

# The national anthems of the European countries

## Where is 'Europe'?

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Our European national anthems express in very different ways the attachments of the European populations to their countries. Let us have in the first place a look on the central themes that come to the fore in the European anthems.

The major themes of the national anthems themes are almost always connected with one or more other themes that play a secondary role or that have an explanatory function. Moreover, the very central role of the Lord in theme 3 (see below) is less outspoken under the other themes or is left out altogether.

Reading the texts of the European national anthems, it becomes very quickly apparent that the European background of these nations is never mentioned. Their belongingness to 'Europe' is perhaps taken for granted?

Anyhow, the diversity of these 'European' anthems is very great, as is revealed by my analysis.

The analysis of the European national anthems reveals that they are in several respects very different. Looking for the major themes that the national anthems express, I found eight different types of national anthems.

1. *The anthems of the tiny states of Europe. The diversity of the national anthems starts here (4 cases).*

2. *The anthems that place in the forefront the beauty of the landscapes of the country to which their native populations belong (7 cases).*

3. *The national anthems that put God in the center of their message (15 cases).*

4. *The national anthems that express in the first place the population's attachment to their country in a general way (4 cases).*

5. *The central theme of the national anthem is a (coming) revival of the nation (8 cases).*

6. *The central theme of the national anthem is freedom, sometimes in relation with some other central values (7 cases).*

7. *The central theme is something that is unique for the nation. Moldavia and Azerbaijan (2 cases).*

8. *Anthems without text (2) or not being national anthems (1) (3 cases).*

The attachments between the European populations and Europe or the European Union are rather weak as is shown especially during the last few decades. This weak attachment and this underdeveloped sense of identification with the European Union contrast with the positive orientation of the populations after the end of World War II in the founding countries.

Another observation that we can make is that singing the national anthem collectively signifies often that the singers have a strong need to express their national solidarity and unity. At the same time it indicates also a difference between 'us' and the Others. That's why after important soccer matches, the victors sing in several cases their national anthem.

But when on the 13<sup>th</sup> January the French Assemblée sang the Marseillaise, for the first time since almost a century, it was motivated by another collective sentiment. It was to express their disgust of the cruel attacks by Islamic fundamentalists in Paris were many members of the editorial board of 'Charlie Hebdo' were killed and, also in Paris but on a different site, customers of a kosher supermarket.

The main cause of this negative change is without any doubt that the politicians on the European level and on the national levels were so eager to expand the internal European market that many new nations were accepted as members of the Union without the necessary guarantees that their solvability was sufficiently strong to participate in this system. And this process of enlargement of the EU proceeded without consulting the populations of the member states about this enlargement and without warning them about the nature of probable negative consequences. We have voted for a European Union as a democratic system, not as a system that is not trying to reduce energetically the evident enormous democratic deficit that characterizes the European Union.

In 2006 I wrote: 'The opaqueness of the present European decision-making processes, the lack of a clear vision on the future – especially the relationships between (global) markets and civil society – and the sometimes difficult demarcations between national decision-making and decision-making on the EU-level are certainly constraints on the development of the institutions of the EU. It could be argued that this is a severe judgment and that the situation is not that bad once one invests a bit more energy in order to understand what is really going on. However, in many cases the national parliaments have the feeling that they cannot really control what is going on in Brussels and that their democratic rights and obligations are being bypassed and sapped. No wonder that the populations of the EU have a strong feeling that they are at a too large distance from this decision-making level and that they cannot really influence the outcomes of this process by voting. Hence a tremendous abstention when they are called to the ballot-boxes. The European Parliament could play an important role in this situation, together with the mass media. But until now I am, as a citizen of the EU, not impressed by what is going on.'<sup>1</sup>

During the last decade, I did not observe real positive developments into a more democratic direction. What I observe is even more negative. It is a development into the direction of a hierarchy of nations, a hierarchy that is built on the declarations of some nations that they are the leaders of the EU. How often are we confronted by proposals of the French-German Couple that declares to be on the top of the EU? It could be so when such declarations were the result of democratic processes, but that is not the case at all.

Anyhow, the results of this leadership are not positive at all. During this period, it became evident that the political support for the European Union within large parts of the populations of the European member-states gradually decreased. This lessening support is manifested by an increasing absence of enthusiasm for the EU and a strong rise of negative attitudes against the EU, often expressed in a violent way, also by political responsible persons.

