

## *Editorial*

### **Balkanfila is getting ready for the next step**

Balkanfila Newsletter enters its 2<sup>nd</sup> year and the content of this issue, offer a range of reports and articles while the aim to further enrich the Newsletter's content still remains its main objective.

Exhibitions, no doubt, serve as the engine of organized philately as well as publications of course and other cultural events which are promoting Philately. When Museums are actively participating in such events, then the cultural imprint of Philately reaches a wider audience. The exhibition on "Navigation" is such an event that first took place in Trieste and in early February went to Ljubljana. On the other hand, National Exhibitions, with International participation, still remain the root of exhibiting philately and the TimFilEx is one of the best examples of our region, the Balkans.

The rapid and earthshaking changes affect Philately, something that Philatelists previously ignored and/or underestimated. These new challenges for Philately have to do mainly with demographics and the digital world. A number of sensible and acute views are offered by Ion Chirescu, a devoted collector and acknowledged philatelist.

Awards, at times, may be a rather unpleasant occasion but that depends both on the award-giving committee as well as the recipients of the Awards. The FEPA Awards for 2024 that have acknowledged the contribution of three exceptional persons actually add credit to the Award itself. The latest UPU competition included four winning Postal Administrations from our region in the top-three places of the three competition categories.

In this current BF NL among other articles one can find a presentation of the Turkish Philatelic Academy that enters of 11<sup>th</sup> year of active Philately, Greece's Philatelic and Postal Museum, the activities of the Union of Philatelist of the Republic of Moldova and an internal competition to select a common design motif for the theme "70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the EUROPA Stamp".

The new stamp issues remind us of the fascination of the postage stamp. The stamp, this minute piece of paper –although it is gradually used less for postal purposes– is an outstanding "concentrate" of art and ideology of the issuing countries as well as an "ambassador" that displays of how a country wishes to be seen and identified both on a national and an international level.

Balkanfila, as it was decided last November in Thessaloniki, is ready for the next step as its first Yearbook is "under construction".

## Philatelic exhibition on “NAVIGATION” in Ljubljana, Slovenia

The Maritime Museum of Crete, under the leadership of Mr Emmanouil Petrakis, the Philatelic Association of Slovenia, the Embassy of Greece in Ljubljana, in cooperation with the Hellenic Foundation for Culture in Italy and the Post of Slovenia, organised a non-competitive philatelic exhibition, NAVIGATION – ΝΑΥΣΙΠΛΟΪΑ, in the Ljubljana main Post office premises.



*President of the Slovenian Philatelic Association Bojan Bračič addressing the guests, right from him Mr Emmanouil Petrakis, Chairman of the Maritime Museum of Crete and H.E. Mr. Argyrios Makris, Ambassador of Greece in Slovenia.*

The exhibition is part of the philatelic collection of the Maritime Museum in Crete, which has been successfully developing in recent years. In 2010, the first exhibition of stamps on the theme "Lighthouses of the World" took place in the Maritime Museum in Crete, marking the beginning of the establishment of philatelic collections. Over time, the stamps were divided into thematic units to enrich the collections. As a result, thematic collections with many stamps were created, which are constantly supplemented, such as Navigation, Battle of Crete, Cretan State, Marine Environment, Lighthouses of the World, Christianity, etc.





The exhibition is part of the museum's permanent collection, "Navigation," which is exhibited in the museum's central space and in the area of the MORO shipyard—a permanent exhibition of ancient and traditional shipbuilding.

The exhibition has been set up again, especially for the presentation in the lobby of the Post Office in Ljubljana. It consists of approximately 200 exhibition sheets containing commemorative stamp series, sheets of personal stamps, albums, commemorative leaflets, maximum cards, and envelopes from around the world from the first day of use. The issues range from 1930 to 2020.



*First visitors before the opening ceremony*

The historical information provided by the series of stamps is extraordinary because, over the centuries, we have met great explorers and sailors such as Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), James Cook (1728–1779), Ferdinand Magellan (1480–1521), Vasco da Gama (1460–1524), etc.

