

# THE EUROPEAN FLAG

**” To me, the 12 stars in your emblem are a reminder that the world could become a better place if, from time to time, we had the courage to look up at the stars.**

Address by Václav Havel, President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 10 May 1990.

Recognised throughout the continent, the sky blue flag with 12 gold stars has symbolised the aspiration and the reality of European construction for over half a century.

Since its adoption by the Council of Europe in 1955, the European flag has unceasingly represented the resolve to further peace and prosperity in all European countries with respect for common values such as democracy, human rights, rule of law and diversity.

In 1983 the European Parliament officially adopted the flag and recommended that it become the emblem of the European Communities. The European Union summit approved this proposal in June 1985. Since 1986 the European flag has become the quintessential symbol of a common European identity. Countless activities and enterprises have made this flag a component of their visual identity.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# BIRTH OF THE EUROPEAN FLAG



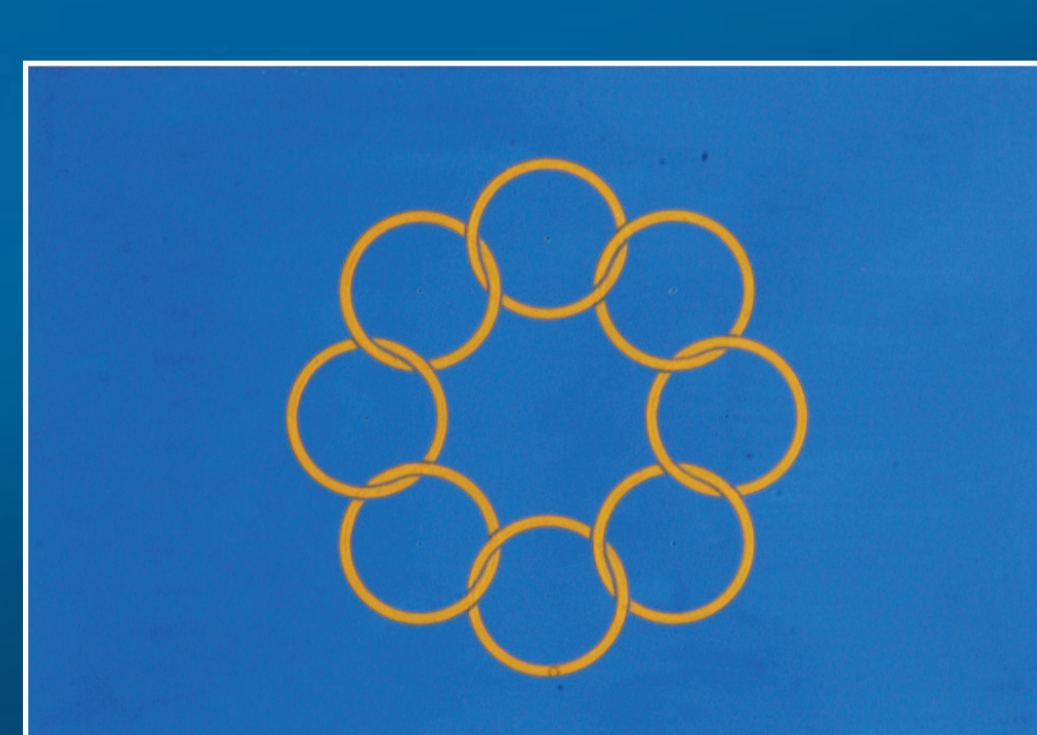
From the inception of the Council of Europe, it very quickly became imperative to adopt a common symbol for Europe.



When the Council of Europe was first convened in 1949, two emblems vied for the favour of Europeans. The most widespread was the European Movement's green "E" on a white background. It had been conceived by the President of the Movement, Duncan Sandys, to replace the red "E" on a white background which dominated the proceedings of The Hague Congress in 1948. The colour green represented the hope of European unity. Another emblem taken into account was a circle and "cross gules" on a field azure, adopted in 1923 by Count Coudenhove-Kalergi for the Pan-European Movement.



