

# The function of the European symbols on European identity



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Master Thesis Human Geography  
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## Preface

*“At this crucial hour in Europe’s search for her identity, the time has perhaps come to provide her with what she still lacks in the trilogy of symbols by which our States identify themselves: like them, she needs her Flag, her Day and her Anthem. These will give her the new impetus she needs in order to advance on the road to unity, and she will find therein a resounding expression of her driving force and of her faith” (Radius, 1971, 15).*

The European symbols have been introduced with the main reason to stimulate a European identity. European identity is expected to assist the continuing integration process within Europe. The EU is currently experiencing many difficulties with regard to its legitimacy, because of the economical and financial crises. The function of the European symbols is therefore interesting, although it is only one of the many elements that influence European identity. Hopefully, this thesis will provide the reader with a better insight in the European idea and the role the European symbols have played and continue to play with regard to this.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Martin van der Velde for his support and advice. Much appreciation also goes to all the people who took the effort to fill in the survey and to Roberto Hayder for making time to tell me more about the symbols. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their help and for being there for me.

## Summary

This thesis investigates the function of the official European symbols (the European flag, the European anthem, Europe Day and the European motto) on European identity. European identity and the function of national symbols will be explored first. Then, the character, performance and perception of the European symbols will be described and analyzed.

European identity can be distinguished in groupness (a feeling of commonness amongst Europeans) and identification (a feeling of connectedness with the EU and its policies). An important aspect of a common identity is the feeling of a common origin or past. European history has provided some common values and experiences, but is not something that really binds Europeans. The origin of the EU is not as idealistic as sometimes is portrayed, national interests have also played an important role. Several developments, like globalization and the enlargement and increasing power of the EU have an impact on European identity. European identity is expected to be created by increasing contact amongst Europeans. The EU has gradually become more and more involved with creating European identity, for example through cultural policy. This involvement is disapproved of by some, they argue that it should not be tried to impose a European identity. Advantages of increasing European integration are especially concerning the economical field. European identity is strongly related to national identity, they can exist besides each other but interests sometimes conflict. In such cases it often shows that national identities are much stronger.

Symbols are objects or things that stand for something else. The meaning of a symbol (what it signifies) depends on the perceiver and the situation. A symbol that signifies roughly the same things for many people is called a socially shared symbol. In the case of a symbol that functions as an emblem, its meaning is straightforward and uncomplicated. When a symbol functions as representation, its meaning is much deeper and often connected to personal values and emotions. Symbols can also be used as a tool by people in power to achieve certain goals. The national symbols originated from practical purposes (particularly recognition) and have gradually become globally conventional; every nation is expected to have them. The literature revealed that the national symbols can fulfill certain unifying and divisive functions. They can help to create a feeling of identity through references to shared history, heroic events. Also, when people together perform or perceive the symbols this will affect feelings of common identity.

After WW II, the Council of Europe started to think about European symbols and introduced a flag, an anthem and a day. The European Union only much later started a process to introduce the symbols. Eventually, after extensive debates over the European flag, it adopted the same flag and anthem as were already used by the Council of Europe and a Europe Day on another date. The European motto was first used in its current form in 2000. After the introduction of the symbols, efforts have been made to formalize their position by attempting to include them in a treaty. Due to protests from national actors, this failed. In some occasions, ordinary citizens actively oppose or desecrate the European symbols, this can be seen as incidents though.

The current position of the European Union with regard to the performance of the symbols is fairly modest. The European Commission does not have a concrete policy agenda to work with and is not involved with the promotion of the symbols. The performance of the flag is clearly regulated; third parties who want to use it must ask permission. In most cases this is no problem though, the EU thinks of it as positive when people use the symbols. The performance of the European symbols is explored with a focus on different spheres of

society. Overall, the European flag is much more present than the other three symbols. Within the institutional sphere, the flag has a function for international relations. Within the EU institutions, all four symbols are performed regularly. Not many European citizens are involved with this though. In the sports and military sphere, the European symbols are not often perceivable, contrary to the national symbols. In our everyday lives, the European flag (or emblem) is often present, it is expected that many of these performances are perceived unconsciously. Performances of the European symbols and the national symbols are often related.

The perception of the European citizens is investigated with the help of literature, Eurobarometer results on the European flag and a survey amongst ordinary Dutch citizens. The Eurobarometers showed that the European flag is commonly known and that its popularity seems to be rising. The survey revealed that knowledge of the anthem, day and motto is not commonly present. Their existence is regarded as neutral by a majority of the respondents. The survey also showed that the Dutch symbols are seen as positive, important and natural by more people than the European symbols.

The introduction of the European symbols fits within the context of EU efforts to stimulate European identity. The use of the European symbols is not promoted by the EU though. The approval of the use of the symbols by third parties indicates that the EU does not intend to control the function of the European symbols heavily. The functions of national symbols do apply to the European symbols, but often in a much lesser degree. The European symbols sometimes seem to lack a broadly appealing character and are also performed less often. The relation between the European and national symbols is sometimes tense, but in most cases they co-exist without problems.

The accessibility and strength of the European symbols is much lower than that of the national symbols. They tend to address an elite public. Their meaning is strongly linked to the EU, but also to Europe in a larger sense. The opposition against the symbols revealed that they in some cases signify an image of a European superstate or stand for the EU and its policies. Seeing the European symbols has once proved to influence European identity positively. Their existence will definitely improve the presence of Europe and the EU in people's minds and this can induce positive and negative effects for European identity.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

The main subjects of this thesis are European identity and the European symbols. The concept of European identity refers in this thesis to a feeling of common identity amongst Europeans or to identification with Europe. It is possible to think of many elements that can constitute such a feeling of European identity, for example the geographical borders of Europe, a common European heritage or the current cooperation within Europe. What European identity consists of and what the position of the European Union (EU) is in the creation of a European identity will be discussed in this thesis. The four symbols that are presented on the official EU website as "The symbols of the EU" (Official EU site, 2012) are the European flag, the European anthem, Europe day and the European motto. These four are the symbols investigated in this thesis, they are not the only symbols of Europe though (the Euro is for example also an important symbol). The introduction and the development of the European symbols has not been uncontroversial and seems to be related to EU attempts to develop and strengthen a European identity. Although the EU focuses on its member states, the broader sense of Europe is always present. The distinction between Europe and the EU will therefore not always be made, except in cases where a different relation to the symbols and European identity is expected.

## 1.1 Central goal and research questions

The central goal and the main research question present the core issue of this research.

### **The central goal**

*To provide a better insight in the function of the official European symbols on European identity.*

### **The main research question**

*What is the character, performance and perception of the official European symbols, how does this relate to the position of the EU and the national symbols, and how does this affect European identity?*

The main research question shows two points of focus with which to look at the function of the European symbols: the role of the EU and the comparison with the national. These will not be treated in a separate section or chapter, but will return throughout the thesis.

The comparison of European identity and its symbols with nation state identity and its symbols is important to investigate the function of the European symbols. A much bigger amount of information is available on the function of national symbols than on the function of European symbols and since the European symbols are to an extent copies of the national symbols (especially the flag and the anthem), differences and similarities with the national situation reveal much about their function. The situation in the Netherlands will be used as the main point of focus to investigate the position of the European symbols.

The role of the EU in the creation of a European identity and in the position of the European symbols is crucial in this thesis. The European symbols investigated are adopted by the EU and the function of the European symbols is thus strongly related to this institution. Knowing the motivations behind EU efforts to introduce and develop the symbols is crucial to

understand their envisioned function. It is also important to know how the EU influences the actual function of the European symbols.

In order to answer the main research question, six sub questions have been formulated. These are all connected to a single chapter. An important distinction can be made between three different parts within the thesis. The first part (chapters 2-3) is theoretically oriented and includes theories and information that is necessary to frame the position of the European symbols. The chapters 4, 5 and 6 focus on different aspects of the European symbols that relate to their function, respectively character, performance and perception. In chapter 7 the findings of the empirical part will be connected with the theory and the function of the European symbols will be explored.

1. What is 'European identity' and how is it constructed?

(Chapter 2: European identity)

European identity is a core concept in this thesis and a proper introduction is therefore important. First, difficulties with regard to European identity will be explained and a distinction between groupness and identification will be made, this will help to grasp the concept throughout the thesis. The genealogy of Europe and the EU, the current state of European identity and its construction and the importance of a European identity will then be explored. There will also be a special focus on the relation between European identity and nation state identity. Discovering more about European identity will lead to a better insight about the position of the European symbols and what they may stand for. Some aspects of European identity have a relation with the function of the European symbols.

2. How do symbols work in general and what is the function of national symbols?

(Chapter 3: Symbols and the function of national symbols)

Investigating symbols and their function in general will provide information about how symbols work and how they are constructed. The function of national symbols will be explored, this provides important clues to explore and evaluate the function of the European symbols.

3. Which ideas and decisions have shaped the introduction and development of the European symbols?

(Chapter 4: The European symbols)

To understand the reasons and developments behind the introduction of the European symbols is crucial. It clarifies more about their envisioned function and position. The development of the symbols from their introduction on, including advancement and opposition will provide more information about their current function and position.

4. What is the position of the European Union on the performance of the European symbols and when are the European symbols performed?

(Chapter 5: The performance of the European symbols)

The influence of the EU on the performance of the European symbols will be investigated. In addition, an exploration of the real performance of the European symbols in different spheres will help to evaluate their function.

5. What is the knowledge of and attitude towards the European symbols by ordinary citizens?

(Chapter 6: The perception of the European symbols)

The current perception of the European symbols is an important aspect with regard to the function of the European symbols. It reveals more about the position of the symbols in the minds of ordinary citizens. A survey amongst ordinary Dutch citizens will assist in providing the information needed.

6. How do characteristics of European identity and symbols in general relate to the character, performance and perception of the European symbols?

(Chapter 7: The function of the European symbols)

The last chapter before the conclusion is an analytical one that will focus on relations between the theoretical and empirical chapters. Through combining the available information, with a focus on the position of the EU and the comparison with the national symbols, the function of the European symbols will be discussed.

## 1.2 Relevance of the research

To clarify the purpose and value of this research, both its social and scientific relevance will be explained.

### *Social relevance*

The power of the European Union and its institutions has increased over the last decades. While the practical power and influence of the EU increased, the EU also became more and more concerned with the promotion of a common European identity. There is a strong interdependence between the practical and emotional side of European integration. Advantages or disadvantages that people experience due to EU policy will influence their connection with Europe. Many policies of the EU clearly brought advantages to the member states, but the increasing influence of the EU is also often opposed. Not all EU policies are beneficial for all member states and the shift of power from the national to the European level is sometimes clearly under attack. The legitimacy of the EU and its decisions partly depends on a feeling of European identity; a feeling of common identity and connectivity with Europe helps in getting support for EU policies and interventions. Currently, slightly more than half of the population regards itself as European and this has been stable for 30 years (Kaelble, 2009, 205). A feeling of common identity can contribute to increasing cooperation between organizations and people, since such a feeling implies a certain amount of trust and respect

which is expected to work positively in creating and maintaining relations. Wintle (1996, 23) argues that a sense of common identity can unite people who might have been unrelated otherwise.

A certain level of European identity is crucial to be able to continue the process of European integration. The EU has officially adopted the four symbols (European flag, anthem, day and motto) with the purpose to stimulate a European identity. The creation of the European symbols has often been called artificial and an elite matter. When the symbols were introduced, much optimism existed about the development of a common European identity. It is visible in the official reports that a strong feeling of common European identity existed amongst the members involved in the decisions that led to their introduction. Jacques Chaban-Delmas, chairman of the European Committee, stressed the significance of Europe day as an opportunity *“to think of their common heritage, of their joint interests, their shared hopes and destiny”* (ena.lu, 1971, doc.2978). Although many steps indeed have been taken, such as a common currency, a truly united Europe seems far away and Utopian.

More knowledge on the function of the European symbols and their influence on the development of a common European identity is interesting for future decisions with regard to them. The question is whether the efforts of the EU to establish the symbols have been fruitful and what has been the impact of investments in the creation and performance. The results of this thesis may provide an incentive for the European Commission (EC) to think again on the function of the European symbols on European identity, including its own role in this process.

#### *Scientific relevance*

As mentioned, the goal of this thesis is to provide new information on the function of the European symbols on European identity. For the scientific relevance of this thesis, the current state of the art has to be explored first. European identity has become a popular subject of research in the past decades. The European symbols are seldom the main subject of a scientific article or book though.

The introduction of the European symbols and the presumed motives in doing so got some attention in the scientific world. The existing literature is mainly focused on the introduction of the symbols and on the related attempts of the EU to artificially create a European identity (Shore, 2000). Little is researched and specified about the real function of the European symbols and the ways this changed since their introduction. The current function of the symbols is not explored thoroughly and I think this thesis will contribute to fill this knowledge gap.

This research is special because it gathers and combines information about many aspects of the European symbols: their character, performance and perception. An exploration of the available literature and additional research are important to investigate these aspects of the symbols in a structured way. The comparison with national symbols and the focus on the role of the EU will make the function of the European symbols much more comprehensible.

### **1.3 Methods**

The approach of research will be mainly qualitative. The goal of the thesis involves many different and interrelated theoretical concepts and empirical information; a qualitative approach provides more room to explore all of these concepts and their relations. The main method to investigate the different topics and their relations will thus be literature research

(including newspaper articles and EU documents). An in-depth interview with an EU official will help to acquire more information on the position of the EU with regard to the symbols. A survey will provide more information on the perception and opinion on the European symbols by ordinary Dutch citizens.

#### *Literature research*

Literature research refers to the use of existing written material. Through reflecting and combining the literature, new perspectives can be created (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2007). Academic articles and books are the resources that play the biggest role in the theoretical part of the research. Theories on European identity and the function of symbols are necessary to investigate the function of the European symbols. Furthermore, official EU documents and media documents will also provide useful information.

#### *In- depth interview with an EU-official*

The goal of the interview will be to improve knowledge about the actual and envisioned function of the symbols as perceived by the EU. It will also help in investigating what regulations and incentives there are for performances of the symbols. An EU official possesses specialized information about the European symbols that is not available in the literature. In-depth interviews are commonly regarded as a method that works well to acquire information from people with specialized knowledge. To profit most from the expert knowledge of the interviewee, a semi-structured interview will fit best. The advantage of such a flexible approach is that it creates room for unexpected directions. An interview-guide and recording tools will be used to properly conduct and process the interview.

#### *Survey amongst Dutch citizens*

The goal of the survey is to acquire more information about the perception of the symbols by ordinary European citizens: about their familiarity with the symbols, their perception of the symbols and how they experience the difference between the symbols of their nation and the European symbols. A survey helps to gain a better insight in the perception ordinary Europeans have of the European symbols. Some quantitative data is already available (in the Eurobarometer and by Bruter (2003)), this data is not sufficient though. The methods with regard to the survey will be specified further in chapter 6, which includes the results of the survey.

With regard to analyzing the results, it is important to create explicit clues based on the theory. The function of the European symbols depends on many different aspects and the theory is necessary to frame the findings in the latter chapters.

## Chapter 2: European identity

Recently there has been much attention in the academic world for what Europe is and to what extent a European identity does exist. An important reason for this is the increased institutionalization and power of the EU. The ongoing shift of power from the nation state to the EU makes it an important question whether there is an 'essence' behind the Europeanization process (Wintle, 1996, 9). Is there something that really binds European citizens? In this chapter the concept and existence of a European identity will be explored.

The focus in this chapter will be on the EU and its policies. The role of the EU is important to understand the position of the symbols, because the EU has introduced the symbols and is involved with them. European identity stretches further than the EU though and it is important to note that this larger area also sometimes needs to be involved in the exploration of European identity.

In the first section, the concept of European identity and its use in this thesis will be explained. It is intended to clarify the meaning of European identity and thereby limit the range of possible interpretations. The second and third sections are meant to provide a better insight in the concept of European identity; they respectively focus on a historical perspective and on various developments and theories that relate to European identity.

### 2.1 The concept of European identity

The concept of identity is broad and can be used in many ways and in many fields, it is thus important to clarify the concept. I will focus on its use in this thesis and on some important processes related to its construction and maintenance.

#### *Groupness and identification*

Identity is based on perception, it is never given and objective. Delanty & Rumford (2005, 52) argue: *'Identity is not an idea or a cultural given, but a mode of self-understanding that is expressed by people in ongoing narratives and situations;...'*. Wintle (1996, 5) argues that identity is about images, rather than about realities. This also implies that it is not possible to approach a fixed truth about European identity, because it has no homogenous state. European identity can bring up a wide range of images to different people: the average African migrant presumably has a very different image of Europe than the average American tourist.

Identity is both involved with practice and analysis. People use the concept in their everyday lives to perceive and value themselves and their activities, and how this relates to others. It can also be used to convince people, for example for political motives, that they are the same or different than others (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, 4). Brubaker and Cooper (2000, 6-11) argue that the meaning of the term "identity" has become too broad to be useful in scientific analysis. They show the existence of a lot of different uses of the concept and distinguish strong conceptions of identity from weak conceptions. The strong conceptions do often involve assumptions that are based on the practical use of the term, while the weak conceptions of "identity" are too vague and therefore hard to use in actual research.

In this thesis, the term "identity" will be specified when necessary with the help of two of the terms that Brubaker and Cooper propose: *groupness* and *identification*. These concepts offer a more specific perspective on European identity. First, groupness refers to a feeling of common identity. Brubaker and Cooper (2000, 20) argue that: *'A strongly bounded*

*sense of groupness may rest on categorical commonality and an associated feeling of belonging together with minimal or no relational connectedness*". A categorical commonality is a factor that a group of people shares; it can range from wearing the same kind of cloths to attending the same concert. Of course sharing something in common does not automatically result in a feeling of belonging together. Brubaker and Cooper (2000, 20) argue that this is often the case though in collectivities like nations. The self-understanding of people with a certain nationality can thus result in feelings of groupness between people that share this nationality. This feeling of groupness is expected to arise faster when people attach a high value to their nationality. European groupness is an element of European identity and in this thesis it eventually will be connected to the function of the European symbols. Secondly, identification is focusing on the way in which people identify with something, in this case how European citizens identify with Europe and the EU. "Identification" is a concept that is smaller and demands more specifications than "identity" (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, 14). There are relational and categorical modes of identification. The relational mode refers to identifying oneself or another with the help of the relations that one has. A person can describe his own identity almost solely through references to other people and things. The categorical mode refers to identifying through inclusion or exclusion of certain attributes, for example citizenship (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, 15). Since identification of people with Europe and the EU will be the core subject. The identification the EU depends on the image people have of this institution. To what extent people feel represented by the EU, whether they accept its position and the general image of the institution are all having an impact on the degree of identification. A stronger identification indicates that it is accepted more and easier integrated in somebody's conception of his own identity. When one feels a stronger identification with the EU, this implies that one easier accepts the institutions and rules that come with it.

Groupness and identification are used throughout the thesis to provide a more specific view on European identity (especially in the empirical chapters). Noticeably, both can be related to attempts of the EU to strengthen European identity. A European identity is always composed of individual identities. A larger amount of people that experiences groupness and/ or identification with regard to Europe thus leads to a stronger European identity. In addition, the degree of groupness and identification is important. It can be argued that the more feelings of European identity are present throughout European society, the more successful European identity is. When feelings of groupness and identification with Europe are limited to a certain area (for example Brussels) or group (for example high educated youth), this has important effects on the function of European identity. To what degree a European identity exists has been discussed by many scholars and cannot be objectively measured.

#### *The construction and maintenance of identity*

Some knowledge on how identities are constructed will improve understanding of European identity. Delanty & Rumford (2005, 51) argue that identities are constructed through social action and that they are constantly changing. When for example a person's self-understanding or loyalty changes, this implies a shift in that person's identity.

Two main processes that provide people with a sense of identity are internalization and socialization. When a child grows up, he will copy and integrate the behavior of his parents and eventually of a larger group of people. To secure and confirm ones identity, being part of groups plays a crucial role (Spiering, 1996, 110). A whole social protocol is often attached to being part of a group, this can be expressed through wearing certain

clothes, through how you drink your cup of tea or through who you say you vote for. In the case of a European identity, the group of people concerned is mainly distinguished by living in a certain part of the world; this group is thus very large and diverse.

A remarkable connection exists between identity and the division between 'us and them'. The perceived differences between an in-group and an out-group are crucial in the process of identity making. An identity can simply not exist without a perception of and reflection on other identities. People tend to position themselves or their own group against the other (often unconsciously) to strengthen their identity. Str  th (2002, 397) argues that *"The idea of, for instance, a European identity necessarily contains a demarcation from the non-European"*. In line with the importance of an identity, the process of stereotyping the other is often much more revealing of the way people see themselves than of the way the other really is (Str  th, 2002, 395). It is interesting to regard a feeling of common identity as an extension of the image someone has of himself. In general, people are fairly positive towards themselves and when they feel they share a common identity with others, they are probably more likely to project some of their own positive characteristics towards those people. The opposite happens when people look at the other, with whom they do not identify. Often this other is labeled with negative characteristics.