The works of important painters such as the Dutchman Willem van de Velde the Younger (1636–1672) or the British Richard Wright (1723–1775) depict important naval battles that changed the course of history. Information and data on many historic ships and events can be found along with a series of stamps and philatelic products from all over the world. Countries and smaller island groups with rich philatelic production arouse our curiosity and encourage us to learn about their geographical location and culture through philatelic material. (This is how its manager Mr. Emmanouill Petrakis presented the Museum of Navigation and Philatelic Collections in the content presentation).

The participation at the grand opening was not only numerous but also rich in content; the keynote speakers who addressed the audience were:

- 1) Mr. **Bojan Bračič**, President of Slovenian Philatelic Association
- 2) Mr **Emmanouil Petrakis**, Chairman of the Maritime Museum of Crete
- 3) Mrs. **Aliki Kefalogianni**, Director of the Centre for Hellenic Culture, in Trieste, Italy
- 4) H.E. Mr. **Argyrios Makris**, Ambassador of Greece in Slovenia
- 5) Mr. **Ioannis Giannakakis**, Vice Mayor of Chania, Responsible for Culture.

6) Mr. Aleksander Salkič, Director of Executive Management's Office and Corporate Communications of Post of Slovenia

Those present were very honoured when H.E. Mr. Argyrios Makris, Ambassador of Greece in Slovenia gave his address in beautiful Slovenian. He also emphasized that the exhibition will again offer the public elements of study and cultural reflection in the context of friendship between Greece and Slovenia.



*Mr. Petrakis presenting the Maritime Museum of Crete*

In any case, it is necessary to mention the presence of the Maritime Museum team from the municipality of Chania, where the museum is located. The head of the Centre for Hellenic Culture from Trieste, the head of the Trieste post office, and the director of the Maritime Museum of Slovenia from Piran, who is also a member of the Association of European Maritime Museums. In the company of a glass of white wine and salty-sweet canapés, some agreements for the future were already made. In Piran (a Slovenian city on the Adriatic coast), the *Lighthouses* collection is to be exposed, and in Ljubljana, towards the end of the year, the *Christianity* collection – both exhibits from the Maritime Museum of Crete.



The event was moderated by Igor Pirc, Vice President of the Slovenian Philatelic Association, who prepared this event together with the Deputy Ambassador of the Hellenic Embassy, Nikolaos Vagdoutis, and who is also the author of this article.

*Photos by Veni Ferant and Igor Pirc.*

*Mr. Petrakis presented the gift to Mr Aleksander Salkič,  
Director of Executive Management's Office of the Slovenian Post*



# TimFileX 2025

## ASOCIATIA FILATELICA TIMISOARA



The Philatelic Association from Timișoara, will organize at the middle of November 2025, the National Philatelic Exhibition with International Participation TimFileX 2025. The Exhibition will be held at Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara, on about 400 frames, and the participation is open for exhibits which won at least 75 points at any national exhibition during the last 5 years.

The competition classes are: Traditional Philately, Postal History, Thematic Philately, Aero and Astro Philately, Modern Philately, Open Philately, Experimental Philately (1 and 2 to 3 frames), Youth and Literature.



TimFileX is the traditional philatelic exhibition from Timișoara. The last edition, from 2023, was one of the most successful exhibitions held in Romania during this past years. Collectors from Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, France and Germany presented in Timișoara their collections. At the same time, the most important Romanian collections were presented in Timișoara, as a final repetition before last year EFIRO.

We are proud that TimFileX 2023 has had official stamps issued by Romfilatelia, being the single Romanian exhibition (except EFIRO) having its own stamps. TimFileX 2023 has had the FEPA recognition, what we will try to obtain for this edition too.

We will come back as soon as possible with the rules and conditions of participation.

For further information please contact the General Commissioner: **Marius Muntean**  
e-mail: [mariusvasilem@yahoo.com](mailto:mariusvasilem@yahoo.com), tel: 0040/722/594608.

## Ion CHIRESCU speaks to Balkanfila Newsletter



Ion Chirescu, President of the Romanian Philatelic Federation is keen collector –not only in philately– and an awarded exhibitor. Balkanfila Newsletter requested him to share with us his views and ideas on Philately, that he kindly accepted.

*Organized Philately in the Balkans, in recent years, seems to experience a revival. Do you think that this philatelic revival in the Balkans is something temporary or it can be a long-term?*

I believe that the philatelic revival in the Balkans has the potential to be long-term due to the increased interest in culture and history. However, it is essential to strengthen philatelic communities and encourage young people to get involved to maintain this vitality.

