

# THE 25TH OF MARCH 1821 ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA OF THE HELLENIC UNION OF ROMANIA<sup>1</sup>

Ela COSMA

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## Abstract

The study discusses the celebrations of Greece's main national day (25 March 1821) among the Greeks living in present day Romania, organized in the Hellenic Communities affiliated to the Hellenic Union of Romania, as reflected in the pages of the bilingual periodical, *Ελπίς/Speranța* (Elpis/Speranța) [Hope]. After a short introduction (1), we present: the Hellenic Union of Romania, its territorial communities and presidents (2), drafting the portraits of *kyrios* Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023), president of the Association of the Hellenic Community in București (3), and *kyria* Eleni Idu (1941-2022), founding president of the Hellenic Community in Cluj-Napoca (4). Then we turn to: the celebration of the main national day of Greece as reflected in *Ελπίς/Speranța* (5), eventually insisting on the political agenda of the 25th March 1821 in Romania and Greece, namely on the Hellenic Communities from Romania (6), as well as the Romanian and Greek highest-ranking politicians (7) celebrating the 25th March 1821. We conclude our study with a few final remarks (8), regarding both Romania's domestic policy of observing the rights of its national minorities (including the Greek minority) and the good example offered by Greece in protecting its Greek diaspora.

**Keywords:** celebration of the 25th of March 1821; Hellenic Union of Romania; Hellenic Communities in Romania; *Ελπίς/Speranța* (Elpis/Speranța) periodical; political agenda.

## 1. Introduction

Defined by Nicolae Mihai (2014) as “an affective construct”<sup>2</sup> born in the dawn of modernity, which helps the individual to build the relationship with his nation, each and every *national day* becomes a form of public manifestation, taking shape and symbolic dimension in the collective mind, and adopting a certain pattern, with common ritual elements (Bălinișteanu, 2026). Approaching *Nașterea sărbătorilor naționale la români* [The birth of national holidays among the Romanians], in a case study based on archive documents revealing the historically first Romanian national day, *24 ianuarie. Propagandă și “mise en scène” în spațiul urban din Oltenia (1864-1867)* [The 24th January. Propaganda and mise en scène in the urban space of Oltenia (1864-1867)], the cited historian shows how the Romanians have built their relations with power during the last two centuries by means of the national days of 24 January and 10 May. As exercises in national solidarity and public memory, as well as sites of encounter between propaganda and emotion, the various celebrations of national festivities across different Romanian regimes (from the princely and monarchical periods to the communist and post-communist eras), these collective local practices gained importance and marked the memory of the Romanians' modern nation (Mihai, 2014, pp. 59-69).

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<sup>1</sup> Article History: Received: 31.12.2025. Accepted: 02.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

<sup>2</sup> Original source text: “un construct de tip afectiv”.

Drawing a parallel with the main national day of 25 March 1821<sup>3</sup>, celebrated by the Greeks living today inside and outside of Greece, our analysis focuses on the significant historical turning point which shaped the modern and contemporary Greek nation. By continuing the presentation of the Greek revolution (1821-1829) in the pages of the periodical of the Hellenic Union of Romania, *Ελπίς/Speranța* [Hope], we aim to show in this study how the main national day of Greece, celebrating the “immortal” 25th March 1821 and the “glorious years” (*χρονία δοξασμένα*), is praised not only in the song of Grigoris Bithikotsis or Giorgos Dalaras, *Να ’τανε το εικοσι ένα* [If only it were ’21 again], in Greece and in the Hellenic diaspora all over the world, but especially among the Greeks living in nowadays Romania.

The methodological frame of the study is based on a solid empirical documentation offered by the mentioned journal, counting numerous cultural events organised yearly on this occasion by the Hellenic Communities pertaining to the Hellenic Union of Romania. The commemorative practices and places regarding the Greek and Romanian heroes of 1821 are also to be analysed in detail.

The organizations of the Greek national minority in Romania and short biographies of the local leaders Savas Tsokaridis and Eleni Idu, presidents of the Hellenic Communities from București and Cluj-Napoca, complete the picture and the political agenda of the celebrated Greek national day.

Moreover, besides the analytical and descriptive methods, our approach involves the discourse analysis of the political speeches and the communication style of high-ranking statemen and politicians from Hellada and Romania, as well as certain Greek concepts and their meanings attached to the 1821 revolution for Ellada’s liberty and independence, which have imposed themselves in Europe’s long-term history.

## **2. The Hellenic Union of Romania, its Territorial Communities and Presidents**

The Greek population in Romania—numbering 2,086 individuals at the 2021 census, compared with 3,668 in 2011; 6,472 in 2002; 3,940 in 1992; 6,262 in 1977; 9,088 in 1966; 11,166 in 1956; and 23,161 in 1930, according to data from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011, 2021)—is organized within the Hellenic Union of Romania (Uniunea Elenă din România).

Founded right after the fall of Ceaușescu and the communism in Romania, on 28 December 1989, the Hellenic Union is one of the 18 organizations of the national minorities officially recognized in Romania’s Parliament. Thus, the organizations of the national minorities represented in the Chamber of Deputies in Romania’s Parliament are: 1. the Association League of Albanians from Romania, 2. the Union of Armenians from Romania, 3. the Bulgarian Union Banat-Romania, 4. the Union of Croats from Romania, 5. the Hellenic Union of Romania, 6. the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania, 7. the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania, 8. the Association of Italians of Romania, 9. the Association of Macedonians in Romania, 10. the Union of Poles of Romania Dom Polski, 11. the Social-Democratic Party of the Roma from Romania, 12. the Community of Lipovan Russians in Romania, 13. the Cultural Union of Ruthenians of Romania, 14. the Union of Serbs of Romania, 15. the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania, 16. the Turkish Democratic Union of Romania, 17. the Democratic Union of Slovaks and Czechs of Romania, 18. the Union of the Ukrainians of Romania (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2004b, p. 23).

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<sup>3</sup> The Hellenic Republic has two national days, celebrating the outburst of the liberty revolution on 25 March 1821 and *To μεγάλο ΌΧΙ* [The Great NO] of 28 October 1940.

The founding president of the Hellenic Union, Sotiris Fotopolos (1937-2008), was also the deputy of the Greek minority between 2000-2008, while the current president Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol is its deputy since 2008. The first deputies of the Hellenic Union in the Chamber of Deputies of the Romanian Parliament had been Anton Nicolau from Prahova (during the legislatures 1990-1992, 1992-1996), Gherasim Gazi from Iași (1996-2000), followed by the above-mentioned presidents Sotiris Fotopolos from București (2000-2004, 2004 - 5 August 2008) and Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, deputy of București (since 8 September 2008), Galați (2008-2012), Prahova (2012-2016), deputy of the Hellenic Union (2016-2020, 2020-present) (Camera Deputaților, 2016).

Nowadays the Hellenic Union of Romania includes 24 territorial communities with over 10,000 members (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2025), Romanian citizens of Greek descent (a third of its members) and Philhellenic Romanians (two thirds).

The largest Greek Community on Romanian territory is, of course, the branch of the Hellenic Union founded in București, as soon as 10 January 1990. However the Hellenic Community in București acquired legal personality only in 2002. Since April 1990 the first Greek language courses, held by Pagona Mularidis-Georgescu, were organized in București. The first chosen president, George Moularidis, was followed at the head of the București Community by Aristotel Ioanidis. The latter formed in October 1994 a new association of the Greeks, with legal status, namely the Hellenic Community Orfeus in București. On the other hand, the București Community of the Hellenic Union continued its activity under the interim management of Pagona Mularidis-Georgescu, until new elections took place in 1997, when Savas Tsokaridis was elected president of the (main) Association of the Hellenic Community in București. But in 2006, Savas Tsokaridis followed by a part of the Association members separated themselves from the Hellenic Union of Romania, too (Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, n.d.).

