

United in diversity:**ANTHEMS AND FLAGS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,**

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Denmark

1. Flag

- Created in the 14th century and adopted in 1397

The Danish flag (*Dannebrog*) literally means ‘red cloth’. It is mentioned for the first time in the 14th century in a Dutch text, then in 1478 in a Danish text. It is a red flag with a white cross that extends to the edges of the flag and is shifted to the hoist side. The cross is known both as the ‘Scandinavian cross’ or ‘Saint Olaf’s cross’.



According to legend told in Christiern Pedersen’s Danish chronicle, the flag fell from the sky on 15 June 1219 and reinvigorated the troops of Valdemar II ‘the Victorious’ during a crusade against the pagan Estonians. The then Emperor of Rome, Constantine, had dreamed of a cross, before the battle in 312 that made him the sole sovereign of the Roman Empire: this was typical of miraculous apparitions. Another legend tells of the tunic of Valdemar II that was stained red with blood following a Danish crusade in Estonia, with the exception of the shoulder strap and belt areas. This colouration is also said to have inspired the colours of the Danish flag. It is in memory of the battle that the *Dannebrog* order was established in 1219, which even today still rewards special contributions in the field of arts, science or matters in Denmark’s interest.

Firstly, the crests of Valdemar IV Atterdag, dating back to 1370-1386, were borne on a red standard with a white cross, officially adopted by the Danish royal family in 1397. From 1591 onwards, under the reign of Christian IV (cf. Danish national anthem), Danish coins were minted with a similar cross, which soon became considered as that of the *Dannebrog*. Lastly, between 1848 and 1850, years marked by nationalism, the Danes often flew the national flag. Nowadays, they continue to fly it in their garden, for family celebrations and official holidays. The Danes celebrate Valdemar’s Day on 15 June and small Danish flags are sold on this occasion. Christmas is also the perfect opportunity to decorate Christmas trees with small Danish flags, another sign of the Danes’ attachment to the *Dannebrog*, the oldest flag in the world.

2. Anthems

1. *Kong Kristian stod ved højen mast*

(King Christian stood by the lofty mast)

- Written by Johannes Ewald
- Composed by Johan Ernst Hartmann
- Composed and adopted in 1780

2. *Der er et yndigt land*

(There is a lovely land)

- Written by Adam Oehlenschläger
- Composed by Hans Ernst Krøyer
- Composed in 1835 and adopted in 1844

Denmark has two officially recognised national anthems. The first royal one, *Kong Kristian* – King Christian – used during commemorations of the Royal family or for military occasions, and the second civil national anthem entitled “There is a lovely land”.

The 'royal anthem', written in 1779 by Johannes Ewald, Danish poet and playwright, is the oldest European national anthem in terms of official adoption. Initially, the text appeared in 1780 in the historic operetta by Ewald: "The Fishermen" (*Fiskerne*). It pays tribute to King Christian IV (1577-1648), to the navy and to the war heroes of the 17th and 18th centuries. Danish involvement in the Thirty Years War lasted from 1625 to 1629. Despite an alliance with Sweden in 1928, the latter declared war on Denmark in 1643. The first stanza of the anthem recalls the victory of the hero King Christian IV on Sweden in 1644, turning Denmark into a world power. It started trading relations with Iceland, Greenland and the Indies and built monuments and castles throughout the country. This heritage bears witness even today to the power of Denmark.

Kong Christian stod ved højen mast

*Kong Christian stod ved højen mast
i røg og damp;
hans værge hamrede så fast,
at gotens hjelm og hjerne brast.
Da sank hvert fjendtligt spejl og mast
i røg og damp.
Fly, skreg de, fly, hvad flygte kan!
hvo står for Danmarks Christian
hvo står for Danmarks Christian
i kamp?*

Der er et yndigt land

*Der er et yndigt land,
det står med brede bøge
nær saltens østerstrand (bis).
Det bugter sig i bakke, dal,
det hedder gamle Danmark
og det er Freja's sal (bis).*

King Christian stood by the lofty mast

King Christian stood by the lofty mast.
In mist and smoke;
His sword was hammering so fast
Through Gothic helm and brain it passed.
Then sank each hostile hulk and mast,
In mist and smoke.
"Fly!" shouted they, "fly, he who can!"
Who braves of Denmark's Christian,
Who braves of Denmark's Christian,
In battle?

There is a lovely land

There is a lovely land,
That proudly spreads her beeches
Beside the Baltic strand (bis).
A land that curves in hill and dale,
That men have named Old Denmark
And this is Freya's hall (bis).

The original air of the 'royal anthem' dates back to the 17th century. Its composer is unsure but the melody is generally attributed to Johan Ernst Hartmann. The final version as well as all the variations for piano were recomposed by Friedrich Kuhlau in 1817 (opus 16). He integrated it into the overture to "The Elf Hill" (*Elverhøi*), a play composed for a royal marriage in the Danish Court in 1828.

The second anthem "There is a lovely land", was written by the head of Danish romanticism Oehlenschläger, in 1819. Norway became separated from Denmark in 1814, following the Treaty of Kiel, whereas these two countries had been united since 1380 under the Danish crown and farming crises were worsening the situation in the country. In the 1840s, in parallel to the unification process underway in Italy and Germany, the Scandinavian political movement was developing in Denmark and in Sweden. Associated with Hans Ernst Krøyer's melody, the song became popular as was considered to be national anthem in 1844 during a gathering of some 12,000 students. At the place of this meeting, on a hill facing the sea, a granite column was erected in 1863, commemorating the deaths of Danish fighters and displaying the podium and the five trees symbolising the union of the Nordic countries: beech (Denmark), birch (Sweden), fir (Norway), juniper (Finland) and rowan (Iceland). Everything bears witness to Denmark's attachment to this meeting place.

Scandinavian cooperation progressed and from 1875, Denmark, Sweden and Norway were united in monetary union, which lasted until 1914.

Proximity to nature, a major feature in Scandinavian culture and underscored in the anthem "There is a lovely country", pays tribute to the beauty of the landscapes and the country. The anthem was a strong symbol of Danish resistance against the German occupier. Today, this anthem is used during national and international sporting events.