*In your opinion, is it possible for the Balkan Federations to have a co-ordinated plan?*

Yes, a coordinated plan is not only possible but also necessary. I am glad that you have taken this initiative, and I will try to support it as much as I can. Collaboration among Federations would allow us to organize joint exhibitions and promote philately in a unified manner across the region.

*One of the main topics in philatelic discussions is the Future of Philately, what do you think that should be done in order Philately to survive in the years coming?*

To survive, philately must adapt to new trends, including the use of digital technologies and organizing interactive events that attract a broader audience.

*Philatelists, as passionate collectors, place value on materials that most people do not understand and/or ignore. Is it possible for this closed circle to fade away and “advertise” philately to the wider public?*

In the near future, philately will unfortunately be in decline because young people are very little or not at all interested in it, facing increasingly varied challenges. It is essential to make philately more accessible and attractive to the wider public. Educational and promotional campaigns can help open this circle and expand interest in philately.

*What are the short- and medium-term priorities and objectives of the Romanian Philatelic Federation Council under your Presidency?*

The priorities include organizing philatelic exhibitions, developing international partnerships, and promoting philatelic education online for young people.

*We have entered the “digital age” a long time ago, and nowadays AI is rapidly emerging. Can philately take advantage of these new digital opportunities?*

Yes, philately can benefit greatly from digitization. Online platforms can help promote collections and facilitate communication among philatelists. However, we must be careful to preserve the authenticity and value of the collections.

*In your opinion, can the new “digital era” in philately also have a negative effect?*

A negative effect could be the depersonalization of collecting. It is important to find a balance between digital and traditional interactions to keep the passion alive. A negative impact is that philatelists are less willing to buy stamps, as they are still very expensive; they might prefer to use images instead of physically owning them.

*How do you feel if international philatelic exhibitions could be more “digital” than “physical”?*

I believe a combination of physical and digital exhibitions is ideal. Physical exhibitions provide a unique interactive experience, but integrating digital aspects can expand reach and accessibility.

*Is the current image of philately—as presented on our websites, publications, etc.—among philatelists and non-philatelists on the right path?*

Overall, the image of philately has improved, but more creative and attractive promotion is needed to engage new members and generate interest among young people. I don't think it is on the right path, but I am glad that it exists and will continue to exist for a while.

*In your opinion, is organized philately a “necessary evil” or a positive occupation?*

I consider organized philately a positive occupation, as it helps preserve history and culture and promotes collaboration among people from different corners of the world.

*What philatelic areas as a collector, researcher, and exhibitor interest you the most?*

I am very interested in the postal history of Romania, rare stamps from the interwar period, as well as the evolution of the postal system from its inception to what will probably soon be its disappearance.

## FEPA 2024 AWARDS

The FEPA Board has announced that the following medals have been awarded for 2024 to three acclaimed persons, two Philatelists, an Artist-Designer as well as Certificate of Appreciation to Solihull Philatelic Society of U.K on grounds of their significant contributions to Organized Philately.



The FEPA MEDAL for EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE to ORGANIZED PHILATELY, 2024 was awarded to: **BRUNO CREVATO-SELVAGGI RDP (Italy)**



Dr Bruno Crevato-Selvaggi's philatelic activities have been expressed through various leadership roles within the Italian Federation where he is currently President but has been a member of the board of directors since the 1990s, and in the organization of international exhibitions Italia 98, Italia 2009, Italia 2018 and ECTP 2019. He was one of the promoters and the main organizer of philatelic exhibitions held in the seats of the Chamber of Deputies and the Presidency of the Republic, which have given extraordinary visibility to philately.

He is also Director of the Institute of Postal Historical Studies in Prato, a unique institution at the European and world levels, which organizes periodic studies and in-depth historical-postal meetings aimed at both the philatelic and academic worlds. He was President of the European Academy of Philately from 2014 to 2017. He is a FIP juror for philatelic literature, a class whose evaluation regulations he has contributed to significantly within the FEPA framework. Dr Crevato-Selvaggi has produced a rich array of articles and volumes on philately and postal history, always of high quality. He has been the editor of the official magazine of FSFI, Qui Filatelia, since its establishment. In 2006, he was awarded the FEPA Medal for Exceptional Study and Research, and in 2022, he signed the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists.