### **Which countries are contained in each of the preceding categories?**

1. *The anthems of the tiny states of Europe. The diversity of the national anthems starts here.*

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Berting, *Europe: a Heritage, a Challenge, a Promise*. Delft: Eburon, 2006, p.193.

I begin with the very little countries, at least when they are measured by the circumference of their territories. The smallest ones are: Andorra, Malta, Monaco and San Marino.

Andorra's anthem starts with: 'The great Charlemagne, my Father, liberated me from the Saracens'. Andorra is described as a Princess, a Maiden neutral between two nations, as the only remaining daughter of the Carolingian empire. As a country that is free for eleven centuries. It is, indeed, a European country in spite of the fact that the Carolingian empire is only history.

Malta starts with appealing the Lord to guard the Motherland so dear whose name we hear. And adds to this wish: 'May he who rules, for wisdom be regarded! In master mercy, strength in man increase! Confirm us all, in unity and peace!' This is a classical wish that we see often expressed in national anthems.

We see the same tendency in Monaco's national anthem, be it in a still more rigid sense: 'We carry on the same traditions. We celebrate the same religion. We are honored to have always had the same Princes. And no one will make us change'. In a certain way this emphasis on the same traditions, the same religion and the same ruling family is in several respects not European in the modern sense!

San Marino's anthem, finally, expresses its attachment to the Italian republic.

The national anthems of these four small nations have quite different ways to present their national identity. We will see in the following pages that these small nations don't refer to the specificity of their natural surroundings, as is the case in many other nations, especially the anthems of the Nordic ones.

## *2. The anthems that place in the forefront the beauty of the landscapes of the country to which their native populations belong.*

The emphasis on the beauty of the natural environment is very prominent in a rather large number of the anthems of these nation states. The populations of these countries sing that they are primarily attached to the natural scenery of their native soil. This is the case in the national anthems of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Luxemburg, Austria, and Croatia. Especially prominent is this theme in the Nordic countries.

The anthem of Sweden refers to the glorious past of the nation, but the major part is on the beauty of the natural scenery. And it says at the end: 'Yes, I want to live, I want to die in the North.'

The anthem of Denmark is in the same vein. 'There is a lovely country it stands with broad beech near [the] salty eastern beach..'. Here too we find the connection with the past and with the wish that 'Our old Denmark must endure'.

The anthem of Norway also gives a central place to the attachment to the country. 'Yes, we love this country as it rises forth, rugged, weathered, above the sea, with the thousands of homes'. It also refers to the great past and the army of heroes, but it also explicitly refers to the importance of the king and of national solidarity: 'The King himself stands strong and open as our border guard and his most powerful weapon is our brethren pact'.

Finland's anthem, as a northern nation, also stresses the attachment to this northern homeland, this land of our fathers, this fatherland.

The anthem of Austria starts with a description of the beloved natural environment together with the reference to the great struggle to obtain this place in the middle of the continent, 'like a strong heart'. And of course, it mentions unity and the need to pledge allegiance to the Fatherland in order to face the coming ages.

The national anthem of Croatia also glorifies the beauty of the homeland. There is a short reference to the glorious past. The main message, however, seems to be to tell the world that a Croat loves the mountains, the great rivers the deep blue sea, in short, his homeland.

Luxemburg in northwestern Europe has also a national anthem that emphasizes the beauty of the homeland, the homeland that is carried deeply in the hearts of the citizens and that is worthy to risk all. But in this anthem we also see included a prayer to be protected by 'O You up there, whose hand lead nations through the world protect the Luxembourg country from foreign oppression and suffering'.

### 3. *The national anthems that put God in the center of their message.*

Our next category of national anthems concerns those in which the central place is occupied by God as the protector of the national authorities of the populations concerned and of the nations' specificity. We see this central theme in the national anthems of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Iceland, Slovenia, Albania, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Serbia and Turkey.

The most ancient national anthem in Europe is that of the Netherlands.

It is the *Wilhelmus* that had a centuries-old history. The *Wilhelmus* was the national anthem of the Dutch Republic. It had been sung on many official occasions and at many important events since 1568, such as the [siege of Haarlem](#) in 1573 and the ceremonial entry of the [Prince of Orange](#) into [Brussels](#) on 18 September 1578.

