



RESOLUTION ON EUROPEAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

Adopted by UEF FC 28-29th March

One of the most important challenges for European integration is the strengthening of the sense of a European belonging. Cultural and linguistic diversity is a fundamental and welcome aspect of a federal Europe. Nevertheless, we believe that forging a European cultural identity would be important for developing such a sense of belonging. If the creation of a European Federation is our ultimate goal, one of our objectives shall also be the promotion of a European cultural identity.

It seems a well established fact that the loyalty to the nation-state is stronger than European belonging, as evidenced by all recent Eurobarometer surveys. Indeed only a small percentage of European citizens identify with the EU, the overwhelming majority still considers themselves first a citizen of a nation state. This is partly owing to the matter that after the end of the cold war national identities have been strongly enhanced by the media and politicians. Although the consequences of this trend have not always been positive (ethnic wars, growing feelings of intolerance), the growing attachment to the nation-state is a matter of fact. Therefore, it is more than ever necessary not only to stress the risks of nationalism but also to develop, foster and strengthen a sense of (pan) European belonging, a sense of positive, non-discriminatory European identity". But how to do it?

Culture is part of the answer.

Common cultural and social practices seems a strong medium to do just that - develop, foster and strengthen this notion : spreading common symbols, introducing common holidays, teaching a common understanding of European history and of the roots of the European integration process, which is based on the idea of shared sovereignty.

The introduction of the concept of European citizen in 1992, endowed with certain entitlements and strengthened by succeeding reform Treaties, is another important factor in developing a sense of identity, but 18 years is much too short a time to have any effect in a sociological process which has to evolve bottom-up.

With to 27 Member States in the European Union and nearly half a billion European citizens, the wealth of European culture and cultural history is a great asset for the EU and, beyond this, all of Europe. Bringing the various strands and local expression together into a common cultural space is an important element for building a common cultural identity.

The UEF welcomes the introduction of different European symbols and programs which undoubtedly are important for developing active European citizenship and which could add to a sense of shared identity:

- The launch of the programme European cultural capital in 1985;
- The introduction in 1986 of European flag, anthem and Europe Day;
- The introduction in 1987 of the Erasmus programme and the subsequent creation of the Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig educational programs;
- The introduction in 1989 of the European Twinning programme ;
- The creation of European political parties by the Maastricht Treaty;
- The recognition of culture as a European policy by the Maastricht Treaty
- The introduction in 1999 of a common European currency;
- The introduction in 2003 of the European motto « United in diversity » ;
- The introduction in 2007 of European political foundations;
- The recognition in 2008 by the European Parliament of the European symbols and motto;
- The 2007-2013 Culture programme of the European Commission, which commits €400 million to help construct a shared European cultural space;

All this could help provide the basis for the development of a European cultural identity. The publication of trans-national text books such as the Franco-German text books in 2006, trans-national history commissions or the South East European history manuals in 2008 or other similar projects would add to such a development.

UEF notes that:

- 91% of EU-citizens interviewed [by Eurobarometer] felt attachment to their nation-state and only 49% to the European Union;
- Education is essential for shaping identity and for social cohesion in Europe;
- Linguistic diversity is a cultural and democratic cornerstone of the European Union
- European political parties contribute to the forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union;
- The EU runs programmes in the education and cultural areas such the Lifelong Learning Programme (€ 7 billion), Erasmus, Grundtvigt or Culture (€ 0,4 billion), endowed with a considerable budgetary means;
- The concept of culture is primarily identified with national values, practices and historical references;
- The EU shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. It shall encourage cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, support the improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples;
- Article 165 - 167 of the TFEU provide a basis for European actions in the field of education and culture.

UEF regrets that:

- The European Constitution and then the Lisbon Treaty failed to be the momentum for the creation of a « Constitutional patriotism »
- European Symbols are not mentioned in the Lisbon Treaty

Therefore UEF calls upon:

- The EU education ministers to launch a (pan) European History school book projects open also to countries outside the EU;
- The European Commission and the Council (EU education ministers) to promote the learning of languages in such a way that it enables all school children in the EU to learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue;
- The European Commission and EU Education ministers to promote a European translation policy, taking into account the actual needs of European citizens and third country nationals and the contribution of translation to the “5th Freedom”, ie the free circulation of ideas, the need for innovation underlined in the Agenda 2020 and the preservation of cultural diversity;
- The European Commission to reach its target of 3 million Erasmus students by 2012 ;
- The European Commission to propose to increase by 10 per cent the budget for Culture and the Life long Learning programmes in the post 2013 financial period (2014 - 2019)
- The Commission and the Council to continue - if possible to a greater extent - to actively use the possibilities of Article 165-167 of the TFEU for promoting common EU policies in the area of education and culture;
- The Commission and the Council to propose and enact actions aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and supporting the improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples;
- European foundations, Parties and Groups to promote the European electoral system and pan European electoral lists ;
- the Council to introduce 9th of May as a European-wide bank holiday;
- Its bureau and national sections to use the European capital for Culture as a mean to promote European culture in UEF actions and meetings;
- Its bureau and national section to forward this resolution to the European Commission and Education Ministers;