### **3. *Kyrios* Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023), President of the Association of the Hellenic Community in București**

While the first president of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Sotiris Fotopolos, inaugurated and led the political life of the Greek national minority after 1989, the activities developed by the president of the Association of the Hellenic Community in București, Savas Tsokaridis, aimed mainly to promote the Neogreek culture and language (as a mother tongue) in Romania. The latter authored a handbook of Neogreek for the primary school grades I-II, as well as a handbook of Romanian language for Hellenophones (Tsokaridis, 2003a; Tsokaridis, 2003b).

Professor Apostolos Patelakis, fine connoisseur of the complicated historical events and of the relevant personalities among the Greek communist refugees in Romania, published in *Ελίς* an impressive obituary *În memoria profesorului Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023)* [In memory of professor Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023)] (Patelakis, 2023, pp. 74-78), from which we extract the following biographical notes.

Born in a poor peasant family (with six children) on 15 March 1934, in the village of Notia, Greece, near the North Macedonian border, in 1947 little Savas and his family were sent by the Greek Communist Party (ΚΚΕ, Κομμουνιστικό Κόμματος της Ελλάδας) to Bulkjes in socialist Yugoslavia. The Greek colony of Bulkjes was dissolved in 1949, so Savas and one of his sisters moved to Wroclaw in South-Western Poland. When his father, Haralambos, died in 1948 fighting for the EAM (Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο, National Liberation Front), Savas Tsokaridis, who was only 14, started to work at the printing house of the ΚΚΕ.

In 1952-1953 Savas was sent, together with his party comrade Agoritsa Zurgopoulou, his future wife, to Romania, to the secret School of the Communist Party in Breaza. Here he met for the first time many of the Greek party leaders in exile. After completing his studies, the KKE assigned him to Hunedoara, where there was a large Greek community of approximately 850 people, most of whom worked at the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej metallurgical plant. Savas Tsokaridis, too, worked in the industrial city Hunedoara, first as an electrician, later as an accountant, becoming in 1953 a full member of the KKE, responsible with the cultural problems. According to the deal extant between the Romanian Workers' Party (PRM, Partidul Muncitoresc Român), which ruled Romania in the Stalinist Period, and the KKE, the Greek communists could be admitted to the PRM upon their request, which happened to Savas in 1955.

After attending between 1956-1958 the courses of the superior school of the Working Youth Union (UTM, Uniunea Tineretului Muncitoresc) in Braşov, in 1958 Savas received the much-coveted PRM membership card. So in 1959 he moved to Suceava as a party activist, joined by Agoritsa, whom he married the same year. For about ten years, the Tsokaridis family lived in Suceava, where the two children (Lambis and Elly/Elisavet) were born. In parallel, Savas graduated from the part-time department of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University in Iaşi (1962-1968).

Apostolos Patelakis explains the disagreements created in 1960-1963 between the PRM, who had become increasingly distant from Moscow, and the Greek communists, who openly supported Moscow. For this reason the PMR revoked the Romanian citizenship of the Greek immigrants, while the Greek party members (like Savas) were excluded from the PRM.

In 1968 the KKE from Romania broke into two rival parties, the inner-KKE (led by Partsalidis) and the external-KKE (led by Koliyannis). Tsokaridis was on the side of the former. The inner-KKE sent him to Bucureşti, where he eventually moved permanently together with his wife and children in 1970. After the fall of the military dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974), the former Greek immigrants from Romania could finally return to their homeland, as both Greek communist parties also did. Yet Savas Tsokaridis remained in Bucureşti, where his children attended higher schools with good results (in 1985 Lambis graduated from the Polytechnic Institute and Elly from the Faculty of Dentistry in Bucureşti).

SAVAS TSORAKIDIS



**Image 1.** *Kyrios* Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023), President of the Association of the Hellenic Community București (Patelakis, 2023, p. 78).

Savas became a correspondent of the *Αυγή* [Dawn], the newspaper edited since 1974 by the inner-KKE. He was for many years a teacher of Neogreek language at several high-schools in București. On political level he was elected secretary of the București organization of the inner-KKE and president of the Association of the Greek Political Emigrants, supporting especially the students enrolled in the organization Rigas Feraios of the inner-KKE, who held Romanian state scholarships during the communist period.

Immediately after the Romanian revolution of 21-22 December 1989, on 28 December the representatives of the Greeks from Romania founded in București the Hellenic Union, with branches all over the country. Savas Tsokaridis became for many years the president of the Association of the Hellenic Community in București and the editor-in-chief of the periodical of the Hellenic Union, *Ελπίς/Speranța* [Hope]. A few years after the death of his wife Agoritsa (2017), Savas Tsokaridis passed away on 2 October 2023, at the age of 90 (Patelakis, 2023, pp. 74-78).

#### **4. *Kyria* Eleni Idu (1941-2022), Founding President of the Hellenic Community in Cluj-Napoca**

I am myself, as a Romanian, a member of the Hellenic Community in Cluj-Napoca since 2004, and this paper (part of a book that I am writing<sup>4</sup>) is dedicated to *kyria* Eleni Idu (30 March 1941 - 22 February 2022), founding president of our community (1998-2022).

Eleni Zoï was born on 30 March 1941, in Epirus (Greece). After the Second World War, in 1947-1948, as a 6–7-year-old girl, daughter of a communist prisoner, she had to escape

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<sup>4</sup> The book approaches *Minoritatea națională elenă din România și revista “Ελπίς”, 1993-2023* [The Hellenic national minority in Romania and the periodical “Ελπίς”, 1993-2023].

from her homeland, accompanied by her older sister, Maria. Led by their grandmother through the mountains, but only unto the Greek state borders, Eleni and Maria suddenly found themselves orphans and refugees, heading to the countries of the socialist bloc.

With the assistance of the International Red Cross and the Romanian Red Cross—both involved for different reasons—the two young girls crossed Bulgaria and arrived in Romania. There, the sisters were separated once again: Maria was sent to Oradea, while Eleni was taken to the children’s colony in Tulgheș, Harghita County. Here she attended the primary school (with a few classes in Greek mother tongue) and the secondary school (in Romanian).

During high school, she moved to Craiova and, after successfully passing the entrance examination to the Faculty of Geography at the University of Cluj, she settled in this Transylvanian city, where she remained for the rest of her life. She married her fellow student Petru Idu, who later became a respected researcher and professor of geography. For many years, Eleni Idu was a dedicated and much-loved geography teacher at several schools in Cluj County and the city of Cluj, until her retirement.

Just like many of her Greek companions, before the Romanian Revolution of 21-22 December 1989 Eleni Idu was considered a “stateless person” (*cetățean apatrid*) with no citizenship, rejected by capitalist Greece and excluded from political rights by socialist Romania. After the falling of communism (1989), she eagerly acquired first her Romanian citizenship, and later her Greek citizenship (Cosma, 2022a, pp. 36-39).

*Kyria* Eleni Idu, native speaker of Neo-Hellenic, was her entire life a model citizen, devoted to both her ungrateful countries: motherland Greece and land of adoption Romania. In Greece, her “Patrida” (that she spelled and wrote always with capital letters), she searched for her roots and, after decades, she found her old father alive. Then she used to visit Maria, who is still living in Athens today. In Romania, the land of her soul (*țară de suflet*), she lived, loved, and worked, devoting her boundless care to her family—her daughter Alina and her grandson Alexis—as well as to her pupils and, above all, to the Hellenic Community in Cluj-Napoca. Founded by her in 1998, the community gradually took shape as a close-knit family united by a shared sense of Greek identity and feeling.

