

# EFIRO 2024 World Exhibition

## 16-19 April 2024

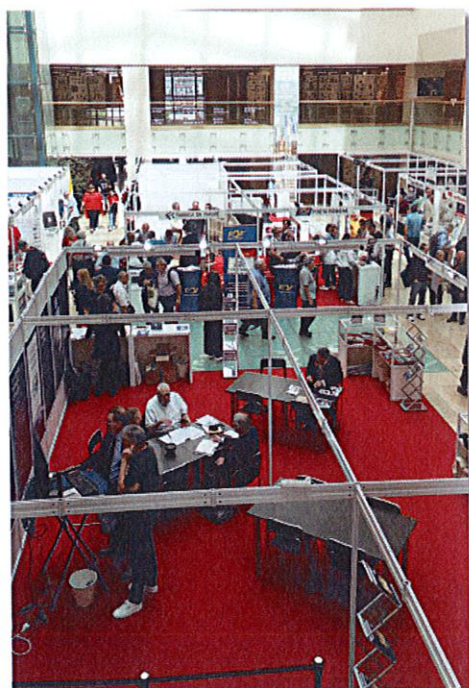
### *Costas Chazapis writes:*

After a smooth and relaxing flight from Athens, the plane landed at the Henri Coandă airport in Bucharest. Before I realised it I found myself comfortably sitting in a bus heading to Piața Unirii (Union Square), one of the largest squares of the Romanian capital. Although it was almost midday, the traffic to the city centre was unexpectedly dense, and the ride lasted nearly an hour. I couldn't complain, as I had enjoyed a long city tour for just 3 lei or 0.60 euros.

Bucharest is perhaps the most beautiful city in Southeast Europe. Long boulevards, spacious pavements, bicycle routes, tall trees, and greenery are all-in-one. Impressive buildings of the late 1800s and early 1900s, of the earlier period of monarchy, are mixed with later, Soviet-type, huge constructions that remind visitors of an era the Romanians prefer to forget.

After a few minutes' walk from Piața Unirii, I arrived at the National Library, the venue of EFIRO 2024, a modern, big ten-story construction with a style of its own. The exhibition was spread over two levels, the ground floor and the mezzanine, interconnected with several staircases and escalators.

More than 2,600 frames were employed, most of which have been manufactured recently in Romania, property of Ion Chirescu, President of the Romanian Federation, Chairman of the Organising Committee, and owner of the Museum of Romanian Records. Having realised the opportunity of the huge space available in the National Library, the Organisers sought to bring in additional frames from neighbouring countries, and they did: 600 frames from Bulgaria.



Following a quick stroll around the frames to find out what was where, I figured out that, because of the bulky columns that supported the tall building, the frames were developed in many small-sized islets, each comprising a handful of exhibits. However, architect Chirescu designed these islets to contain either 5- or 8-frame exhibits exclusively. The result was that all exhibits started and finished at the two ends of a single row of frames.

My first impression of EFIRO 2024 was its opening ceremony. The stage was set as simple as it could be, with three speakers that did not waste anybody's time. Ion Chirescu welcomed the visitors, Prakob Chirakiti RDP, FIP President, came next, and Florin Valentin Stefan, a Posta Romana representative, followed. All three addressed the audience in less than ten minutes combined!

Speaking of impressions, the Romanians did a marvellous job, considering their late start and lack of updating of the philatelic community until only a few months before the opening. Not only did they succeed in attracting a considerable number of frames but they also designed an exhibition which was easy to attend, housed in a nice venue which was generally well-lit, without annoying delays or other setbacks. The national commissioners, jurors, and many visitors were accommodated in three hotels at walking distance from the venue. Everybody could enjoy sitting at restaurants and cafes along the north bank of the Dâmbovița River, very close to the exhibition. Even the Museum of Romanian Records, where the hosts offered evening receptions on every single day of the exhibition, was close by.

The hosts, whether members of the Organising Committee, employees of the National Library or the Museum of National Records, volunteers, or any other Romanian we met, were genuinely friendly to the visitors. Although he had a double role as Juror and General Commissioner, Francisc Ambruș was always around, answering all kinds of questions, and led a well-managed team, getting lots of help from Assistant General Commissioner, Romeo Minc .

The Jury President was Eli Weber and the Secretary Bernard Jimenez. The big winners were Joseph Hackmey RDP with “Classic Baden” (Grand Prix International), and Ion Chirescu with “Foreign Posts in the Romanian Territories 1811-1878” (Grand Prix National). Gerard Louis Van Welie with “The Maritime Mail Connections with the Netherlands East Indies 1788–1877” was also a very close contender for the Grand Prix International. The Awards Dinner took place at the impressive Le Château.

At the AIJP (Journalists) annual Congress, Wolfgang Maassen RDP announced that EFIRO 2024 was the first FIP exhibition with digital literature exhibits. He added that AIJP members will have the opportunity to meet again later in the year, in Ulm in October and Monaco in December. His proposal for the 2025 Congress to take place in Bern, during the Bernaba and Multilaterale exhibitions, was unanimously passed. At the second part of the AIJP session, President Maassen made a presentation about the latest FIP Regulations and Guidelines, posing several questions indicating various critical points, which he proposed to be reconsidered. Wolfgang Maassen finally announced that he had decided to step down at the 2025 Congress, following twenty fruitful years in the President’s chair.

The AIEP (Experts) meeting was centred on the presentation of the new Yearbook 2024, which includes information about the AIEP members and activities, all the prominent philatelists awarded with the “Hunziker Medal”, the rules for auction companies wishing to include the AIEP “Quality label”, as well as the new Statutes of 2022, following the new AIEP address in Vienna. The event, first with physical presence after the Covid-19 pandemic was followed by a reception kindly offered by the Museum to AIEP members and guests.

Twelve two-frame exhibits presented by European Academy members were mounted during a two-hour AEP meeting. A forty-minute PowerPoint presentation by AEP member Oral Avci, entitled “Iraq, a State crafted in stamps”, was the meeting’s highlight.

Tobias Huylmans and Jonas Hällström RDP, both Managing Directors of the Global Philatelic Network, staged the presentation of three new books:

Edition d’Or vol. 71: Joseph Hackmey, *Barbados and Grenada*. The two collections were presented in a single-volume, tête-bêche format, the first of the so-called White Line Series, which is dedicated to the author’s outstanding collections.

Edition d’Or vol. 72: Eddie Leibu, *Romania Outbound Mail*

Edition Spéciale: Fritz Heimbuchler, *The First Stamps of Brazil 1843-1870*



I feel obliged also to mention the remarkable Museum of Romanian Records, with thousands upon thousands of trivets and pressing irons, corkscrews and vintage cameras, as well as the 800 large-sized frames where 50,000 copies of items of Romanian philately are on display. I was also stunned by the outstanding memorabilia collection of all the FIP patronaged or recognised exhibitions, a lifetime accomplishment of the tireless Alexandru Bartoc.