## THE FEPA MEDAL for EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT to ORGANISED PHILATELY, 2024

was awarded to: **MYRSINI VARDOPOULOU** (Greece)

Dr Myrsini Vardopoulou, a painter and engraver, has been a stamp designer for over 30 years. She has taught the period 2019–2022 at the Athens School of Fine Arts the academic subject of “Postage Stamp Design” and is currently a consultant for the documentation of archival material at the Philatelic and Postal Museum of Greece. Since 2013, she has designed the front covers of “Opus”, the annual publication of the Académie Européenne de Philatélie, along with several other highly acclaimed philatelic books such as the Hellenic Philatelic Society Centenary Publication “Traces of Communication”.



She created the logos for the two NOTOS international philatelic exhibitions and was an active member of the Organizing Committee for NOTOS 2021. Dr Vardopoulou has received numerous distinctions, including the First Prize of Asiago Philatelic Art for the Greek 2010 Europa stamps and the International Olympic Committee Silver Medal for the Greek 2012 London Olympic Games stamps. Her book, “Greek Stamps 1861–1961, History, Ideology, and Aesthetics”, was awarded a Large Gold Medal at Italia 2018.

## THE FEPA MEDAL for EXCEPTIONAL PHILATELIC STUDY and RESEARCH, 2024

was awarded to: **MEHMET AKAN** (Turkey) for

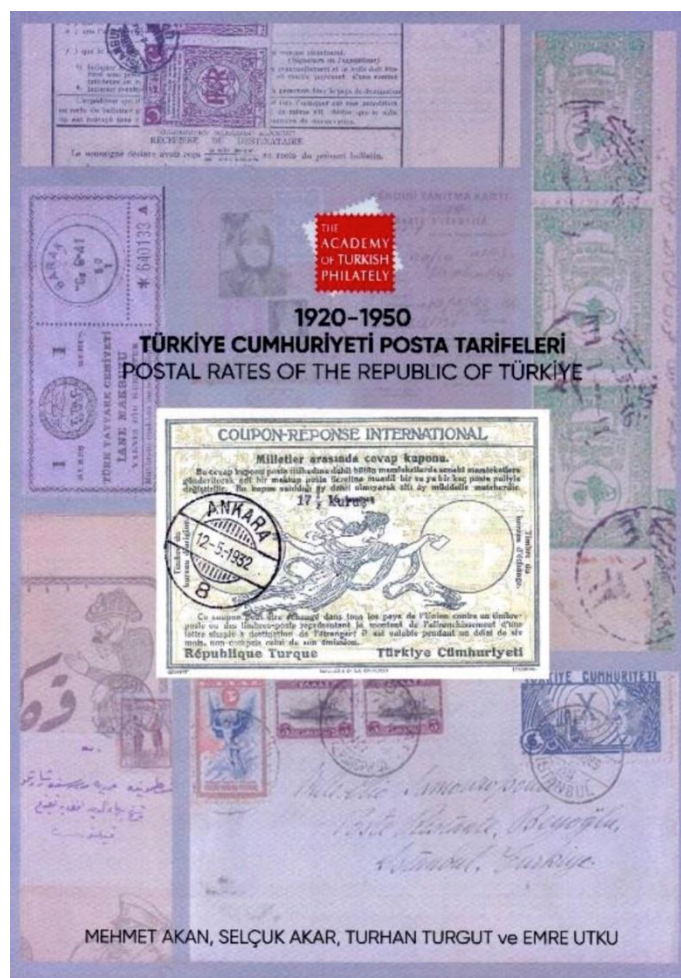
“Postal Rates of the Republic of Türkiye, 1920–1950”

Co–authors: **SELÇUK AKAR, TURHAN TURGUT RDP, EMRE UTKU**



## “Postal Rates of the Republic of Türkiye, 1920–1950”

The book is a project by the Postal Rates Research Group of the Turkish Philatelic Academy based on a collaborative effort by Mehmet Akan, Selçuk Akar, and Emre Utku, prominent figures from the new generation of philatelists, along with respected philatelist Turhan Turgut RDP. This 350–page, full–colour, and fully bilingual book (Turkish–English) documents Turkey’s postal rates from 1920 –1950, covering all postage services defined in UPU Congress publications and airmail rates. It also includes comprehensive information on special rates and services, examining many categories that had not previously been catalogued or thoroughly analyzed.



