
Hungary

1. Flag

- Created in 1848
and adopted in 1957

Composed of three horizontal bands of red-white-green, the Hungarian flag appeared for the first time in 1848, during the wave of the “Springtime of the Peoples” that was sweeping over Europe. This layout drew inspiration from the existing tricolour flags that were very popular at the time as a reflection of the French Revolution. The choice of colours, however, was strictly linked to the history of Hungary: the red recalled the banners of the tribes of King Arpad, who settled the Magyars in the heart of the Pannonian Plain; the white was the colour of King Stephen, who freed the kingdom and was canonised in 1083; the green belonged to the royal coat of arms, especially since the time of Mathias Corvin in the 15th century.



A less historic interpretation stresses that the red represents courage, the white loyalty and the green hope.

The flag, which was initially forbidden by the Hapsburg Emperor, reappeared in 1867. The 1848 revolution, which was initially liberal, became radical under the impetus of the political leader Kossuth. With the help of the Czar the Emperor crushed the movement and regained control of the Kingdom of Hungary. Franz Joseph of Austria, weakened by his defeat against the Prussians in 1866, agreed to a compromise within his empire granting autonomy to the Kingdom of Hungary. This was known as the “double monarchy” or dual monarchy.

Over the course of several periods, the flag bore a shield in its centre. The most famous one, which bears the patriarchal cross, with green hills, the red and white colours of Arpad and King Stephen’s crown, is still used today. The Soviet emblem was removed during the uprising in Budapest in 1956. Despite the repression of the Russian Army and the appointment of Janos Kadar to power instead of the popular Imre Nagy, the idea of placing a new emblem on the flag was quickly cast aside and the simple tricolour flag took on its definitive form.

2. Anthem

- *Himnusz* (Anthem)
- Written by Ferenc Kölcsey
- Composed by Ferenc Erkel
- Composed in 1823 and adopted in 1903

While only the first stanza is usually played and sung, the entire poem from which the Hungarian anthem originates endeavours to recall the history of the people. Parading before us we can visualise Arpad, the 9th-century head of the Magyar tribes originating from the Ural mountains, the king and national hero Mathias Corvin and the Turkish and Mongol invaders. In 1686, the Catholic forces united in the Holy League hunted the Ottomans and conquered Buda, and then the entire Hungarian territory. The Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 nevertheless firmly anchored Hungary in the Hapsburg Empire, to whom it would remain bound until 1918.

Himnusz

Isten, áldd meg a magyart
Jó kedvvel, bőséggel,
Nyújts feléje védő kart,
Ha küzd ellenséggel;
Balsors akit régen tép,
Hozz reá vig esztendőt,
Megbünhődte már e nép
A múltat sjövendőt.

Anthem

O Lord, bless the nation of Hungary,
With Your grace and bounty,
Extend over it Your guarding arm
During strife with its enemies
Long torn by ill fate
Bring upon it a time of relief
This nation has suffered for all sins
Of the past and of the future!

The anthem belongs to the romantic movement and reveals hallmarks of nobility and religiousness, which are underscored by the melancholic music accompanying the text.

The lyrics, written by the poet and politician Ferenc Kölcsey, became so popular that a contest was organised in 1844 to set it to music. The winner, Ferenc Erkel, was a great name in Hungarian music, a major figure of Romanticism involved in the struggle against privileges and for freedom of the serfs. He was linked to what became the Franz Liszt Academy of Music.

Filled with nostalgia and reminders of the glorious or painful past, the Hungarian anthem fully expresses the need for calm and serenity after a turbulent history filled with successive rulers. In this it fully reflects the desire for peace by all Europeans, after the chaos of the 20th century.

Despite several attempts, the national anthem, although temporarily replaced by the *Kaiserlied* of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was never modified, even during the Communist period. Because of his fame, the well-known composer Zoltan Kodaly could refuse to compose a new anthem in 1948, arguing that there was no need to replace the *Himnusz*.