Delanty & Rumford (2005, 51) also point out the narrative dimension of identities. Identities influence your memory, since it is normal to remember things better when they complement a certain view or opinion that already exists about the self or an entity. This implies that people may not be receptive to signs of a European identity, for example the symbols, when they do not already have a feeling of being European.

## **2.2 Historical perspective**

*'If history is largely mythical, it is because the politics of identity consists in anchoring the present in a viable past. The past is, thus, constructed according to the conditions and desires of those who produce historical texts in the present. This is as true of our own history as of anyone else's'* (Friedman, 1992a, 207).

A feeling of common identity is expected to strengthen through a sense of a common history with positive connotations. The meaning of events changes through generations of history making. This does not mean that the feeling of common European heritage people may currently experience is not real; such a feeling does not become less important when it is based on an account of history that is not the truth.

The perception that people have of the past is a result of a process in which events are selectively organized. This organizing then results in a representation of the past that leads up to somebody's ideas about the present (Friedman, 1992b, 837). The construction of history is thus an important element for the construction of meaning in the present; how people see the present connects strongly with how they see the past. This also relates to identity, because how people perceive themselves and their groups is connected to how they perceive their history. An important strategy to spread certain ideas, like that of the existence of a European identity, is thus the construction of the past. Annually, the EU spends more than 500 million on its cultural policy, which is aiming to promote Europe's 'shared cultural heritage' (Shore, 2004, 33). This definitely indicates how important a common identity is for the EU. The heroic version of the past is often preferred over the darker and more complex version. It can thus be expected that actors that want to promote a common European

identity will be focusing on the events and periods with positive associations and binding qualities and especially not on the ones which reflect a divisive image.

It has become clear that history and its account influence the present. The history of Europe and its identity will be discussed in two parts. In the first part, the focus will be on the periods and events that are often discussed as part of the European heritage. It will provide an exploration to what extent a common history does exist and what it implies for European identity. The second part will address the developments after WW II which started the road towards the current state of the EU.

### *2.2.1 European heritage*

European heritage can be described as a sum of shared experiences and influences; this explicitly does not implicate a single culture or civilization (Wintle, 1996, 13). A perceived shared history is suspected to improve common identity feelings amongst people. In this part, the European historical “common ground” and its perception will be explored.

It is important to realize that Europe is not a given geographical entity; it is a man-made concept with borders that are mostly not naturally defined. The historian Robert Bartlett argues that in the period from 950-1350 AD, people of Europe developed a sense of common identity, due to a combination of external threats and internal developments (Wintle, 1996, 21-22). In the years and centuries that followed, the position of Europe constantly changed. Although different nation states all have their own account of the past, some aspects of history are shared by a large part of Europe and commonly acknowledged as parts of a European heritage. Often recurring in literature on a European heritage are Greek-derived thinking, the influence of the Judaeo-Christian religion, the Roman Empire and the Enlightenment period (Wintle, 1996, 12-13). An account of these four aspects of European history will be given to provide a better perspective on what a European heritage consists of and on how the narratives about common European heritage function.

#### *Greek-derived thinking*

The name Europe originated in the Greek mythology. Europa was a princess who was abducted by the god Zeus to Crete, westwards, where she became queen. In line with the myth, Ancient Greece is often seen as the place of origin of European civilization. In Ancient Greece, from about 700 BC until 500 AD, much progress occurred on different fields. Advancements in philosophy, science, politics and art have provided a base (as now perceived) for European civilization. Michael Wintle (1996, 11) reminds us of the fact that the Greek history took place in a Middle Eastern and oriental context. The link between Greek civilization and developments in western Europe is thus not as consistent and logical as is often assumed.

The way in which many Europeans perceive Ancient Greece, as an important origin of certain values like democracy and individualism, exists since the Renaissance. The Greeks themselves were at first not aware of their history and the place this had achieved within the Western European process of self-identification. They were long identified and identified themselves as ‘Romans’. Only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century a Greek national identity was (re)born. In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was even agreed on some schools that every student would change his name into a Hellenic one and that students should speak only classical Greek (Friedman, 1992a, 195 (Dimaras, 1969, 60)). It is interesting that the Greeks themselves forgot about their history. It is a clear example of the fact that European history as we know it is a narrative and that this narrative changes over time.

### *The Roman Empire*

Many important developments on the military, bureaucratic and infrastructural field took place during the time of the Roman Empire (from 27 BC until 476 AD). In addition to that, it is noticeable that the ideas of Ancient Greece were brought to a major part of Europe via the Roman Empire (Wintle, 1996, 13). The area covered by the Roman Empire was large and thus improved measures to control were required. Public facilities and infrastructural improvements (like roads and aqueducts), large-scale organized trade (for example in slaves) and an organized roman military were developed.

It is common to see the experience of Roman hegemony as a factor that unified and shaped Europe (Wintle, 1996, 54). The developments from Rome brought Europe further economically and technologically. Contrary to the Greek influence, the Roman Empire was physically present in a large part of Europe (although not in the northern part of Europe, and additionally in the northern part of Africa) and thus also physically has left its mark on many places.

### *The influence of the Judeo-Christian religion*

The influence of the Judeo-Christian religion is visible in the many churches and traditions that are present within Europe. Although in the past decades an increasing amount of people has stopped believing, the Judeo-Christian religion does provide a common ground. Many European people have grown up with the values and stories that are interlinked it.

The Orient and Islam have played a crucial role as a mirror through which Europe could demarcate itself. The Crusades were a symbol of the shared religion and values that existed in Europe at the time. They did not involve commercial or other positive contacts with the other and took the distinction between the Christian Europe and the Muslim Orient to another level (Stråth, 2002, 391).

A strong link has long existed between Christianity and Europe. In 870, Pope John VIII was called 'Rector Europae' (Wintle, 1996, 14). The identification with religion went so deep that the concepts 'Europe' and 'Christianity' had the same meaning from the fourteenth century until the end of the seventeenth century (Wintle, 1996, 55). The strong link that existed between Christianity and Europe, as a united entity, weakened when Christianity itself started to fall apart. Religious wars destroyed the Christian unity in Europe. This resulted in a transition of the term 'Europe', from equal to Christianity towards a more neutral reference to a certain area and certain values (Stråth, 2002, 392). Although the many different groups that originated from Christianity may have undermined European unity at certain points in time, currently the common experiences and practices related to the Judeo-Christian religion are expected to be a unifying factor.

### *The Enlightenment period*

The Middle Ages (from roughly 500 AD until 1500 AD) was a period with relatively little development. Around 1440 AD the printing press was invented, this development made it easier to spread ideas and played a role in preparing the possibilities of the Enlightenment period. In the Enlightenment period (from around 1650 AD until 1800 AD) Europe economically and technologically developed faster than other parts of the world. This also had its effects on feelings of common European identity and in addition stimulated a feeling of superiority towards other parts of the world. Exploration and colonization followed, on a scale that had not occurred before. European nations were able to maintain a major influence on the world for centuries.

The four periods/aspects discussed all have a primarily positive association with them; the image of a civilized and ordered continent with a leading position in the world is treasured. An often occurring idea about a European cultural identity is that it resembles 'modernity' in general (Wintle, 1996, 10). Modernity stands in this respect for all kinds of positive connotations, like advanced knowledge and technology, democracy and civilization. Wintle (1996, 11) argues that this vision is often based on the assumption that '*...Europe has been the cradle of civilization from the beginning of recorded history, and that European civilization stretches in an unbroken line from the ancient Greeks (with the Egyptians often co-opted as honorary Europeans) right down to the present day;...*'. The idea that relates to this assumption is that Europe is an example for the rest of the world. It is important to realize that European history is not characterized by an unbroken line of development and civilization (Wintle, 1996, 11). Dark periods in history have certainly occurred, not least related to the many wars fought between European nations. After the Second World War, definitely the worst and most embarrassing chapter of human history, a turning point in European relations took place. The need for a peaceful future was deemed more urgent than ever and steps towards more cooperation were taken.

### *2.2.2 The road towards the European Union*

This part will provide a brief overview of some developments that are part of the European Union heritage. Special focus will be on the representation of EU history by itself and on how this EU narrative is sometimes revealing an idealistic image. Before World War II, several individuals already had thoughts about the idea of uniting Europe. Here only some developments that influenced the cooperation which now exists as the EU will be accounted, until the introduction of the EEC. Important developments after that period will be discussed in another context in the next section.

#### *Starting and developing political cooperation within Europe*

In 1943, while WW II was still raging, the Allies and the governments in exile had already agreed that after the war a Europe of nation states should be restored. Creating a post-war federation was discussed though, especially for the case of Eastern Europe. This idea was not compatible with the plans and ideas of the USA and the Soviet Union though. Britain simply did not want to stress the point in expense of the possibility of endangering the Allied cooperation (Morgan, 1996, 45).

After the Second World War, Europe was divided in East and West, which became respectively under the influence of communism (the Soviet Union) and capitalism (the United States of America). The USA assisted a lot in the recovery of Western European economies and also promoted integration of Western European nations in the field of economy. At the end of 1949, the European Recovery Program was half-way, the USA decided to continue giving Marshall Aid under the condition that the Western European countries participated in an economic integration program. The American pressure had an effect: the Schuman Plan (1950) was created to organize the coal and steel industries of France and West Germany (Morgan, 1996, 46).

The Schuman plan marked the beginning of the European Union as it exists today. In 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established (participants were France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg). The treaty, as the name already reveals, did only integrate one economic sector. The High Authority of the ECSC can be seen as the first supranational organization of Europe. Morgan (1996, 47) argues that the way the ECSC was formed shows little, if any, federalist ideas or intentions.

He writes: *"The proposal came from a nation state, was negotiated into existence by political leaders and officials of the nation states, and in the institutional balance agreed to by nation states, it protected the responsibility of national governments for the economic policies of their own countries. It was conceived as an end, not as a beginning or a first step to something else."*

The official website of the EU does not mention the pressure from the USA, while this seems to have played an important role in the creation of the Schuman Plan. The European countries made their own cooperation plan, but this consisted of much less cooperation than the USA had wanted. The information above shows that it were definitely not only idealism and the image of a federalist Europe that led to the Schuman plan; instead, pressure from outside and practical advantages for the nation states played a major role. It is clear that an important motive to write the Schuman Plan was the wish to reconstruct the French economy (Morgan, 1996, 47).

The fact that the EU presents 'the founding fathers of the European Union' at its website (EU official website, 2012) shows that the EU is proudly presenting its past. The name 'founding fathers' seems to be copied from the much better known 'founding fathers' of the USA. On the EU website, eight founding fathers of the EU are mentioned. They are presented as *"regarded by many as the principal architects of European integration following the end of the Second World War"*.

It is interesting that the EU sometimes idealistically represents its own past, since this reveals something about the EU position and the construction of a European identity. The question to what degree the construction of Europe has been due to idealism and to what degree to selfishness is strongly connected to questions surrounding the concept of European identity. If the member states would act purely on behalf of themselves, the question they would ask themselves is whether a European identity is useful for the well-being of their own nation state. When they think this is not the case, they will probably not support the attempts of the EU to create a European identity more than necessary to stay in the game. This also affects the support for the symbols. Concerning the past and image of the European Union, it seems like the EU represents some aspects of its own history more romantically than they actually were. People are relating more to stories that concern ideals and have a coherent clue (like the founding fathers and the idealistic motives behind the start of the cooperation). It is sensible that this representation of the EU history is helping to increase identification with the EU.

### **2.3 Theories on European identity**

After reflecting on the origin of the European idea and the beginning of the EU in the previous section, the focus shifts towards the present state of European identity. First, visions on European identity will be discussed and some aspects that have an impact on European identity will be highlighted. The second part presents theories on the construction of European identity, both from below (through the behavior of ordinary people) and from above (through policies of the EU). The importance and usefulness of European identity will be the subject of the third part. In the fourth and last part of this section, special attention will be given to the relation of European identity with national identities.

### *2.3.1 Perspectives on European identity*

Different views exist on the way the European identity concept should be approached and on which aspects can be seen as characteristic of European identity. It is obviously a choice where to draw the line of what European identity includes, therefore it is important to briefly explore the possibilities. Bruter (2003) decides to split European identity in a cultural and a civic component. Briefly summarized, the civic component refers to a feeling of belonging with regard to the laws, rules and institutions of Europe and the cultural component refers to a feeling of belonging to their fellow Europeans (Bruter, 2003, 1155). Parallels can be drawn with 'identification' and 'groupness' which Brubaker and Cooper (2000) proposed as more specific concepts of identity.

#### *Europe in a global context*

The position of Europe in the world has an important impact on European identity. Threats from other parts of the world, whether they are economical, cultural or military, are generally enhancing the need for cooperation. These threats would expectantly stimulate a European identity, since the effect of a threatening other generally results in a stronger common identity. According to Spiering (1996, 126), there is no evidence that Europeanness is reflected to Europeans through mirrors on a global scale. The degree of rivalry that is necessary to achieve this is simply lacking. Since the 2001 attacks, the distinction between the 'Western world' and the 'Islamic world' has sharpened, but the 'Western world' consists in this case of much more than Europe. The presence of a clear other with which the European could mirror himself could assist creation of a European identity, as in the period of the crusades. In the globalized world, such a strong long-lasting singular distinction seems to have become outdated though. The increasing contact due to globalization, direct or indirect through media, makes other cultures increasingly normal and accessible. In addition to that, organizations like the United Nations are meant to prevent and solve conflicts, representing nearly all countries of the world.

The United States of America have long surpassed Europe when military power and global influence is concerned. A major part of European identity was claimed by a larger western area. In addition to that, the idea of an exalted European civilization was highly damaged through the horrors related to WW II (Delanty & Rumford, 2005, 28). Developments on a global scale have forced European countries to cooperate more, as already became visible in the section on a European heritage. Europe has lost the leading role it played in the world for centuries. China and India are on the rising and experience much more economical growth. Due to the global competition it has become necessary for European countries to enhance their influence through cooperation. Globalization led to the need for decisions made by the EU as a global actor (Kaelble, 2009, 196).

#### *Growing influence and power of the EU*

The cooperation within Europe has been increasing from WW II onwards, as already partly described in the previous section. The European Economic Community, predecessor of the EU, was founded in 1957 by six countries with the purpose to enhance cooperation in the economical domain. In the years that followed, cooperation gradually intensified and the number of member states grew. In the past decades, the EU has gained influence on non-economical issues, through several treaties and agreements from 1986 on. Support for the EC had been largely uncontroversial, since it only concerned economical issues (Kaelble, 2009, 195). When the power of the EU extended to issues like security, social policy and migration, legitimacy gained importance since the EC decisions were now directly affecting

citizens' daily lives (Kaelble, 2009, 194/195). The effects of the ever-increasing cooperation within Europe on European identity are suspected to be both positive and negative. One of the results of the increasing power of the EU has been an increased visibility of Europe: some of the EU policies have led to the introduction of practical advantages and signs of a common identity. The other side of the coin is that the power of the EU has led to more criticism, since EU policies are not always accepted. Especially in a period of crisis (as currently is the case), unpopular measures are leading to distrust and opposition to the EU.

The growing influence and power of the EU also resulted in practical steps towards European integration, which ordinary Europeans can experience. Two major milestones are the implementation of the Schengen Treaty and the introduction of the Euro. The Schengen Treaty removed border control on many borders within the EU. It is expected that this reduced the barrier to cross a Schengen border. While borders within the EU increasingly soften, the outer EU borders are heavily controlled. The term "Fortress Europe" has become common and refers to the difficulties with regard to entering Europe. The EU enlargement thus led to a whole different character of borders between neighboring states, when one of them became a EU member (Delanty & Rumford, 2005, 33). The Euro, the common currency in 17 of the 27 EU member states, was introduced virtually on January 1<sup>st</sup> of 1999 and physically on January 1<sup>st</sup> of 2002. This event brought Europe much closer to the people living in the participating countries. The EU became perceivable during everyday payment transactions and currency exchange became redundant in many cases. Cris Shore (2000, 90) even argues that *"the Euro is the most important symbol of European integration and identity to date"*.

### *Enlargement of the EU*

The size of the European Union has increased gradually in the past years. This implies that the area of European cooperation has increased and additionally that the diversity within the area of intensive cooperation has increased. The fall of the Berlin Wall (in 1989) made further enlargement possible and has played an important role in the transformation of European identity. The Iron Curtain was a closed border, little interaction was possible, and it split Europe in two. It can be argued that the loss of a powerful other after the fall of the Wall is a cause for the recent weakness of the identification with Europe (Kaelble, 2009, 207).

The expansion of the EU in the 1990s to parts of Eastern Europe already raised questions which concerned the boundaries and the basic values of the EU (Kaelble, 2009, 196). In 2004, ten new members joined the EU. The recent accession of many Central and Eastern European states to the EU has sometimes been perceived by the new members as a kind of home-coming (Cram, 2009, 106). Some had the feeling that they had been cut loose of Europe and that with accession they reconnected with their European history. When talking about the boundaries of Europe, the focus is often on the Eastern-Western divide. The fall of the Wall and the recent enlargements of the EU caused a major shift with regard to the perception of this border.

### *Other aspects*

Geographically, Europe is to a large extent not naturally demarcated; its borders have changed over time and are contestable. Currently the Mediterranean Sea is for example perceived as a natural border, but Delanty & Rumford (2005, 31) remind us that *"...for the seafaring nations of antiquity it constituted a natural unity, in contrast to the largely unknown territories of the European landmass"*. Diverse landscapes and climates exist within Europe, which also implies many different cultures and lifestyles.

Europe is characterized by the presence of numerous languages, of which many have Latin or Germanic roots (Wintle, 1996, 15). In the European Parliament many translators are working to make all the European representatives understandable. This diversity in language could link to difficulties in communicating, and consequently in bonding and experiencing a common European identity. Luckily, many Europeans speak additional languages. Currently, English is the language that is educated and used mostly to communicate in Europe, as in many other parts of the world. In the Netherlands, education of English, German and French is common on high schools. Spanish is offered occasionally. Referring to the heritage, Latin and Greek are subjects generally offered only in Gymnasium, the elite part of high school. This implies that these languages only become accessible to the brightest students.

Europe is missing strong media that can contribute to a common identity. This adds to the problem that Europe already has with the lack of a cultural base (Kaelble, 2009, 208). When European media had a stronger position and reached a larger public, this would strengthen European identity. Language is one of the difficulties to establish a successful European newspaper or television channel. It is also questionable whether Europeans would be interested in media that report from a European perspective.

### *2.3.2 Construction of European identity*

Insights with regard to construction of European identity will be discussed in this section, both construction from below (through the behavior of ordinary people) and construction from above (through EU interventions). These two are interrelated; they influence each other. The construction from above is crucial to achieve a better perspective on EU identity politics.

#### *Construction from below*

The emphasis will first be on the ways in which European identity is constructed from below. In other words, how ordinary citizens create European identity in their everyday lives. Of course these processes provide the EU with clues on how they can stimulate European identity. They will also reveal which groups are suspected to experience more or less feelings of European identity than average. An important reason why the sense of Europeanness has not improved significantly, despite the ongoing unification process, is that the experience of Europe is not spread throughout society (Fligstein, 2009, 137).

Fligstein (2009, 133) argues that the main reason why people adopt a European identity is positive interaction with people from other European countries. When people experience a basis of solidarity with others and when they interact regularly, they may start to feel a common identity. Not all people have the same opportunities to interact with other Europeans; the richer and more (economically) successful part of society travels most and consequently benefits most from the rewards of the interactions. It is expected that more frequent contact amongst Europeans leads to increasing groupness.

#### *Construction from above*

The EU plays a role in identity-making through policies and programs that stimulate interaction between Europeans. In addition to enhancing groupness, improving identification with the EU is also important to continue the integration process. This part will provide a view on the development and current state of European Union identity politics, thereby excluding the introduction of the four European symbols (this will be discussed in chapter 4).

In 1973, a "Declaration concerning European identity" was adopted by the EC foreign ministers. This declaration cherishes shared values and unity in many different terms and

phrases. It also stresses the importance of European identity in a global context. No concrete measures to stimulate a European identity are named though. The first elections for the European Parliament in 1984, provided (through the low turnout) a strong incentive with regard to creating European identity. At that time, no treaty included culture, let alone that there were financial reservations for this. Consequently, the promotion of a European identity was only possible under the header of economic reasons (Shore, 2000, 45, referring to Forrest, 2004, 12). Before the cultural policy was legalized and formalized, it was thus already functioning in a disguised way (Shore, 2000, 46).