The book is a very comprehensive reference work on postal rates in the Turkish Republic. The information was collected in easy–to–use tables; the relevant source information is provided for each rate. This allows the reader to check the accuracy of the rates if necessary. The work draws on significant collections and meticulously scanned official archives, ensuring all rate–related information is supported by references to archival sources. Philatelic collections often risk being divided over time, but reference publications like this help preserve the subject’s legacy. This book will become an essential reference work, addressing a critical gap in Turkish philatelic studies in scope and content.

The medal will be presented to Academy President Mehmet Akan on behalf of the Working Group at the FEPA Congress to be held at EuroPhilEx Birmingham 2025 in May. It will be available for sale online at [https://www.isfila.com/en/online\\_satis/](https://www.isfila.com/en/online_satis/) from the end of March.



# Turkish Philatelic Federation enters its 11<sup>th</sup> Year

Founded in May 2014 under the Turkish Philatelic Federation, the Turkish Philatelic Academy has now entered its 11<sup>th</sup> year. Originally conceived as an entirely amateur initiative, the Academy has exceeded expectations thanks to the dedication and support of its members.



As of early 2025, we have begun welcoming international members who specialize in Ottoman, Turkish, Balkan, and Middle Eastern philately. Membership is by invitation, requiring the recommendation of two existing members. Our initial invitations were extended to esteemed philatelist colleagues, all of whom responded positively. Over time, we look forward to seeing the individuals they, in turn, recommend joining our community.

After extensive preparation, our website will officially launch in March. It will feature a wealth of resources, including articles, PDFs of Academy publications, exhibits, and project announcements.

Visit us at [www.filateliakademisi.net](http://www.filateliakademisi.net).

In building the site, we reached out to our esteemed member Christos Gikas, the editor of Balkanfile News, to request permission to share BF News. He responded, "it will an honor for BF Newsletter to appear on the website. Besides, the BF Newsletter is a collective effort of all the Member Federations, so no permission is needed. ..." This philosophy also applies to our Academy's website. Designed as a common platform for Ottoman, Middle Eastern, Balkan, and Turkish philately, the site is open not only to Academy members but also to academics, philatelists, and anyone interested in the subject."



## 'From National Struggle to Liberation'



The 100<sup>th</sup> year project book titled 'From National Struggle to Liberation', conducted under TDF Vice President Murat Hazinedaroğlu's management has been published. The publication, 180 pages in full color and A4 size, can be obtained from the Ankara Philatelic Association. 100<sup>th</sup> Year exhibitions were held at all stops of the liberation movement that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk started on May 19, 1919 at Samsun and ended on October 29, 1923, in Ankara. The project, carried out with TDF board member Nihat Çimrin and the late philatelist Erdoğan Şen, lasted a total of 5 years and 11 exhibitions were held in different cities.





The Union of Philatelists of the Republic of Moldova was established on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1992. At that time UFRM numbered 1018 philatelists as members organized in four 4 as well as 7 regional branches.

Between 1992 to 2016 the activities of UFRM began to decline. Following a General Meeting of UFRM on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2016 it was decided all philatelic branches to be united into a single association and change the strategy for Moldova. Mr. Adam Andrei was elected as President. Due to a new law UFRM had to re-register and entered into the State Register with the right to have official activity. Since 2016 UFRM organized 10 National exhibitions with international participation and participated in 17 International exhibitions of various levels.

This year UFRM, together with Post Office of Moldova and the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, made a presentation of a stamp dedicated to the Lunar Year of the Snake according to the Chinese horoscope.



On January 17<sup>th</sup>, UFRM with the Chisinau History Museum co-organized a special exhibition titled "Views of Chisinau in Postcards"

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, was held a General Meeting of all branches unfolding the Union's strategy to promote Philately through the planning of a national exhibition in 2025, the possibility of holding an international exhibition under the auspices of FEPA in 2026 as well as their efforts to open a creative center "Young Philatelist".



