FLAGS OF THE EU COUNTRIES

T he symbolic nature of flags, which is strong and inseparable from the countries whose history is often unknown to us, can provide us with indications and clues about the foundations of our nations and the similarities between the EU countries. We have chosen a typological classification which reveals inspiration that is intra-national (colours of regions, provinces, etc.) national, or common to several nations, such as those finding their colours in the Slavic frame of reference.

The origins of the standards that are today the emblems of our countries, are sometimes points of debate as their first appearance in some cases dates back to several centuries before our time. For example, the *Dannebrog*, the flag of Denmark, is mentioned for the first time in texts dating back to the 14th century, whereas the legend tells of its creation at the beginning of the previous century. The first date proposed to readers hereinafter indicates the period during which the most complete form of the banner appeared; it is followed by the date on which it was the most recently formalised. For the most part, these flags correspond to what Anne-Marie Thiesse called the "passing from the Europe of Princes to the Europe of Nations", which led to a radical change in systems of collective representation.

Numerous are the flags that bear witness to the spread of ideas and the penetration of intellectual or social movements throughout Europe over the centuries. This is the case of the flags of Italy, Belgium and Hungary, all inspired by the French Revolution. Multiple influences, be they intra- or extra-national, have endured throughout the centuries, then amalgamating into the flags of today. The Hungarian emblem, whose colours recall the historic moments of this nation, draws its inspiration from the tricolour layout of the French flag.

Over time, several flags have evolved, disappeared or reappeared. Some were adopted only very recently, such as that of Romania, created in 1867, but only made official in 1994. Or the Dutch flag, in which the orange colour is replaced by red, when used at sea, in order to make it more visible.

Curiously, through the study of these 28 European flags, it is possible to find symbolic links between supposedly distant countries: the colours of the German and Estonian flags are those of student groups; the colours of Austria and Latvia tell the story of fabric drenched in the blood of a military leader; the Czech and Lithuanian flags were created by an official commission, whereas that of Cyprus stands out as being the only flag in the whole world, along with that of Kosovo, that portrays the country's outline.

From an anecdotal viewpoint, the reader understands why certain national sport shirts take up the dominant colour of a country such as the Irish green, the French blue, while the Dutch orange perpetuates the colours of the House of Orange, and the Italian blue evokes the colours of the former reigning Savoy dynasty.

FLAGS CLASSIFIED BY DATE OF CREATION		
	Created	Adopted
Austria	1230	1786
Denmark	1397	1397
Netherlands	1572	1937
Sweden	1663	1906
Spain	1785	1981
France	1789	1848
United Kingdom	1789	1801
Italy	1797	1948
Germany	1816	1919
Greece	1822	1978
Belgium	1830	1831
Ireland	1830	1937
Luxembourg	1830	1972
Hungary	1848	1957
Slovakia	1848	1993
Romania	1867	1994
Finland	1870	1918
Bulgaria	1879	1994
Estonia	1881	1918
Portugal	1910	1911
Latvia	1917	1921
Lithuania	1918	1988
Poland	1919	1919
Czech Republic	1920	1993
Malta	1947	1972
European Union	1955	1985
Cyprus	1960	1960
Croatia	1990	1990
Slovenia	1991	1991