Last but not least, *kyria* Eleni Idu was and remained, in words and deeds, a true Romanian patriot, a Romanian nationalist of the noblest and most sentimental kind. She taught us the Greek anthem of liberty, *Σὲ γνωρίζω ἀπὸ τὴν κόψη* [I recognize you by the sharpness / of the sword], on Dionysios Solomos’s lyrics (1823). We always sang it standing up, yet never by itself, but always accompanied, with hand on heart, by the call in the verses of Andrei Mureșanu (1848), *Deșteaptă-te, române!* [Wake up, Romanian!], the Romanian national anthem. Year after year we celebrated the Greek heroes of the unforgettable 1821, but it was *kyria* Eleni who also opened our souls, with reverence, towards our great Romanian poets Mihai Eminescu (whom we celebrated on every 15 January) and Ioan Alexandru (whom she knew, loved and recited with his *Imnele* [Hymns]). At the festivals and conferences of the national minorities in Cluj, it was more than once that *kyria* Eleni Idu took a stand and took over *de facto* the offices not honored by the Romanian authorities, who were absent, literally and figuratively.

This pronounced civic and patriotic sense of hers had exclusively positive valences, manifesting itself as dignity, pride and pure love for the two homelands, the Greek and the Romanian one, without ever offending or hurting the feelings of those of another language and nationality. In all the situations of her life, to which I bore witness, *kyria* Eleni Idu, founding president of the Hellenic Community in Cluj, was and remained *O grecoaică adevărată, o româncă patrioată: ELENI IDU (30 martie 1941 - 22 februarie 2022) / Μια πραγματική Ελληνίδα, μια Ρουμάννα πατριώτισσα: ΕΛΕΝΗ ΪΝΤΟΥ (30 Μαρτίου 1941 - 22 Φεβρουαρίου*

2022) [A real Greek woman, a true Romanian patriot: Eleni Idu, 20 March 1941 – 22 February 2022] (Cosma, 2022a, pp. 36-39; Cosma, 2022b, pp. 1029-1057).

On 30 March 2021 *kyria* Eleni celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Not long after that she started her journey among the stars on a beautiful winter day, on 22 February 2022 (Cosma, 2022b, pp. 1029-1057). It was only two days before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. God spared the former Greek colony girl, born during wartime, to die of a broken heart caused by the new warmakers' evil spirit and lack of humanity and love to the people. All these, she (who used to be called by her nearest and dearest with the affectionate nickname *Sofoklidi*) has fully offered her entire life to everybody who knew her.<sup>5</sup>

*Kyria* Eleni Zoï Idu's destiny and life story very much resemble to those of her generation fellows, refugee orphans from Greece and colony children in Romania, who became high educated adults and some of them even founding presidents of the Hellenic Union and its communities: Sotiris Fotopolos (1937-2008) in București, Marica Koza Pieptu (1927-2013) in Iași. They belong to the last wave of Greeks who came to Romania and settled down here, however not as collonists or merchants (like their ancestors in antiquity, in medieval and modern times), but as stateless political immigrants, welcomed and cherrished by their adoptive country.

Only recently a light was finally thrown upon this last Greek wave to Romania (Chisacof, 2016, pp. 34-35). Implacable history and dramatical individual biographies are also interwoven, for the first time, in the canvas of a unique book, written by the already mentioned Romanian Greek author, Apostolos Patelakis, and published in 2017, describing *Războiul civil din Grecia (1946-1949) și emigranții politici greci în România (1948-1982)* [The civil war in Greece, 1946-1949, and the Greek political emigrants in Romania, 1948-1982] (Patelakis, 2017).

In an extended and methodologically solid study of imagology, Gabriela Boangiu also approached *Povestirea vieții – Identitate și alteritate pe parcursul războiului civil elen din 1946-1949* [The Life Story – Identity and alterity during the Hellenic civil war of 1946-1949] (Boangiu, 2017, pp. 23-51). The case studies presented by the mentioned author represent valuable ethnological documents comprising several fascinating "small stories" (*istorii mărunte*) of oral history regarding our topic. Namely, the respondents interviewed by G. Boangiu were originally from Greece: Zoe Tomescu's mother, Costas Ivanilis and Eleni Ciuciu (Țiuțiu), married Elena Radu, who - as children of socialist and communist parents who had been arrested and persecuted during the Greek civil war of 1946-1949 - were forced to leave their homeland. Eleni Ciuciu and her sister, coming from a Vlach mountain village of the Epirus, were saved (just like *kyria* Eleni Idu) by the International Red Cross, which they considered to be "father and mother for us" (*Crucea Roșie a fost tată și mamă pentru noi*), too. After crossing Albania and Yugoslavia, the little Aromanian (*Cincar*) girls arrived to Romania, being received in Arad and in the sanatory and colony for Greek children from Sinaia. Eleni Ciuciu followed a professional school and later she had a good place to work at the Romanian Railways (CFR, *Căile Ferate Române*) (Boangiu, 2017, pp. 31-34, 37-45).

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<sup>5</sup> I wrote in my book: "With love, I dedicate this book to *kyria* Eleni Idu, president of the Hellenic Community in Cluj, my second mother in... Romanian spirituality" (Cosma, 2014, p. 5).



**Images 2-4.** *Kyria Eleni Zoï Idu* (1941-2022), founding president of the Hellenic Community Cluj.  
Photos: *Ελπίς/Speranța*, January-March 2022, pp. 36-37.

## 5. The celebration of the 25th March 1821 reflected in *Ελπίς/Speranța*, periodical of the Hellenic Union of Romania

Over the last three decades, the Hellenic Union of Romania has sustained both morally and, in most of the cases, financially (from the budget allocated to the Greek minority by the Romanian state), by means of intensive cultural and publishing activities, the aim of promoting the Neo-Hellenic mother tongue, Orthodoxy, Hellenic culture and civilization, Greek traditions and customs.

The most important and very active Greek periodicals and publishing houses reflecting the cultural policy of the Hellenic Union are: 1. its periodical *Ελπίδα/Speranța* [Hope] (1993/1997-2004), renamed *Ελπίς/Speranța* (2004-2023); 2. Editura Omonia, the publishing house founded by director Elena Lazăr (in 1991), with an impressive portfolio of hundreds of belletristic, cultural and historical translations published so far; 3. the UER Press, the very publishing house of the Hellenic Union (since 2009); 4. *Studii bizantine* [Byzantine studies], a specialized journal edited by the Byzantine Cultural Society (*Societatea Culturală Bizantină*) in collaboration with the Hellenic Union of Romania (2010-2018) (Cosma, 2021, pp. 377-392).

The celebration of 25 March 1821 is reflected either in special journal issues (as those of March 2003 and March 2004, almost integrally dedicated to this national day), or in numerous accounts and encomiastical articles, sending greetings and wishes in the typically Greek way: "Happy birthday,

Greece!” (Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα!). Over time the periodical’s issues have been published bilingual in Greek and Romanian (initially on separate pages, later in two columns on page). The more and more accurate and suggestive translations were carried out, among others, by Evanthia Papaefthymiou, Edith Uncu, Marina Patelakis.

In the January-March 2023 issue, Mariana Alecu, editor-in-chief of *Ελπίς/Speranța*, synthesized the events organized by the Hellenic Union and by its territorial communities from Romania, marking the usual celebration of the main National Day of Greece in an ordinary, not anniversary year. The activities unfolded by the Hellenic Union included various Greek music and dance shows and performances, book presentations, concerts, exhibitions of paintings etc. Most of these events were coordinated by the president of the Hellenic Union, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, and many of them (especially those in București, Drăgășani, Iași, Secu) were attended by the Greek ambassador in Romania, Sofia Grammata, too.