During a meeting in Fontainebleau (25 and 26 June, 1984) the European Council decided to set up an *ad hoc* Committee (led by Pietro Adonnino) to investigate ways to strengthen European identity. In the 'Conclusions of the presidency' of that meeting is written: "*The European Council considers it essential that the Community should respond to the expectations of the people of Europe by adopting measures to strengthen and promote its identity and its image both for its citizens and for the rest of the world*" (Adonnino, 1985, 5). One of the things that the Committee had to investigate was the possibility for "*symbols of the Community's existence, such as a flag and an anthem*" (idem). The Committee presented its findings to the European Council in two reports. The report in March 1985 focused mainly on practical improvements that would for example make it easier to cross borders and improve citizens' rights in other EU countries. The second report, which came out in June 1985, is much more directly concerned with ways to stimulate and strengthen a common European identity and includes a long list of ideas and plans to achieve this (amongst them are stimulating European television, a Euro-lottery and the twinning of European towns and cities). European heritage, Europe's cultural wealth and the lack of knowledge about the construction of Europe are mentioned regularly in the report.

The Maastricht Treaty (1992) was the first to include an article which provided room for legal actions in the field of culture (Barnett, 2001, 410). Article 128 (below the header 'Culture) contains some goals for this new field, for example "*bringing the cultural heritage to the fore*" and "*improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples*". It also talks about the conservation of "*cultural heritage of European significance*", about cultural exchanges and about promoting artistic and literary creation. The EU could now actively and openly promote co-operation and support its member states in their cultural policies. Barnett (2001, 411) quotes Forrest (1994, 17) about article 128: it "*contains a balance struck between member states which wanted culture in the Treaty in order to allow wider Community action and those who wanted it mentioned in order to set limits beyond which it should not go*".

The European Commission has also focused on information policy to improve a European identity. An interesting case was the De Clercq Report on information policy (1993) which argued that Europe should be presented as a brand; instead of trying to explain complicated treaties to citizens the focus should shift to the presenting the EU as a "good product" with a human face that brings personal benefits (Shore, 2000, 55). The presentation of this report was not a success, people found the report too commercial and some phrases were perceived to propose a mild form of indoctrination; journalists staged a walkout during the press conference (Shore, 2000, 56).

#### *Criticism on attempts to create a European identity*

To achieve a common European sense of political culture and identity has proved to be difficult and requires willingness of nation-states and their people. National political parties on the far Left and Right often represent people that do not have positive experiences with

Europe. Respective concerns about Europe undermining the national welfare state and nationalistic feelings that are not compatible with the increasing influence of Europe are important reasons for the rejection of Europe by these groups (Fligstein, 2009, 133). In Dutch politics for example, the SP and PVV are explicitly taking stance against Europe.

It became clear that the EU is actively involved with the creation of European identity. Cris Shore (2000) is very critical towards these attempts of European Union officials and politicians to create a European identity. He argues that they are driven by political motives, especially motives with regard to the legitimization of the EU and its institutions. The identity forming process is mostly driven by highly educated people that work at the European Union or are strongly connected to it. The main idea seems to be that a European identity does already exist, but that people need to be reminded of it. Some people think therefore that people must be persuaded, and when this fails then other strategies must be deployed to create a common identity (Shore, 2000, 29).

The question is whether it is desirable that the EU actively tries to improve people's connection with Europe, since it is so clearly related to the prevailing opinion within the EU itself that the integration process must be continued. Pushing a European identity can also inflict negative effects and opposition and it is not free of costs. It could be argued that European identity should not be interfered with and increase naturally, at the pace that fits ordinary Europeans.

### *2.3.3 The importance of a European identity*

The vision of the endpoint of the EU has been left intentionally vague. It is clear that further unification is the intention of the EU, but to what extent is not mentioned (Fligstein, 2009, 132). As became clear, EU policy makers hold on strongly to the idea of a common European identity. An important reason to stimulate the evolvement of European identity is that this can support the progress of other elements of the European integration. Whether such an approach is desirable is arguable.

The effects of European integration are most visible in the economical field. Shore (2000) points out that a sense of a common European identity is not only beneficial for the pro-European elite. Market analysts agree that a lack of a feeling of belonging undermines the evolution of a European market. Shore quotes an annual review of consumer trends of the Henley Centre for market research. They argue in 1996 that European consumers lack a feeling of being European and that this weak identity is 'both a source and a symptom of a deeper economic malfunctioning'. The Henley Centre also states that the competitiveness of Europe suffers from its splintered existence (Shore, 2000, 20-21). With the introduction of the Euro a cohesive European market has become closer, but although the market certainly benefits from the Euro, a common currency does not erase the different policies and ideas that exist within the participating nation-states. When choices have to be made, the nation-states will often still tend to look for the best option for their own inhabitants instead of the best option for the European Union. Loyalty and compassion of people still lies strongly with their own nation-state and this creates difficulties to act as a European economic block. In addition, it can be argued that European integration has reduced conflicts within Europe.

### *2.3.4 Relation with national identity*

One of the aspects that relate to the question 'how to unify the people of Europe' is the relation with national identity. Most people are comfortable with having multiple identities and the shifting between them as required by the situation (Smith, 1992, 59). Collective identities like national ones are much less flexible and often powerful and enduring. This implies that

dual loyalties with regard to collective identities are not always accepted, especially when different interests are at stake (Smith, 1992, 59). The relation with national identity can be mentioned as a cause for a weak identification with Europe (Kaelble, 2009, 207). Bruter (2009, 1500) opposes this view, he refers to research that has provided evidence of a positive correlation between multiple identities. Here, some common ideas with regard to the differences and relation between European identity and national identity will be presented.

Smith (1992, 62) argues that national identities have strong advantages over a European identity. He writes: *"They [national identities] are vivid, accessible, well established, long popularized, and still widely believed, in a broad outline at last. In each of these respects, 'Europe' is deficient both as idea and as process"*. According to Smith, Europe lacks the good sense of a pre-modern past which *"...can provide it with emotional sustenance and historical depth"*. He also states: *"Above all, national identification has become the cultural and political norm, transcending other loyalties in scope and power"* (Smith, 1992, 58). It is important to realize that nation states have different responsibilities and a different relation with their citizens compared to the EU. Kohli (2000, 119) reminds us that a nation state can demand its citizens to join the army when necessary, while the EU has not such a power. Also with regard to subjects like taxes and facilities the nation state has a much more direct relation with its citizens.

When people do not feel like they share a certain common identity with other European citizens, they will probably not support common European policies if these will not benefit their nation state. In this sense it is logical that the shift of power from the nation state to the EU is seen as a negative development by some Europeans. Especially when their own countries are not the ones that benefit most, they may feel that 'their precious taxes' are spend to benefit people with which they do not feel any kind of connection or empathy. The division between 'us and the other' is thus for some people a reality within the EU.

Within Europe, big differences exist with regard to the national-European relation. Laffan (2001, 721) argues that in the case of Britain, Denmark and Sweden the EU still fulfils the position of 'the other', while in other countries the EU does resonate with a national identity. People that regard the 'nation' as the most important category that they relate to may be less eager to travel and interact with people from other European countries. They may regard them as 'others' (Fligstein, 2009, 137). Euro-skeptics sometimes try to convince people that the EU endangers the national economy, but their language often reveals that the core argument is that national business should not be interfered with by 'others': it is clear that feelings of national pride and identity play an important role for the existing resistance against further European integration (Spiering, 1996, 112). The current financial crisis puts extra pressure on the relation between the national and the European. In Dutch politics, with elections coming up, the EU has become a major subject. The PVV has chosen to use the slogan "Hún Brussel, óns Nederland" (Their Brussels, our The Netherlands), which clearly makes explicit that the EU is perceived and presented by the PVV as 'the other', in contrast to the national.

## 2.4 Conclusion

*What is 'European identity' and how is it constructed?*

The purpose of this chapter has been to clarify the meaning of European identity and to provide a better perspective on several elements that are related to it. The concepts of groupness and identification will serve to make the concept better accessible.

Throughout the chapter it became clear that Europe is in many respects not a natural entity and that some of its borders are vague and constantly shifting. Historically, some periods that were important in the creation of Europe and "typically European values" have been discussed. Although the European history has provided some common values and experiences, it is not a solid base for a European identity. Advocates of a common European identity tend to use parts of the common history to create a feeling of belonging together, though. The EU can be seen as an important narrator in this perspective; a narrator whose position and purpose make it natural to promote Europe and itself. The origin of the EU is also used as such; it is portrayed by the EU as a purely idealistic effort backed by visions of a united Europe. In reality, it seems like practical and national advantages also played an important role.

The EU is an important actor when it concerns European identity. The enlargements and increasing influence of the EU are having a major impact on European identity. Although increasing cooperation within Europe supposedly positively affects European identity, difficulties related to the interlinkedness can also be a source of increasing anti-European feelings (for example in the current financial crisis). Improving and spreading an image of Europe and itself (and thus indirectly improving identification) has also become increasingly one of the policies of the EU.

To be able to continue integration within Europe, the EU needs legitimization. Improving identification of European citizens with the EU is then important. The EU efforts to create a European identity intimately relate to the European symbols and their function. The focus of EU attempts to create European identity lies both on identification and groupness. With regard to groupness, many ways have been introduced to improve contact between Europeans.

## Chapter 3: The function of symbols

In this third chapter, theory on symbols will be explored. How symbols are created and maintained is important to understand their role in society and will be the subject of the first section. In the second section, the position and function of national symbols will be investigated. The European symbols are created after the example of these national symbols and therefore more knowledge of their function will be helpful to investigate the function of the European symbols.

### 3.1 Defining symbols and exploring their character

Something can be called a symbol when it represents something else in a persons' mind. Maykel Verkuyten (1995, 267) specifies this, stating: *'symbols being means to experience an abstract content, and not only representing one in a brief and vivid way for the purpose of intellectual understanding as with metaphors'*. A symbol may refer to values, memories or emotions. It is important to note that symbols have the power to influence people's thinking and behavior (Verkuyten, 1995, 264).

In social semiotics, it is explained that a symbol consists of a sign and a signifier. The sign refers to the object or thing itself and the signifier refers to that which it represents in the mind of the perceiver. The meaning of a symbol is thus never implied by the object itself, but constructed by the perceiver. What a symbol signifies often varies strongly according to the perceiver and the situation. Consequently, the same object can be a symbol for one person, while it does not have any meaning for his neighbor or can be perceived in a totally different way according to the situation. An example of the importance of context with regard to the meaning of a symbol is given by Verkuyten (1995, 268). He refers to an experiment in which people could indicate the extent to which pictures from the Gulf War affected them. Images of birds in oil had the most impact; people saw them as signifiers of innocence and devastating effects of war. The same images would probably bring forth different associations when the oil would have been accidentally spilled at sea.

#### *Socially shared symbols*

When a group of people recognizes a symbol and experiences a similar meaning, the symbol is said to be socially shared. Symbols of religion are an example: they are known by a large part of society and refer to shared values and ideas, especially for people who support the religion. The exact meaning of a symbol always depends on the perceiver and the situation, but in the case of a socially shared symbol an important part of the symbolic meaning is agreed on. Socially shared symbols are thus the accepted expressions of symbolic meanings (Verkuyten, 1995, 266).

Pål Kolstø (2006, 697) emphasizes that the link between a symbol and its meaning is never natural: *'Since there are no inherent qualities in any symbol that link it emotionally or cognitively to the entity which it symbolizes, this linkage has to be learnt'*. With regard to socially shared symbols, this learning process is often embedded in society. The influence of upbringing, education and media is thus important for the existence and functioning of socially shared symbols. When a socially shared symbol is present, it is thus often passed to future generations.

In the case of socially shared symbols, their occurrence and meaning are often controlled from above. The strength of the link between the symbol and its meaning varies

from person to person and according to the situation. This ubiquitous nature of a symbols' meaning also plays a role in the case of national and European symbols.

### *Function of symbols*

A symbol can be perceived unconscious and conscious and related to that the effects of a symbol can be implicit (unconscious) and explicit (conscious) (Butz, 2009, 781). Once again, this depends on the situation and on the perceiver. When a symbol is present in everyday life, the chance that it is unconsciously perceived rises; it is then part of the ordinary and will not draw much attention to it.

Ian Manners (2011, 245) distinguishes different theoretical perspectives on the function of symbols. Three of them will be used to clarify the function of symbols in this thesis. In the perspective of '*Symbols as emblems*', symbols are taken to have a strong link with their content and have the primary function to communicate. The meaning of a symbol is supposed to be commonly shared throughout society (Manners, 2011, 246). Traffic signs are an example of emblems; they have a primarily communicative function and their meaning is straightforward. The link between the sign and its meaning is not so clear in the perspective '*Symbols as representations*'. More attention for the construction of symbolism and personal context results in many possible representations of a single symbol (Manners, 2011, 247). A representation has a much more complicated meaning than an emblem, often including personal values, memories and emotions. A special focus on the power of symbols is characteristic of the perspective '*Symbols as domination*'. In the case of important socially shared symbols, their meaning is often managed from above. The ways symbols are used to change people's attitudes and to reach certain goals are often critically assessed in literature, for example by Shore and Foret (Manners, 2011, 248). This thesis will focus on the national and European symbols. Seeing these symbols as representations fits better than seeing them as emblems, since they do not have a singular meaning to them. In addition, seeing symbols as tools of domination will be recurring. The exploration of the role of the EU in promoting European identity through the symbols fits well in this perspective.

In a peaceful situation the effects and importance of the symbols will differ from the effects in a situation of conflict. In a situation of conflict people often feel a higher degree of identification with their own group and consequently the performance of the symbols increases (Butz, 2009, 783).

## **3.2 Symbols of the nation state**

Although the European Union has repeatedly stated that they do not want to transform Europe into a large look-alike of a nation state, it nevertheless adopted symbols that are strongly associated with nation states: a flag, an anthem, an annually celebration day and a motto. This section shall first present the origin of nation state symbols and will then focus on some important functions of them found in the literature.

### *3.2.1 The development of national symbols*

The current habit of creating and adopting national symbols "...stems from a long tradition in which groups or ruling houses used banners, crests, fanfares, etc. as a form of announcement and identification" (Cerulo, 1989, 77). These symbols often served the practical purpose of communication. They were important tools to sent information or mark points of gathering, especially in the circumstances of war. In addition to that, the symbols

also carried out the identity of a group. The habit of nations to adopt a single set of symbols started during the nineteenth century and became a globally shared rule in the twentieth century (Cerulo, 1989, 77). Political elites have always been a major force behind the introduction of symbols, with the main purpose to create bonds and achieve certain goals. Cerulo (1989, 78) argues that national symbols are often patriotic and “*represent the nation’s identity or character-its mood, desires, and goals as put forth by those in power*”. A brief summary of the construction and form of national symbols will be provided.

The most important symbol of a nation is its flag. According to Foret (2009, 321), “...*the value of a flag has always been constructed through conflicts*”. Nations benefitted from a clear division between “us” and “the other”. Anthems are less often perceivable than flags, they often originate in a song popular amongst the people or a choice by a government. Competitions to choose an anthem or explicit commissions to write an anthem have also been common (Cerulo, 1989, 78). Most national anthems contain a text. National days are often referring to the day at which the nation achieved independence or to an important event which marked the nation (like a revolution). A national motto reflects the motivation of the state in a few words, often in the primary language of the nation or in Latin. Often recurring themes within the motto’s are unity, freedom, justice and peace. Also, references to religion are made. Not all nations have adopted a motto and a national day. Since the purpose of national symbols is to represent a nation, the nation’s identity should be reflected in them. Ideas on the link between the nation and for example the colors of the flag or character of the anthem are therefore often present. Certain conventions amongst nations exist on how the symbols should look like.

It is not accidental that every nation chose to adopt the symbols mentioned. Nations have copied each other and eventually the habit became so commonly shared that it became expected of a proper nation to possess its own symbols. In the current global system of nations, symbols are required. They are thus not only referring to the particularity of a single nation but also to the universality of the system of nations. A new nation will be recognized by the established nations when it resembles them and adopting symbols (the flag and an anthem in particular) is thus necessary (Billig, 1995, 85). The form of the national symbols has become commonly shared amongst nations and conventional practices exist: the flag is for example rectangular. In that respect the flag “...*, announces itself to be an element of an established, recognizable series, in which all the flags are essentially similar in their conventions of difference.*” (Billig, 1995, 86).

When nations adopted their symbols a long time ago, the link between symbols and nation has often become perceived as natural and uncontested. Nations that recently adopted symbols often struggle with their legitimacy and these symbols regularly fail to promote national unity. Their connection to an abstract meaning is often weak; people did not grow up with them and lack emotional attachment. Important to realize is that most of the symbols that are currently perceived as strong have gone through this process in the past and were once perceived as artificial (Kolstø, 2006, 679).

#### *Promoting the function of the symbols*

When national symbols have been adopted, their function still has to be created and maintained. Attempts to steer the function and meaning of national symbols are commonly present and reveal which power elites suppose the symbols to have. Governments or other groups in society sometimes decide to increase the exposure of people to national symbols (Butz, 2009, 781). Managing the use of symbols and their meaning can be done with the help of regulations and laws. Promotion (distributing free flags at a sports game) and instructing

the media to use them in a positive context (although this is not an option when the media is independent) are other possibilities.

Kolstø (2006, 677) refers to an explicit attempt by the Chinese Communist Party to stimulate patriotism with the help of the symbols, in a published statement from 1996 revealingly named 'Teach the General Public and Especially the Young to Love the National Flag and the National Anthem'. In Russia as well, the government decided to actively promote the symbols in the 2006-2010 programme for the 'patriotic education of the citizens' (Kolstø, 2006, 289). Kolstø (2006, 689) writes that it: "...devotes an entire section to 'the use of Russia's state symbols in the patriotic education' and reveals a strong conviction that the mood of the population may be influenced through visual arts".

### 3.2.2 *The function of national symbols*

It already became clear that the reasons behind the introduction of national symbols refer mostly to identification of the self and bonding of the nation. Here, aspects of the function of national symbols found in the literature will be given. A distinction can be made with regard to involvement of symbolic action (Schatz and Lavine, 2007, 333). A symbol can be perceived without interfering its state or being part of a certain ritual. However, when citizens are actively involved in the use of the symbols one can speak of symbolic activities.

#### *Practical functions*

The function of the flag is clearly still partly that of an emblem, with the purpose to communicate. When the flag is hung at half mast, this refers to a sad event (Billig, 1995, 39 (referring to Firth 1973)). Foret (2009, 315) points out that possessing a flag has become necessary for international recognition, mostly due to common practices of recognizing the other (for example with regard to boats and military) and its prominent role in international relations and world events (notably sport games). The flag has become universally shared and its use immediately clarifies which nations are involved, for example in negotiations or in a sports event. The other symbols are barely functioning as an emblem, although for example recognition which country won a sports event by hearing the anthem can be argued to fall under this category.

#### *Agents of subtle change*

Although national symbols can surface suddenly in times of threat, war or victory, most of the time, they are silent reminders of the connection with a nation. National symbols are visible in all kinds of subtle places and forms. The implications of our exposure to those symbols are little explored, but it is argued that they do have an impact on psychological and social processes (Butz, 2009, 780).

Michael Billig (1995) argues that nationalism does not only refer to the margins of society (like extreme right political parties or separation movements), but also to the normal view on a society, in a more subtle way. Billig (1995, 6) has posed the term 'banal nationalism' to "cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced". Symbols play an important role in these processes. Billig (1995, 8) writes: "The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building".

In line with Billig's argumentation on the subtle influences of symbols on our everyday lives, there is indeed some indication that national symbols can influence common identity by shifting people's opinions away from the extremes. Butz (2009, 785-786) refers in this respect to a research (by Hassin, Ferguson, Shidlovski and Gross, 2007) that investigated

the influence of subliminal Israeli flag primes on the opinions of Israelis on the conflict between Palestine and Israel. The result was that exposure to the national flag led to opinions that were less extreme; people who were highly nationalistic gave less nationalistic responses than usual and people who were little nationalistic gave stronger nationalistic responses. National symbols may thus be able to influence attitudes and behavior while people are unconscious of their exposure to the symbols.

### *Unifying forces*

National symbols can promote a common identity through the creation of groupness. When people pay tribute to their national symbols together, they all behave in the same manner. This common behavior, like removing your hat and singing the anthem, is expected to bring people closer together (Butz, 2009, 785).

National symbols can activate passionate feelings and behavior, since they can become a representation of a complicated combination of values and emotions. The power of a symbol can sometimes even supersede what it is supposed to represent. Schatz and Lavine (2007, 330) refer to a quote of Durkheim (1995/1957, 220) to illustrate this: *‘The soldier who dies for his flag dies for his country, but as a matter of fact, in his own consciousness, it is the flag that has the first place’*. The emotions and feelings that refer to one’s life in a nation are in this case directed towards the flag. A symbol can then ultimately become more important to somebody than the concepts to which it refers.

