

Europe Day

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Europe Day

In all the Member States 9 May is celebrated as Europe Day. As we know, with the advent of monarchies, feast days of a civil or dynastic nature began to be celebrated, although many included a religious element (coronations, a sovereign's wedding, birth of an heir to the throne, etc.). These feast days were generally accompanied by tournaments, jousts, cavalcades and hunting parties. After the French revolution, however, civic feast days of a popular and national type began to become important in celebrating the achievement of freedom from domestic privilege (France) or from subjection to foreign rule (in the case of the Americas). In the Member States, one day is set aside for national celebrations. Civic holidays are a significant way of preserving memory, and help periodically to naturalise an eclectic heritage, to keep awareness of the past alive and to unify relational networks.

The national public holiday is often the day on which the State became independent, and in some cases it celebrates the patron saint or an event that is particularly meaningful for the nation.

The Constitutional Treaty sets 9 May as Europe Day in memory of the Declaration made by the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, on 9 May 1950, which is conventionally seen as the date on which the building of Europe began.

The celebration of 9 May is not just the celebration of the founding document of European integration. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the current and real situation which changes daily. It celebrates the realities of life in a European Union based on the principles of the rule of law, a Union that possesses a democratic order founded on popular sovereignty and on values that are now accepted and shared by the vast majority of European people. The meaning of the celebration lies in its commemoration of the path that had to be taken to consolidate these principles and values, without taking for granted the victories won.

Europe Day on 9 May offers a yearly opportunity to bring Europe closer to its citizens. It is a day of information, guidance and discussion of European Union themes, especially, but not just, in schools and universities, with events of a particular cultural and educational content. Europe Day must also be an opportunity to forge closer ties among the citizens of Europe and overcome the sense of distance, indifference and even disaffection that they feel for the European institutions. It is a time at which the most can be made of the Union's symbols. As in the case of a national day, what is needed is a good display of European flags, not only at places at which events are being held but also, and in particular, at windows. Lastly, 9 May

should be a public holiday when men and women from different cities, regions and countries of our Europe can meet.