For instance, on 9 March 2023, the 11th edition of the “Greek Wave”, the already established exhibition of 25 Romanian and Greek painters, took place in the Romanian capital city, involving the Hellenic Union and its partners, among which the Romanian National Library. The Greek and Romanian heroes fallen in the battle of Drăgășani in 1821 were commemorated, on 12 March, by more than 130 people, in the presence of D.G. Zisopol, S. Grammata and the presidents and members of 9 Hellenic communities. On 18 March, the territorial communities of the Greeks from Bârlad, Iași, Piatra Neamț, Onești, Prahova, Roman, were invited to the Moldavian Secu Monastery (in the Neamț county), where they participated to a *Te Deum* held by the abbot of the mentioned monastery, archimandrite Vichentie Amariei. The traditional extraordinary concert of the Philharmonic Paul Constantinescu, which took place in Ploiești on 23 March, was inaugurated by a speech of Dimitrios Karakonstantis, counselor of the Hellenic Embassy in Romania. On 25 March, the Hellenic Union and the Greek Embassy celebrated the National Day of Greece by a *Te Deum* held in the Church Bunavestire [Annunciation] in București (Alecu, 2023a, pp. 5-9; Alecu, 2023b, pp. 40-41, 46).

In the same year, the local communities of the Hellenic Union of Romania also organized, on their own, a range of cultural and artistic events in Bârlad, Brașov, București, Craiova, Galați, Iași, Pitești, Ploiești, Târgoviște, Turnu Severin (Alecu, 2023b, pp. 22-52).

## 6. The Hellenic Communities from Romania celebrating the 25th March 1821

As already mentioned, commendatory articles were published in *Ελπίς* each year on the occasion of 25 March by the leading staff of the Hellenic Union. Such are the message of 2003 sent by Sotiris Fotopolos, deputy and president of the Hellenic Union of Romania, *Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας με την ευκαιρία της 25ης Μαρτίου / Mesajul Președintelui Uniunii Elene din România cu ocazia Zilei Naționale a Greciei* [Message of the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania on the occasion of the national day of Greece] (Fotopolos, March 2003, p. 2), or the speech delivered, on the occasion of celebrating 200 years since the beginning of the Greek revolution, by Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, president and deputy of the Hellenic Union of Romania, at the inauguration (on 23 June 2021) of the exhibition of portraits entitled *Personalități grecești care au jucat un rol important în istoria românilor, din antichitate până în zilele noastre / Ελληνικές προσωπικότητες που διαδραμάτιζαν σημαντικό ρόλο στην ιστορία των Ρουμαάνων, από την αρχαιότητα έως και σήμερα* [Greek personalities that played an important part in the Romanians’ history since antiquity until nowadays] (Zisopol, April-June 2021, 31-32).

Anniversary articles were published in *Ελπίδα* or *Ελπίς* by the presidents and members of all Hellenic Communities from Romania, too (Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 1990).

Many articles from București were written by the journal editors (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2003, pp. 7-10; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, p. 3; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, pp. 8-9), by the editor-in-chief Mariana Alecu (Alecu, 2010a, p. 9; Alecu, 2010b, pp. 3-5; Alecu, 2013, pp. 5-6; Alecu, 2014, pp. 6-7; Alecu, 2018a, pp. 28, 31; April-June 2018, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 25-

28; Alecu, 2019c, pp. 104-105), but also by Savas Tsokaridis (Tsokaridis, 2004, pp. 10-11), Vasile Calcandi – expressing *Σκέψεις τις παραμονές της μεγάλης εορτής του ελληνικού λαού την Επετειό της Επανάστασης του 1821 / Gânduri în preajma marii sărbători a poporului elen la aniversarea Revoluției pentru Independență de la 1821* [Thoughts about the the Hellenic people’s great celebration at the anniversary of the revolution for independence in 1821] (Calcandi, 2004, pp. 12-13), Ana Nicola (2004, p. 13), Maria Mihelis (Mihelis, 2004, pp. 13-14), Olimpia Bândeă (Bândeă, 2007, pp. 14-15).

The articles coming from the Hellenic Community in Bârlad were signed by Afrodita Tereza Sîriopol and Oltea Râșcanu-Gramaticu, who presented *Σελίδες της ιστορίας μας / Pagini ale istoriei noastre* [Pages of our history], by Gabriela Bucătaru, but also by the editors of *Ελπίς* (Sîriopol, Râșcanu-Gramaticu, 2007, pp. 19-20; Bucătaru, 2016, p. 20; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, pp. 2-3; Alecu, 2014, p. 8).

The very active Hellenic Community in Brașov was led by Vasilis Karalis (1994), Adelina Pitulice Vasilatos (1995-2001) and Lemoița Chiriac (since 2002). Articles sent to *Ελπίς* were written by president Lemoița Chiriac, who also contributed to the publication of the periodical as a translator (using the pen name Lemoița Chiriac Gousopoulou); further authors from Brașov were Elpida Dracopol and school teacher Alina Lazăr (Chiriac, Dracopol, 2004, pp. 19-20; Lazăr, 2006, pp. 11-12). The celebrations of the 25th March were usually held at the famous Cultural Center Reduta in Brașov (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, pp. 9-10; Alecu, 2018, pp. 28-29; Alecu, 2019b, p. 32).

From the Hellenic Community Brăila, led by presidents Vasilis Barzoukas (1990-1993), Alekos Neofitos (1993-1999), Nikolaos Saridakis (1999-2007), Haralambis Karavias (since 2007), beautiful articles were published on *Η 25η Μαρτίου 2003 στη Βραϊλα / 25 Martie 2003 la Brăila* [The 25th March 2003 in Brăila] by the president (signing with his Romanian name) Nicolae Saridache (Saridache, 2003, pp. 12-13; Saridache, 2004a, pp. 14-16; Saridache, 2004b, pp. 46-48) and Veronica Macri (Macri, 2019, pp. 13-15).

*Σκέψεις για την επανάσταση του 1821 / Gânduri despre revoluția din 1821* [Thoughts about the revolution of 1821] were sent from the Hellenic Community Calafat by president Elena Cornelia Lungu (Lungu, 2004, pp. 22-23). Further articles were dedicated to the *Η ιέρη ημέρα της 25ης Μαρτίου στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Καλαφάτ / Sfânta zi de 25 Martie la Comunitatea Elenă din Calafat* [Holy day of 25 March in the Hellenic Community in Calafat], joined by the traditional greeting “La mulți ani, Grecia! / Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα!” [Happy birthday, Ellada!] (Hellenic Community Calafat, 2004, pp. 56-57; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, pp. 2-3; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, pp. 10-11; Alecu, 2013, pp. 5-6).

From Cluj-Napoca, the founding president Eleni Zoï Idu (1998-2022) and the vice-president Alice Tokalakis (until 2022), as well as the new president Daniel Mocanu (since February 2022) also sent reports on the cultural events developed by the Hellenic Community Cluj during *Η εορτή της ελληνικής άνοιξης / Sărbătoarea primăverii elene* [The celebration of the Hellenic spring], which were generally presented in the journal column *Δin viața comunităților/ Από τη ζωή την κοινοτήτων* (From the life of the communities) (Zoï Idu, 2004, pp. 21-22; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, pp. 5-6; Alecu, 2010b, p. 5; Alecu, 2013, p. 7; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 30).

Further articles were published on *Ziua Națională a Greciei / Εθνική Επετειός της 25ης Μαρτίου* [The national day of Greece, 25 March] by the Hellenic Community in Constanța, led by its president Anton Hiropedi (1997-2010) (Hellenic Community Constanța, 2009, p. 3; Alecu, 2013, p. 5; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21, 21-22; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 28-29; Hellenic Community Constanța, 2023, p. 30).