Tradition and history are important factors in the perceived strength of national symbols. National symbols function as a means to stimulate the glorifying, romanticizing and mythologizing of the past (Schatz and Lavine, 2007, 333). The pride that people feel with regard to the heritage of their nation can also alter their ideas about the history of the symbols of their nation. People thus may tend to think of their symbols as older and less dynamic than in reality. Foret (2009, 315) refers in this respect to Guenter (1990, 213) by giving the example that *‘All the paintings of the American revolutionary period dramatize the Stars and Stripes, although it did not exist in its contemporary form at the time’*.

National symbols, with powerful emotions attached to them, have an impact on the degree of groupness in a nation. According to Schatz and Lavine (2007, 332) it is important to realize that nations are communities so large that a person only experiences contact with a fraction of the group, therefore *‘the ability of national symbols to objectify the group is essential to arousing group identification (see Allport, 1927)’*. Schatz and Lavine (2007, 333) argue that in symbolic activities like waving the flag *‘...citizens actively (or vicariously) express their national membership’*, often in the presence of other national members. These activities are stimulating people to experience a feeling of groupness. Together with this internal strengthening, national symbols often strengthen the perceived difference between ingroup and outgroup membership. People may become more conscious of their ingroup when they are exposed to their national symbols and consequently they also become more conscious of the outgroup (Butz, 2009, 786). There are many examples of cases where national symbols have been used in nationalistic and hostile responses to outgroup members. After the attacks on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, some Americans responded with aggressive marches on Islamic mosques while waving the US flag (Butz, 2009, 788).

Kolstø argues that the function of symbols can increase through positive associations: *‘If state symbols can be linked to events and situations that the citizens psychologically associate with pride, joy, and high spirits, these good feelings may rub off on the flag and other national symbols and enhance their emotional value’* (Kolstø, 2006, 698). It is thus important for the function of symbols that they are present at this kind of situations.

### *Divisive forces*

Kolstø (2006, 679) argues that symbols are not solely able to unify; they also contain divisive 'qualities'. Especially when the symbol refers to a cultural past, it is at risk of not being accepted by groups in society who do not relate to that past. Butz (2009, 781) argues that in some cases "..., *symbols that are purported to be associated with peace and unity have instead contributed to conflict between groups*". Although new symbols are especially vulnerable to divisive forces, established symbols are also at risk. A symbol can for example successfully be used in campaigns of a specific societal movement and as a result induce negative associations to people from other groups (see Kolstø, 2006).

Regulations with regard to the symbols of a nation can be explicit, the importance of the symbols and their connected values sometimes result in a compulsory "holy" treatment. This also creates new possibilities of protesting. A relatively new law in Russia for example requires people to stand up when they listen to the anthem. The risk is of course that some people will reject to stand up and thereby ruin the unifying element of the ritual and turn it into a divisive one (Kolstø, 2006, 689). In Japan, teachers that refused to face the flag and sing the anthem at a graduation ceremony were reprimanded by the board of education (Butz, 2009, 781). The desecrating of symbols is also a clear example in which symbols are used to show anger and disagreement against what the symbols stand for (in a person's mind).

Based on the literature, four important functions of national symbols can be distinguished:

- "Glorifying and romanticizing the past"
- "Activating passionate feelings and behavior"
- "Bringing people closer together"
- "Creating stronger boundaries between ingroups and outgroups"

These are functions that are strongly attached to the character, performance and perception of the symbols and they will affect groupness and identification. In that sense, they can thus for example assist in creating legitimization for a government.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

*How do symbols work in general and what is the function of national symbols?*

The aim of this chapter was to provide a framework with which the function of European symbols can be investigated. The first section focused on characteristics of symbols. The national symbols are generally socially shared symbols; their function is more connected to representations than to emblems. The perspective of symbols as objects of power will be used to explore the role of the EU with regard to the European symbols.

In the second section, the brief introduction of the national symbols revealed that they are often 'artificially' (from above) created and that they have become globally conventional and required for nations. Elites often play a role in promoting the symbols and regulations with regard to the use of the symbols are common. The investigation of the function of the national symbols showed that the flag serves some practical purposes. With regard to identity building, it became clear that a distinction can be made between consciously and unconsciously perceived symbols. Unifying and divisive processes relating to the national symbols were mentioned. The unifying forces are expected to support the loyalty, support and connection that people feel towards their nation's institutions and towards other group members. However, symbols can also have a divisive function. When certain groups do not

feel represented by them (anymore) and purposely neglect social rules they can become an undermining factor of groupness and identification. The found functions of the national symbols will be used later on to explore the European symbols.

## Chapter 4: The European symbols

The two previous chapters provided an insight in respectively European identity and the function of symbols. This chapter will explain what the European symbols (the flag, the anthem, Europe Day and the motto) are, why they were introduced and how they have developed from then on. The gathered information on the character of the symbols will improve understanding with regard to their purpose and function. The first section will focus on the introduction of the European symbols. In the second section, developments after their introduction will be discussed, with a special focus on controversies that have surrounded them.

### 4.1 Introduction of the European symbols

The first steps towards introducing European symbols were taken by the Council of Europe, an organization founded in 1949. The Council of Europe wanted to stimulate European integration and unity and was of the opinion that a European identity ought to be promoted (Clark, 1997, 793). The adoption of symbols fitted this purpose. The European Community shared the wish for European integration with the Council of Europe, but initially relied on its natural evolution through increasing economical interdependence. From the 1950s until the 1970s, the dominant approach of the EC to European integration entailed that integration in the economical domain would eventually lead towards integration in other domains such as the political and cultural (Shore, 2000, 42). In 1973 the 'Declaration on the European Identity' was signed by the EC members. It included phrases stating they shared 'the same attitudes to life,...' and that referred to their intention to defend shared values like social justice and respect for human rights (Shore, 2000, 44). In the mid-1980s, awareness of the importance to improve the image of the EC grew. The Fontainebleau European Council (25-26 June 1984) was of the opinion that adopting symbols would help to promote the identity and image of Europe (Curti Gialdino, 2005). As already mentioned in chapter 2, the Adonnino Committee was set up to think about ways to create a 'people's Europe', it thereby played a major role in the adoption of official European symbols by the EC. In the report of this committee (1985), recommendations are made for the implementation of a European flag, anthem and day.

The history of the European symbols will show something about the envisioned function of the symbols. It will help us to understand the difficulties and choices that played a role in the introduction of the European symbols. In addition to this, the message that the chosen symbols convey will be explored; interpretations and associations related to the symbols will thus be discussed. The history and meaning of the European flag, the European anthem, Europe Day and the European motto will subsequently be presented.

#### *The European flag*

The European flag was adopted by the Council of Europe as its symbol in 1955. The design of the flag was by Arsène Heitz and Paul Lévy and consisted of a blue background with twelve golden stars. The Council of Europe clarifies the design in resolution 55.32, which states that the blue of the European flag is an evocation of 'the blue of the Western sky' and that the 'Stars figuring peoples of Europe form the circle as a sign of union. They are invariably twelve, symbols of perfection and completeness.' (Foret, 2009, 315).



Image 1: The European flag

The Council of Europe encouraged other European institutions to adopt the flag as well. This was not successful though, the OEEC opposed the hint to a political union that a flag implies and the ECSC did not want to become associated with the symbol of an intergovernmental organization, since this conflicted with its own image of moving towards a federation (Curti Gialdino, 2005). From 1959 to 1961, a debate about adopting the European flag as official symbol of the EEC took place. There was opposition towards adopting the design of the Council of Europe, mainly because of the confusion this would cause. Disagreements and discussions on which design should be adopted passed and an envisioned flag design competition in 1961 was never run. In the years that followed, attention to the matter faded and different unofficial designs were used on several occasions. At the Universal Exhibition in Japan in 1970, for example, the EEC used a flag with six golden stars as its image. In the end of 1972, a competition was held amongst graphic artists to design an emblem which would fit publicity purposes of the EEC. No one was proclaimed the winner; the Commission thought none of the designs suitable to become the official new Community emblem. One of the designs did unofficially become in practice as EEC emblem though: a gold letter E on a blue background was used in publications and other general information purposes from 1978 onwards (Curti Gialdino, 2005). In 1979 the European Parliament was first elected and in the same year it became concerned with the adoption of a European flag. Several MEPs proposed in October 1979 a motion for a resolution to adopt a flag with the same design as the Council of Europe (although in the description of the design no reference was made to this) (Curti Gialdino, 2005). On the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 1983, after the Political Affairs Committee judged the proposal, the resolution was presented to the European Parliament. After a debate in which some MEPs argued against the design (it would lead to confusion) and plead for a competition amongst citizens, the resolution was nevertheless adopted with 50 votes in favor, 19 against and 4 abstentions (Curti Gialdino, 2005). The flag became once more questioned for its similar design as the Council of Europe flag; the Legal Affairs Committee, chaired by Simone Veil, opposed the chosen design and advocated that a competition amongst citizens would be advisable (Curti Gialdino, 2005).

In 1985, the Adonnino Committee agreed with the European Parliament that the design of the flag should be similar to the design that was already in use by the Council of Europe. Because of the differences between the Council of Europe and the European Community, the committee proposed in 1985 to adopt the blue flag surrounded by the twelve gold stars, but with a gold letter E in the middle (as mentioned, the design of such an E was already in use by the Commission). With regard to the use of the flag the Adonnino Committee recommended: *‘The European Council should express the hope that the emblem and flag will be used at appropriate places and on suitable occasions, without of course affecting the use of national flags, and asks the institutions to agree to regulate the use of the flag and emblem’* (Adoninno, 1985, 29).

Jacques Delors, who was President of the European Commission from 1985 until 1994, gave an impulse to the decision-making with regard to the flag. When he entered

office, he launched an image campaign which included the choice of a flag. It could be argued that he overruled the existing debates with his powerful call to adopt the design of the Council of Europe, but his acts definitely speeded up the process (Curti Gialdino, 2005). The flag that was already used by the Council of Europe and the European Parliament became the official symbol of the European Community in 1986. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of May in that year, the flag was raised in front of the Berlaymont building in Brussels. Foret (2009, 315) argues that *‘the European Communities (EC) adopted the flag as a tool to overcome the crisis of confidence in integration after the mediocre level of participation in the 1984 European elections’*.

### *The European anthem*

Similar as in the case of the flag, the Council of Europe was the first organization that adopted a European anthem. About 16 years after the introduction of a European flag, the Council of Europe in 1971 officially made its wish clear to adopt Beethoven’s “Ode to joy”, the end of the fourth movement in Beethoven 9, as the European anthem (Radius, 1971). The responsible committee of the Council of Europe was undivided in their choice. They argued that: *‘Beethoven’s music was representative of European genius and was capable of uniting the hearts and minds of all Europeans, including the younger generation’*. The fourth movement of Beethoven’s ninth includes words extracted from the poem “An die Freude”, which was written in 1785 by Friedrich Schiller. At the time of the Enlightenment it was common to believe that reason and humanity would eventually prevail over the excesses of war. This is also the core theme of the poem of Schiller, which is about brotherhood (Clark, 1997, 791). Ludwig von Beethoven completed his Ninth symphony in 1824, at a time in which the prominence of this dream had faded. Beethoven did believe in the dream and he put parts of the poem in his most famous symphony (Clark, 1997, 792).

The Council of Europe decided not to include any words in the anthem, reasons given were that the poem referred to a universal instead of a European sense of unity and the problem with regard to which language to use. The option that words could be added later is explicitly hold open in the report of the committee (Clark, 1997, 796). The official arrangements for the anthem were made by Herbert von Karajan (Clark, 1997, 802). This is a remarkable choice, since his role in WW II is controversial.

The Adonnino Committee recommended to use the “Ode to Joy”, from the last part of the ninth symphony of Beethoven, as the European anthem. The anthem should be played at *‘...appropriate events and ceremonies’* (Adonnino, 1985, 29). In 1985, the famous last part of Beethoven’s ninth symphony became the official anthem of the European Union.

Although the European anthem lacks words, the ideals that are expressed in the poem of Friedrich Schiller are clearly seen as connected to the choice of the anthem. The perceptions of Schiller and Beethoven on unity and brotherhood can to an extent be translated to current ideals about European integration. The EU also refers to a deeper meaning on the EU website: *‘Without words, in the universal language of music, this anthem expresses the European ideals of freedom, peace and solidarity’*.

### *Europe Day*

The Council of Europe decided in 1964 to introduce an annually Europe Day on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May to celebrate its own establishment. Similar to the case of the flag and the anthem, the Adonnino committee in 1985 advises the EU to adopt an annually day; under the header ‘The European image in education’, the committee proposes to adopt the 9<sup>th</sup> of May as Europe Day. Europe Day was envisioned to become an event in schools and media, helping

to carry out information about Europe and consequently creating awareness and knowledge among the youth (Adonnino, 1985, 24). The 9<sup>th</sup> of May was seen as appropriate date, since Robert Schuman made his famous declaration on this date. The website of the EU states that: *“Speaking in Paris in 1950, Robert Schuman (the French foreign minister) proposed a new form of political cooperation for Europe, which would make war between Europe’s nations unthinkable. This proposal is considered to be the beginning of what is now the European Union”*. In 1985, an EU summit adopted 9 May as Europe Day. Contrary to the adoption of the flag and the anthem, the EU did in this case not copy the choice of the Council of Europe. Consequently there are now two so-called ‘Europe Days’ that coincidentally fall in the same week.

### *The European motto*

The European motto was invented by the EU, much later than the other symbols examined in this thesis. The Council of Europe did not adopt an official motto.

The phrase ‘ever closer union’ has long occupied a central place in the European semantics, from its introduction in the Treaty of Rome on, but was never truly official. The phrase became increasingly controversial in the period after the Maastricht Treaty. In 1999, a competition amongst schools to invent a new motto for Europe led to the introduction of the phrase ‘unity in diversity’. Notably, Indonesia and South Africa also have this phrase (in their own language) as their motto. This indicates that the explicit idea of unity in diversity is not only characteristic of Europe.

Referring to Europe as a ‘unity’ was apparently too far-going for some; despite of the neutralizing effects of ‘diversity’ it bore too much resemblance to ‘ever closer union’. In anticipation to the introduction of the motto in the Constitution of Europe, the phrase was changed to ‘united in diversity’ (Manners, 2011, 259). ‘United in diversity’, the current official motto of the European Union, seems to be above all neutral. It can be interpreted from different angles, people who plea for increasing European integration as well as people who oppose this can both agree with the motto. It is just a matter of whether you choose to focus on ‘united’ or on ‘diversity’. The motto is presented on the EU website in the languages of all member states. It can be argued that the meaning of the motto is therefore slightly different in different languages. The fact that the European motto exists in many languages could have positive and negative influences. Europeans can probably better remember the content and meaning of a motto in their own language, but referring to the creation of a common European identity a truly shared motto in one language (for example Latin) may be more powerful and better fitting.

### *The presentation of the European symbols by the EU*

The EU plays a major role in the use of the symbols, this provides an important clue with regard to their function. The presentation of the symbols by the EU reveals more about the envisioned public of the symbols.

The official website of the EU presents the symbols under the header ‘EU symbols’, but then they are named ‘European anthem’, ‘European flag’ and ‘Europe Day’. Only the motto is called ‘EU motto’. The question whether the EU intends the symbols for its own territory or for a larger area is clarified to a certain extent at the official EU website (accessed 02-08-11). For the flag and the anthem it is stated that those symbols are not only symbols of the European Union, but also of Europe’s unity and identity in a wider sense. As will be explained in the upcoming part, the flag and anthem chosen by the EU are exactly the same as the flag and anthem of the Council of Europe (which represents a much bigger area).

Therefore the EU is not in a position, even if they would want it, to claim these symbols solely for EU member states. The EU also has other reasons to include non members though; maintaining good relations is important and the creation of a broad sense of Europeanness can assist in this. Besides, some neighbors will eventually become part of the EU. Although the day is called 'Europe Day' and not 'EU Day', the meaning of Europe Day is focused on the European Union. It refers to the declaration of Schuman, and therefore to the roots of the EU. The EU argues on its website that Europe Day intends to bring Europe closer to its citizens and peoples of the Union closer to one another. The motto is presented as the symbol of the European Union, but there are still references to the whole continent to be found in the explanation. On the official EU website is written: *'It signifies how Europeans have come together, in the form of the EU, to work for peace and prosperity, while at the same time being enriched by the continent's many different cultures, traditions and languages'*.

The boundaries of the concept of Europe are vague and disagreed on, and so is the spatial reach of the symbols. The flag and anthem are also related to the Council of Europe and therefore are supposed to represent a larger European area. The fact that the EU is the main actor in regulating and promoting the use of the symbols leads though to the assumption that people within the EU member states will perceive the symbols more.

#### **4.2 Developments after the symbols were introduced**

This section will critically investigate events and developments after the introduction of the symbols. Besides information in the literature, information on developments with regard to the symbols has also occurred in Dutch newspapers. Some newspaper articles will be quoted and a general impression of the coverage of the subject in Dutch newspapers will be given.

Efforts to promote the symbols are strongly related to opposition towards the symbols. Many initiatives with regard to the European symbols have stranded and this often has to do with perceived associations and competition with national symbols. In some cases the European Union provides a preemptive defense through statements about the relation of the European symbols to their national siblings. At the official EU website (accessed 14-09-2011) is for example written: *"The European anthem is not intended to replace the national anthems of the EU countries but rather to celebrate the values they share"*. The aim of this chapter is to evaluate some major developments and to improve knowledge of the promotion and contestation of the symbols. This will help to unravel their function and it will reveal more about the way the EU is dealing with the symbols.

##### *Efforts to develop the symbols' function and related opposition on elite/political level*

One of the most important efforts with regard to evolution of the symbols was their inclusion in the proposed Constitution of Europe. This would increasingly formalize the position of the symbols. The Constitution of Europe was rejected by France and The Netherlands through referenda in 2005. One of the reasons was the fact that it included an article (I-8) about five 'symbols of the union' (the four symbols discussed in this thesis and the European currency). In the Lisbon Treaty (entered into force in 2009), which was created as an alternative for the failed constitution, the symbols of the union had vanished (Manners, 2011, 244-245). Angela Merkel said in June 2007 about the Lisbon Treaty: *'The new treaty will not include state-like nomenclature or symbols, ... . Many of our partners feel these stand for a European superstate. I do not share this concern but I must respect it'* (Manners, 2011, 245 (Merkel in

Benoit and Parker, 2007)). One of the people Angela Merkel may refer to is Dutch foreign minister Ben Bot: on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2006, *NRC.NEXT* writes about a plea of Ben Bot to discard the European flag and the European anthem, he argued that the flag and anthem deduced the attention from more important business and that discarding them would fit to reduce bureaucracy. Ben Bot did later partly withdrew his plea, by stating that he liked the symbols but opposed to their inclusion in a treaty, since this would give the impression of the EU as a country. The fact that the article on European symbols was removed from the Lisbon Treaty displays the sensitiveness that exists with regard to them. Also on an elite level, people associate the European symbols with the idea of a European superstate.

Examples of resistance against the European symbols by national actors, like political parties and organizations, are common. The presence of the European flag has been most strongly opposed in the United Kingdom. The next chapter will provide an overview of the performance of the European symbols and related contestation of them. Although many initiatives and proposals have been rejected by national actors, the symbols sometimes do surface in new ways. Sarkozy was for example the first president that made the European banner appear on his photograph as head of state (Foret, 2009, 322).

#### *Opposition to the symbols by ordinary Europeans*

The previous part revealed that opposition against the symbols is present on the political and elite level. Although politicians represent ordinary citizens and act on behalf of them, it is still a selected group of people that is really involved with the symbols in this way. In 2006, reacting to the plea of Dutch foreign minister Ben Bot, José Manuel Barroso stated that he did not know a single complaint of a civilian about the flag and the anthem (*NRC.NEXT*, 14th of October, 2006). Protest against the symbols (or what they are thought to stand for) can also be the work of ordinary citizens though; their opposition can be on the formal level (for example by writing letters to the EU in which they oppose the existence or form of the symbols) or can be direct and physically present. The latter can more easily function as a divisive factor, since it is clearly visible to other citizens and can sometimes offend people.

The rumor that the European flag has a connection with Catholicism has alienated the flag from some people. In February 2009, a Dutch newspaper (*NRC.Next*) writes about strict Calvinists who oppose to the rule that cars must have a license plate with the European emblem and adhere a specially designed sticker with the Dutch lion over it. This form of protest to the flag can easily be overlooked, since it happens on a small scale and people do not focus on license plates to investigate this.

Physical assaults on the European flag, like people burning or tearing it, supposedly indicate that the symbol stands for something negative in the minds of these people. As Manners (2011, 251) reminds us, physical assaults do indicate a certain level of recognition and significance of the flag. Some of the pictures of burnings that can be found on the internet show angry people in the Arabic world. In these cases it can be assumed that the European flag provokes the same feelings (although maybe with some diversity) as the Israeli flag or the flag of the United States. With regard to the subject of this thesis, it is more interesting to look at the flag burnings that recently took place within Europe. The financial problems and the solutions proposed by the EU have angered some people from within the EU so much that they started to burn and tear the European flag (it did not happen on a large scale and can be seen as incidents though). It is remarkable that citizens from EU member states have burned a flag they were supposed to see as their own. This could imply that the meaning of the flag was for these people very strongly related to the EU and related policies and not very strongly to Europe as a whole, including themselves.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

*Which ideas and decisions have shaped the introduction and development of the European symbols?*

The introduction and further developments concerning the European symbols, revealed something about the EU vision on the character of the European symbols. It became apparent that the European Union began to see European symbols as a serious issue much later than the Council of Europe did. The European flag was the subject of the most intensive debates. The problems with regard to find a suitable new design have eventually prevailed over disadvantages with regard to confusion with the Council of Europe.

With regard to the development of the symbols, it became clear that the EU stumbles upon difficulties in their attempts to promote and formalize the symbols. On an elite/ political level as well as on the level of ordinary citizens, protests against increasing use or formalization of the symbols occurs. It seems like the actions of ordinary citizens contesting the symbols can be seen as incidents, but sentiments amongst them are expected to have a profound influence on the actions on the elite/ political level.

The next chapter will investigate the function of the European symbols further, by looking at their performance. This will provide a better view on the exploration why the function of the European symbols is weaker than the function of national symbols.

## Chapter 5: The performance of the European symbols

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the performance of the European symbols, the concept 'performance' in this thesis only relates to when and where the European symbols are used. The first section will provide a more distinct view on the role of the EU with regard to the performance of the symbols. In the second section, the performance of the European symbols in different spheres will be investigated.

### 5.1 The position of the EU

In the fourth chapter, on the introduction and developments with regard to the European symbols, important clues with regard to the EU vision on the symbols surfaced. The EU has clearly made efforts to formalize and promote the function and use of the symbols. This section will provide a further insight in the position of the EU through an exploration of the existing vision and regulations with regard to the performance of the symbols.

The interview with Roberto Hayder (EC), Principal Policy Officer of General Institutional Issues, provided more clarity on the position of the European symbols. Roberto Hayder is the person within the EC who has the European symbols as one of his core subjects. Since the attempts to include the symbols in a Treaty failed, the European symbols are not included in Primary Law and there are little written rules with regard to them. The European Commission does therefore not have a concrete policy agenda on the symbols to work with (Interview R. Hayder, 2012).

The European Commission and the Council of Europe together came up with criteria to judge the appearance and use of the European emblem by third parties, it was the outcome of an exchange between two high officials of the two institutions (Interview R. Hayder, 2012). It is stated in the interinstitutional styleguide that the emblem may be used only by third parties if *"there is no likelihood of the user of the emblem being confused with the European Union or the Council of Europe"* and if *"the emblem is not used in connection with objectives or activities that are incompatible with the aims and principles of the European Union or of the Council of Europe"* (<http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-5000100.htm>, accessed 23-07-2012). Officially, permission to use the emblem should be sought in advance with the General Secretariat of the European Commission (Röttinger, 2003, 1098). These cases arrive at the desk of Roberto Hayder, about 10 till 20 per month. Sometimes the EC consults the Council of Europe or vice versa (Interview R. Hayder, 2012). The European Commission itself has no power to execute sanctions in the case of misuse (Röttinger, 2003, 1098). Protection of the European symbols is possible through other ways though.

The European flag is registered in 1979 (by the World Intellectual Properties Organization, in Article 6 of the Paris Convention) as a symbol under the header of international organizations, not under the header of states. The member states of the EU are expected (on the base of the principle of contractual fidelity, Art. 10 EGV) to tolerate and use the European flag and to comply with related regulations. In addition, member states must refrain from acts that can undermine or deteriorate the function of the European flag as a symbol of unity (Röttinger, 2003, 1102). It has become common practice that the member states use it and that *"the national provisions apply to the national flag and mutatis mutandis apply to the European flag"* (Interview R. Hayder, 2012). In the case of misuse of the emblem, first a request is sent to stop using it. If people do not change their use of the

emblem, the EC can address to the judicial authorities of member states and ask them to start a proceeding or go with lawyers to the civil courts. In the case of misusing the flag the EC can thus for example look whether there are *'provisions of the national criminal law which are prohibiting the burning or sanctioning of any Hoheitszeichen'* (Interview R. Hayder, 2012). It barely happens that an attack against the dignity of the emblem/flag is noticed though and in even less cases it occurs that a trial is held over its performance (Foret, 2009, 320).

With regard to the anthem, the European Commission sets value to its performance in the arrangements of Von Karajan, not in other arrangements (Röttinger, 2003, 1100). The copyright of the European anthem is in hands of the heirs of Von Karajan. The EC can therefore not grant authorization to third parties to play the anthem, since it only has the permission and rights to play it for its own purposes. People can perform or play it, but are at risk to pay copyrights (Interview R. Hayder, 2012). The EC is not structuring the celebration of Europe Day; everybody is allowed to take initiatives for the celebration, member states, municipalities and individuals: *'We are open, we are not going to force it or impose it, it's up to the civil society or the people in Europe to do that, some are doing it more and some are doing it less'* (Interview R. Hayder, 2012).

The EC is not concerned with promotion of the symbols. Initiatives with regard to advancement of the European symbols do sometimes come from the European Parliament or from other groups or individuals. Although the EC does not promote the symbols, it regards it as positive when third parties use the symbols. With regard to the relation between the national and European symbols, Roberto Hayder (Interview, 2012) stresses that *'the EU symbols do not try to put national symbols apart. They stand aside, in addition'*. According to him, performance of the symbols must be voluntarily and imposing them would be contra productive.

## **5.2 Performance of the European symbols**

The performance of the European symbols in different spheres of society will be explored in this section. The available knowledge on the subject is scarce and fragmented, this must therefore not be seen as a finished enumeration, but instead as a starting point with which the performance of the European symbols and its implications can be investigated further.

In some cases the European symbols occur in derivative forms, when these are included this will be made explicit. The normal form with regard to the flag/emblem is the design as described in the interinstitutional styleguide. Performances of the "Ode to Joy" will be included when it has explicit ties to the European anthem. Similarly, events on Europe Day and performance of the motto must relate to the symbol as created by the EU.

The performance of the European symbols can be examined for within Europe (internal) and for the position of Europe in the world (external). This thesis will focus on performances that are meant for Europe itself, since they are more likely to have an effect on European identity. The focus on the internal function of the European symbols does not mean that all the performances of the symbols related to global affairs are neglected though, because these performances may also be perceived by European citizens.

The performance of the European and national symbols may be interconnected. Laffan (2001, 718) stated: *"EU symbols are rarely stand-alone symbols. Rather, they are used in conjunction with national symbols to connote the embedding of the national in the European and the European in the national"*.

The performance in the institutional, military and sports sphere will be investigated. After that, the presence of the symbols during events, in people's everyday lives and through the media will be inspected. Noticeably, performances change over time and also depend on the place and occasion.

### *Institutional sphere*

Performances that are directly related to institutions (such as the EU, governments or municipalities) are here regarded as performances within the institutional sphere. Performances in this sphere are closely linked to the existing regulations and protocols, since regulation of performances often focuses on the institutional sphere. According to Foret (2009, 317), the European flag is not used as a sign of authority in the same way national flags are. As he puts it: *'No European can remember having been married by a mayor with a twelve-star sash'*.

Within the EU organization, the European symbols are used a lot. The majority of Europeans does not perceive these performances though, only people who for example work at the EU or live nearby will perceive them. A proposal for the use of the flag and emblem by the European Commission was accepted by the Secretary-General on 31 July 1986. One of the decisions was that the flag would get a permanent place within buildings belonging to the European Commission. At the main buildings in Brussels (Berlaymont) and Luxembourg (Monnet), the European flag will be permanently waved outside. Pictures of the buildings show that national flags of the member states are also present at these places, although in the case of the Berlaymont building the most common image shows a long line of European flags. On Europe Day, EU officials get a day off and the institutions open their doors to the public. The European anthem is played at official occasions at the EU. The European motto is sometimes used in EU documents.

In a global institutional setting, the European flag is often present. During meetings between world leaders in which the EU represents its member states, the European flag stands on a table and/ or in the background (next to for example the American flag). There are some other international organizations that negotiate on a global level and have a flag that is present, for example the United Nations. Smaller countries (in the sense of influence on the global scale) experience fewer opportunities in which their own flag is visible in global meetings and negotiations. Their experience of the European flag in the background is therefore expected to be different from that of larger countries. People from smaller countries may value their representation through the European flag more, because they were not represented by a flag earlier.

Institutions of EU member states, like ministries, municipalities and embassies, are sometimes using the European symbols. They can organize something on Europe day or decide to wave the European flag in front of their building.

Opposition against increased performance of the European symbols in the institutional sphere does exist. A proposal (instigated by Germany) to wave the European flag next to the national one at embassies of the member states has for example been strongly opposed by the UK government (NRC, October 19, 1994). In 2006 the United Kingdom Independence Party argued that local rules in Newcastle prescribed that only national banners were authorized, as a result the City Council had to withdraw the European flag from public buildings since it was argued to be a form of advertising (Foret, 2009, 316). In the Netherlands, in July 2012 the municipality of Amsterdam decided to wave the European flag next to the flag of the city. Immediately protests arose and it was decided that the Dutch flag also has to be waved (De Volkskrant, July 12<sup>th</sup> and July 13<sup>th</sup> 2012).

### *Military sphere*

It already became apparent that conflicts have played a major role in the development of national symbols. During times of war, patriotism grows and national symbols tend to become much more visible. The history of the European flag is almost free of conflicts and wars, in contrast to most national flags that have been present during these kind of periods. The European army is composed of the national armies. This implies that all the military operating in a European mission is still educated in a national context.

The military of the European Union has a coat of arms, which includes the colors and stars of the flag. The European flag was used in some external operations, for example in Congo in 2004 and at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border in 2006 (Foret, 2009, 321). These performances and conflicts have not been really visible to most Europeans though. According to Foret (2009, 320): *“The army does not function as a ‘school of the flag’ for Europe as it does in nation-states”*. Some moments have occurred in which the European symbols became more visible in the military sphere. Military parades on the Champ-Élysées in 1992 and 1994 had a European flavor, respectively through the participation of a group who wore a European corsette on their hat and the participation of the Eurocorps. Nicolas Sarkozy invited troupes from the 27 EU member states to participate in the parade of 14 July 2007, at which the European flag was clearly present (Foret, 2009, 321).

Performances in the military sphere can relate to strong emotions. When a soldier dies, in many nations it is the custom to wrap the national flag around the coffin. The flag represents that the soldier has died for his country and this provides reason for a collective mourning. It seems not possible that the European flag could fulfill such a position. Most missions are conducted in a national context or in a global context (the United Nations). Flags on military tunics and equipment, ships, vehicles and other military-related things are thus more common in the national case.

### *Sports sphere*

Athletes often wear an emblem of their nation state flag on their clothes and when line-ups are presented the flags tend to be next to the name (or in the case of swimmers in their line in the water). In international sport events, the attention is drawn to the national symbols in the prize ceremonies, with a combination of the flag and anthem of the nation state (for the winner, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> only get the flag). The public is on these occasions often actively participating in the use of the symbols (they for example dress in the flags colors, wave flags and join singing the anthem). Major sport events are extensively broadcasted and thus perceived by a large group of people.

There have been ambitious attempts by the EU to infiltrate the symbolic domain of sports, but they have not been very successful. The Adonnino report (1985, 26) proposed several ideas, amongst them to invite *“...sports teams to wear the Community emblem in addition to their national colours at major sporting events of regional or worldwide interest”*. Such a plea was also made in a motion for a resolution by three members of the European Parliament proposed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1984. In 1987, two separate motions were tabled by MEPs: one for the creation of a European flag and one for a European team to participate in the Olympic Games (Curti Gialdino, 2005). When he was President of the European Commission, it was a wish of Romano Prodi to let European athletes participate at the Olympic Games in Beijing under both their national and the European flag. This plan was not executed due to national pride and difficulties with regard to protocols (Foret, 2009, 319). In February 2012, a majority of the European Parliament agreed with a proposal to stimulate

the use of the European flag in sports games. This proposal did not induce positive reactions in Dutch politics (Telegraaf, 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, 2012).

The performance of the European symbols in the sports sphere is, compared to the national symbols, very low. There have been moments in which the EU symbols did enter the sports sphere, for example in 2004, when Italian football teams played in European shirts (Foret, 2009, 319), but these moments have been rare and can be seen as incidents (in this case the reason was to celebrate the 2004 enlargement of the EU). There are exceptions in which European teams do exist. At the Ryder cup, a golf competition which is held every two years between a European and an American team, the European team (not only EU) represents itself with the European flag. Image 2 shows that national flags are also present during the celebration, in this case the national flags are allowed to co-exist with the European ones. Also in sailing, recently a new European team has been founded by some established sailors with the purpose to promote unity amongst EU nations.



Image 2: Celebration Ryder Cup in 2010



Image 3: The "Esimit Europa 2"

### *Events*

Events can be impressive and often relate to special moments or occasions. Sports games and military parades can also be seen as events, but these have been treated before.

Some events return each year. People do not get a day off with Europe Day, while they (in most occasions) do get a day off with their national holiday. In the Netherlands, it is a tradition to celebrate graduation from high school with binding a school bag to the Dutch flag and wave this outside. On the Dutch memorial day of WW II (4<sup>th</sup> of May), the "Wilhelmus" is always played after two minutes of silence to remember the victims of war. This is an impressive tradition and it relates to much emotion.

Sometimes, rare events are accompanied by symbols, for example revolutions, protests or a change of throne. Such events can make a big impression and when symbols are connected to it, it can boost their function (positively or negatively)/

### *In people's everyday lives*

In this part the focus will be on the performances that occur in people's everyday lives, it will include performances that can be perceived unconsciously and may have a banal influence (Billig, 1995).

The European emblem is present on car license plates of the EU member states. In 1998, the Council of the European Union adopted a Council Regulation (No 2411/98) that embodied a design for license plates. Member states of the EU thus have to use plates with on the left side of the plate the European emblem and initials that represent the country. On many products in the supermarket the European emblem is visible, although this is often very small and in a derivative form. When something is subsidized by the EU, it is often obligatory

to present the European emblem on publicity expressions and on signs near a finished project. The introduction of the Euro has increased the frequency in which the emblem can be perceived. The emblem is visible on the Euro banknotes and also on the coins the stars are present in a different form.

Cars, food and money are part of our everyday lives and the fact that the European emblem is (often) present on these things supposedly influences our perception of Europe. It may thus stimulate a feeling of European identity, since these ordinary reminders of Europe can influence people's connection and feeling of being a European citizen.

### *Education and media*

With regard to education, in an analysis of booklets that were published by the European Commission, it became visible that the European flag was the illustration that was chosen most often to represent Europe, especially when it concerned the global scale (Foret, 2009, 219). As became visible in chapter 3, in some countries the national symbols are abundantly present in the cultural and educational sphere.

It was mentioned that the performances within the institutional sphere are mostly perceived by the same group of people. It is important to realize though that through the media, these performances can also reach a larger group of people. The news (on television and in newspapers) plays an important role in making the performance of the symbols visible for ordinary Europeans. News items about Europe are often accompanied by a picture of the European flag.

## **5.3 Conclusion**

*What is the position of the European Union on the performance of the European symbols and when are the European symbols performed?*

This chapter has provided information about the EU position with regard to the performance of the symbols and the performance itself. It became clear that the European symbols are not legally protected by European law, but misuse can be combatted with the help of national law or the civil court. For the sake of maintaining a good relationship with the EU, member states are in a way obliged to comply with the expected use of the symbols (without judgment on whether member states do this reluctantly). The EU has, together with the Council of Europe, clearly indicated measures to regulate the use of the European flag/emblem in the interinstitutional style guide. For the other symbols, no such protocol exists. The EC is not involved with promotion of the European symbols.

The European flag is evidently the most common and visible European symbol, it is present during many activities of ordinary citizens. The other three symbols seem to be performed rarely. Performances in the institutional sphere are mostly perceived by the political and bureaucratic elite, but indirectly (through the media) these performances can reach ordinary Europeans. Performances of the European symbols in the sports and military sphere are rare compared to the performance of national symbols in these spheres.

This chapter showed that the difference in performance between the national and European depends much on the sphere one investigates. As Foret (2009, 319) puts it: *'Private citizens are targets rather than actors of European symbolism. This may be true for most national flags. However, in some domains where national colours are readily waved, the European ones remain absent'*. It was mentioned that Laffan (2000) spoke about the interrelatedness of the performance of the European symbols with the national ones. With

regard to performances in the institutional sphere, national flags are indeed often present besides the European one. In the case of the presence of the European emblem in our everyday lives, it is to a certain extent true. The representatives of the national are here often not the siblings of the European symbols discussed though. The Euro coins for example have a national side with various images and license plates include letters that represent the country.

## Chapter 6: Perception of the European symbols

This chapter will investigate the perception of ordinary European citizens with regard to the European symbols. The first section presents the available research and data on the perception of the symbols. In the second section, the purpose of a survey amongst Dutch citizens will be clarified and the methods used to create, conduct and analyze the survey will be explained. The third section will present the results of the survey. The results of Eurobarometers, the research of Michael Bruter and the survey will be split into a cognitive part and an evaluative part, respectively addressing knowledge of the symbols and attitude towards them.

### 6.1 Available information

Several Eurobarometers and articles of Michael Bruter concern an investigation on how ordinary European citizens perceive the European symbols. The Eurobarometers provide information about the commonness and perception of the European flag. The articles of Michael Bruter reveal more about the impact of the European symbols, including the flag, the anthem and Europe Day.

The Eurobarometer is a survey that is conducted twice a year amongst the inhabitants of the member states of the EU. It provides statistical information about the European opinion on a wide range of subjects. Some Eurobarometer polls have investigated the European flag (in 1986, 1992, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2007), the four most recent ones included a similar approach. No Eurobarometer polls have been used to investigate the public opinion on the other official symbols of the EU. Michael Bruter has done qualitative and quantitative research on the function of the European symbols.

#### *Knowledge of the symbols*

Eurobarometer 26 (1986, 44), held shortly after the introduction of the flag as an official symbol of the European Community, is the first to contain a section on the European flag. One of the questions measured the familiarity with the flag of the European Community. Respondents got to see four flags, amongst which the flag of the European Community. One third of the respondents has not answered this question. Of the remaining people, 58 percent was able to detect the European Community flag. The results of the flag investigation in EB 26 show that the European Community flag was not recognized as such by a large part of the population in 1986.

In several Eurobarometers that concern the flag, a picture of the European emblem is shown, with the question whether people have ever seen the symbol. This question was first asked in 1992 (EB 37), when in the Netherlands 91 percent answered affirmative (the average of all countries was only 80 percent). In 2002, 89 percent states to have seen the symbol before. In the years that follow, the emblem/flag became even better recognized (in 2004, 2006 and 2007 respectively 94, 92 and 95 percent of the respondents ever saw the symbol). As a next step, people who recognized the emblem were asked what it stands for. The percentage of people who correctly related it to Europe also went up over the years (82% in 2002, 95% in 2004 and 91% in 2006, in the Eurobarometer of 2007 the question does not return). It is remarkable that the Eurobarometer of 2006 shows a dip in both recognition of the symbol and knowing what the symbol stands for. The recognition and knowledge of the European flag have increased, currently only a small minority does not recognize its design and representation of Europe.

### *Attitude towards the symbols*

Eurobarometer 26 (1986, 44) included the question whether it is a good idea or a bad idea that the European Community has a flag of its own. The majority of the respondents, 54 percent, thinks it is a good idea. Only 11 percent thinks it is a bad idea. Differences between countries are present, the respondents in the United Kingdom and Denmark are most critical towards the flag (around a third thinks it is a bad idea).

It is also investigated in EB 26 (1986, 49) how the respondents attitude is towards the idea that during the next Olympic Games the teams of the European Community member states will carry the European flag on their outfits, additionally to their national flag. The majority of the respondents (54 percent of all the respondents and two third of the people who actually answered the question) were positive towards the proposal.

EB 31 (1989, 41) involved the European symbols in a totally different way. It included an exploration on perceptions of a people's Europe. Respondents had to answer the question what indicates for them to the existence of a people's Europe. The use of the European anthem and flag was one of the many possible answers and was only chosen by 8 percent of the respondents, therewith it was the least popular answer. This indicates that people did not attach much value to the symbols. It is noted that the choice for the European anthem and flag was slightly higher in Belgium (15 percent), Luxembourg (12 percent) and France (10 percent).

In EB 37 (1992, 27), all respondents from the EC member states (including the people who had not seen the flag) had to rate their agreement with five statements. In EB 37 no specification is given on the range of the answers. This would have been useful since extreme answers always have a big impact on the average score of a scale. It is therefore not possible to draw specific conclusions. Overall, the higher the score, the more positive is the respondents' attitude towards the flag.

1. "I don't like this flag" (1)/ "I like this flag" (10); the respondents average was **7.2**. This is a clearly positive score. It can be interpreted both towards the design of the flag and towards the existence of the flag in general. The question is in my view measuring a more superficial perception of the flag. It does not openly relate to peoples' opinion with regard to the use of the flag or the meaning of the flag. The Dutch respondents average was only **5.9**, which was the lowest score.
2. "this flag stands for something which is not good" (1)/ "this flag stands for something good" (10); the respondents average was **7.0** (the Dutch score was **7.2**). The average score concerning the second statements shows a clear preference for "this flag stands for something good".
3. "this flag should not be seen on all public buildings in (our country) next to the national flag" (1)/ "this flag should be seen on all public buildings in (our country) next to the national flag" (10); the respondents average was **6.5** and the Dutch average was **6.2**.
4. "I am not proud of this flag" (1)/ "I am proud of this flag" (10); the respondents average was **5.6**. This could imply a very divided response as well as it could be that people's attitude was quite neutral. The Dutch score was even lower, only **4.9**.
5. "I don't consider this flag to be mine" (1)/ "I consider this flag to be mine" (10); the respondents average was **5.2**. The fifth question, which relates most directly to identification, has the least supportive score towards the flag. Remarkably, in this case the Dutch score is more positive than average (**6.5**).

It seems like the Dutch opinion towards the flag was in 1992 less positive than the average opinion in the EC member states.

In the latest four Eurobarometers that concern the flag, people got to see the European Union flag and had to fill in whether they tended to agree or disagree with four statements. The percentage of respondents that tended to agree with the statements is shown in table 1. Below table 1, the results are discussed briefly.

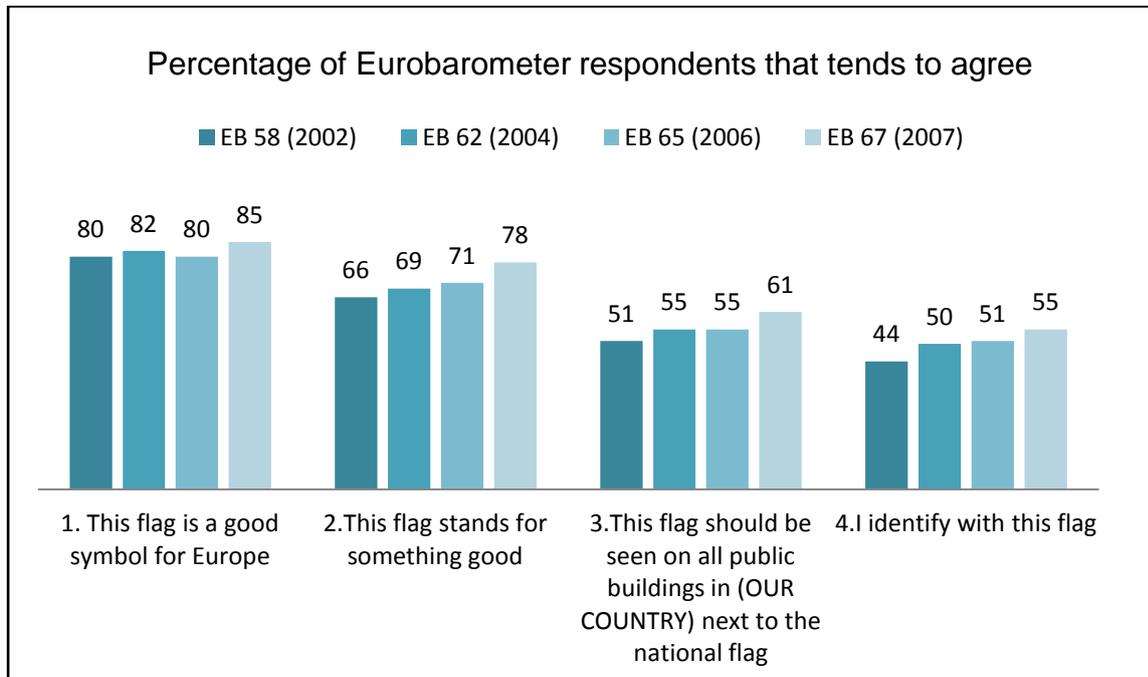


Table 1: Eurobarometer results on the European flag

Overall, the results of these four Eurobarometers reveal a trend of an increasingly positive attitude to the European flag between 2002 and 2007. Statement 1 has the highest rate of agreement amongst the respondents. It indicates that most Europeans see the current flag as a symbol that fits Europe. This does not reveal much about people's attachment to the flag though. Statement 2, 3 and 4 are providing a better view on this. The second statement provides us with more clarity about the flag's symbolic meaning: most Europeans associate the European flag with something good. Statement 3 refers to a scenario in which the flag would be waved on all public buildings, alongside the national flag. Most people tend to agree with the statement, but a substantial amount does not agree. The fourth and last statement investigates directly whether people identify with the flag. In 2002 a slight minority agrees, this increases to a slight majority in 2007. Much more respondents think that the flag is a good symbol for Europe than people who say they identify with it. This contrast can be argued to relate to the difference between the rational and the emotional. People can rationally think positively of the existence of a symbol, but if they don't feel anything when they see it they will probably not identify with it.

It is interesting to compare the average score of Europe with the results of the Dutch respondents (found in EB 58, EB 65 and EB 67). With regard to the first and second question, the results are quite similar. The percentage of the Dutch respondents that agreed with the third and fourth question repeatedly showed to be much lower than average though. In 2002, 2006 and 2007 respectively 33, 33 and 37 percent tended to agree with the third

question and 23, 28 and 22 percent tended to agree with the fourth question. In these cases, the Dutch score was amongst the lowest. This implies that identification with the flag is much lower and that Dutch people are less eager than in other European countries to accept the flag in public life. The reason for this is not really clear, although it is one of the richer countries within the EU. Since The Netherlands is amongst the founding countries of the EU, a higher connection to Europe and the flag could be expected.

### *Impact of the European symbols*

Michael Bruter (2003, 2004) focuses directly on the function of the European symbols on ordinary people. He set up an experiment in which he investigated the influence of seeing the European symbols and good or bad news on people's attitude towards Europe. His hypothesis on the European symbols part is that "...*exposure to symbols of European integration reinforces the citizens' sense of European identity,...*" (Bruter, 2003, 1152). Bruter first measured people's initial attitude towards Europe with a questionnaire. Then an intervention was created, in which people perceived good or bad news on European integration combined with photographs of symbols related to European integration or neutral photographs. Some hours later people had to fill in another, more extensive questionnaire (Bruter, 2003, 1158). The results of the experiment reveal that European identity is significantly influenced by media messages and exposure to the symbols of European integration. This shows that the efforts to strengthen European identity from above are likely to have an impact (Bruter, 2003, 1160). The most striking result is that people who saw the symbols scored higher on both the civic and cultural component and that the cultural component was more affected than the civic component (Bruter, 2003, 1166). This indicates that the function of the European symbols may be more related to the "*groupness*" side of identity than to the "*identification*" side.

Michael Bruter (2004) also investigated the perception of the most important symbols of the European Union in a qualitative way. He did this by analyzing focus-group discussions (held in 2001) in France, the UK and the Netherlands about the symbols. These discussions reveal more about people's knowledge and attitude towards the symbols. Relatively many participants were students, who are probably better informed than the average European citizen. With regard to the meaning of the flag, the discussions led to many connotations, most noted were concepts like 'peace', 'harmony' and 'co-operation'. The topic of a European/ national tension also returned in the focus-group discussions. The question whether the participants perceived opposition between European and national symbols led to a division in the focus-groups. One British group agreed that the European symbols contrasted with the national symbols (Bruter, 2004, 30).

## **6.2 Survey**

To complement the existing information on the perception of the European symbols by ordinary citizens, a survey has been conducted amongst 172 Dutch citizens. This section will provide an explanation of the methods used to create, conduct and analyze the survey before turning to the results in the next section. It is important to realize that the monetary crisis was happening during the research (although the media attention has faded somewhat with respect to a few months earlier). I expect that people will be more negative towards Europe, since the problems and difficulties that currently occur.

### *Purpose of the survey*

Improving knowledge about the perception of the European symbols by ordinary Dutch citizens is the main goal of the survey. The survey consists of two main parts: a cognitive part and an evaluative part. The cognitive part of the survey is meant to achieve a better view on the current knowledge of the European symbols. The evaluative part of the survey is intended to measure the existing opinion on the European symbols. This distinction is thus similar as in the previous section. An elaborate motivation of the questions and structure of the survey is to be found in Appendix II.

### *Creating the survey*

Since the survey population consisted of Dutch citizens, the survey is in Dutch. The original survey is included in Appendix I. Most questions in the survey are multiple choice with scales on which people can indicate how much they agree. People were obliged to choose one answer. They could not continue with the survey otherwise. The advantage of this is that people could not (consciously or unconsciously) skip a question or choose more than one answer and that consequently the results are more complete. A disadvantage is that people who did not agree with a certain question or certain possibilities may have dropped out.

### *Spreading the survey*

The survey was conducted amongst Dutch citizens in February-May 2012. The Eurobarometer results showed that sometimes big differences exist amongst countries. Therefore, results cannot be automatically transferred to other European countries. An online link to the survey has provided the most respondents. Within my vicinity I gathered email addresses and spread the general link to the survey. Only the questionnaires that were completely finished have been included in the results of this thesis. Because of the way of approaching respondents, the research population does not mirror Dutch society. The limitations with regard to this will be attended to in the next section that focuses on the results.

### *Analyzing the survey*

The results of the questionnaires will be imported in SPSS. After that, the survey population will be evaluated and the results on the questions will be presented and interpreted. Two groups have been explored: age (born before 1972 and born from 1972 onwards) and education (people who finished HBO or WO and people who did not). In the results of the survey, these groups will only be mentioned when remarkable differences occurred.

In the analysis of the results of the survey, one has to be careful what conclusions can be drawn. It is important to realize that it is all about perception. A person may for example have seen the European flag several times, but never consciously realized that he was seeing it. It is also a possibility that a person consciously noticed the flag, but did not link it to Europe. The results of the knowledge part of the survey will thus for example not measure the real frequency somebody sees the European flag, but the frequency somebody thinks he sees the European flag.

The interpretation of the questions about the knowledge of the symbols is not expected to cause doubt amongst the participants. The more abstract questions that are supposed to measure peoples attitude towards the European symbols will probably not be interpreted the same by every participant though. It will thus be sensible to be more careful with drawing definite conclusions about those parts of the questionnaire.

**6.3 Results of the survey**

The number of respondents that finished the survey is 172. More women than men participated in the survey (58.1 percent of the respondents was female). The educational level of the respondents was much higher than average (the CBS (2012) mentions that in 2011 33.3 percent of the working population has finished HBO or WO, while amongst the respondents 72.1 percent has finished HBO or WO). Respondents were relatively young, 54.1 percent was between 18 and 40. The CBS data (2012) from 2011 shows that 32.7 percent of the population older than 20 is 20-40 years old. It also has to be noticed that many of the respondents are amateur musicians in classical orchestras. This may have influenced the knowledge of the European anthem, since this is a classical piece. Since many of the respondents are highly educated, the attitude towards Europe and consequently towards the European symbols is expected to be more positive than would be the case with a proper reflection of society.

The first part of the survey gives an insight in the general attitude of the respondents towards Europe. A majority (64 percent) feels European and half of the respondents indicates to be proud to be an inhabitant of Europe. This reveals that the majority of the respondents experiences European identity in a way. People who experience a European identity are expected to have a more positive attitude to the European symbols. With regard to the influence of the EU on the member states, 56.4 percent of the respondents thinks this is positive and 12.7 percent finds it negative, 30.8 percent indicates to have a neutral standpoint.

*Knowledge*

To measure the existing knowledge of the symbols, for each symbol was separately asked whether people were aware of its existence and, if they were, whether they could provide a description of the symbol. When people answered affirmative to the last question, they were given room to write the description. Since there are many different descriptions with many degrees of preciseness, an accurate description in this case only indicates that people are supposed to recall what the symbol is.

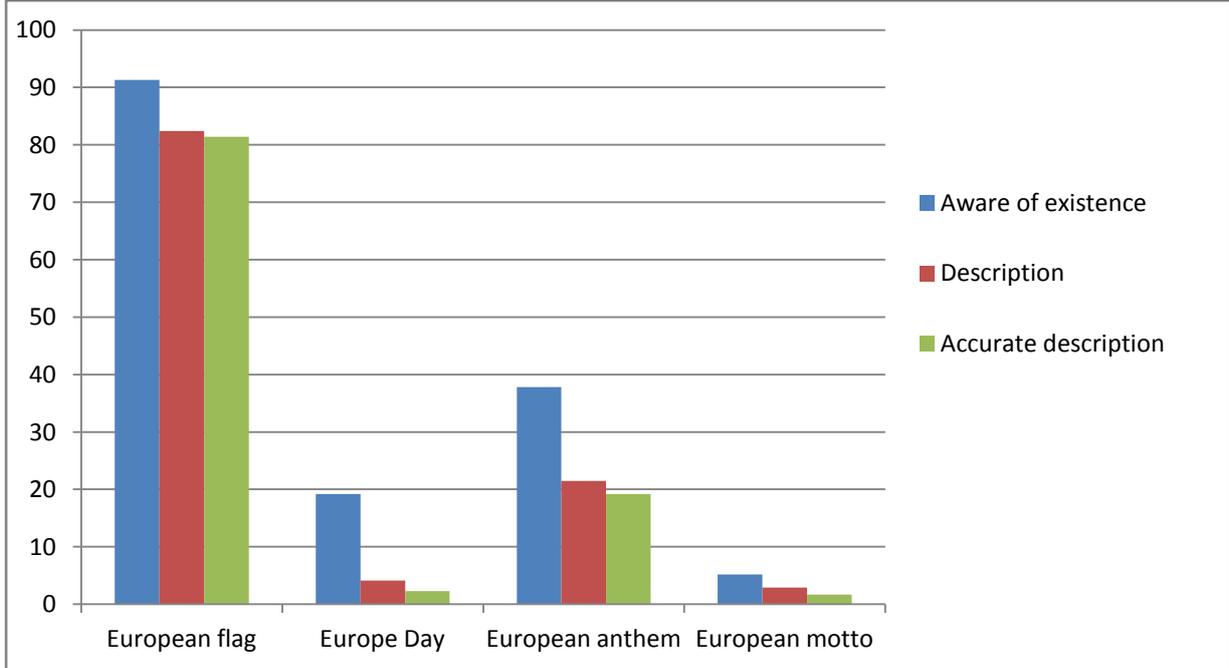


Table 2: Knowledge of the European symbols

The knowledge of the European flag is by far the largest, 91.3 percent said to know of its existence. Most people indicated to know what it looked like (82.4 percent) and they were mostly right (81.4 percent). The blue of the background was mentioned often and the stars were described most often as yellow, sometimes as gold. A circle was also named frequently. In the description of the flag, ten people spontaneously commented that the stars are representing the member states, this seems to be still a common misunderstanding. The people who indicated to know the European flag were asked how often they saw it. Most people chose the option “monthly” (39.7 percent) or weekly (25.6 percent). Only 4.5 percent had the idea they saw the flag daily and 16.0 and 14.1 percent thought they saw the flag respectively annually and rarely. This shows that also in the perception of most people, the flag is often present and that the performance of the flag is thus acknowledged. The 30 percent that indicated to see the flag once in a year or less is expected to perceive the flag more often (due to its presence in the media and in everyday life) but is not aware of this. The existence of the European anthem is known by 37.8 percent, but only 19.2 percent can provide an accurate description of the anthem. People who knew the anthem named and referred to concepts like “Beethoven”, “alle Menschen werden Brüder” or “Ode to joy”. In the case of Europe Day, the gap between being aware and being able to reproduce the date is even larger than in the case of the European anthem: 19.2 percent is aware of its existence, but only 2.3 percent is able to provide the correct date. Only four people correctly indicated that Europe Day is the 9<sup>th</sup> of May. Three people who also argued they knew the date of Europe Day came up with three different dates, remarkably none of them the Europe Day of the Council of Europe (5<sup>th</sup> of May). Only 5.2 percent of the respondents is aware of the existence of the European motto (and only three people knew the phrase).

*Perception*

To measure the perception of ordinary Dutch citizens towards the symbols, a combination of direct and indirect questions was included in the survey. Immediately after the investigation of their knowledge about a symbol, people were asked what they thought of its existence. The results are shown in the table below:

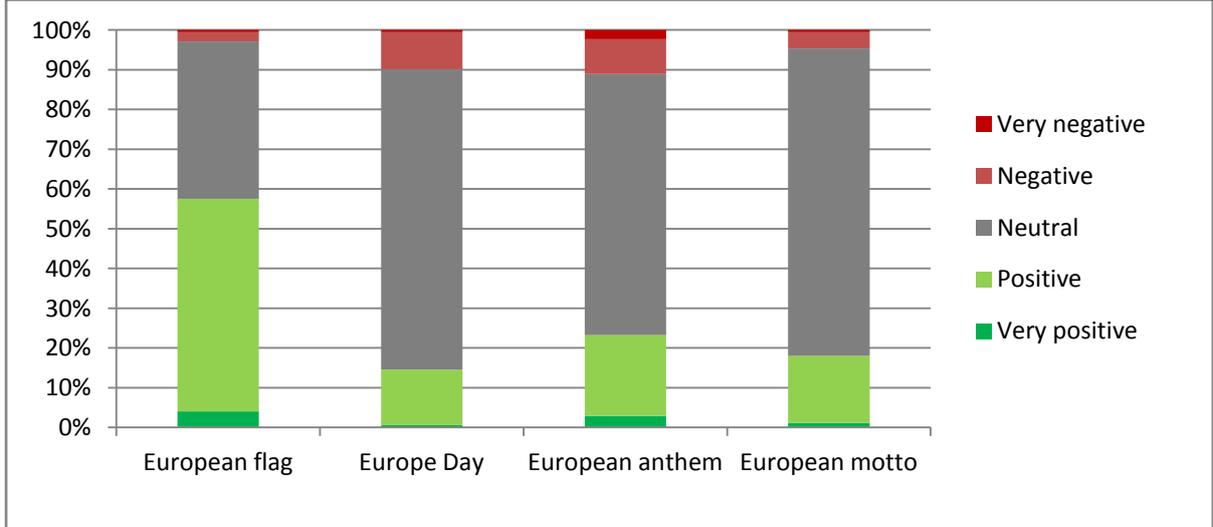


Table 3: What do you think of the existence of the European flag/ Europe Day/ European anthem/ European motto?

The attitude towards the European flag is evidently most positive, although also a neutral attitude is often found. It stands out that a large majority of the respondents indicated to have a neutral attitude towards the other three symbols. The existence of Europe Day and the European anthem was regarded as negative by respectively 9.9 and 11 percent of the respondents. Remarkably, the existence of the European anthem led to slightly more extreme opinions.

To complement the theoretical opinion about the existence of the symbols, people were asked what they thought of more practical situations. This situational opinion can be compared to the direct attitude towards the existence of the symbols.