When the Dutch monarchy was founded after the Napoleon Era, the *Wilhelmus* was not the national anthem. It was a new national anthem, the 'Wien Neerlandsch bloed door d'aderen vloeit', an anthem that was extremely royalist, nationalist and even racist'.

In 1932 it was replaced by the *Wilhelmus* as the national anthem. In this national anthem, William of Orange or William of Nassau, the leader of the revolt of the Dutch provinces against Spain, declares his undying faith to his country until his death. To this he adds that God is his shield and his trust and he hopes that God will never leave him.<sup>2</sup>

The national anthem of the United Kingdom is also very God-centered. In comparison with the Dutch anthem, the relation with God is reversed. In the Dutch anthem, it is the William of Orange who accentuates his steady attachment to God. In the British anthem, the Queen's subjects who sing: 'God save our gracious Queen! God save our gracious Queen! Long live our noble Queen!' And they ask a lot more accomplishments of God for their Queen (or King) and in the same time for themselves: 'O Lord our God arise, Scatter **her** enemies, And make them fall. Confound their politics. Frustrate their knavish ricks'.

The national anthem of Iceland is also strongly God-centered but in quite another way than the anthems of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In the Icelandic national anthem - the *Lofsöngur* – there is no intermediate level between God and the people, as is illustrated by the following phrases: 'Oh, the God of our land! Oh, the land of our God! We praise your holy, holy name!'. And later on, even more explicitly: 'Father, our Lord from generation to generation, we tell our most important tales. We tell and we thank for a thousand years, for you are our only shelter. We tell and we thank with tears in our eyes, for you created our fortune wheel'.

The national anthem of Latvia is God-centered without putting intermediate layers between God and the Latvian population: 'God bless Latvia, Our beloved fatherland. Bless Latvia, Oh bless it, we beseech thee!'

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<sup>2</sup> The *Wilhelmus* has 26 stanzas of which only the first and the fourth are sung during public ceremonies.

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The national anthem of Georgia places also God in the center of the motherland, together with the beauty of the country and the freedom that now reigns.

This intermediate level is neither present in the national anthem of Serbia. God has a very central place. He is the God of Justice, of the Serbian hope. He is asked to protect the young tree of freedom and even the Serbian race: 'God, our hope; protect and cherish Serbian lands and Serbian race!'

A fourth variant of a God-centered anthem is the national anthem of Slovenia. It pleads not only for God's blessing for Slovenia, but for all those countries that express the same good intentions for their future: 'God's blessing on all nations, who long and work for that bright day, When o'er earth's habitations. No war, no strife shall hold its sway. Who long to see that all men free, No more shall foes, but neighbours be '.

The national anthem of Switzerland is also God-centered. Its specificity is that it links the central position of God with the Swiss landscape: 'When the morning skies grow red and o'er us their radiance shed, Thou, O Lord, appearest in their light. When the Alps glow bright with splendour, Pray to God, to Him surrender, For you feel and understand, That He dwelleth in this land'.

This specificity Switzerland shares with Liechtenstein, but in that latter case there is also an explicit link with the political life, as follows from the following sentences: 'On Alpine heights, this beloved homeland, this dear fatherland, was chosen for us by God's wise hand'. In the following stanza we encounter the following phrase: 'Long live the Prince of the Land, long live our fatherland, through bonds of brotherly love United and free!'

And look at Hungary's national anthem. God is in the center: 'God Bless the Hungarians with good cheer and prosperity. Extend a protective arm if they fight the enemy.'

Estonia's national anthem has the same specificity. 'For nowhere in the world around can ever such a place be found so well beloved, from sense profound, My native country dear!'. And the anthem follows with: 'May God in Heaven thee defend, My own, my dearest land! May He be guard, may He be shield, For ever bless and guardian wield Protection for all deeds of thine, My own, my dearest land!'

The national anthem of Bosnia-Herzegovina also accentuates the uniqueness of the country. 'You are unique the only homeland I have, you are unique Bosnia and Herzegovina'. And to this praise is added: 'May God save you for the generations to come. You are the land of my dreams, the land of my forefathers'.

