

The symbols of the European Union – Conclusion

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Conclusion

The role of symbols in forging an awareness and an identity of the European Union as a political community is therefore crucial. It is in practice true that most of the basic categories and concepts relating to European integration and, in particular, those breathing life into the notion of belonging, are represented by symbols that make the very notion of citizenship tangible, real and comprehensive. Leaving aside the symbols listed in the Constitution, I am thinking of Europe's buildings (from the Berlaymont to the Justus Lipsius), the European passport, vehicle number plates, cities of culture, etc.

Far from performing a 'cosmetic' function that is secondary in importance to the function of the four freedoms or of Community policies, the symbols express the deep-seated values of the European Union. They can also mobilise the sentiments of European public opinion. They do not just breathe life into the notion of belonging, but contribute actively to support it, thereby helping the fledgling European *demos* to put down roots.