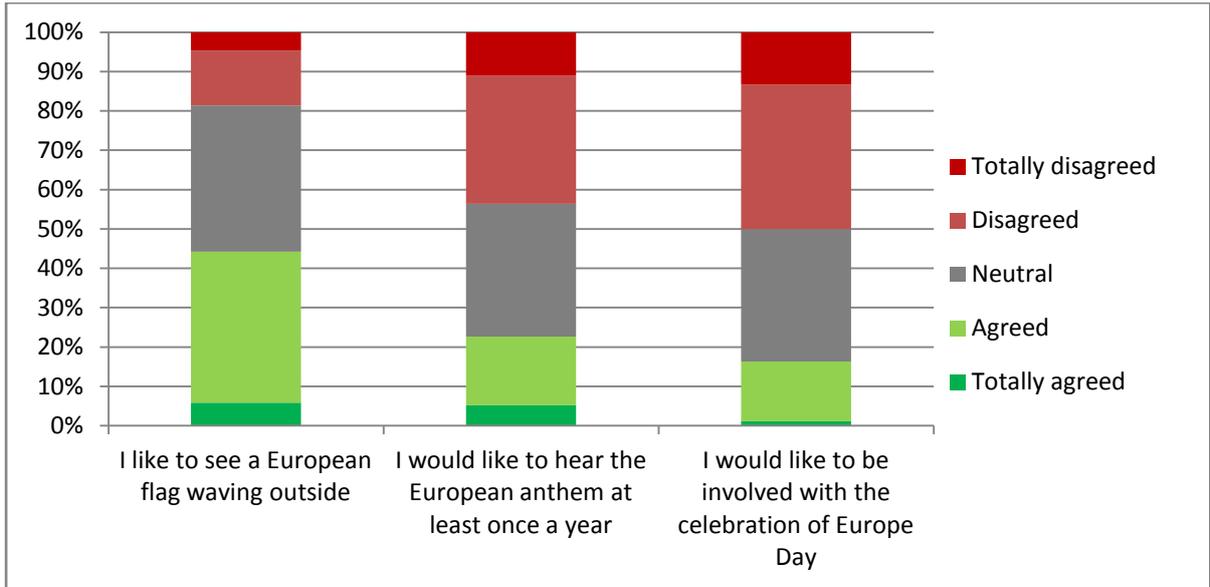


Table 4: Attitude towards the symbols in certain situations

Quite a big amount of the respondents, 44.2 percent, (totally) agrees with the statement that they like to see a European flag waving outside. Only 28.6 percent (totally) disagrees with the statement. The reactions towards perception of the European anthem and involvement with Europe Day are more reserved. 22.7 percent of the respondents agreed or totally agreed that they would like to hear the European anthem at least once a year and only 16.3 percent indicated they would like to be involved with the celebration of Europe Day. Many people disagreed or totally disagreed with these statements (43.6 percent to the statement concerning the anthem and 50.0 percent to the statement concerning Europe Day).

With regard to the statement that the European Union should promote the symbols, a slight majority agreed (5.8 percent totally agreed and 50.0 percent agreed). A substantial amount of people disagreed (20.9 percent) and some totally disagree (1.7 percent). The fact that many people think that the EU should promote the symbols can be conceived as a supportive signal for the EU. Apparently, many people do agree with EU involvement with regard to the symbols. 22.6 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement though.

The survey included two questions that intended to investigate the expected influence of the European symbols on groupness and identification. 59.3 percent of the respondents thinks that the European symbols strengthen the feeling of connectedness between inhabitants of different European countries, 19.2 percent disagrees with this statement. Even more respondents, 65.1 percent, think that the European symbols strengthen the feeling of connectedness with the European Union. Additionally, less people (13.4 percent) disagree. This shows that the symbols are slightly more perceived as increasing connectedness with

the European Union than connectedness between citizens from different European countries. The difference in response between older and younger people is interesting for these questions. Younger people much more often think the symbols increase connectedness with the EU (74.2 percent versus 53.3 percent of the older people), while 60.8 percent (young) and 57.3 percent (old) thinks they increase feeling of connectedness amongst European citizens. The older people thus predict a slightly higher effect on groupness amongst Europeans, while the younger people predict a much higher effect on identification with the EU. Also with regard to education, a major difference is visible. High educated people think more often that the European symbols stimulate connectedness amongst Europeans and connectedness with the EU (respectively 64.3 and 69.8 percent versus 45.7 and 52.2 percent amongst lower educated people). This difference can relate to the fact that higher educated people are supposed to be more often in connection with other Europeans and the European symbols.

*Comparison perception European and Dutch symbols*

An important aspect of the survey involved a comparison between perception and attitude towards European and Dutch symbols. The same question was posed for the European and Dutch symbols, in different parts of the survey.

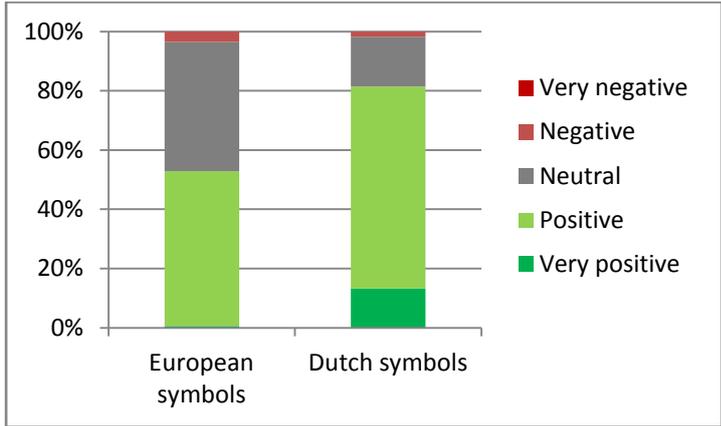


Table 5: How do you think about the European/Dutch symbols?

The amount of people thinking negatively about the European symbols is slightly higher than the amount of people thinking negatively about the Dutch symbols, but still very small. The Dutch symbols are thought of more positively though, while the European symbols are to a higher extent thought of as neutral. Only one respondent thought very positively about the European symbols, while 23 respondents indicated to think very positively of the Dutch symbols.

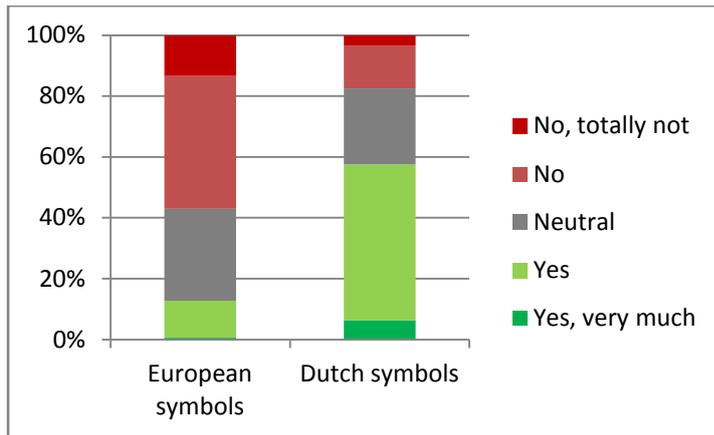


Table 6: Are the European/Dutch symbols important to you?

It is clear that the Dutch symbols are regarded as more important than the European symbols. A majority answered that the European symbols are not important to them, while less than 20 percent answered this way in the case of the national symbols.

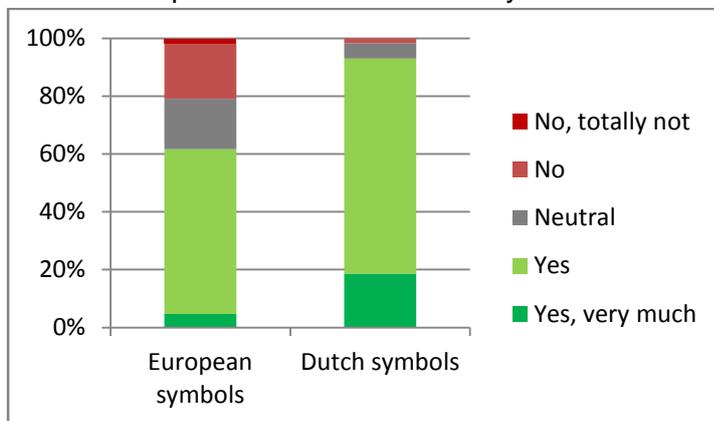


Table 7: Do you think of the existence of the European/Dutch symbols as natural?

The existence of the Dutch symbols is regarded as more natural than the existence of the European symbols. The cause of this may be that the Dutch symbols exist longer than the European symbols. A majority of the respondents answered to find the existence of the European symbols natural though, an indication that their existence is accepted. The difference related to age is remarkable: of the people born from 1972 onwards, 74.2 percent indicates to think of the symbols as natural, while amongst the older people only 45.3 percent thinks so. This could relate to the fact that younger people have grown up with the European idea and with perceiving European symbols. The younger people also think of the Dutch symbols as more natural though (99.0 percent versus 85.3 percent of the older people).

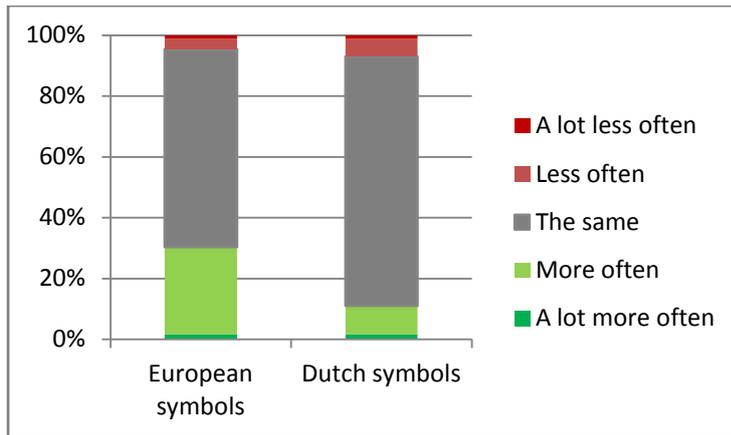


Table 8: Would you like to perceive the European/Dutch symbols more often or less often?

More respondents would like to see the European symbols more frequently than in the case of the Dutch symbols. As became clear in the previous chapter, the European symbols are less often performed than national symbols. The fact that approximately 30 percent indicates to prefer seeing the European symbols more frequently, indicates that there is a certain interest in them. The majority of the respondents takes a neutral stance, though.

Finally, the statement that the European and Dutch symbols can coexist without problems found general favor: 22.1 percent totally agreed and 65.1 percent agreed. Only 2.3 percent disagreed, no respondent totally disagreed. The European symbols are thus not on a large scale perceived as a threat to the national symbols.

## 6.4 Conclusion

*What is the knowledge of and attitude towards the European symbols by ordinary citizens?*

This chapter has provided a better insight in the perception of the European symbols. The results of the experiment that Bruter executed indicate that perception of the symbols has a measurable influence on European identity.

The survey showed that knowledge of the flag is undoubtedly much higher than knowledge of the other symbols and the Eurobarometers revealed that the knowledge of the flag has increased in the past decades. The results of the Eurobarometers and survey also definitely show a high degree of acceptance of the flag.

The existence of the European anthem, Europe Day and the European motto was regarded as neutral by the majority of the respondents of the survey. Around 20 percent indicated they would like to hear the European anthem at least once a year or be involved with the celebration of Europe Day. The attitude towards these less common symbols is not very positive. The majority of the respondents thought of the European symbols as positive or neutral and of their existence as natural, but not many people indicated that they were important to them. The Dutch symbols clearly scored higher than the European symbols on these issues.

## Chapter 7: The function of the European symbols

In this chapter, different aspects of the European symbols will be analyzed with the help of theoretical insights. This chapter does not include a conclusion. The sub question (*How do characteristics of European identity and symbols in general relate to the character, performance and perception of the European symbols?*) will be answered throughout the chapter. The first section will focus on the relation between the EU and the European symbols. In the second section the function of the European symbols will be explored in a national framework; it will reveal how the function of the European symbols differs from that of the national symbols. In the last section, all the elements that constitute the function of the European symbols will be related.

### 7.1 The position of the European symbols from an EU perspective

An analysis of the relation between the European symbols and the EU is important to understand their function. This section refers to the influence of the EU on the character and performance of the European symbols. First, the introduction of the symbols and related motives will be discussed. Then, developments with regard to the symbols and the EU way to deal with them will be analyzed.

#### *The introduction of the symbols*

The position of the European symbols can be seen in the broader context of the efforts of the EU to stimulate European identity. The Adonnino report (1985) included many ideas to create a people's Europe. The most important difference between the European symbols and many other EU efforts (such as the twinning of cities and exchange programs) is that the European symbols are available for all Europeans.

Shore (2000, 50) argues that: "..., despite claims made by its supporters that the EU is forging a unique political entity that 'transcends' the nation-state and beckons the dawn of a new era of Europeanism, the new Europe is being constructed on much the same symbolic terrain as the old nation-states of the last two centuries". It can also be argued though that having European symbols is in a way necessary, due to the global position of the EU: it often represents its member states on a global level and the European symbols are in this sense serving to comply with the habits of their international partners.

The choice to adopt the same anthem and flag as the Council of Europe is expected to have an effect on their function: it makes their reference to the continent Europe stronger. If the EU would have introduced a new flag and anthem for itself, this would probably have resulted in a lesser function for non EU members.

#### *Dealing with the European symbols*

The way in which the European symbols are presented by the EU reveals that they target the entire European population, although with a higher focus on the EU member states. The European symbols are thus not intended to create a stronger boundary between EU members and non members (ingroup and outgroup). This is logical with regard to relations between the EU and non member states and with the perspective of further enlargement.

There are many signs that the function of the European flag is regarded by the EU as much more important than that of the other European symbols. Its introduction was discussed most intensely, it is the only symbol with an available guideline (the

interinstitutional style guide) and Eurobarometers have only investigated knowledge and perception of the flag. The flag has a clear practical function (as an emblem), for example for international relations.

The European symbols are not legally fixed in Primary Law, attempts to establish this failed. Some EU regulations are structuring the use of the flag and (at least morally) oblige the member states to regulate their performance. The flag/emblem is therefore more frequent performed in European Union member states. The European anthem, Europe Day and the European motto are present within the EU institutions, but are not often performed elsewhere. It seems that the European symbols are currently not actively taking part in a plan to create a European identity. The EC does not promote the use of the symbols in the EU member states, the use of the symbols by third parties is in most cases approved though. Such performances often show a certain support for Europe or a connection with the European idea and this is naturally regarded as positive by the EU. Sometimes, initiatives with regard to advancement of the position of the symbols are taken by the members of the European Parliament or other individuals.

The introduction of the European symbols can be reflected on in the light of stimulating or even imposing a European identity and so can the attempts to grant them legal status. When these would have succeeded the situation could have been different, but today their use is not actively promoted. Their existence does sometimes lead to initiatives of other parties though. The situation as Shore (2000) sketches it, with an EU that thinks that people must be persuaded and that strategies must be employed to create a European identity, does not seem to apply to the current treatment of the European symbols. Nevertheless, the symbols are currently present due to past decisions that related strongly to identity politics.

## **7.2 The position of the European symbols in a national framework**

In form, the chosen symbols are similar to national symbols. The form of these national symbols originated from a practical purpose and possessing and using these symbols has long become a generally shared norm for nation states. Several functions of national symbols found in the literature were discussed in chapter three. Here, it will be argued what the knowledge with regard to the European symbols implies for these functions and how this differs from the national case.

### *“glorifying and romanticizing the past”*

As became clear in chapter 2, a common historical ground is by many regarded as an aspect of European identity. It is therefore useful to explore how the European symbols link to a European heritage and what this implies. The European flag was created after WW II, its design does not directly refer to a historical period. The European anthem can be linked to the period of Enlightenment. Apart from its reverberation of esteemed ideals, the anthem may also relate to a sense of historical European pride: the Enlightenment was a period in which Europe was globally leading and Beethoven can be perceived as one of the geniuses that Europe brought forth in this period. Europe Day is clearly linked to the history of the EU itself, with its date referring to the plea towards increasing European cooperation of Robert Schuman (on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1950). Robert Schuman does not seem to bring up the famous connotations that for example the founding fathers of the USA do; the average European will probably know Abraham Lincoln better than Robert Schuman. The European motto is only recently invented and does not appear to have a link with a historical period.

A brief comparison of the age of the European symbols with that of national symbols reveals that the European symbols are relatively young. As was explained in chapter 3, older symbols are often more powerful, since associations with them had more time to develop; links with historical events and memories can enhance the value of a symbol. The adoption of the symbols of the Council of Europe can be seen as a way to claim the European heritage from the Second World War on (Foret, 2009, 316).

Whether the symbols can glorify and romanticize the past is strongly related to the presence of a European past, which is not present in the way national pasts are present. It seems like the European symbols lack a powerful historical reference compared to national symbols. They are not included in heroic paintings and have not been present during major socially shared events. Fulfilling this function strongly depends on the associations the symbols can bring to mind. It is therefore benefiting when the existence of a symbol is perceived as natural and long established. In the survey, it showed that the existence of the European symbols is perceived as natural by a majority of the respondents, approximately 20 percent indicated not to think of them as natural. The Dutch symbols are clearly perceived as more natural: almost all respondents indicated to think of their existence as natural.

*“activating passionate feelings and behavior”*

The relative weakness of the previous function already makes it harder for the European symbols to fulfill this function. Performances of the European symbols often seem to be in a quite neutral setting, not in a setting of ultimate joy, sadness or other strong emotions. The fact that the European symbols are hardly performed in the sports sphere creates in this sense a clear defect with regard to this function. The military sphere is also strongly interlinked with emotions and passion and performance of the European symbols is here not as intense and frequent as the national symbols.

Recent Eurobarometers that investigated the flag, showed an increasing popularity. The flag is seen by a majority to stand for something good. This fits the findings of Bruters' qualitative research, in which concepts like 'peace', 'harmony' and 'co-operation' were often attached to the flag. It is possible that the reason these concepts are named is that it represents a breach with a long history of conflicts within Europe. Although the perceived meaning of the flag is regarded as positive, this does not imply that it is able to activate passionate feelings and behavior.

It is remarkable in the results of the survey that the existence of the anthem, day and motto was thought of as neutral by a large majority of the respondents. This may relate to a certain ignorance which could very well have to do with the little performance and knowledge of these symbols: when people do not even notice their existence, they are probably less inclined to have an opinion about it. The European flag can be called a socially shared symbol, it is known by a large majority of ordinary citizens and most of them link its meaning correctly to Europe (as investigated in Eurobarometers).

The results of the survey support the idea that the European symbols are not strongly activating passionate feelings and behavior. The fact that a large part of the respondents indicated a neutral attitude towards the existence and performance of the European symbols reveals that many people do not really care about the European symbols. Less than 20 percent of the respondents indicated that the European symbols were important for them, compared to nearly 60 percent in the case of the Dutch symbols.

Opposition against the European symbols can refer to passionate feelings and behavior, for example in the case of burning flags. This is happening in a negative way though and definitely not supporting European identity.

*“bringing people closer together”*

This function is strongly related to “activating passionate feelings and behavior”. When looking at the performance of the symbols, it is noticeable that this is almost never done by ordinary Europeans. Although the European flag/emblem is perceived regularly in our everyday lives, active involvement with them is rare. Participatory performances are especially supposed to create a feeling of groupness. The fact that this kind of performances rarely occurs in the case of the European symbols makes them less powerful to bring people closer together.

The positive associations with the European flag are expected to also assist in bringing people closer together. The other three symbols are not expected to assist this function, since their performance is low and their character is in some cases not expected to be supportive. Europe Day is not a free day (except for EU employees) and it passes unnoticed for the large majority of Europeans. Its existence is not commonly known and it is expected that many people are unfamiliar with the event it refers to. The chosen European anthem is a classical piece, which may make it harder for certain groups of society to relate to. Classical music is often regarded as an elite matter and the fact that the anthem has no text can be argued to make it even less approachable. Since the European anthem currently does not have words, the feeling of commonly singing the text of the anthem is not even possible theoretically. The European motto can be interpreted in many ways and the choice to translate it in all languages probably improves its accessibility, but not its unifying qualities.

The fact that the performances of the emblem mentioned are similar in every EU member state, may lead to an increased feeling of commonness. When people are on holiday in another country, they may feel more ‘at home’ because of the similar presence of the European emblem. It has been shown that banal perceptions of a symbol can influence the opinion of people, leading to less extreme opinions. Not much research has been done with regard to this, but it creates the presumption that the European emblem, which is often present during our everyday lives, may have a banal influence on our opinions or behavior. Supposedly, this banal influence is related to the overall perception of the European symbols and since this is less strong than the national ones, the banal influence is expected to be smaller.

*“creating stronger boundaries between ingroups and outgroups”*

Stronger boundaries between ingroups and outgroups can exist between Europe and other parts of the world or within Europe itself. A strong distinction between the European and the non-European will function as a unifying factor for Europe; the function of symbols often becomes stronger in a situation of conflict or distrust. Flag burnings in Arabic nations therefore may assist the function of the flag for European identity, since the public rejection or threat by “the other” often brings people closer.

Incidentally, the European flag/emblem is opposed by ordinary Europeans. It is always a possibility that the function of the symbols could become divisive; since supporting or opposing them is an overt act, a massive occurrence of this could support the creation of a strong and visible line between people in favor and against Europe. Despite the increasing opposition that currently exists towards Europe, there is no indication of such a development though.

The comparison with the national symbols has shown that the function of the European symbols is much weaker on many terrains, but especially with regard to emotional attachment and importance.

### **7.3 The position of the European symbols**

Now the position of the EU and the way the European symbols relate to the functions found on national symbols have been discussed, this section will provide an evaluation of the function of the European symbols. First, the relation between the character, performance and perception of the European symbols will be investigated more thoroughly. Special attention will be given to opposition towards the European symbols and what this implies for their function.