Ion Vasoyanis from the Hellenic Community of Craiova sent in 2007 a text about how *Οι Έλληνες της Κραγιόβα εόρτασαν την Εθνική Επετειό της Ελλάδας / Grecii din Craiova sărbătoresc Ziua Națională a Greciei* [The Greeks from Craiova celebrate the national day of Greece] (Vasoyanis, January-February-March 2007, p. 22), to which other unsigned articles were added (Comunitatea Elenă din Craiova, 2004, p. 51; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, pp. 2-3; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 10; Alecu, 2013, pp. 5-6; Comunitatea Elenă din Craiova, 2013, p. 23; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 30).

The Hellenic Community in Galați, together with its president Dimitrios Zamfiropol (since 1991) and Carmen-Pinelopi Papadatu, also greeted *Ο εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετειός της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Γαλατίου / Ziua Republicii Elene la Galați* [The celebration of the Hellenic

Republic in Galați], expressing *Σκέψεις και συναισθήματα με το ιστορικό γεγονός της 25ης Μαρτίου 1821 / Gânduri și sentimente pentru 25 Martie 1821* [Thoughts and feelings regarding the 25th March 1821] (Papadatu, 2003, pp. 13-14; Zamfiropol, 2004a, pp. 16-17; Zamfiropol, 2004b, pp. 42-46; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, p. 2; Alecu, 2010b, pp. 4-5; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 30).

President Călina Bucur of the Hellenic Community Giurgiu presented the local celebrations of the 25th March in 2003, as well (Bucur, 2003, p. 16).

The strong Hellenic Community from Iași, with its remarkable presidents: profesor Andreas Rados (1990-1992) and Marica Pieptu Koza (after 1992), envisaged the numerous commemorative places situated in the county seat Iași and in the surroundings reminding of the fights and battles fought during the first stage of the Greek revolution on Moldavian land (the Church Trei Ierarhi [Three Hierarchs] and the Monastery Galata in Iași, the Monastery Secu), in articles written by Nicoleta Baciu-Pendus, Cristina Ioanidis and, of course, by the latest president Marieta Alexandrescu (Baciu-Pendus, 2003, pp. 15; Ioanidis, 2004, pp. 48-49; Alecu, 2013, p. 7; Alecu, 2014, p. 8; Alexandrescu, 2016, p. 17; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 28).

The village Izvoarele (Tulcea county) has an important Greek minority, characterized by well-preserved folk customs. The Hellenic Community in Izvoarele unfolded several cultural events dedicated to the main national day of Ellada (Niculache, 2003, p. 15; Alecu, 2013, p. 7). The president of the Hellenic Community Izvoarele, school teacher Ion Niculache, has also authored a monography dedicated to *Grecii în Dobrogea de Nord: Comuna Izvoarele, județul Tulcea* [The Greeks in Northern Dobrogea. Communal residence Izvoarele, Tulcea county] (Niculache, 2011).

The Hellenic Community Onești (Bacău county), led for short time periods by Simos Luliadis, Maria Mațuka, Iannis Rallis, Vasilis Gourzanopoulos and Takis Kiriakopoulos, was very active over time by organizing *Ο εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Ονέστι / Sărbătorirea aniversării naționale a Eladei la Comunitatea Elenă din Onești* [The celebration of the national anniversary of Ellada in the Hellenic Community in Onești] (Hellenic Community Onești, 2004, p. 58; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 11; Alecu, 2013, p. 7; Alecu, 2018b, p. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 29).

From the range of presidents leading the Hellenic Community Piatra Neamț: Nicolae Pavlidis (1990-1992), Nicolae Vițu (1947-2021; president between 1992-1996 and since 2004), Iulian Cârstoiu (1996-2003), Filippos Panaiotidis (interim president 2003-2004), it was Iulian Cârstoiu and Nicolae Vițu, who highlighted in their articles *Την σημαντικότερη εορτή της Ελλάδας / Cea mai importantă sărbătoare a Greciei* [Ellada's most important celebration] (Cârstoiu, 2003, p. 16; Vițu, 2007, pp. 10-12; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 9).

At the same time, president Mihaela Maria Cernătescu (since 1994) and member Noni Bachide-Pană of the Hellenic Community Pitești sent their messages and greetings of *La mulți ani, Grecia! / Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα!* [Happy birthday, Ellada!], as well as their *Σκέψεις και συναισθήματα που μας εμπνέει το ιστορικό γεγονός της 25ης Μαρτίου / Gânduri și sentimente pe care ni le trezesc evenimentele istorice ale zilei de 25 Martie, Ziua Națională a Greciei* [Thoughts and feelings inspired by the historical events of the day of 25 March, the national day of Ellada] (Cernătescu, 2003, pp. 14-15; Cernătescu, 2004a, pp. 20-21; Cernătescu, 2004b, pp. 53-54; Cernătescu Paticu, Bachide-Pană, 2007, p. 18; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, p. 4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 11; Alecu, 2014, p. 8; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 29).

The Hellenic Community Prahova in Ploiești, led by its presidents poet Lambros Ziogas (1990-1996), doctor Anton Nicolau (1996-2001), engineer Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol (since 2001), published in the pages of *Ελπίς/Speranța* several news and articles. Among these, we notice the rather philosophical urge stated by Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, *Να μην ξεχνάμε το παρελθόν μας για να χτίσουμε το μέλλον και να μην ξεχνάμε το μέλλον για να ζήσουμε στο παρόν / Să nu ne uităm trecutul pentru a clădi viitorul și să nu uităm viitorul pentru a trăi în prezent* [Let us not forget our past in order to build a future and let us not forget the future in order to live in the present] (Zisopol, 2004, pp. 17-19). Further articles from

Ploiești were written by Mariana Alecu, Ștefania Vasile (Alecu, 2010b, pp. 3-5; Alecu, 2013, p. 6; Alecu, 2018b, p. 20-21; Vasile, 2018, p. 22; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 27, 30; Alecu, 2019c, pp. 104-105).

The long serving founding president of the Hellenic Community Roman (Neamț county) organized in 1990, engineer Boris Cepalis (1930-2021), published in the periodical of the Hellenic Union a couple of encomiastic texts reflecting *Η 25η Μαρτίου απέβη Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας / 25 Martie 1821, devenită Ziua Națională a Greciei* [25 March 1821, which became the National Day of Greece] (Cepalis, 2004, pp. 24-25; Cepalis, 2007, pp. 12-13).

The Hellenic Community Sulina (Tulcea county), from the mouth of the Danube River, led by the women presidents Irina Rădeanu (1997-2005) and Ecaterina Gheorghe Dracopoulo (after 2005), as well as the Hellenic Community Tulcea, represented by the same president Ecaterina Gheorghe-Dracopoulo (Ekaterini Gheorghe) and by Athena Felea, celebrated *Με τη σκέψη και την καρδιά μας στην Εθνική Επέτειο της Ελλάδας / Gând și suflet de Ziua Națională a Greciei* [Thoughts and feelings on the National Day of Greece] (Gheorghe, 2003, p. 16; Gheorghe, 2004, pp. 23-24; Felea, 2004, pp. 52-53; Gheorghe-Dracopoulo, 2007, pp. 21-22).

Hrisoula Cotenescu, the long-lived president of the Hellenic Community Târgoviște (since April 1990), also praised several times *25η Μαρτίου στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Ταργκόβιστε / Ziua de 25 Martie la Comunitatea Elenă din Târgoviște* [The day of 25 March in the Hellenic Community in Târgoviște] (Cotenescu, 2004, pp. 54-55; Cotenescu, 2007a, pp. 15-16; Cotenescu, 2007b, pp. 21-22; Alecu, 2010a, p. 9; Alecu, April-June 2018, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 28-29).