The national anthem of Russia fits in this category. It refers but in a different way to the sacred homeland and to the protection by God. 'Russia – our sacred homeland, Russia – our beloved country. A mighty will, great glory –These are your heritage for all time!', and: 'You are unique in the world, one of a kind –This native land protected by God!'

Turkey's national anthem belongs also to this God-centered list. It is connected with freedom. 'For Freedom is the absolute right of my God-worshiping nation. I have been free since the beginning and forever shall be so.' 'Neither you nor my race shall ever be extinguished! For freedom is the absolute right of my ever-free flag; for independence is the absolute right of my God-worshiping nation!'

4. *The national anthems that express in the first place the population's attachment to their country in a general way.*

The national anthem of Lithuania is an example of love for, or attachment to the country as its main topic. 'May the love of Lithuania brightly burn in our hearts. For the sake of this land, let unity blossom!'

Bulgaria's national anthem expresses the same tendency: 'Oh, dear native land, Earthy paradise! For your loveliness, your beauty E'er will charm our eyes'.

The following example in this category is the national anthem of the Czech Republic. This republic is a: 'Paradise on earth it is to see. And this is that beautiful land, the Czech land, my home'. But it seems to be a home only for Czechs for the anthem states that non-Czechs are not included. It is a home only for: 'That (is) the glorious race of the Czechs, among Czechs is my home'.

The national anthem of Montenegro also places the population's attachment to the country, their mother Montenegro, and being the keeper of her honesty.

5. *The central theme of the national anthem is a (coming) revival of the nation.*

The (coming) revival of the nation is a central theme in several national anthems today.

The national anthem is an example of this and is related to Italy's struggle to create its nation-state in the nineteenth century. 'Brothers of Italy, Italy has awakened; Scipio's helmet she has put on her head'. 'Let us unite! We are ready to die; Italy called. Let's unite under one flag, one dream; to melt together. Already the time has come'.

Also the national anthem of France, *la Marseillaise*, could be considered to glorify the birth of a new nation. 'Allons enfants de la patrie. Le jour de gloire est arrivé! Contre nous de la tyrannie, L'étendard sanglant est levé (bis). Entendez-vous dans les campagnes Mugir ces féroces soldats ? Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras égorger nos fils, nos compagnes !

Aux armes, citoyens, Formez vos bataillons, Marchons, marchons ! Qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons ! (bis).<sup>3</sup>

The national anthem of Poland is another example of this. 'Poland has not yet succumbed. As long as we remain, what the foe by force has seized, sword in hand we'll gain'.

The anthem of Slovakia has also this theme of the national revival: 'That Slovakia of ours has been asleep so far, but the thunder's lightning is rousing it to come to'. But: 'Slovakia already arises, tears off its shackles. Hey/yes, dear family, the hour has struck, Mother Slava Glory is alive'.

The national anthem of Romania belongs to the same category: 'Awaken thee, Romanian, from that deathly sleep into which you've been sunken by the barbarian tyrants. Now or never sew yourself another fate to whom even your cruel enemies may bow to'.

The national anthem of Ukraine accentuates also the revival of the nation-state. 'Ukraine has not yet died, nor her glory, nor her freedom, upon us, fellow Ukrainians, fate shall smile once more. Our enemies will vanish like dew in the sun, and we too shall rule, brothers, in a free land of our own. Ukraine has not yet died, nor her glory, nor her freedom....Souls and bodies we'll lay down, all for our freedom, and we'll show that we, brothers, are of the [Cossack](#) nation!'

The national anthem of Macedonia sings that: 'Macedonia is liberated, it lives in liberty'. 'Today above Macedonia is born the new sun of liberty. The Macedonians fight for their own rights....Now again the flag flies (that) of the Krushevo Republic'.

The national anthem of Armenia also accentuates its rebirth as a free and independent Fatherland. And it honors those who died for this freedom: 'A man dies but once, blessed is the one that dies for the freedom of his nation'.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Arise, children of the Fatherland, The day of glory has arrived! Against us tyranny Raises its bloody banner (repeat) Do you hear, in the countryside, the roar of those ferocious soldiers? They're coming right into our arms To cut the throats of our sons and women!  
To arms, citizens, Form your battalions, Let's march! Let an impure blood Water our furrows!(repeat).