In chapter 3, three different ways of symbolic performance were named: as emblems, as representations and as domination. As a reminder, symbols as emblems have a function that is mainly communicative and refers to a clear meaning. Performance of the symbols as representation refers to a more complicated symbolic meaning, which often involves personal values, memories and emotions. The use of the symbols as domination refers to a situation in which they are used to achieve certain goals.

#### *Relation between character, performance and perception*

The character, performance and perception of the European symbols are strongly interrelated. The character of the symbols has been shaped by the EU. This has an impact on the performance of the symbols. A change in performance will of course influence the perception.

With regard to the character of the symbols, the question to what extent the European symbols are used as domination has been partly addressed in section 7.1. It depends on your perspective whether you see the European symbols in this way. It is good to remember though that the national symbols have also often been created by an elite.

The European flag/emblem is visible on a regular basis to ordinary Europeans, but the performance of the other three symbols is rare. The survey made clear that the flag is also much better known and more appreciated than the other three symbols. Many performances of the European flag involve a communicative purpose, such as their inclusion on license plates or on a plate belonging to a subsidized project. The European flag/emblem is the only symbol, of the four investigated in this thesis, that is expected to play a role through performances that are unconsciously perceived.

Strongly related to the performance of the symbols is the knowledge of them. It became clear that the knowledge of the flag is very high. The Eurobarometers show that relatively fast after its introduction, it was commonly recognized. Certain regulations that involve the use of the flag/emblem may have helped to achieve this. As became clear in chapter 5, performance of the European flag/emblem has become common. The lack of knowledge of the European anthem, Europe Day and European motto supports the presumption that they are an elite matter; almost never performed for ordinary Europeans. Still, some knowledge about the existence of these symbols exists.

#### *The relation between the European and national symbols*

The comparison between attitude towards national and European symbols revealed that the national symbols are regarded as more positive, important and natural. This result fits with information from earlier chapters about the advantages of national symbols with regard to character and performance.

Opposition towards the European symbols occurs on different levels. On an elite level, national politicians are sometimes counteracting advancement of the symbols. Additionally, some ordinary European citizens have performed acts to protest against the European symbols and what they stand for. The perceived opposition against the symbols

can be embedded in the theory about the relation between national and European identity. It became clear that multiple identities can exist together, but that in the case of collective identities dual loyalties are not always accepted. National identities are generally much stronger than European identity and a distinction between the self and the other is still present between European people from different nation states. Opposition to the development of the European symbols is often relating to an opposition to a certain degree of European influence (in expense of the national influence).

Remarkably, in 1986 a majority of the Eurobarometer poll respondents was positive towards the idea of a European flag on the outfits of the Olympic Games. More recent Eurobarometers have shown that people tend to favor the statement that "this flag should be seen on all public buildings...", next to the national flag. In the survey, the statement that the European and Dutch symbols can coexist without problems found general favor. This does not complement expectations based on the difficulties found in the literature. Supposedly, most ordinary people have not experienced a situation of conflict and cannot imagine situations in which a clash could occur. It may also have to do with the current modest performance of the European symbols, which is hardly dispelling the performance of the national symbols.

Despite the fact that the European symbols are performed less often than the national symbols, it is still a remarkable result of the survey that a larger amount of people would like to perceive the European symbols more often than the Dutch symbols. Only a fraction of the respondents answered that they wanted to see the European symbols less often. When the EU wants to increase performance of the European symbols, this is then a hopeful result.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

Although this thesis focuses on the function of the European symbols on European identity, it is important to realize that the existing European identity strongly influences the position of the symbols. It became visible that opposition against the symbols is often due to a lack of European identity (especially compared to the national case). Development of the EU, in size as well as in power, is interdependent with the function of the European symbols. Now the elements that relate to the function of the European symbols have been analyzed, the main goal of this thesis can be recalled: *To provide a better insight in the function of the official European symbols on European identity.*

The main research question was:

*What is the character, performance and perception of the official European symbols, how does this relate to the position of the EU and the national symbols, and how does this affect European identity?*

The function of the European symbols is too complicated to be measured directly; it differs from person to person and also depends on the situation. Within this thesis, several aspects that are related to the function have been investigated: the character, performance and perception of the European symbols. First the accessibility and strength of the symbols will be evaluated. Then will be discussed what the European symbols signify. Finally, conclusions can be drawn on how the European symbols might influence European identity.

### *Accessibility and strength*

The character, performance and perception of the symbols have revealed something about their accessibility; to what extent they are able to reach people. This accessibility has shown to be very low in the case of the anthem, day and motto. It became visible that the European Union seems to be particularly concerned with the European flag/emblem. Explanations for this are to be found in their low performance and possibly in that their character does not appeal to ordinary citizens. The function of the European symbols has not developed much from their introduction on, although the flag has become generally known and appreciated.

Although the European symbols are meant to target every European and help create "a people's Europe", their character and performance seem to relate more to an elite public. Only the flag is supposed to have a function that is socially shared amongst Europeans. The existence of the other three symbols may fulfill supporters of Europe with joy, but their function barely involves ordinary Europeans.

The function of the national symbols is clearly more powerful than that of the European symbols. Therefore, an important conclusion is that the function of the European symbols on European identity is weaker than the function of the national symbols on national identity (although this is a bit hard to compare, since national identity is overall much stronger than European identity).

### *What do the European symbols signify?*

The European symbols refer to a certain commonness or bond between European nations. The European flag is by most people regarded to stand for something good. The form of the anthem and day refer to the history of Europe and the EU.

An important issue is to what extent the symbols are linked to the EU. The EU does not limit the function of the symbols to the EU member states, but some performances are strongly linked to the EU and its institutions and policies. In Brussels, the 'capital of the EU', the European flag is for example much more present than in other cities, in front of all the buildings of EU institutions. The EC accepts it when the symbols are used for purposes that are not related to the EU, this implies that they do not stress the symbols to refer only to the EU. Instead, they can refer to a broader interpretation of Europeanness. The survey results showed that by younger people the relation between the symbols and the EU is predicted to be stronger. This might imply that for younger people the association between the European symbols and the EU is stronger.

The EU has clearly experienced opposition in developing the function of the European symbols, with regard to the Constitution and Lisbon Treaty but also in smaller cases. Opposition towards the symbols is related to several issues. First, the EU has adopted "national symbols", which some people associate with the idea of a European superstate. They can be seen as threatening the position of national symbols and the position of the nation state in general, which are overall highly appreciated. People can also oppose the symbols because they are perceived to signify the EU and its policies, anger to certain developments can be directed towards the symbols by people from within Europe as well as from outside Europe.

#### *How do the European symbols influence European identity?*

In chapter 2, it became clear that European identity is a complicated concept which cannot be accurately defined, let alone measured; it depends on many different associations and aspects. Groupness amongst Europeans and identification with the EU are strongly interrelated concepts. However, the different points of focus they provide help to grasp the concept of European identity. The experiment of Michael Bruter (2003) measured the impact of seeing the European symbols on European identity. It revealed that seeing the European symbols had an impact on European identity: it produced higher scores for both the civic and cultural component. This is an important result, since it is the only hard proof that the European symbols affect European identity, the results showed that seeing the symbols enhanced the feeling of European identity. The cultural component was more affected than the civic component. This indicates that the function of the European symbols may be more related to the "groupness" side of identity than to the "identification" side.

Due to their accessibility, the influence of the European symbols on European identity is expected to be higher for an elite. People who are working at the EU will probably experience the strongest influence. Amongst these groups, European identity is already much higher than average. The lack of appealing performances for ordinary citizens (like in the sports or military sphere) reduces the influence on European identity. They are therefore not stimulating groupness in the same way as the national symbols. As shown, unconscious perceived performances of symbols can also have an effect on people's behavior and may stimulate groupness. The European flag/emblem is expected to be perceived banal regularly, compared to the national flag it does not have a strong representation to it though and functions particularly as an emblem. Therefore, this effect is also expected to be less than in the case of national symbols.

The European symbols are supposed to increase the recognition of the EU and Europe; they remind people of their existence and are therefore expected to support the establishment of the EU and Europe in people's minds. The European symbols also make the increasing European influence more visible. For European identity, this can induce

positive and negative effects. The European symbols are copies of the national symbols and the fact that for some people they signify an image of a European federation, a threat to the national, makes them vulnerable. There is also a danger in a strong connection of the symbols with the EU as an institution, since they may easier risk to become measures of protest against EU policies. The symbols can be used to put the EU in a negative light and to appeal to sentiments of people who oppose further European integration or even want to undo it. In this sense they can impact European identity in a negative sense.

It is important to realize that the European symbols are much weaker than national symbols. The symbols can assist in creating a European identity and thereby fulfill the main purpose of their introduction. Consequently, they may also assist in creating legitimization for EU policies. A perceived threat of the national and its symbols can result in a negative effect on European identity though. The introduction of the European symbols was part of EU efforts to stimulate European identity, but the EU is currently not involved with a plan to stimulate the function of the European symbols. Since Europe has nowadays become such a sensitive issue, this seems to be wise.

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## Appendix I: Survey

Beste deelnemer,

Fijn dat u mee wilt werken aan mijn onderzoek! Mijn naam is Ike Verschoor en ik ben student Sociale Geografie aan de Radboud Universiteit te Nijmegen. Mijn masterthesis gaat over de **Europese symbolen** en de resultaten van deze vragenlijsten zullen bijdragen aan een beter inzicht in hoe Nederlanders de Europese symbolen zien. De vragenlijst bestaat uit verschillende onderdelen met betrekking tot uw houding tegenover Europa, de bekendheid van de Europese symbolen en uw mening over de Europese symbolen. Het is de bedoeling dat u bij meerkeuzevragen één bolletje inkleurt. Aan het einde van de vragenlijst is er ruimte voor opmerkingen. De anonimiteit van de deelnemers zal gewaarborgd worden.

Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal 5 á 10 minuten duren.

### Houding tegenover Europa

[1] *Kunt u aangeven hoe u zichzelf ziet? U kunt een 1 toekennen aan de meest toepasselijke tot een 4 aan de minst toepasselijke.*

Als regionaal                      ....  
Als Nederlander                      ....  
Als Europeaan                      ....  
Als wereldburger                      ....

[2] *Voelt u zichzelf Europeaan?*

Ja, heel erg       Ja               Neutraal       Nee               Nee, totaal niet

[3] *Bent u trots om inwoner te zijn van Europa?*

Ja, heel erg       Ja               Neutraal       Nee               Nee, totaal niet

[4] *Het Schengen verdrag heeft gezorgd voor open grenzen (geen paspoortcontroles meer) in een groot gedeelte van Europa. Wat vindt u hiervan?*

Zeer positief       Positief       Neutraal       Negatief       Zeer negatief

[5] *Wat denkt u van de invloed van de Europese Unie op de lidstaten?*

Zeer positief       Positief       Neutraal       Negatief       Zeer negatief

### Bekendheid van de Europese symbolen

*Op de officiële website van de Europese Unie worden de vier officiële symbolen van de EU/Europa beschreven: de Europese vlag, Europa Dag, het Europese volkslied en het Europese motto. Er zijn geen foute antwoorden, het gaat alleen om de bekendheid van de Europese symbolen bij Nederlanders.*

[6] *Wist u voor u aan deze vragenlijst begon van het bestaan van de **Europese vlag**?*

Nee      → ga verder met vraag [9]  
 Ja

→ [7] Kunt u het uiterlijk van de Europese vlag omschrijven?  
 Nee  Ja, namelijk:.....

→ [8] Hoe vaak ziet u de Europese vlag?  
 Zelden  Jaarlijks  Maandelijks  Wekelijks  Dagelijks

[9] Wat vindt u van het bestaan van de Europese vlag?  
 Zeer positief  Positief  Neutraal  Negatief  Zeer negatief

[10] Wist u voor u aan deze vragenlijst begon van het bestaan van **Europa Dag**?

Nee → ga verder met vraag [12]

Ja

→ [11] Weet u op welke datum Europa Dag is?  
 Nee  Ja, namelijk:.....

[12] Wat vindt u van het bestaan van Europa Dag?

Zeer positief  Positief  Neutraal  Negatief  Zeer negatief

[13] Wist u voor u aan deze vragenlijst begon van het bestaan van het **Europese volkslied**?

Nee → ga verder met vraag [15]

Ja

→ [14] Weet u wat het Europese volkslied is?  
 Nee  Ja, namelijk:.....

[15] Wat vindt u van het bestaan van het Europese volkslied?

Zeer positief  Positief  Neutraal  Negatief  Zeer negatief

[16] Wist u voor u aan deze vragenlijst begon van het bestaan van het **Europese motto**?

Nee → ga verder met vraag [18]

Ja

→ [17] Weet u hoe het Europese motto luidt?  
 Nee  Ja, namelijk:.....

[18] Wat vindt u van het bestaan van het Europese motto?

Zeer positief  Positief  Neutraal  Negatief  Zeer negatief

### **Mening over de genoemde officiële Europese symbolen**

*De vragen in dit blok zijn bedoeld om een beeld te krijgen van uw mening over de Europese symbolen.*

[19] Hoe denkt u over de Europese symbolen?

Zeer positief  Positief  Neutraal  Negatief  Zeer negatief

[20] Zijn de Europese symbolen belangrijk voor u?

Ja, heel erg  Ja  Neutraal  Nee  Nee, totaal niet

[21] Vindt u het vanzelfsprekend dat de Europese symbolen bestaan?

Ja, heel erg  Ja  Neutraal  Nee  Nee, totaal niet

[22] Zou u de Europese symbolen vaker of minder vaak willen tegenkomen?

Veel vaker  Vaker  Hetzelfde  Minder vaak  Veel minder vaak

[23] *Ik vindt het mooi om buiten een Europese vlag te zien wapperen.*

Helemaal eens     Eens     Neutraal     Oneens     Helemaal oneens

[24] *Ik zou het Europese volkslied in elk geval eenmaal per jaar willen horen.*

Helemaal eens     Eens     Neutraal     Oneens     Helemaal oneens

[25] *Ik zou graag betrokken willen worden bij de viering van Europa Dag.*

Helemaal eens     Eens     Neutraal     Oneens     Helemaal oneens

*Nederland beschikt over soortgelijke symbolen, denk daarbij aan het volkslied en de Nederlandse vlag.*

[26] *Hoe denkt u over de Nederlandse symbolen?*

Zeer positief     Positief     Neutraal     Negatief     Zeer negatief

[27] *Zijn de Nederlandse symbolen belangrijk voor u?*

Ja, heel erg     Ja     Neutraal     Nee     Nee, totaal niet

[28] *Vindt u het vanzelfsprekend dat de Nederlandse symbolen bestaan?*

Ja, heel erg     Ja     Neutraal     Nee     Nee, totaal niet

[29] *Zou u de Nederlandse symbolen vaker of minder vaak willen tegenkomen?*

Veel vaker     Vaker     Hetzelfde     Minder vaak     Veel minder vaak

### **De positie van de Europese symbolen**

*Er volgen nu vier stellingen waarbij u aan kunt geven hoe u de positie van de Europese symbolen ziet.*

[30] *De Europese Unie moet de Europese symbolen promoten.*

Helemaal eens     Eens     Neutraal     Oneens     Helemaal oneens

[31] *Ik denk dat de Europese symbolen het gevoel van verbondenheid tussen inwoners van verschillende Europese landen versterken.*

Helemaal eens     Eens     Neutraal     Oneens     Helemaal oneens

[32] *Ik denk dat de Europese symbolen het gevoel van verbondenheid met de Europese Unie versterken.*

Helemaal eens     Eens     Neutraal     Oneens     Helemaal oneens

[33] *De Europese symbolen en de Nederlandse symbolen kunnen zonder problemen naast elkaar bestaan.*

Helemaal eens     Eens     Neutraal     Oneens     Helemaal oneens

### **Algemene informatie**

[34] *Geboortejaar (4 cijfers): .....*

[35] Geslacht:             Man             Vrouw

[36] Postcode (4 cijfers): .....

[37] Nationaliteit(en):  Nederlands     .....

[38] Wat is het niveau van uw hoogst voltooide opleiding:

Basis             VMBO             HAVO             VWO             MBO 1 / 2  
 MBO 3 / 4         HBO             Universitair     Anders, namelijk:.....

**Hartelijk dank voor uw deelname aan deze vragenlijst!**

Als u nog opmerkingen heeft over het onderwerp of de vragenlijst, dan kunt u deze hier plaatsen:.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Als u interesse heeft in de resultaten van het onderzoek waar deze vragenlijst deel van uitmaakt, kunt u uw e-mailadres achterlaten. De masterthesis (in het Engels) zal dan na afronding in pdf-formaat naar u verzonden worden. Uw e-mailadres zal niet gebruikt worden voor andere doeleinden en u zult anoniem blijven.

e-mail: .....

## Appendix II: Structure of the survey

The structure of the questionnaire will be explained here and its relevance for my research will be motivated. It is important that each question has a purpose, questions should be easy to interpret and questions should fulfill the research goal.

The questionnaire has two main purposes:

1. To investigate what knowledge ordinary Dutch citizens have of the European symbols.
2. To investigate the attitude of ordinary Dutch citizens towards the European symbols.

### Part 1 [1]-[5]: Attitude towards Europe

The first part of the questionnaire has the purpose to reveal a person's attitude towards Europe. Connections between this attitude and the knowledge and attitude towards the European symbols can thus be made. The first and second question are more directed to measuring emotional belonging to Europe (feeling European), while the third and fourth question are more directed to measuring opinions on the practical implications of Europe.

- [1] scaling loyalties
- [2] feeling European
- [3] pride of being European
- [4] opinion on Schengen agreement
- [5] opinion influence EU on member states

### Part 2 [6]-[18]: Knowledge of the European symbols

The questions in part 2 are meant to measure the knowledge of the four European symbols. The four symbols are presented separately, to make it possible to investigate for example which symbols are more commonly known. People are first asked whether they know about the existence of a symbol. When the answer is yes, one follow-up question is posed about their familiarity with a symbol (whether they know what the symbol is). In the case of the flag one extra follow-up question has to be answered, namely how often people perceive the flag (Due to the very low presence of the other three symbols, this question is not expected to create useful results). The commonality with the symbols will provide clear hints about their function. A question about people's attitude towards the existence of a single symbol is posed immediately after the questions concerning the knowledge of that symbol.

- [6] familiarity with the European flag
- [7] description of the European flag
- [8] frequency perception European flag
- [9] flag attitude, direct question
- [10] familiarity with Europe Day
- [11] description Europe Day
- [12] day attitude, direct question
- [13] familiarity with the European anthem
- [14] description European anthem

- [15] anthem attitude, direct question
- [16] familiarity with the European motto
- [17] description European motto
- [18] motto attitude, direct question

**Part 3 [19]-[29]: Attitude towards the European symbols (topic includes [9], [12], [15] and [18])**

People's attitudes towards the European symbols in general and the Dutch symbols in general will be explored here. The same questions are asked about the European and Dutch symbols, so it becomes possible to see the difference in attitudes towards them. This fits with the comparison between the function of the European and Dutch symbols as an important aspect throughout the thesis. Between the two parts inquiring the attitude towards respectively the European symbols and the Dutch symbols, three questions ([23]-[25]) are formulated about separate symbols. The opinion of people about the symbols is not asked directly (as before), but in a more situational context.

- [19] The European symbols taken together, question measures whether peoples attitude towards them is positive or negative. Compare with [26]
- [20] The European symbols taken together, compare with [27]
- [21] The European symbols taken together, links with the discussion in the literature about the artificial nature of the European symbols. Compare with [28]
- [22] The European symbols taken together, question about the preferred change in frequency to perceive the European symbols. Compare with [29]
- [23] flag attitude, situational question
- [24] anthem attitude, situational question
- [25] day attitude, situational question
- [26] same question as [19], but for the Dutch symbols
- [27] same question as [20], but for the Dutch symbols
- [28] same question as [21], but for the Dutch symbols
- [29] same question as [22], but for the Dutch symbols

**Part 4 [30]-[33]: The function and position of the European symbols**

The statements in this part will inquire information about how ordinary Dutch citizens think about the function of the symbols.

- [30] about the role of the European Union in the promotion of the symbols. It becomes clear in the thesis that there is a lot discussion about this topic and I think knowing the public opinion on which role the European Union should have is valuable.
- [31] this question refers to the expectations with regard to the influence of the European symbols on a feeling of groupness amongst Europeans
- [32] this question refers to the expectations with regard to the influence of the European symbols on identification with the EU
- [33] Investigating public opinion on the tension between European and Dutch symbols. This topic is often recurring in the thesis and it has an additional value to know what ordinary people think about this.

**General information [34]-[38]**

The last part of the questionnaire is meant to acquire personal information about the respondents. The interpretation of the results becomes more valuable when you know more about the questionnaire population. It then can be argued to what extent the answers of the respondents are reflecting the Dutch population. In addition to that, certain connections between characteristics (for example man/woman or age) and the knowledge and attitude towards the symbols can be explored.