meetings) have become huge spectacles, their scale amplified by television.

For all these reasons, the European Commission has been seeking, especially since 1985, to introduce a Community dimension into European sport. In the first phase of its activity in this respect, the Commission patronized a number of events, selected on the basis of their media impact and the force of their Community aspect. Several different sports are already involved:

- In 1985, after some modest experiments, the Community really spread its sails: it sponsored the first European Yacht Race, in which 23 of the biggest multihulls competed against each other along the Community coastline. The course was more than 3 000 miles long and brought the boats, in eight stages, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. The race was started by President Delors in Kiel roads (Schleswig-Holstein) on 9 August; the first survivors of the bitterly tough course arrived a month later at Porto Cervo, in Sardinia. Tens of

thousands of spectators came to see the departures and arrivals of the 'seagoing formula 1's'.

The fact that the race is in stages adds to the attraction of the competition. It also allows a prize denominated in ECU¹ to be awarded at each stage and European days to be organized in the ports hosting the event.

The European Yacht Race will now take place every two years. The next one will leave The Hague/Scheveningen (The Netherlands) on 12 July 1987. The catamarans and trimarans will stop over at ports in eight European Community countries. Once again the fleet will travel from North to South, arriving on 15 August in San Remo (Italy), but this time it will travel around Scotland and Ireland on the way.

- Cycling, which is specifically mentioned in the Adonnino Report, was given some priority in 1986 with the aid given to the Tour of the Future of the European Community. The race was conceived in the light of the enlargement of the Community. It left Oporto on 10 September, crossed northern Portugal and Spain, the south of France and the north of Italy and ended in Turin. Exhibitions, conferences and other events on the theme of the European Community were organized at each of the stages.

In 1987, year of the 30th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome which set up the European Community, the second tour will pass through the six founding countries: The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, France and Italy.

- On the calendar of international tennis competitions the European Community Championship is the new name of the European Champions' Championship held in Antwerp (Belgium). The numbers of spectators have made it, in four years, the number one indoor tournament. Beginning with the 1986 Championship, held from 31 October to 9 November, the European Commission sponsors this event. It is an occasion for the stars of world tennis to confront each other and an opportunity for promoting the ECU and the European flag.
- The European Commission does not simply patronize existing competitions: it also tries to encourage the organizing of new ones on a Community scale. 1987 will be the year of the first Community Swimming Championships. This new competition, in which swimmers from all the Community countries will take part, will be held in Leeds (United Kingdom) on 11 and 12 April. Twelve men's teams and twelve women's will compete. They will be selected in preliminary national competitions and will represent the Member States' best clubs.
- The 'Sail for Europe' Association, which was set up in 1976, put together – with Community aid – the first European sports team: a crew of young sailors from several Member States. This crew has taken part in two round-the-world

¹ The European currency unit. On this subject see *European File*, No 15/86: 'The European Monetary System'.

races with the yacht 'Treaty of Rome' and has twice competed in the Tour de France with a boat called 'Europe' (it won in 1984). In 1987 the Association will organize the Constitution Race, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome and the 200th anniversary of the Constitution of the United States of America. Starting orders will be given from Nieuwpoort (Belgium) and the finish is to be in Philadelphia.

All these initiatives respond to the wish to develop the People's Europe and create a closer Community of Europeans. One could, of course, think of going further. In its recommendations the European Council at Fontainebleau spoke of assembling European sports teams. The first discussions on the subject with sporting federations have given an idea of the numerous obstacles (legal, financial, practical, political, psychological) which will have to be overcome before real Community teams can be put together.

The last Olympic Games, in Los Angeles, showed that all the athletes of the 12 Community countries together were able to win more medals (188) than the Americans (174). For the next Games, in Seoul in 1988, the European Commission will try, as a first step, to have competitors from Member States wear the Community symbol or some logo derived from it, in addition to their national emblem.

Apart from sporting competitions as such, it is worth mentioning European awareness-building journeys:

- From 11 to 13 July 1986, Strasbourg welcomed participants in the European Rally, organized under the aegis of the Community. Drivers of all ages from every corner of Europe made journeys converging on the capital of Alsace. There there were festivities, folklore evenings and galas, a parade of old models and prizes for the oldest car and for the one that had travelled farthest.
- Fifty young people from different regions of the Community took part in a bicycle tour of Europe in July 1986. The President of the European Parliament started them off outside the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg. The cyclists went to Brussels via the Saar and Luxembourg. The journey brought the young people face-to-face with the concrete problems of European integration: crossing frontiers, changing money, using another language. The participants also played the role of messengers for Europe by making the people of the regions they travelled through more aware of the need to build Europe.
- Since 1973 there is also a Walk for Europe, a big excursion on foot linking the three Community 'capitals': Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. On 5 May 1986, the Grand-Place in Brussels was the scene for the finish of the 14th Walk. On that occasion several thousand Brussels schoolchildren converged on the city centre, symbolically finishing the course along with those who had taken part in the 1 000 km walk across Europe.

A passport, an anthem, common identity documents, a Europe Day and European Weeks, shared interests in sport: the Community is not just a matter of (sometimes very technical) rules and regulations. It is also based on everything that draws its people together, from Scotland to Crete and from Jutland to the Algarve. Much remains to be done in this area, but new foundations have been laid ■

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