

United in diversity:

## ANTHEMS AND FLAGS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

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# Portugal

## 1. Flag

- Created in 1910  
and adopted in 1911



While the colours green and red are fairly traditionally associated with hope and courage in battle, it is the coat of arms in the centre of the flag that offers us a fresco of Portugal's history. The final version of the flag was only adopted in 1911, thus belatedly by comparison with the country's long history, as though each point had been carefully thought through and weighed up.

In the centre of the main shield, five blue shields are set in a cross recalling the Cross of Christ. Each one contains five silver bezants, the number five also referring to the five wounds of Christ, and the shields also illustrate the victories of the first king of Portugal, Alfonso Henriques, over the Moors. In the surrounding field, the same king is evoked through the seven castles he won in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, thus making his mark on the country's territorial expansion. Portugal achieved its current size after the southern province of the Algarve was conquered and annexed in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century.

The shield rests on an armillary sphere symbolising the country's maritime and colonial achievements. This maritime expansion, which began in around 1415, reached its peak with the navigators Vasco da Gama and Ferdinand Magellan. A plan submitted by Christopher Columbus, an Italian, however, was rejected by the Portuguese so he submitted it to Queen Isabella of Castille instead and she approved it. This period was to mark the golden age of Portugal under King Manuel I. An empire was gradually built spanning the five continents: Madeira, the Azores and Brasil in the west, Angola, Mozambique, Capo Verde and Guinea-Bissau in Africa, and Goa, Malacca, Macao, East Timor and the Moluccas in the east. Madeira and the Azores are still part of the Republic today, though they enjoy insular autonomy status.

A civil and military uprising in 1910 led to the establishment of the Portuguese Republic. A committee was tasked with devising the national flag, and the Constituent Assembly endorsed its choice on 19 June 1911. It is a complex flag that paints a historical fresco: only the colours green and red are republican symbols, because the monarchy's traditional colours were blue and white.

The Portuguese people are very attached to their flag as a mark of their identity. Whenever the national team is playing in an international football competition, the balconies of Portuguese ex-pats the world over are instantly decked with the national flag!

## 2. Anthem

- *A Portuguesa* (The Portuguese)
- Written by Henrique Lopes de Medonça and composed by Alfredo Keil
- Created in 1890 and adopted in 1911

The Kingdom of Portugal forged an alliance with the English in 1396 to promote military and economic cooperation, signing a treaty that is still in force today. The alliance came into its own when it proved to be of use in hounding out the Spanish in 1640 and the French in 1808, as well as during the two World Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Yet the Republican transition was to take place in a specifically anti-British vein. England put the Portuguese royal house in a tight spot by opposing its territorial aims in Africa, which were supposed to make up for its loss of Brasil. This led in 1891 to civil unrest, which was directed both against the royalty and against the country's powerful traditional ally. The Republicans gained the upper hand, and in 1911 the Constitution established the national anthem and the national flag.

Sung during the attempted revolution in January 1891, the march written by Henrique Lopes de Medonça and set to music by Alfredo Keil urges the sea-faring people to wake up and rebel. The British ultimatum against Portugal's aspirations was a bitter pill to swallow and it was seen as a humiliation. A sentiment of injustice and a desire for freedom shine through both the lyrics and the melody. *A Portuguesa*, with its vibrant, enthusiastic and impassioned tone and words, was taken up by the Republican rebels on 31 January 1911.

Several different versions of the anthem, both in terms of its musical arrangement and of the rhythm adopted, coexist in Portugal, but the new Constitution of 1976 spawned by the "Carnation Revolution" and the toppling of the dictator Salazar in 1974, established the definitive version still in use today.

### **A Portuguesa**

*Heróis do mar, nobre povo,  
Nação valente, imortal,  
Levantai hoje de novo  
O esplendor de Portugal!  
Entre as brumas da memória,  
Ó Pátria, sente-se a voz  
Dos teus egrégios avós,  
Que há-de guiar-te à vitória !  
Às armas, às armas!  
Sobre a terra, sobre o mar,  
Às armas, às armas!  
Pela Pátria lutar  
Contra os canhões marchar, marchar!*

### **The Portuguese**

Heroes of the sea, noble people,  
Brave and immortal nation,  
Raise once again today,  
The splendor of Portugal!  
Among the haze of memory,  
Oh Fatherland, one feels the voice  
Of your distinguished forefathers,  
That shall lead you to victory!  
To arms, to arms!  
Over land, over sea,  
To arms, to arms!  
For the Fatherland, fight!  
Against the cannons, march on,  
march on!

