

Atlas of European Values
Trends and Traditions at the turn of the Century



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Colophon

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Preface



*"But aren't these values what really matter,
and are not they what give direction to all the rest"*
Vaclav Havel*

We live in challenging times. Financial crises, globalisation, demographic ageing, climate change and immigration give rise to new uncertainties in Europe, and all over the world. Yet we can build on the strength of the people on our continent to face these challenges and to guarantee the unique prosperity, peace and growing unity which we have achieved. Knowing and realising what binds us, beyond the differences, is essential for that task. We need to understand and respect each other's values, ideas, dreams and convictions. Even if geography may set a frame, the European borders are essentially set by values, by our beliefs. 'United in Diversity', the European Union's motto, again proves to be a well-chosen term.

This Atlas of European Values provides a rich insight into the values and attitudes of the Europeans: more than 800 million people living on the 'old' continent, both inside and outside the European Union's 27 Member States. The atlas examines what Europeans value in family life, work, religion, politics, society and well-being. With the underlying research spanning a generation in time, the Atlas also provides a picture of important value transformations as well as of firm, incontestable beliefs. It is a treasure-trove of information on the wealth of opinions about Europe, and the forces that bind us in spite of our differences.

Interestingly, the book also provides a picture of the direction in which Europe seems to be heading. Modernisation and

individualisation have gained ground, especially in the North-Western parts. However, traditional family values still dominate. An East-West divide is found when it comes to the average opinions on issues such as homosexuality or abortion. In contrast, people all over the continent share a number of firmly-held common values regarding freedom, solidarity, equality, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Indeed, the European Union – today 27 European states working together with common institutions – would be impossible without this foundation of freedom, democracy and justice, the very essence of modern societies.

A flourishing European society cannot be built on economic institutions and political bodies alone; these are only instruments. It is people, engaged and enthusiastic European citizens, who need to bring life and soul into the idea of a peaceful, free and democratic Europe. This presupposes that citizens feel connected to each other and to a larger whole. There cannot be a society without a sense of solidarity, which should start from the smallest beginnings. It also presupposes a sense of a greater good, going beyond pure self-interest. These values are a necessary condition for the work of European unification, as it started off shortly after World War II. This Atlas gives every reason to believe that the citizens of our continent will carry the unique project that is our European Union well into the 21st century.

Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council,
October 2011

*Speech at the European Parliament 2009