

# Romania

## 1. Flag

- Created in 1867  
and adopted in 1994

The association of the three colours blue, yellow and red dates back to the uprising of 1821 against Ottoman overlordship over the two principalities of Valachia and Moldavia. Initially set horizontally, the bands became vertical in 1867. The three colours express the desire for freedom and unity of all the peoples of Romania, whether dominated by the Turks, the Russians or the Austro-Hungarians. They were originally the result of a merger between the colours of Moldavia which were blue and red, and the colours of Valachia which were yellow and red.



Other interpretations are often ventured to interpret the colours' significance, such as the union of Romania's three historic regions, Moldavia, Valachia and Transylvania, or blue for the sky and freedom, yellow for prosperity and equality and red for the blood of fraternity. Children were once taught in school that blue stood for the sky, yellow for the cornfields and red for the blood spilled by the heroic defenders of the Romanian land. But that version is no longer taught today.

Long bearing in its centre a crest combining the emblems of the country's main regions, the flag was given a hammer and sickle by Nicolae Ceauşescu, the leader of the Romanian communist regime from 1965 until his fall and execution in December 1989. Ostensibly marking his distance from the USSR, Ceauşescu forged ties both with the West and with China, but he then proceeded to sink into the personalisation of power, radicalising the Securitate secret police and forcing the nation to fold in on itself and to withdraw into isolation. A rebellion broke out in Timișoara in December and Ceauşescu fled with his wife after being heckled in Bucharest. The National Salvation Front took power under former communist Ion Iliescu after the erstwhile dictator's execution.

Right from the very start of the unrest in Timișoara – and this was to become a major aspect of the 1989 revolution – the Romanian flag had a hole punched through the middle to remove the communist hammer and sickle. It was to fly with that hole in it throughout the revolution, its image going round the world and an example of the flag in that condition even being presented to US President Bill Clinton during a visit to Bucharest.

The flag was finally adopted in its present form in 1994.

## 2. Anthem

- *Deșteaptă-te, române!*  
(Awake, Romanian!)
- Written by Andrei Mureșanu
- Composed by Anton Pann
- Composed in 1848 and adopted in 1990

The Romanian national anthem echoes the revolutions of 1848 which rocked a large number of European countries. At that time Transylvania was a part of the Habsburg possessions, while the two principalities of Moldavia and Valachia were under the joint overlordship of Russia and Turkey. A deeply-felt desire arose to unite and to free the three regions, Mureșanu's lyrics reflecting the need to remind the Romanian people that they shared a common history. They refer to the names of the great men who were the Romanian people's "forebears": Trajan, Michael the Brave, Stephen the Great and Matthias Corvinus.

After numerous attempts to extend the Roman Empire north of the Danube to the region inhabited by the Geto-Dacians, Trajan conquered Dacia and had his glorious conquest carved on a column erected in the heart of his forum in Rome. We are also told of a legendary idyll between Trajan and the shepherdess Dakia, the embodiment of Dacia. The Daco-Roman population has been living in the region without interruption since then.

During his reign in Moldavia from 1457 to 1504, Stephen the Great personified bravery itself in his struggle against the Hungarians and the Poles, but above all against the Ottomans. In fact his bravery was even to earn him the nickname "athlete of Christ", which was conferred on him by the pope. He was also a cousin of Valachian Prince Vlad Tepes, who inspired the character of Dracula.

Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary from 1458, was one of the leading players in the struggle against the Ottomans. He succeeded in gathering all of the regions that make up modern Romania under his wing.

And above all, Michael the Brave, at the head of a military coalition with his neighbours against the Ottoman Empire, managed to unite the three Romanian provinces under his command in 1599. That union, despite being only fleeting, still holds pride of place in the Romanian people's national sentiment today.

A priority in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the reference to the Cross and the Christian army was a way of reaffirming the struggle against the Turkish Empire, the primary obstacle standing in the way of the Romanian people's freedom.

This song has rung out during every single popular uprising thanks to its call to patriotism and freedom. It was sung by the protesting crowds during the revolution in 1989 and it was only natural that it should become the country's national anthem in 1990.

### ***Deșteaptă-te, române!***

*Deșteaptă-te, române, din somnul cel  
de moarte,  
În care te-adânciră barbarii de tirani!  
Acum ori niciodată croiește-ți altă  
soartă,  
La care să se-nchine și cruzii tăi  
dușmani!*

*Acum ori niciodată să dăm dovezi în  
lume  
Că-n aste mâni mai curge un sânge de  
roman,  
Și că-n a noastre piepturi păstrăm cu  
fală-un nume  
Triumfător în lupte, un nume de Traian!*

*Priviți, mărețe umbre, Mihai, Ștefan,  
Corvine,  
Româna națiune, ai voștri strănepoți,  
Cu brațele armate, cu focul vostru-n  
vine,  
"Viață-n libertate ori moarte!" strigă  
toți.*

*Preoți, cu crucea-n frunte! căci oastea  
e creștină,  
Deviza-i libertate și scopul ei  
preasfânt,  
Murim mai bine-n luptă, cu glorie  
deplină,  
Decât să fim sclavi iarăși în vechiul  
nost' pământ!*

### **Awake, Romanian !**

Romanian, awaken your Spirit from  
the sleep of Death  
Impressed upon you by Tyrannies of  
barbarians;  
Now or never, fashion a new Fate,  
Stronger than your foes!

Now or never, our legacy prove to all,  
That through our veins still flows the  
Blood of Ancient Rome  
That in our chests we proudly hail a  
Name,  
Triumphant in battle, the Name of  
Trajan!

Gaze mightily, glorious shadows,  
Michael, Stephen, Corvinus  
The Romanian nation, your  
descendants,  
With weapons in their hands, with your  
Fire burning  
"Life in Liberty or Death!", all cry  
together.

Priests, with the Cross before you, as  
the army is Christian,  
The motto is Liberty and its goal  
eternal  
Better dead in battle, in full glory  
Than be enslaved again in our  
ancestral homeland!

