



Stars, Anthems & Mottos: The Symbols That Unite Europe



Main topic & European value

- ◆ **Core topic:** Symbols of European Unity. This game explores the history, meaning, and significance of the shared symbols that represent the European project, including the European flag, the anthem, Europe Day, the motto, and the euro.
- ◆ **European values:** Democracy, solidarity, equality, and human rights. Through interactive gameplay, players examine how shared symbols foster collective identity while respecting cultural diversity.



Educational objectives

By the end of the game, the player should be able to:

- ✓ Identify the five main symbols of the European Union and explain their origins.
- ✓ Compare the intended meaning behind each symbol with how it is perceived by citizens today.
- ✓ Evaluate the role of shared symbols in building collective identity across diverse societies.
- ✓ Apply knowledge of European symbols to analyse how unity and diversity coexist within the EU motto.
- ✓ Explain the democratic processes through which these symbols were adopted.



Scenario overview

The year is 2027. The European Parliament has launched a travelling exhibition called "Unity in Symbols" to visit schools, community centres, and

public spaces across Europe. However, on the night before the exhibition's grand opening, a power failure scrambled the digital displays, mixing up facts, dates, and images related to the EU's key symbols.

The player takes on the role of a young exhibition coordinator who must restore the displays before visitors arrive. Set across five themed rooms, each dedicated to one symbol (the flag, the anthem, Europe Day, the motto, and the euro), the player investigates historical archives, interviews virtual visitors from different countries, and solves puzzles to piece together accurate information.

Along the way, the player encounters differing opinions about what the symbols mean to people from various backgrounds, discovering that unity does not require uniformity. The central challenge is not only factual accuracy but also understanding why these symbols matter to different communities and how they reflect shared democratic values rather than a single national perspective.



Core mechanics & tasks

- ◆ The game uses a combination of exploration, puzzle-solving, quizzes, and decision trees. In each of the five themed rooms, the player must complete a set of tasks to restore the exhibition displays.
 - Exploration: the player navigates interactive environments, examining objects and reading archival documents.
 - Quizzes: factual multiple-choice and matching questions test knowledge of symbol origins, dates, and meanings.
 - Puzzle-solving: the player reassembles scrambled timelines, matches symbols to their correct descriptions, and decodes historical clues.
 - Decision trees: at key moments, the player must choose how to present information to diverse audiences, balancing accuracy with sensitivity.

◆ Tasks include:

- ◆ Room 1 (Flag): Reconstruct the history of the twelve-star circle and explain why twelve was chosen.
- ◆ Room 2 (Anthem): Listen to musical excerpts and identify the correct version of the Ode to Joy, then explore its origin.
- ◆ Room 3 (Europe Day): Sort historical events on a timeline to understand the significance of 9 May.
- ◆ Room 4 (Motto): Collect perspectives from virtual citizens on what “United in Diversity” means to them, then draft a display caption.
- ◆ Room 5 (Euro): Match euro coin designs to their countries and explore how a shared currency reflects cooperation.



Player role

The player is Alex Renier (default name, customisable; gender-neutral), a 19-year-old university student on a cultural heritage internship at the European Parliament. Alex has been assigned as the lead coordinator for the “Unity in Symbols” exhibition. Coming from a multicultural background, Alex is personally curious about what holds Europe together. The player has agency in deciding how to approach each room, which sources to prioritise, and how to frame the exhibition captions. Alex can choose to emphasise historical accuracy, emotional resonance, or inclusive representation, and these choices affect how virtual visitors respond at the end of the game.



NPC profiles

Name	Role in the story & function in the gameplay	Personality traits
Dr. Maren Solis	Mentor and guide. Provides historical context and challenges the player to think critically about each symbol. Offers hints when the player is stuck.	Patient, knowledgeable, encouraging. Speaks calmly and asks Socratic questions.

Yara Lindqvist	Ally and fellow intern. Helps the player gather visitor perspectives and offers a contrasting viewpoint, sometimes questioning whether symbols truly matter to younger generations.	Curious, slightly sceptical, warm. Enjoys debate but always remains respectful.
Tomasz Brandt	Opponent (nuanced). A local journalist who believes the exhibition oversimplifies European identity. Challenges the player with tough questions but has understandable motivations rooted in concern for local cultures.	Direct, articulate, principled. Not hostile but firmly critical. Respects evidence-based arguments.



Dialogue options, choices & consequences

Dialogue or dilemma	Available options (2-3)	Short-term & long-term consequences
Room 1 (Flag): A visitor claims the twelve stars represent the original EU member states. Tomasz overhears and challenges Alex to correct the visitor or agree.	A) Politely correct the visitor, explaining the twelve stars symbolise unity and completeness. B) Agree with the visitor to avoid conflict, hoping Tomasz does not notice. C) Invite the visitor to explore the room together and discover the answer.	A) Visitor appreciates the correction; trust score increases. B) Tomasz publishes a critical note about the exhibition's accuracy; trust score decreases. C) Visitor becomes an active participant in the room; strongest trust boost.
Room 2 (Anthem): Yara questions whether the Ode to Joy feels relevant to young people. The	A) Focus on the historical origins of the anthem and its adoption by the EU. B) Acknowledge Yara's point and suggest creating a	A) Dr. Solis praises the thorough research; Yara remains unconvinced. B) Yara is enthusiastic;



player must decide how to present the anthem.	modern remix for the display. ○ C) Ask Yara to interview visitors about what music means to them and incorporate the responses.	Dr. Solis warns about straying from the official narrative. ○ C) Both NPCs appreciate the collaborative approach; visitors engage more deeply.
Room 3 (Europe Day): Virtual visitors argue that 9 May is meaningless because the EU has problems too. The player must frame the display.	○ A) Present 9 May purely as a historical commemoration of the Schuman Declaration. ○ B) Acknowledge the EU's challenges while explaining why remembering its founding ideals matters. ○ C) Invite visitors to write their own reflections on what peace means today.	○ A) Display is factually strong but emotionally flat; moderate engagement. ○ B) Visitors respond positively to the balanced framing; trust score increases. ○ C) The interactive element generates high engagement; Tomasz notes it avoids hard questions.
Room 4 (Motto): Tomasz confronts Alex, asking how "United in Diversity" can be genuine when some communities feel excluded.	○ A) Defend the motto by citing examples of EU inclusion policies. ○ B) Agree that the motto is aspirational rather than descriptive, and present both perspectives. ○ C) Ask Tomasz to contribute	○ A) Tomasz is unimpressed by a scripted defence; trust score drops. ○ B) Both Tomasz and Dr. Solis appreciate the nuance; strongest outcome



	a short statement for the display representing his viewpoint.	for credibility. ☐ C) Tomasz respects the invitation; his contribution enriches the display.
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Summary, debriefing & reflection questions

After completing the exhibition, consider the following questions:

- ◆ Why does the European flag have twelve stars rather than one star per member state? What does this choice reveal about the values behind the design?
- ◆ The EU anthem has no official words. Is this a strength or a weakness? Why?
- ◆ How does the motto “United in Diversity” differ from “United as One”? What does the difference reveal about European values?
- ◆ Can shared symbols help people feel connected across language and cultural barriers? Give examples from the game or your own experience.
- ◆ Tomasz argues that European symbols sometimes oversimplify complex identities. Do you agree or disagree? Support your view with evidence from the game.
- ◆ If you could propose a new symbol for Europe, what would it be and why?
- ◆ How did the choices you made in the game affect the reactions of visitors and NPCs? What does this tell you about the importance of framing and perspective?
- ◆ Why is it important that symbols are adopted through democratic processes rather than imposed?
- ◆ In what ways can celebrating shared symbols coexist with respecting local and regional traditions?
- ◆ After playing this game, has your understanding of European identity changed? If so, how?



References & additional resources

- ✦ European Commission. (n.d.). The European flag. https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/european-flag_en
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- ✦ Fontaine, P. (2018). Europe in 12 lessons. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a5ba73c6-3c6a-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1>



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