6. *The central theme of the national anthem is freedom, sometimes in relation with some other central values.*

Some national anthems are organized around the central concept of 'freedom'. One of these is the national anthem of Greece. 'From the graves of our slain, shall thy valour prevail. As we greet thee again, hail, Liberty! Hail!

Albania's national anthem demonstrates the same attention to the pivotal role of freedom: 'Around the flag united with a desire and a reason all vowing to him to unite the word for the freedom'. Freedom. We will keep the arms in our hands to protect our homeland in anywhere. Our rights we don't share them...

The Lord Himself has said that Nations vanish from the earth but Albania will live. For her, for her we fight for.

The core of the national anthem of Kazakhstan is also 'freedom we gained', honor, unity and the mother tongue.

Also the national anthem of Ireland accentuates freedom by stressing that the country shall not shelter the despot or the slave. 'Soldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to Ireland. Some have come from a land beyond the wave, sworn to be free'.

**The national anthem of Belgium rejects servitude and accentuates liberty, loyalty to the king and allegiance to the law.**

The German national anthem puts forward the central importance for the nation of three values: unanimity, law and liberty.

Finally, also the national anthem of Spain points at the importance of liberty for the people, together with brotherhood, democracy and love for the fatherland.

7. *The central theme is something that is unique for the nation.*

Unique in another way is the national anthem of Azerbaijan. It is the only national anthem that puts in the center of the attachment to the country, the Fatherland, the sacrifice: 'We are all together ready to give our lives for you!. We are all together strong to sacrifice our blood for you!'. And: 'Soldiers gave their life for you, All of them became heroes!'<sup>4</sup>

8. *A national anthem with no words.*

The only example is Kosovo that rejected a text with the argument that a text could arouse feelings of antagonism among national minorities. Also the anthem of the European Union is without words. The anthem of Vatican City is not really a national hymn.

**The European national anthems were officially adopted in which period?**

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<sup>4</sup> Andorra's national item is also unique with its specific link with the Carolingian empire.

*The national anthems of Europe have their origin in:*

- a. The 16<sup>th</sup> century: the Netherlands (the United Republic of the Seven Provinces): 1568. It became the national anthem of the Netherlands in 1932.
- b. The 18<sup>th</sup> century: the United Kingdom: 1744; Spain: 1770 (and again in 1997); France: 1797.
- c. The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Greece: 1823 (and again in 1982); Belgium: 1830; Denmark: 1835; Hungary: 1844; Romania: 1848 (and again in 1989); Norway: 1850 (and again in 1900).
- d. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Cyprus: 1865; Iceland: 1874; Sweden: 1890; San Marino: 1894; Luxemburg: 1895.
- e. The 20<sup>th</sup> century: 1900-1920: Albania: 1920; Azerbaijan: 1920 (and again in 1993); Portugal: 1911 (and again in 1957); Finland: 1918; Czech Republic: 1918 (and again in 1993); Lithuania: 1919.
- f. The 20<sup>th</sup> century: 1921 – 1950: Andorra: 1921; Austria: 1946; Estonia: 1920 (and again in 1990); Germany: 1922; Ireland: 1926; Italy: 1946; Latvia: 1920; Liechtenstein: 1920 (and again in 1963); Malta: 1941; Poland: 1926; Turkey: 1921.
- g. The 20<sup>th</sup> century: 1951 – 1990: Bulgaria: 1964; Croatia: 1972; Slovenia: 1980; Switzerland: 1981; Vatican City: 1950; the European Union: 1972 (The 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony of Beethoven: Ode to Joy, 1823. It is not an anthem to sing during public presentations. It does not replace in any way the national anthems).
- h. The 20<sup>th</sup> century: 1991 – 1999: Armenia: 1991; Kazakhstan: 1991; Macedonia: 1991; Russia: 1993; Slovakia: 1993; Moldavia: 1994, Belarus: 1994; Bosnia-Herzegovina: 1999.
- i. The 21<sup>st</sup> century: Ukraine: 2003; Georgia: 2004; Serbia: 2004; Montenegro: 2004; Kosovo: 2008.

