

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

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Slovenia

1. Flag

- Created and adopted in 1991

The flag consists of three horizontal tricolour bands in white, blue and red, with the addition of a crest. The basic colours and the way they are arranged are typically Slav, and are also to be found, for instance, in the Russian flag.

The crest, on the other hand, shows the country's mountains, the Adriatic Sea and its rivers, as well as the three stars of the Counts of Celje.



The mountain depicted is Mount Triglav, the highest peak in the country at 2,864 metres above sea level, which every Slovenian has to climb at least once in his or her life. This legendary location situated in the heart of a national park is to be found on Slovenia's euro coins. Its three-peaked shape also reflects the three stars, Triglav meaning "three heads" in Slovenian.

The historical connections are many and varied. The three colours are those of the pan-Slav movement which developed in central and Eastern Europe in the 19th century, and indeed we find them also in the other countries in which Slavs form the majority of the population. They are also the three colours of the flags and banners of the historic Carniola region centering on Ljubljana. This was an administrative division under the Habsburg Empire, and also the centre of the Illyrian Provinces in Napoleon's empire. So the three colours carry the dual symbolism of a broad area shared by Slavs and of a smaller but specific area strongly imbued with national identity.

The stars of Celje refer to the County which proved capable of maintaining some form of independence from its powerful neighbours, even if only for a few years. The dynasty of the counts, allied to Luxembourg and opposed to the Habsburgs, died out in 1456 and their territory naturally fell under the influence of the Austrian emperor, given that it had been a part of the empire since the 13th century. So the dynasty's influence was only fleeting, but it was to prove strongly symbolic for the country's identity when it achieved independence in 1991.

Thus the flag reflects both the country's roots in the Slav world, in a specific and unique historical context, but also the image of the quality of life and the environment that are so dear to the Slovenian people's heart.

It emphasises the country's love of nature, of its rivers and its mountains, a love which we find in the national logo chosen in 2006 to promote the country abroad: "*I feel Slovenia*", where the light green background highlights the beauty and purity of a country in which nature is paramount. This highly emotional slogan is embodied not only in the use of the words "I feel" but also, indeed more especially, in the use of the four letters forming the word "love" designed to boost the country's attraction. The slogan can be seen in the world of tourism, on national sports teams' kit and at major cultural events and receptions, where it stands alongside the national flag.

2. Anthem

- *Zdravljica* (A Toast)
- Written by France Prešeren
Composed by Stanko Premrl
- Composed in 1844
and adopted in 1989

Poet France Prešeren is Slovenian history's most charismatic figure. His statue dominates the heart of the capital Ljubljana and his name and image are to be found in every town and village and on the country's coinage, revealing both his popularity and his influence in the country.

Zdravljica

*Živé naj vsi narodi,
ki hrepené dočakat' dan,
da, koder sonce hodi,
pepir iz sveta bo pregnan,
da rojak
prost bo vsak,
ne vrag, le sosed bo mejak!*

A toast

God's blessing on all nations,
Who long for that bright day,
When o'er earth's habitation
No war, no strife shall hold its sway;
Who long to see
That all man free
No more shall foes, but neighbours be!

The first known work in the Slovenian language dates back to the 10th century, although it began to develop in full only in 1550 when Primož Turbar translated and published the biblical New Testament in the spoken language of his people, in accordance with the precepts of his mentor Martin Luther. In the mid-19th century Slovenia, which was still under Habsburg domination at the time, a majority of the country's elite, feeling politically attracted to pan-Slavism, preferred to speak in foreign languages. So Prešeren catalysed the flowering of the Slovenian language, which was just emerging from the fields and forests, and opened up new horizons for it. The language found in him its Alexander Pushkin, its Heinrich Heine, and acquired a hitherto unknown nobility.

Thus it was only natural that a part of his political work should be adopted to compose the national anthem. "A Toast" was composed in 1844 and published in 1848 after the demise of the absolutism established by the Austrian chancellor. Set to music in 1905, it was unanimously adopted as the national anthem in 1989.

This lyrical poem speaks to the heart, embodying the people's aspiration to both national and individual freedom, or rather freedoms: that of every citizen, and that of all of the peoples in the world, in the hope that those freedoms will lead to universal harmony and concord. The last verse also denotes the country's attachment to the spirit of peace among neighbours that was so dear to Europe's founding fathers.

It is worth noting that, just like Prešeren, so Slovenia's other foremost national figures are not monarchs, leaders or heroes of memorable battles but tend, far more, to come from the literary world. It is true that this country, which has been independent since 1991, has for centuries known only foreign overlordship or domination, or alliance with its other Slav neighbours.