In 1950 a group of experts studied at some length a hundred or so proposals by artists, amateurs and heraldry specialists from all over the world, but no decision was reached. Five years later in April 1955, the Committee of Ministers shortlisted two designs: a crown "of 12 five-pointed golden stars, their points not touching", by Arsène Heitz, and a constellation of stars, by Salvador de Madariaga. Finally, after approval by the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, the design by Arsène Heitz was selected and all European institutions were urged to adopt it. It was inaugurated at the Château de la Muette in Paris on 13 December 1955.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



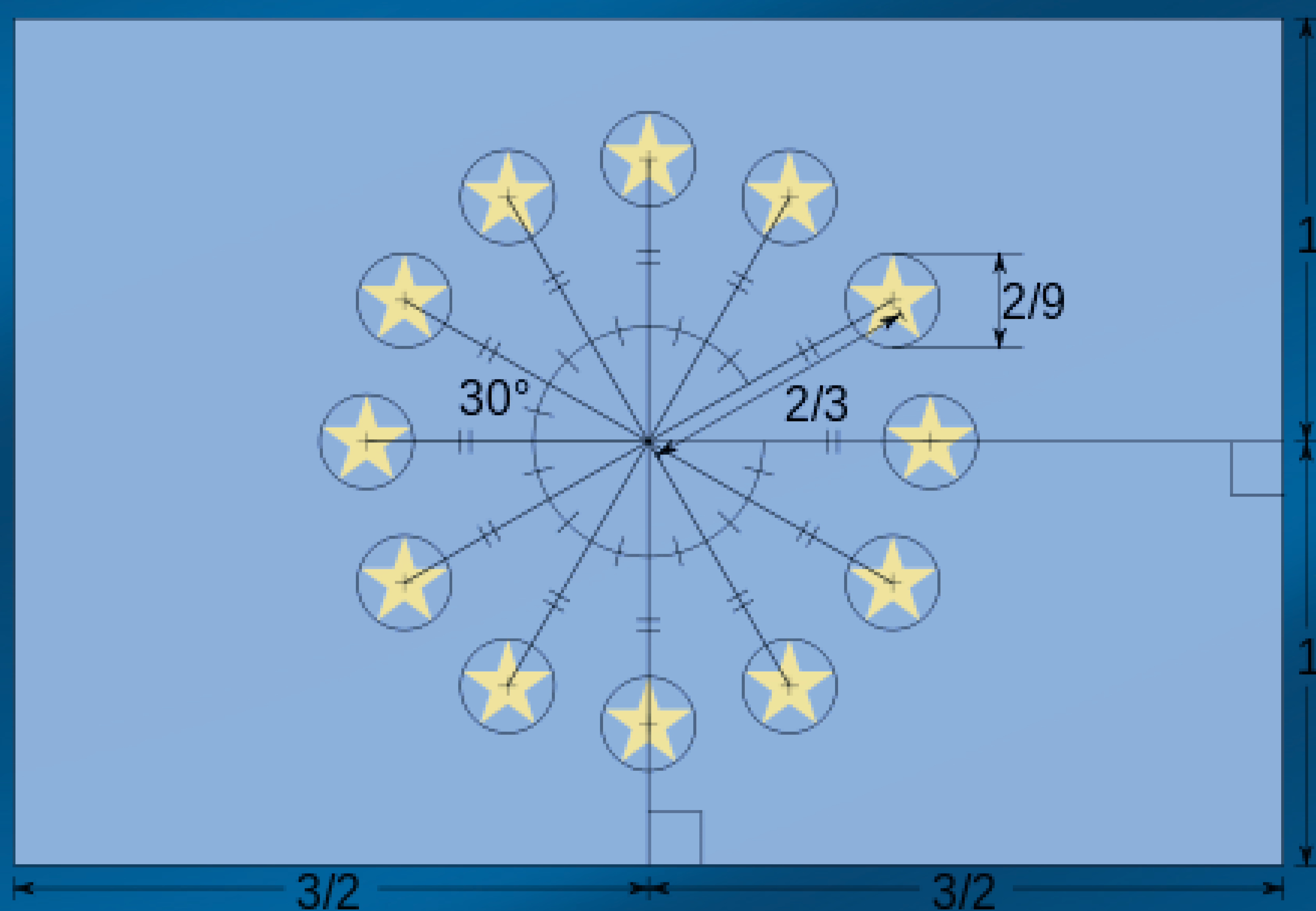
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# A COMMON SYMBOL FOR ALL EUROPE



The circle of 12 gold stars on a sky-blue background symbolises union, solidarity and harmony among the peoples of Europe. It stands for the 820 million Europeans.

The number of stars never changes and is not linked to the number of European Union or Council of Europe member states. The figure 12 calls to mind perfection, completeness, the months in the year and the labours of Hercules.



All the stars on the flag are positioned upright with one point vertical and two others horizontal along an invisible straight line. This corresponds to the posture of the human being, head to the sky and feet on the ground. The stars form a discontinuous circle in which they do not touch.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE