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DRAFT REPORT

on insertion of a new Rule 202a on the use by Parliament of the symbols of the Union
(2007/2240(REG))

Committee on Constitutional Affairs

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PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DECISION

on insertion in Parliament's Rules of Procedure of a new Rule 202a on the use by Parliament of the symbols of the Union (2007/2240(REG))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 11 July 2007 on the convening of the Intergovernmental Conference¹, in particular paragraph 23 thereof,
 - having regard to the letter from its President of 12 September 2007,
 - having regard to the importance of symbols for reconnecting the citizens with the European Union and for building a European identity which is complementary to the national identities of the Member States,
 - having regard to Rules 201 and 202 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (A6-0000/2007),
1. Decides to amend its Rules of Procedure as shown below;
 2. Decides that the amendment will enter into force on the day following its adoption;
 3. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and Commission, for information.

Present text

Amendments

Amendment 1

Title XIII, Miscellaneous Provisions, Rule 202 a (new)

Rule 202a

The symbols of the Union

1. Parliament shall recognise and espouse the following symbols of the Union:

– the flag showing a circle of twelve golden stars on a blue background;

– the anthem based on the ‘Ode to Joy’ from the Ninth Symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven;

¹ *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2007)0328.

– the motto 'United in diversity'.

2. Parliament shall celebrate Europe day on 9 May.

3. The flag shall be flown in all Parliament's premises and on the occasion of official events.

4. The anthem shall be performed at the opening of each constitutive session and at other solemn sittings, notably to welcome Heads of State or Government or to greet new Members following enlargements.

5. The motto shall be reproduced on Parliament's official documents.

6. The Bureau shall lay down detailed provisions for the implementation of this Rule.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Symbols in the social and political communication process

Symbols are vital elements of any communication process, particularly in relation to the process of the public's identification of or with any social grouping or organisation, including political bodies. Indeed, symbols may be a decisive element for the public's emotional attachment to these organisations. Flags, emblems, anthems, slogans, colours and other types of symbol are therefore essential in ensuring that any type of human organisation, whether political, ethnic, cultural, sporting, etc., is recognised by the public, and they play a crucial role in the public's identification with these organisations. Symbols convey an emotional image of the underlying values of the organisations they represent, they play a part in making abstract ideas intelligible, they facilitate communication and participation and they help to bring the organisations that they symbolise closer to the citizens, thereby contributing to their legitimacy.

This experience, which is shared by all our countries, regions, churches, parties, civic organisations, trade unions, football clubs, etc., is also valid at EU level. It is therefore not surprising that, since their formation, the European Communities and subsequently the European Union have also sought to provide themselves with symbols that the public can identify.

The European flag

The European Union flag is the dark blue flag with a circle of 12 five-pointed golden stars which has been the symbol of the Council of Europe, the first organisation for political cooperation set up in Europe after the world war, since 1955. In order to avoid a scattering of different symbols, which might confuse and alienate citizens instead of bringing them closer, the 1985 Milan European Council¹ decided to follow this example and make this flag, which had by then been in existence for almost 30 years, the flag of what was then the European Community. The flag was intended to represent perfection, complementarity and solidarity, thus symbolising Europe's unity.

Since 1986, European citizens have become used to seeing and identifying the dark blue flag with 12 golden stars as the flag of their European Union. Since then, the flag has been used, with varying but growing degrees of success, at both European and national, regional and local public buildings, at public institutions and ceremonies (in some Member States it is even unfurled alongside the national flag in the national parliaments), as a symbol identifying Community programmes and actions (for example, at internal borders between Member States, symbolising the abolition of controls at internal borders, or on information for the

¹ The flag, the anthem and Europe day were adopted by the Milan European Council of June 1985, acting on the suggestion contained in the Adonnino report of the *ad hoc* committee on a Peoples' Europe, this decision being subsequently formalised by a Council decision of April 1986. Since 29 May 1986 the European flag has been flying at the buildings of the European institutions alongside the national flags of the then 12 Member States of the European Communities.

public on public works programmes co-financed by the Union, etc.). Perhaps surprisingly, the blue flag with the 12 golden stars has also become known beyond the Union's external borders, and it is a symbol which populations facing humanitarian crises or natural disasters have come to identify with a haven of peace, safety and solidarity.

The European anthem

It was also the Council of Europe, in 1972, which was the first to adopt as its official anthem the 'Ode to Joy' from the Ninth Symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven, composed in 1823 and based on the poem with the same title written by Friedrich von Schiller in 1785. It would be hard to find such a well-known piece of music and poetry that would better symbolise the idea of European integration than this ode 'to the unity of the human species transformed into the subject', heightened by the exultant and sublime music of a composer who is one of the best symbols of European genius. The European institutions thus did well to follow the example of the Council of Europe and make the 'Ode to Joy' the anthem of the European Union.

Europe Day

The European institutions were also quick to perceive the need for a day to commemorate European integration. National and civic public holidays generally have a dual function of evoking an identity or value that is being remembered, but also of producing and renewing that same identity or value that is then reaffirmed for the future. 9 May, the day of the Schuman Declaration, was chosen by the Community institutions as their official holiday in 1962, but it applies only to their staff. For its part, in 1964 the Council of Europe chose 5 May, the date on which it was set up in 1949, as Europe Day, but it never had any genuine European impact. Later, the Milan European Council decided to follow the recommendations of the Adonnino report and publicly commemorate 9 May, the date which perhaps best symbolises the moment when the whole process of European integration was launched. 9 May has gradually been emerging out of the institutions and into the outside world through the organisation of shows, exhibitions and events such as open days when citizens can visit the European institutions and their offices in the Member States, acquire material for information and entertainment, etc., so that bit by bit it is becoming a holiday for European citizens. However, its deeper significance will only truly take root in the emotional memory of European citizens if the Member States themselves join efforts to this end, recognising Europe Day as a real European public holiday.

The euro

Evidently, even though it does not yet cover all the Member States, the single currency could not fail to become a symbol of the European project when it came into circulation, not only for the populations of the Member States where it has been introduced, but quite clearly also among the populations of third countries, who are starting to identify the EU with the euro in the same way as they identify the US with the dollar.

Adopted by the Madrid European Council of December 1995, the term 'euro' replaced the 'ecu' referred to in the Maastricht Treaty. The euro has been in use in the financial markets since January 1999 and has been in circulation since 1 January 2002; after Slovenia joined the eurozone, followed by Malta and Cyprus on 1 January 2008, it became the official currency of

15 Member States. In addition, the euro is the official currency of States such as Monaco, the Vatican and San Marino and the de facto currency in Andorra, Montenegro and Kosovo.

The symbol for the euro is €, inspired by the letter epsilon in the ancient Greek alphabet, evoking the origins of European civilisation and the first letter in the name 'Europe', to which were added two parallel horizontal bars which are intended to symbolise the stability of the European economy and of the new currency.

The motto: 'United in diversity'

The most recent of the European symbols, the motto, stems from an initiative by the European Parliament. On 4 May 2000, at a formal sitting in the Brussels Chamber, the then President Nicole Fontaine announced the final result of a competition in which 2 200 schools in the 15 Member States that then comprised the European Union had taken part: 'Union in diversity'. This phrase was altered slightly by the European Convention, becoming 'United in diversity', which may be seen as the perfect definition of the essence of the European project.

The European Constitution and the Treaty of Lisbon

On a proposal from the European Convention, the Brussels European Council of June 2004 inserted an article (I-8) on the symbols of the European Union in the European Constitution.

As we know, the process of ratifying the Constitutional Treaty collapsed. During the negotiations that recommenced in 2007 with the aim of finding a way out of the impasse that had blocked the process following the French and Dutch 'noes', the 27 decided, under pressure from some Member States, to abandon the constitutional perspective and the 'quasi-state' elements contained in the Constitution, among other changes to the text. The symbols of the Union thus became one of the 'collateral victims' of the efforts made to reach an agreement, since they were not included in the new Treaty of Lisbon.

The EP's reaction

It is questionable whether the formal recognition of a flag which is familiar to all Europeans and that is indeed recognised by the populations of countries throughout the world, who look to it to provide protection and safety in crisis situations, of a piece of music that is hummed by all music lovers, of a European holiday, of a currency that the citizens of at least 13 countries already use every day, or of such an appropriate motto as 'united in diversity', could indeed constitute an insurmountable obstacle to the ratification of the new Treaty as some governments claimed.

However, just as they were not created by the Treaties, the symbols will not lose their character as vehicles of the values on which the European Union is based or their degree of recognition/attraction among European citizens simply because they are not enshrined in a Treaty.

Indeed, contrary to what some people appear to believe, the fact that they are not included in the Treaty in no way, either politically or legally, prevents the institutions from continuing to use them as they have done up to now, or indeed intensifying their use. In particular, it does

not prevent the European Parliament from continuing the pioneering role it has always played in this respect, intensifying and regulating the use of the symbols, in particular the flag, the anthem and the motto, within the realm of its activities.

The EP took on a pioneering role in respect of the symbols of the Community/Union at a very early stage. The EP started work in this area immediately after the first elections by direct universal suffrage in 1979, leading to the adoption of the Van Hassel report in 1983 which called for the recognition of the flag of the Council of Europe as the flag of the European Community, ‘a symbol with which the peoples of Europe can identify’. Following the decision of the 1985 European Council in Milan, the EP returned to the topic in 1998 in the Gama report, which highlighted the importance of symbols in ‘consolidating the Community’s image in the eyes of the electorate’ and encouraging greater participation in the European elections. To this end, the EP called on the Commission to take concrete measures to promote the widest possible use of the European flag, for example by flying it alongside the flags of the Member States at the EU’s external and internal borders, in all European municipalities during the week of the European elections, etc.

It is therefore not surprising that it should once again be the EP which has provided an impulse for the greater use of European symbols within the realm of its activities. This is the aim behind the present proposal to amend Parliament’s Rules of Procedure in order to regulate and strengthen the use of Europe’s symbols in its activities, which should also not prevent it from appealing to the other European institutions, in particular the Commission - which should indeed use its power of initiative to propose general measures in this context - and the authorities in the Member States, to join it in promoting the use of European symbols within the scope of their powers.

The recent declaration that 16 EU Member States¹ decided to annex to the Treaty of Lisbon, on the eve of the signing ceremony, reaffirms that ‘the flag with a circle of 12 golden stars on a blue background, the anthem based on the “Ode to Joy” from the Ninth Symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven, the motto “United in diversity”, the euro as the currency of the European Union and Europe Day on 9 May will for them continue as symbols to express the sense of community of the people in the European Union and their allegiance to it’.

To sum up, by adopting this amendment to its Rules of Procedure, the European Parliament wishes to send a clear political message to European citizens: that the symbols of the Union are important and their use is worthwhile at all levels and in all institutional and social fields, because they represent the values that inspire the Union's existence, they unite all those who live and work within its borders, and they identify it in the world as a benchmark for freedom, development and solidarity.

¹ Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia.