Party flags, colours and logos
in the 8th European Parliament

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Abstract

The author surveys the colours and logos used by the political parties with elected members in the 8th European Parliament.

Three years ago the electorate of the European Union elected – or rather did not elect (turnout was less than 43 per cent) – members of the 8th European Parliament, 2014-19. The MEPs belong to 174 separate political parties or movements. Only 20 of those parties can individually muster the equivalent of at least 1 per cent of the 751 elected MEPs. Taken together, those parties represent 48 per cent of the 8th European Parliament, and it is their symbols which are the topic of this presentation.

Summary of parties and colours:

> British Labour Party – red
> German Social Democratic Party – deep red
> Spanish Socialist Workers' Party – deep red
> Social Democratic Party (Romania) – red and white
> Socialist Party (France) – red or purple
> Socialist Party (Portugal) – red or purple
> Right and Justice (Poland) – red and dark blue
> Conservative Party (UK) - blue
> The Republicans (France) – blue
> National Front (France) – dark blue or blue, white and red
> Christian Democratic Union (Germany) – orange or blue or black
> Forza Italia – light blue
> People's Party (Spain) – light blue
> Civic Platform (Poland) – blue and orange
> Alliance of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party (*Fidesz*) – orange
> Alliance '90 The Greens (Germany) – green
> National Liberal Party (Romania) – yellow and blue
> UK Independence Party – yellow and purple
> Five Star Movement (Italy) – yellow and white
> Democratic Party (Italy – green, blue and red

The most frequently used colour amongst the parties in the 8th European Parliament (35 examples) is red. In the European context, this is the colour of the blood shed in revolutions, beginning with the Jacobin red of the French Revolution, through the year 1848, the Paris Commune of 1871 and ending with the Russian Revolution in 1917. Revolutionary red later became the colour of workers' movements and of socialist ideas. It is, however, also associated with violence.

Since the late 19th century the red flag has been a symbol of the British **Labour Party.** The song 'The Red Flag' even became the party's anthem. By 1996 the flag had been amended with the device of a stylised rose, the English national flower (already in use as a symbol by Scandinavian sister parties), outlined in white and accompanied by the word 'Labour' in white.

A design in reversed colours has also been seen in recent years. The rose in a purple-red shade was promoted briefly in the 1990s, but with less success, in the period of so-called New Labour. The party colour remained red.

Labour Party (UK)

The **Social Democratic Party of Germany (***Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands***)** uses a flag in a red colour, but whose shade is defined as purple, with the white capital letters 'SPD'. In the year 2005 there was an unsuccessful attempt to replace the colour red, considered a colour of vigour, by the colour umber, allegedly more modern, its earthy shade a guaranteed success.

Social Democratic Party of Germany

The **Spanish Socialist Workers' Party** (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) used a white flag with a red rose and the red hand-written word 'Socialistas' as pleasing, unambiguous, informal and almost computer-aided when compared to the traditional red flag with white 'PSOE' created by J.M. Cruz Noville in 2013. As that symbol was found to be too like a marketing logo, it was decided to return to the older one from the year 2015. The party's political colour is dark red.

Spanish Socialist Workers' Party

A red flag with three red roses outlined in white, with the white initials 'PSD' beneath, seems a little folklore-ish, but is the flag of the Romanian **Social Democratic Party** (*Partidul Social Democrat*).

Until 2007 the flag was blue with three white roses within a ring of 12 white five-pointed stars – a model derived from the symbol of the European Socialists.

In 2007 red was chosen as the official party colour, to share the traditional colour of European social democratic parties. The official colours – in Romania the registration of political symbols is obligatory by law – are red and white.

Social Democratic Party (Romania)

To differ from communist and other extreme left-wing parties, socialist parties in France and Portugal started using pink instead of red as a party colour, to express their softer, reformist attitude.

The **Socialist Party** in Portugal (*Partido Socialista*) does not have a simple symbol. It consists of a white clenched fist on a red disc with the party name in red around its circumference; and besides that to the right, added more recently, a red bar with the white and red outlines of a rose and the white initials 'PS'.

The logo is frequently placed on red flags.

Partido Socialista (Portugal)

From 1969, the **Socialist Party** (*Parti socialiste*) in France used a logo of a red rose with green leaves held in a clenched fist (also the logo of the Socialist International) and the capital pink initials 'PS', placed on white flag.

In 2016, the logo was supplemented by a large green leaf with the pink legend 'SOCIAL-ÉCOLOGIE' to show environmental concerns.

Parti Socialiste (France)

Red, in combination with dark blue, is the party colour of the non-socialist Polish party **Law and Justice** (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*).

The white outline of a crowned head of an eagle as the symbol of Polish independence is placed on a blue sheet above the initials of the party in red and white, all above the party name on a red field (white and red are the Polish national colours).

The crimson shade expresses nobility and the dark blue exceptionalism. Both colours were favoured by the Polish aristocracy during the so-called 'Res Publica of Both Nations' (i.e. the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of 1596-1795).

Prawo i Sprawiedliość (Poland)

The second most popular colour used as a single colour, by 32 parties of the 8th European Parliament, is blue.

It is one of the oldest party colours. In politics it represents stability and reliability. It is favoured by right-wing and centrist parties.

The blue banner was a symbol of the British Tories — predecessors of today´s **Conservative Party** – certainly from the first half of the eighteenth century, and has remained so until the present day.

William Hogarth, The Polling*, 1754;*
also includes the orange flags of the
now defunct Whig Party

On the party logo, the natural green colour of the oak – the English national tree – was replaced in 2015 by the Union Jack in the form of a tree, returning to the symbol used in 1834.

Conservative Party (UK)

The French **Republicans** (*Les Républicains*) use blue as a single colour after adopting their present name (formerly Union for a Popular Movement – *Union pour un mouvement populaire*) in 2015.

Their flag is created by the French tricolour, a capital 'R' and the name of the party – all in blue on white.

Les Républicains (France)

A flag in navy blue (*bleu marine*, a reference to the first name of party leader Marine Le Pen), with white capitals 'FN' surrounding a flame (a favoured symbol of Italian neo-fascists) in the colours of the French tricolour is used by the French **National Front** (*Front nationale*).

The NF uses the national blue, white, red tricolour as an additional party colour besides the plain navy blue.

Front National (France)

The **Christian Democratic Union of Germany** (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*) has used full blue from 2010 to emphasise its middle course as well as its Europeanism by adopting a logo resembling a capital 'E' (information from R. Klimeš). The red capitals 'CDU' on the white field are in the colours used by its sister Christian parties in Italy and France after the Second World War. The party's pro-unionism is amply demonstrated by the official logo adopted on 7 February 2008 showing the flags of Germany and the EU and the party's red initials on a white field.

Christian Democratic Union (Germany)

The party **Forza Italia** (Forward Italy) adopted the encouraging chant of sport fans for its name, and the azure colour of the shirts of Italian sports teams as its party colour. From 31 October 2015, the party flag is green, white and red like an Italian tricolour, but arranged horizontally with a narrowed white stripe and with the full party name in white.

Forza Italia (Italy)

Azure – sky blue – is the party colour of the Spanish **People's Party** (*Partido Popular*).

The logo of 9 July 2015 uses a stylised tern (sea swallow) in blue as a symbol of freedom, according to its designer F. Martinez Vidal, placed on a white field within a sky blue ring above the party initials, also in sky blue. When the logo is placed on flags it has a darker shade of blue.

Partido Popular (Spain)

The Polish party **Civic Platform** (*Platforma Obywatelska*) has chosen blue together with orange as its party colours. Its logo is created by the outline of Poland with a smile inserted inside, both in an orange colour, and the full party name in blue on the right, all on a white sheet.

Platforma Obywatelska (Poland)

Orange as a political colour is used only in the Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland. However, in recent decades it has become a colour symbolising life and energy without any negative connotation, and has spread among parties and movements regardless of political tendency in half of the EU countries.

The **Alliance of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Party** (*Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – Magyar Polgári Szövetség*) uses an orange disc with the white acronym 'FIDESZ' as a party logo. It is placed on a white sheet.

Fidesz (Hungary)

From 2003, orange became the official colour of the **Christian Democratic Union of Germany** (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*). The red party initials CDU are situated in a white rectangle towards the bottom of the fly of the orange flag. The colour black remains traditional and is used in media references to 'priests' suits'.

Christian Democratic Union (Germany)

Green, also an old political colour, was the colour of freedom, equality, and of the Young Europe Movement 200 years ago. As the colour of life and growth it was adopted by agrarian parties in the twentieth century. In the 1970s it became the colour of ecological groupings and even gave them its name, as in the case of the German **Alliance ´90 – The Greens** (*Bündnis '90 – Die Grünen*). The flag and the logo is a green sheet with a yellow sunflower and with a blue-underlined white party name.

Bündnis 90 Die Grünen (Germany)

In politics, yellow symbolises optimistic, positive expectations as well as wealth. However, it has negative connotations as well. Yellow alone is not used by any of the relevant parties of the 8th European Parliament, nevertheless it is the colour of many liberal parties.

Yellow and blue are the officially registered colours of the Romanian **National Liberal Party** (*Partidul Național Liberal*). The primary logo, a blue arrow pointed diagonally upwards to the right corner of a yellow square was placed on an EU flag above the party's initials in white.

Partidul Național Liberal (Romania)

Yellow, in combination with expressive purple, has a wide range of meanings in political colours. In the case of the **UK Independence Party** it represents non-conformity and libertarianism, and with the purple emblem of the British Pound on yellow field, even europhobia. The logo is used placed either on a light violet-coloured Union Jack, or on a plain purple sheet with the full party name in yellow.

UK Independence Party

Yellow and white are the colours of the Italian **Five Star Movement** (*Movimento 5 Stelle*). White as a colour was primarily monarchic but now signifies pacifism and purity and should be understood here as a symbol of non-partisanship and the struggle for the cleansing of public life. The flag of the Movement is white with a logo in the centre showing five five-pointed yellow stars within a red circle above the black word *MoVimento*, with an enlarged letter 'V' in red as a sign of vendetta.

Movimento 5 Stelle (Italy)

The three colours of the Italian state flag were adopted by the **Democratic Party** (*Partito Democratico*) to emphasise its national character.

Those colours reflect not only tradition but also diversity and are explained as follows: green – laïcity and ecology, white – catholic solidarity, and red – labour and socialism. Below the party initials lies a green olive branch as a symbol of reconciliation and as a reminder of the name of the coalition the preceded the modern party.

Partitio Democratico (Italy)

Colours, logos and emblems of political subjects are not unchangeable. There are many variants, however, the main trends of particular political positions in the spectrum are relatively stable.

Author biography

Ladislav Hnát was born in Plzeň/Pilsen (Czechoslovakia) in 1936. He graduated from the University of Economics, having specialised in External Commerce. He worked in an export corporation in Prague and, among other places, for four years in Burma. After the Soviet invasion he was not allowed to have commercial relations abroad and was employed in the municipal economy in Prague. After the 'Velvet Revolution' he worked as diplomat in Moscow, Riga and New York. He is now retired. He joined the Vexillological Club in Prague (today, the Czech Vexillological Society) soon after its foundation in the 1970´s. He contributes to the journal *Vexilologie*. He has participated in vexillological congresses, sometimes with presentations, in Germany, Italy, England, Poland, the Netherlands (ICV25) and Georgia. Most recently, he has been interested in the flags, colours and logos of political parties. He edited *Colours and Logos of Political Parties in Europarliament 2009-14* and *Party Flags, Colours and Logos in the 8th European Parliament* in English.