

The Republic of the Four Nations, colloquially referred to as the Viennese Republic, is a multinational state in Central Europe. It is divided into four highly autonomous regions that were formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian empire: Austria, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia (Vienna, the federal capital, forms its own region since 1990, but is not considered as a separate nation).

Names

Apart from “the Republic of the Four Nations”, various names are used to refer to the state:

- Its official name is *the Republic of the Four Nations of Austria, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia*.
- It is also commonly referred as *the Viennese Republic*.
- The acronym *ÖMČS* - or *OMCS* - (for *Österreich-Magyarország-Česko-Slovensko*, the name of each nation written in its regional language) is mainly used on maps, coins and stamps.
- The country code is QN (for *Quattuor Nationes*, or “Four Nations” in Latin).

There is no official demonym for the citizens of the Republic. They most often refer to themselves as Austrian, Hungarian, Czechs or Slovaks. Otherwise, “Viennese”, “Viennese citizen” or “Central European” are commonly used.

Symbols

Anthem: *We're the citizens of the Four Nations; The Blue Danube* (unofficial)

Motto: *Omnia Mutantur, Caelum Semper* (Everything changes, but the sky remains); *Two and two make four* (unofficial)

National symbol: Four-leaf clover

National day: strangely enough, each region celebrates the national day of the Republic at slightly different dates, corresponding to the day their regional representatives ratified the country’s first constitution in 1919: 23 October for Hungary, 26 October for Austria (including Vienna), and 28 October for Czechia and Slovakia.

Geography

A landlocked country, the Republic of the Four Nations has shorelines only along its many lakes and rivers. It possesses the largest lake in Central Europe, Lake Balaton – also a popular tourist destination –, and the largest river of the EU, the Danube. The river has been described as the Republic’s backbone, flowing through the country from west to east and connecting three of its capital cities, Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest.

The country has a diverse landscape, mostly mountainous in the north and south-west (Sudetes, Carpathians, Alps) and flat in the south-east.

Its population is highly urbanised, with major urban centres like Vienna, Prague, or Budapest.

Culture

Despite strong regional identities, the region has developed a shared culture since its unification under Habsburg rule, blending Slavic, German and Magyar influences.

The diversity of its cuisine is a good example of this, with Goulash and Apfelstrudel among the Four Nations' most iconic dishes, along with various recipes of schnitzel, dumplings, etc...

The Four Nations are also reputed for the variety of their beers, their spa and bathing culture, and their classical music heritage (Mozart, the Strauss family, Dvorak, Bartók, Liszt...).

The most popular sports are soccer, ice hockey and skiing (each nation usually competes separately in international competitions).

Religiously, the Republic is predominantly Catholic, and though religious practice has decreased under communist rule, it is still part of the country's cultural identity and contributes to a sense of shared identity.

History

- Precursor

Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria had planned to redraw the map of Austria-Hungary radically, creating a number of ethnically and linguistically dominated semi-autonomous "states" which would all be part of a larger federation renamed the United States of Greater Austria.

- Creation

The "Austro-Hungarian Republic" was proclaimed in November 1918 in Vienna as a successor state of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Though Austrophilist sentiments persisted, its future was far from assured, given the strong desire for independence expressed by nationalist movements throughout the territories of the former empire.

Searching for the right balance between right of self-determination (including that of German and Hungarian minorities in Czechia and Slovakia), defence concerns and economic realities, Woodrow Wilson favoured large autonomy for Czechs and Slovaks inside a multinational state. The Allied powers were also concerned about the potential unification of an independent Austria with Germany, and about territorial disputes that would give Germany or Hungary a pretext to invade.

The creation of the *Republic of the Four Nations* was eventually formalised the following year by the treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The former empire was stripped of its southern and north-eastern territories and each region of the new federal state was given a very large autonomy.

- First Republic (1920s-30s)

The early years of the Republic were marred by political violence and nationalist agitation.

But the federal institutions stood fast and, by the late 1920's, it seemed that the country had found its footing, regained a certain stability and internal peace.

From 1929 however, the country was hit hard by the Great Depression. The economic situation exacerbated again ethnic tensions, and facilitated the coming to power of fascist politicians in regional governments. In the 30s, the Republic of the Four Nations was dissolved following declarations of independence in Austria and Hungary, and the subsequent formation of a Czechoslovak state.

Though short-lived, this first republic stayed in the collective memory as a golden age of freedom, democracy, multiculturalism and artistic expression in the region.

- Communist rule (1949-1989)

After the second world war, Winston Churchill proposed to restore the Viennese Republic under the name "Confederation of the Danube", but the plan did not materialise until 1949, when Stalin pushed for the formation of a "Union of Central European Democratic Republics". The objective was to anchor Lower Austria (still under Soviet occupation) to the communist bloc.

The new state proved to be a headache for the USSR, with West Vienna still controlled by Western Allies, frequent uprisings (notably the "Vienna Spring" of 1968), and a steady movement towards political liberalisation. From the point of view of the citizens of the UCEDR however, the ever-present Soviet threat reinforced their cohesion, solidarity and sense of community.

- Second Republic (1989- present day)

Following the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and political reforms, the country was renamed again "Republic of the Four Nations". There was some debate over the future of the multinational state, but support for independence in each of its main regions remained low. Following a referendum, East and West Vienna were reunified as federal capital, and formed their own autonomous region.

The Republic of the Four Nations is now part of NATO and the European Union. The country is considered to be one of the most successful of the former eastern bloc, with a robust economy and a high quality of life.