Finally, from the Hellenic Community in Drobeta Turnu Severin, Irina Popescu and president Paula Scalcău evoked the *Ελληνική άνοιξη στο Τούρνου Σεβερίν / Primăvara Elenă la Turnu Severin* [Hellenic spring in Turnu Severin] (Popescu, 2004, pp. 57-58; Scalcău, 2007, pp. 17-18; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, p. 4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 10; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 29-30). Moreover, the contributions brought by the young school teacher of history Paula Scalcău to the knowledge of the Hellenic minority on Romanian territory regard the well-received volumes *Grecii din România* [The Greeks from Romania] and *Elenismul în România* [The Hellenism in Romania], as well as a recent supplementary textbook for the study of *Istoria și tradițiile minorității elene din România / Ιστορία και παραδόσεις της ελληνικής μειονότητας στη Ρουμανία* [The history and traditions of the Hellenic minority from Romania] (Scalcău, 2003; Scalcău, 2006; Scalcău, 2023).

## 7. Political Agenda of the 25th March 1821 in Romania and Greece

The political agenda of the Hellenic officials from Romania and Greece highlights the anniversary moment, too. *Ελπίς* published the festive messages or articles of the Hellenic Union's presidents Sotiris Fotopolos (Fotopolos, 2004, pp. 1-2; Fotopolos, 2006, pp. 11-12; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2007a, second cover and p. 1; Fotopolos, 2007, pp. 13-14; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2007b, p. 3) and PhD engineer Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol (Zisopol, 2009, p. 1; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2018b, p. 4; Zisopol, 2019, p. 3-4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021b, pp. 3-4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2022c, pp. 6-8; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2022e, pp. 17-18; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2023b, pp. 3-4).

The issue of January-March 2021 of the much mentioned periodical also conveyed the message of the president of Romania, Klaus Werner Johannis, addressed to the *Romanian citizens of Greek ethnicity*, on the occasion of the bicentennial of the Greek independence (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, p. 10). In 2022, the Romanian Department of Culture, Cults and National Minorities, represented by presidential counselor Sergiu Nistor, as well as Livia Neculai, expert of the Romanian Ministry for National Education, also sent messages on the occasion of celebrating the national day of the Hellenic Republic, as reported by the editors

of the Romanian Greeks' periodical (*Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2022b, pp. 3-4, 14, 16; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2022e, pp. 8-13).

High ranking Greek statesmen also addressed to the Hellenic diaspora on the occasion of 25 March 1821. The messages were signed by the presidents of the Republic of Greece Konstantinos Stefanopoulos (Stefanopoulos, 2003, p. 1; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2004a, p. 59-61), Karolos Papoulias (*Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2006, p. 1; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2007a, p. 1; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2009c, p. 5; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2010a, p. 1; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2013, p. 1; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2014, p. 1), Prokopios Pavlopoulos (*Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2018a, p. 1-3; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2019a, p. 1-3) and Katerina Sakellaropoulou, the first woman president of Greece (*Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2020, p. 1-2; Sakellaropoulou, 2021, p. 1-2; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2022a, p. 1-3; *Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2023a, p. 1-2).

In an article dedicated to Katerina Sakellaropoulou, the Romanian-Greek historian Apostolos Patelakis outlined the biographical and political profile of the first woman president of the Hellenic Republic. At prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's proposal, she was elected for a five-year mandate by the Greek Parliament on 20 January 2020, with 261 votes out of 300. Born in Thessaloniki (on 30 May 1956), *kyria* Ekaterini Sakellaropoulou is politically independent (not affiliated with any party) and she fulfilled the function of the president of the State Council of Greece (2018-2020). Thus, she became the 13th president of the Hellenic Republic and its 8th president after the restoration of democracy in the country in 1974 (Patelakis, 2020, 82-83).

In president Stefanopoulos's words (2003), on 25 March the Greeks all around the world celebrate, together with the Orthodox Feast of the Annunciation (Ευαγγελισμός της θεοτόκου),

the immortal generation of the year 1821 which assumed, with abnegation, any sacrifice for the people's liberation, after the long night of slavery that lasted for four centuries (Stefanopoulos, 2003, p. 1, our translation).<sup>6</sup>

A simple message to the Greek diaspora on the importance of 25 March means, sometimes, initiating a real national strategy. President of Greece Prokopios Pavlopoulos turned the 2019 anniversary of "our people's *Resurrection*" ("Ανάσταση" του Γένους μας) into "a permanent source of learning and national inspiration for each Greek". He drew out 6 force-ideas that crossed the history up to the present (*Uniunea Elenă din România*, 2019a, pp. 1-3):

1. although the 1821 "national uprising of the Greeks" (*Εθνεγερσία των Ελλήνων*) broke out in an unpropitious political moment,
2. yet, influenced by the American and French revolutions (of 1776 and 1789),
3. it grounded on the tight connections between the Greeks from Greece and those from diaspora, while numerous historical personalities (Adamantios Koraïs, Rigas Feraios, Ioannis Kapodistrias) and especially the Greek expats in Odessa, Vienna, Sankt Petersburg, Paris, Belgrade, Trieste and in several further diaspora communities enrolled in the fight for liberty;
4. therefore, the example of the 1821 forerunners must inspire both "us, the Greeks living in the country, and you, the Greeks living anywhere on the earth", in order to promote the motherland's interests in "the long term future of Greece and of our great European Family";

<sup>6</sup> Original source text: "η αθάνατη γενιά του '21 που, με ανιδιοτέλεια, ανέλαβε κάθε θυσία για την απελευθέρωση του έθνους, μετά τη μακρά νύχτα της σκλαβιάς που διήρκεσε τέσσερις αιώνες / generația nemuritoare a anului 1821 care, cu abnegație, și-a asumat orice sacrificiu pentru eliberarea neamului, după lunga noapte de sclavie care a durat patru secole".

5. quoting the poet Andreas Kalvos (*Ode of Samos*): “Liberty needs Virtue and Courage”, the president of Greece called for “fulfilling the mission we have towards our Motherland and History”;

6. nowadays Greece, “a pillar of peace and security in the Balkans and South-Eastern Mediterranean”, aspires to contribute “to constructing a Europe of federal type, on terms of representative democracy and respect for the state of law”.

Then president Prokopios Pavlopoulos defined 4 principles that govern today Greece’s international behaviour regarding its problematic neighbours, as the country refuses to admit the “limited sovereignty” of Cyprus and conditions its own support for the adhesion to the European Union of Turkey, North Macedonia and Albania by observing the borders, the international treaties and the rights of the national Greek minorities living in the respective countries (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2019a, pp. 1-3).

*Ελπίς* also hosted greetings sent by remarkable Philhellenic Romanian personalities. Let us mention only the extremely interesting interview, which the often cited philo-Romanian professor Apostolos Patelakis from Thessaloniki had with the Transylvanian poet Ion Brad (1929-2019), Romania’s ambassador in Greece for 9 years (1973-1982), who later translated and edited a comprehensive anthology of *Poeți greci contemporani* [Contemporary Greek poets] (Patelakis, 2013, pp. 36-38).

In 2021, when Greece and its diaspora all over the world celebrated 200 years from the Greek revolution for independence, in spite of the Covid pandemic, the periodical of the Hellenic Union of Romania issued a special number in January-March 2021, which was almost entirely dedicated to the bicentennial anniversary. The front cover of *Ελπίς/Speranța* presented the usual wishes: *Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα!* / *La mulți ani, Grecia!* [Happy Birthday, Ellada!], placed beneath the logo of the Hellenic Union and the number 200, whose last two digits were drawn in such a way as to suggest the infinity sign (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021a, front cover).



Image 5. *Ελπίς/Speranța*, January-March 2021, front cover.

