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## THE GUARDIAN VIEW ON EUROPEAN IDENTITY: ENLIGHTENED IDEALS NEED DEFENDING

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The Guardian (25 September 2024)

From its earliest beginnings in the aftermath of war, the ambition to create a common supranational identity was at the heart of the project that was to become the European Union. One of the EUs founding fathers, Jean Monnet, spoke of the need to make people work together, show them that beyond their differences and geographical boundaries there lies a common interest.

The historic expansion of the union to encompass 27 member states has been a vindication of that vision, notwithstanding the recent shadow cast by Britains self-harming Brexit. Polling for a major report released on Wednesday by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) finds that most citizens, in most member states, remain emotionally committed to the EU. A common response to the challenge of Covid, and the emergence of Vladimir Putins Russia as a threat to peace and stability, appear to have strengthened a sense that cooperation and solidarity hold the key to prosperity and security.

That will be taken as reassuring by Monnets modern successors in the European institutions. But the good news is overshadowed by serious caveats. In the context of turbulent and threatening times, the ECFRs research also identifies three emerging fronts in a wider battle for Europes soul. For those charged with defending the core EU values values of equality and inclusion, each needs to be addressed with a great deal more vigour than has been the case up to now.

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