### ***To which observations does the previous analysis of the European national anthems lead?***

When we observe the totality of national anthems in Europe, it becomes quickly evident that none of them expresses a feeling of an attachment or belongingness to the European continent or to the European Union. We can observe a great variety in the expressions of feelings of love or of admiration, of being deeply rooted in the country that one inhabits. But all those feelings of attachment are generally very specifically related to the country in which one is born. Or with which one has a specific historical bond.

Especially those countries in which the national anthem emphasizes the important role of God or the Lord, sometimes coupled with the rights of a royal family, we note the presence of feelings of being a chosen people. Such items have generally a feudal tinge.

It is beyond dispute that the national anthems of the European countries are the products of a diversified historical development of the European continent. None of them expresses feelings of attachment to 'Europe' or the 'European Union'.



*The national anthems of the European countries. Where is 'Europe'?*

A European anthem must express a strong attachment to a selection of common values and traditions within the European space. The Ode to Joy, this anthem without words, cannot fill the present empty space.<sup>5</sup>

It has become very clear, especially during the last twenty years that the present European leaders will not move forwards into the direction of a European anthem. By now, it has become

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<sup>5</sup> Look to the USA and "The Star Spangled Banner". This anthem was ordered played at military and naval occasions by President Woodrow Wilson in 1916, but was not designated the national anthem by an Act of Congress until 1931. The words were written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key, who had been inspired by the sight of the American flag still flying over Fort McHenry after a night of heavy British bombardment. The text was immediately set to a popular melody of the time, "To Anacreon in Heaven."

*The Star-Spangled Banner*

O say can you see by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;  
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave,  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,  
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,  
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,  
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?  
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,  
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream:  
'Tis the star-spangled banner, O! long may it wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore  
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,  
A home and a country, should leave us no more?  
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.  
A home and a country, should leave us no more?  
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.  
No refuge could save the hireling and slave  
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave,  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand  
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation,  
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n rescued land  
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!

Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!<sup>[1]</sup> By a law signed on March 3, 1931 by President [Herbert Hoover](#), "The Star-Spangled Banner" was adopted as the national anthem of the United States of America

very clear that the majority of the political leaders are totally trapped in a European game that puts in the forefront some national states that think that they are the 'natural' leaders of the EU: Germany and France. Daily we witness that this German-French couple is not capable to develop the right political measures that can really lead to a democratic European Union that overcomes the much deplored democratic deficit that characterizes the European Union since a long time.

Can this impasse be avoided in the future? The rise of the European Union after WWII was certainly related to two important facts. In the first place it had become evident that the Nazis and the other fascist states were defeated by the cooperation of the British military forces with the help of the American military forces. Also the USSR played a very important role in the defeat of the Nazis. It is evident that Hitler made a tremendous mistake by attacking the USSR.

After the liberation of Europe from the Nazi dominance, it became quickly evident that that the totalitarian communist system was another important menace for the liberty and the way of life of the Europeans who were not dominated by the communist totalitarian regime.

But after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 this menace became quickly less important. Our economies flourished during a relatively long period, the rise of the welfare state contributes to a more equitable distribution of incomes, most families could afford themselves regularly holidays, often in other countries within Europe and often also in other parts of the world. This development did not contribute to a reinforcement of the European identity. In the contacts between persons with different national backgrounds, it were often the differences that came to the fore. This became even stronger with the increase of immigration from non-European countries, especially from Arab and other non-European countries.

So we can say that with the disappearance of the menacing totalitarian political systems, and with the continuing failure of the European leadership to establish a real democratic system on the European level, the circumstances that could reinforce the will of a considerable part of the European populations to create a really democratic European Union has weakened considerable. The rise of small groups of Islamic fundamentalists is, for the time being, not impressive enough to turn the present anti-European tide. This anti-European tide implies in certain respects a revival of nationalist feelings, feelings that are very often present in the world of top-sports.

The further development of the European Union necessitates open-minded leadership of the responsible political actors – and it is far from evident that this is indeed the case – and a continuous engagement in explanations why we must reinforce within the European populations the consciousness of the importance of the unity of Europe and the EU. The less educated classes are not the carriers of Europe's desirable future. During the present global development it becomes increasingly urgent that on many occasions we must present ourselves as a united European partner.

But it is by now evident that we need a real European anthem that expresses our attachments and our solidarity with Europe as the bearer of a common set of values and of a diversified culture that is for the present the result of both a common and of a pluralistic history.