Out of the 112 pages of this anniversary issue, almost a half of them present official messages and a large range of activities marking the national day of Greece (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021a, pp. 1-2; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021b, pp. 3-4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021c, pp. 5-9; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 10-21; Alecu, 2021a, pp. 40-65; Alecu, 2021b, pp. 66-70, 88; Alecu, 2021c, pp. 100-112). The messages were addressed by the president of Romania, Klaus Werner Johannis (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, p. 10); the general secretary of the General Secretariat of Public Diplomacy and Hellenic Diaspora, Ioannis Chrissoulakis (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, p. 11); the ambassador of the Hellenic Republic in Romania, Sofia Grammata (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 12-14); the undersecretary of state from the Department for Interethnic Relations of the Romanian Government, Ahmet Aledin (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 14-15); the senior counselor at the Romanian Ministry of Culture, Aurora Caravasile (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 16-17); the mayor of Asprogyros (Greece), Nikolaos Meletiou (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 17-18); the journalist from the Greek radio and television ERT – “Voice of Greece” (*Ελληνική Ραδιοτηλεόραση* – “Φωνή της Ελλάδας”), Athanasios Houpis (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 19-20); the rector of the University of Piraeus, Angelos Kotios (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 20-21).

At the bicentenary of the Greek revolution of 1821, on 23 February 2021, the Greek ambassador in București, Sofia Grammata, joined by the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, paid a visit to the Hellenic Community in Iași, led by Marieta Alexandrescu (Coman & Vulpescu, 2021, pp. 49-50; Alecu, 2021b, pp. 66-67).

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Greek revolution and of the 140th anniversary of bilateral Greek-Romanian diplomatic relations, on 18 March 2021 the Greek Embassy in București organized a special event. Speeches were held by Sofia Grammata (the Greek ambassador in Romania), Bogdan Aurescu (Romanian minister of Foreign Affairs), Tudor Dinu (professor and head of the Department for Neogreek Language at the University in București), Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol (president of and parliamentary deputy for the Hellenic Union), Claudiu Năsui (Romanian minister of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Youth), Pantelis Giannoulis (head of the Economy and Trade Bureau of the Hellenic Embassy), Christodoulos Seferis (head of the Bilateral Greek-Romanian Chamber of Commerce), Antonis Giokas (manager of the Black Sea Suppliers), Georgios Athanasopoulos (vicedirector of the Vista Bank), Michalis Trakadas (general director of the Cables-Icme Ecab), Christos Gonis (representing Chipta Romania), Nikos Koliopoulos (CEO of the Hellenic Business Center Property Development), Georgios Sofanos (representing Sof Medica), Haris Teocharis (Greek minister of Tourism) (Konstantelou, 2021, pp. 68-70).

In the same winter and spring of 2021, the intense activities carried out by the president and deputy of the Hellenic Union, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, regarded further preparations for celebrating the bicentennial of the Greek revolution of 1821. Thus, on 7 January, president Zisopol met Ambassador Sofia Grammata, debating the program of events to be dedicated to the national day of Ellada. On 10 January, under his editorship, the album, celebrating 200 years since the beginning of *Revoluția greacă pe pământ românesc / Η Ελληνική επανάσταση στις Ρουμανικές Ηγεμονίες* [The Greek Revolution in the Romanian Principalities], was ready for printing. Between 8 February - 22 March, the Hellenic Union promoted a feature film, *Revoluția Elenă pe pământ românesc* [The Hellenic Revolution in the Romanian Lands], created on the idea of Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, who also presented it in the television show *Kalimera*, on 8 February. On 24 February, president Zisopol together with ambassador Grammata paid a visit to Iași, laying flower bouquets at the Trei Ierarhi [Three hierarchs] Church - the place where the Greek revolution had begun and where the first headquarters of Alexandros Ypsilantis had been established (later the Etairist headquarters were moved to the Monastery Galata in the same city). On 27 February in Iași, the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania and the president of the Hellenic Community in Iași, Marieta Alexandrescu, hosted an online symposium on *The Beginnings of the Greek Revolution of Liberation*. On 17 and 24 March, deputy D.G. Zisopol presented in the Chamber of Deputies of the Romanian Parliament in București his own political statement, as well as the message of the president of Greece, Katerina Sakellaropolou, regarding the bicentennial anniversary of the National Day of Greece. On 18, 24 and 25 March, he participated on further Romanian and Greek television shows, promoting the celebration of 200 years since the beginning of the Greek revolution of 1821. Deputy D.G. Zisopol agreed with the mayor Daniel Nicodim of Ploiești (18 March) to have, on 25 March 2021, the buildings situated on the central avenue of the respective locality illuminated in white and blue; on the night of 25/26 March, the building of the Romanian Parliament in București was also illuminated in the colors of the Hellenic flag, as a symbolic sign of friendship between Romania and Greece. On 21 and 23 March, president Dragoș Zisopol visited Drăgășani, joined by high-ranking Romanian and Greek politicians. On 25 March, flowers bouquets were layed by president Dragoș Zisopol at the statue of Rigas Velesinlis, at the Greek Church Buna Vestire [Annunciation] in București, where he also attended the *Te Deum* held for the Greek heroes fallen in the revolution. On 25 March in

Câmpina and on 27 March in Brăila, the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania took part in the cultural events organized by the Hellenic Communities Prahova and Brăila, by the mayor of Brăila, Viorel Marian Dragomir, and by Nicușor Ciocan, prefect of the Brăila county. On the last-mentioned day of 27 March, deputy Zisopol attended the anniversary *Te Deum* held in the Greek church from Galați. (Alec, 2021c, pp. 100-101, 105, 108-112).

In 2022, the president and parliamentary deputy of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, participated, on 19 March, in the commemoration of the Greek heroes fallen in 1821 in the battle of Drăgășani. According to the agreement realised with the City Hall from Ploiești, on 22 March a 70 square meter Hellenic flag was raised on the building of the Prahova Prefecture in Ploiești. Under the aegis of the Hellenic Union, coordinated by president Zisopol himself, a tribute concert of classical music, sustained by the Ploiești Philharmonic Paul Constantinescu and conducted by Anastasios Symeonidis, was organized in the C.A. Rosetti Hall of Romania's Parliament Palace in București on 25 March 2022. This event was attended by several diplomats and consuls of Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia, Portugal, Germany, Montenegro, Austria, Ireland, Spain, Great Britain, Italy, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia etc. (Alec, 2021c, pp. 146, 148-149). Ambassador Sofia Grammata and counselor for Education Katerina Makrogiannaki, from the Embassy of Greece in București, also sent messages to the Hellenic Union of Romania on celebrating the 25th of March (Alec, 2022a, pp. 5-6; Alec, 2022b, p.15).

Finally, in 2023, on 26 February the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, and Marieta Alexandrescu, vicepresident of the Hellenic Union and president of the Hellenic Community in Iași, laid flowers at the Church Trei Ierarhi in the former capital of Moldavia, where the Philiki Etairia had started its rebellion in 1821. On 12 March, D.G. Zisopol, joined by the Greek ambassador Sofia Grammata paid the usual March visit to Drăgășani. On 14 March, the parliament deputy Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol made a political statement in the session of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, on the National Day of Greece. On 18 March, the president of the Hellenic Union, along with presidents and members of the Hellenic Communities from Bârlad, Iași, Onești, Piatra Neamț, Prahova and Roman made another visit to the Secu Monastery, laying wreaths for the heroes fallen in 1821. On 23 March, the great concert of the Paul Constantinescu Philharmonic took place in Ploiești. On 26 March, president Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol attended, in București, the *Te Deum* held in the Church Bunavestire and the symphonic concert organized at the Romanian Athenaeum, where the youth symphony orchestra from Thessaloniki performed. On 28 March, the volume written by Roderick Beaton, *The Greeks, a Global History* (2023), and translated into Romanian by Livia Szasz, was presented by Constantin Bălăceanu Stolnici, member of the Romanian Academy. On 30 March, president Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol ended the celebrations of the National Day of Greece by a lecture organized in the middle of the Hellenic Community in Onești (Alec, 2023c, pp. 83, 86-89).

## **8. Final Remarks**

Few European countries (if any) could be so proud as Romania of their domestic policy of observing the rights of their national minorities. The above shown example of the Hellenic Union's Greeks from Romania, who represent but one of the 18 national minorities supported by the Romanian state with school, church and cultural programmes unfolded in their own mother tongue, is illustrative for a successful country strategy in dealing with national minorities.

On the other hand, during the current period of migrations, another good example for a country protecting its own conationals from abroad is offered by Greece. The latter is

intensively sustaining and officially defending the Greek diaspora by any means, and even by special created agencies, like the World Hellenic Interparliamentary Association (*Παγκόσμια Διακοινοβουλευτική Ένωση Ελληνισμού*, PaDEE).

During the 10th general assembly meeting of 20-23 July 2015 in Athens, Romanian deputy Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, member of the PaDEE's board of directors (*Διοικητικό Συμβούλιο*), presented the Hellenic Union as a good model to be followed by the politicians of the Greek diaspora, pointing out the organization's values and main activities of promoting the Hellenism. The special achievements of the Hellenic Union of Romania include: 1. the first Olympic Contest of Hellenism in the world, initiated by the Hellenic Union and organised, under the aegis of the Romanian and Greek Parliaments, between 10-14 September 2014; 2. introducing in schools from Romania of the regular study of the Neo-Greek language as mother tongue and as modern language; 3. promoting the Hellenism in mass media (tourism, cultural products etc.); 4. organising the 15th edition (in 2015) of the Festival of Hellenism in Romania, and others (Alecă, 2015, pp. 6-8).

Due to the consolidated position and role played by the Hellenic Union of Romania, its president Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol has been recently re-elected by the general assembly of the PaDEE in the board of directors of the World Hellenic Interparliamentary Association (2021).

The World Hellenic Interparliamentary Association (*Παγκόσμια Διακοινοβουλευτική Ένωση Ελληνισμού*, PaDEE) is an apolitical organism created in 1996, including parliamentarians of Greek descent from the Hellenic diaspora. In 2005 the Hellenic organization PaDEE was recognized by law as a legal entity. Nowadays PaDEE counts 85 members from all over the world (USA, Australia, Canada, Germany, Romania, South Africa, Switzerland, Zimbabwe etc.). Its main goal is to consolidate the relations of friendship and cooperation between Greece and the members' countries. The board (council) of directors of the World Hellenic Interparliamentary Association is chosen for two years by the general assembly. A report of the meeting of the general assembly of PaDEE, which took place online, on 9 April 2021 (during the pandemic), was delivered, in form of a political statement, in the Romanian Chamber of Deputies by Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, president and deputy of the Hellenic Union, on 5 May 2021 (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021e, pp. 94-95).

The achievements of the Hellenic Union of Romania have no precedence, indeed, and no term of comparison in further countries with Greek diaspora, while the exceptional situation can surely be explained by the extremely favorable state policy, even unique in Europe and in the world, promoted by our country, Romania, towards its national minorities. In fact, the long history of *140 de ani de la stabilirea relațiilor diplomatice româno-elene (1880-2020) / 140 χρόνια από την εγκαθίδρυση ρουμανο-ελληνικών διπλωματικών σχέσεων (1880-2020)* [140 years since the establishment of the Romanian-Greek diplomatic relations (1880-2020)], revealed by Florin Stan and Apostolos Patelakis in their latest book, speaks for itself about the excellent political and diplomatic mutual connections between the Romanian and Greek states (Stan & Patelakis, 2020).

We notice that in the current political and cultural language, used either by organizations or by representatives of the Greeks living today in Greece, Romania or elsewhere, *Hellenism* (*Ελληνισμός*) is not at all defined, as the European non-Greeks have learned at school, as regarding the study or imitation of ancient Greek culture during and after antiquity. In fact, the native Greeks of today perceive Hellenism as a range of permanent and updated values, principles, ideas, with a pronounced ethnic and national character, guiding the modern and contemporary Greek (Hellenic) way of life.

This is a beautiful declaration of membership to the modern and contemporary Greek nation. But there is a dark side of the moon, too. In Greece, Hellenism also includes the language community of all Greek (Hellenic) speaking individuals, regardless of their mother

tongue and of their not officially recognised nationality: Aromanians/Vlachs, Macedonians/Slavs, Arvanites/Albanians and others. Thus, modern and contemporary Greece has turned the important cultural vector of Hellenism into a tool of linguistic and ethnic oppression for non-Greek national identities and national minorities.

Apparently, further words of Neo-Hellenic etymology like *patriots* (πατριώτης) and *patrída* (πατρίδα) seem to become senseless in the age of globalization. And yet, the Greeks' unfatigable cult of heroes (ήρωες) and martyrs (μάρτυρας), as well as the vividly assumed celebrations of the national day of Greece on 25 March stand for and prove not only the humanity's strong need of faith, but also the meaningful power of nations and national identities in Europe and all around the world (Cosma, 2022b, pp. 1029-1057).

In the end, let us quote from the Hellenic Union's message of 2009, giving voice both to the typical Greek philosophical question on the sense of national celebrations in the nowadays world, and to a proper answer:

The Greek Nobel Prize laureate Giorgos Seferis<sup>7</sup> was asking himself: "What are poets doing in an ungrateful world?". To the same effect, someone might ask: "What sense can national anniversaries still have in a world continually heading for globalization?" National anniversaries are indispensable, because they are feasts of faith, so useful not only to the nations celebrating them, but also to the history itself. The national celebrations get a much more general sense if they surpass the national frames, turning into manifestations with ample vibration, essentially contributing to man's education for the better. (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009a, p. 1.)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Greek national poet Giorgos Seferis (1900-1971) was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature in 1963. The Nobel Prize jury justified this choice due to the poet's "eminent lyrical writing, inspired by a deep feeling for the Hellenic world of culture".

<sup>8</sup> Original source text: "Ο βραβευμένος με Νόμπελ, ο Έλληνας Γιώργος Σεφέρης, ρώτησε: Τι αναζητούν οι ποιητές σε έναν αγάριστο κόσμο;» Στο ίδιο πνεύμα, θα μπορούσε κανείς να ρωτήσει: 'Ποιο είναι το νόημα των εθνικών επετείων σε έναν κόσμο που κινείται συνεχώς προς την παγκοσμιοποίηση'; Οι εθνικές επέτειοι είναι απαραίτητες επειδή αποτελούν εορτασμούς πίστης, ωφέλιμες τόσο για τα έθνη που τις γιορτάζουν όσο και για την ίδια την ιστορία. Οι εθνικές εορτές αποκτούν πολύ γενικότερο νόημα αν υπερβούν το εθνικό πλαίσιο, μετατρέποντάς τες σε γεγονότα με ευρεία απήχηση που συμβάλλουν ουσιαστικά στη διαπαιδαγώγηση του ανθρώπου προς το καλύτερο. / Laureatul premiului Nobel, grecul Giorgios Seferis, se întreba: 'Ce caută poezii într-o lume nerecunosătoare?' În același sens, cineva ar putea întreba: 'Ce rost mai au aniversările naționale într-o lume ce continuu se îndreaptă spre globalizare?' Aniversările naționale sunt indispensabile pentru că sunt sărbători ale credinței, de folos atât națiunilor ce le sărbătorează cât și istoriei în sine. Sărbătorile naționale capătă un sens mult mai general dacă depășesc cadrul național, transformându-se în manifestări cu ample rezonanțe care contribuie esențial la educarea omului în bine.

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