# The Philatelic and Postal Museum of Greece

## An “Ark” of Postal Knowledge

*by Emmanuel Georgoudakis,*

The desire for a Museum of Greek Postal History has been in existence for as long as Greek postal history itself. From the launch of the Large Hermes Head in 1861 to the present day, however, the collected material still leaves much to be desired in terms of documentation.



Our objectives have always been clear. Despite the turbulence of Greece’s past—encompassing both World Wars, Civil Wars, and coup d’états—the museum secured a permanent home in 1976, thanks to a generous donation from Mrs. Nia Stratou, a prominent philatelist of the time. Although progress has at times been slow or halted, the steps we have taken remain significant.



It is worth-noting that one of the earliest recorded laws for retaining outdated postal items dates to 1943, a time when Greece was experiencing a harsh occupation under the Third Reich. Even then, philatelic materials from the UPU arrived, as illustrated by an album featuring German stamp issues from 1939 to 1942.

The Greek Postal Service continued issuing directives and gathering historical items, always with the prospect of establishing a formal museum in mind.

In 1957, the Postal Service discovered correspondence from the 19th-century Greek Consulate and Postal Office in Ottoman Thessaloniki. This material remains under the Postal Service’s care, earmarked for a potential Postal Museum rather than being transferred to the General State Archives or the Foreign Ministry Archives.



It was not only the Postal Service that took an interest in preserving these documents. In 1970, private individuals donated a small collection of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century letter-cards, along with a complete set of postal cancellations from every post office once operating in Smyrna (Izmir), all intended for a future museum.

In November 1966, new legislation covering various postal matters formally established a Postal Museum in name. The following year, a regulation deemed all postage stamp printing materials to be national heritage objects to be gathered for the upcoming museum, with legal penalties for those who withheld or possessed them unlawfully.



*Drawing of Corfou by the Architect Ernst Ziller, used for the 1939 "Ionian" issue.*

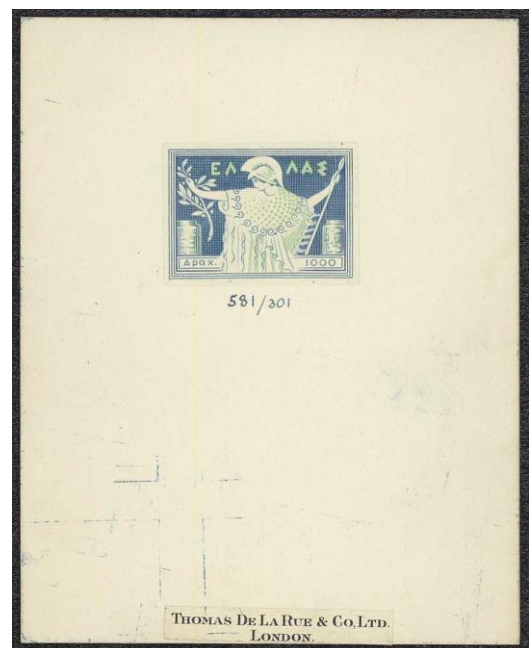


*Proof for the 1939 "Ionian" issue by "Thomas de la Rue & Co" (England)*

Shortly afterward in April 1967, a military coup took place and the dictatorial regime lasted for seven years. Although the regime promoted new Postal Service infrastructure, it neglected important philatelic and cultural initiatives, including the search for a suitable museum location. As a result, these rare materials remained boxed up, awaiting the chance to be properly exhibited.



*Approved stamp printing proof for the 1935 "Mythology" air mail issue, designed by D. Biskinis. Thomas de la Rue & Co.*



*Recto of the approved stamp printing proof for the 1953 "National Products" issue, designed by J. Kefallinos. Thomas de la Rue & Co.*

In 1976, a new opportunity emerged through the generous donation of Nia Stratou, a dedicated philatelist and member of the Postal Service’s stamp–approval board. Unfortunately, the donated space is entirely underground, comprising about 350 m<sup>2</sup> with just about 180 m<sup>2</sup> of which are suitable for exhibitions. It is divided into two rooms: one for postal objects (mailboxes, uniforms, bicycles, and so on) and another for stamps, draft illustrations, envelopes etc.

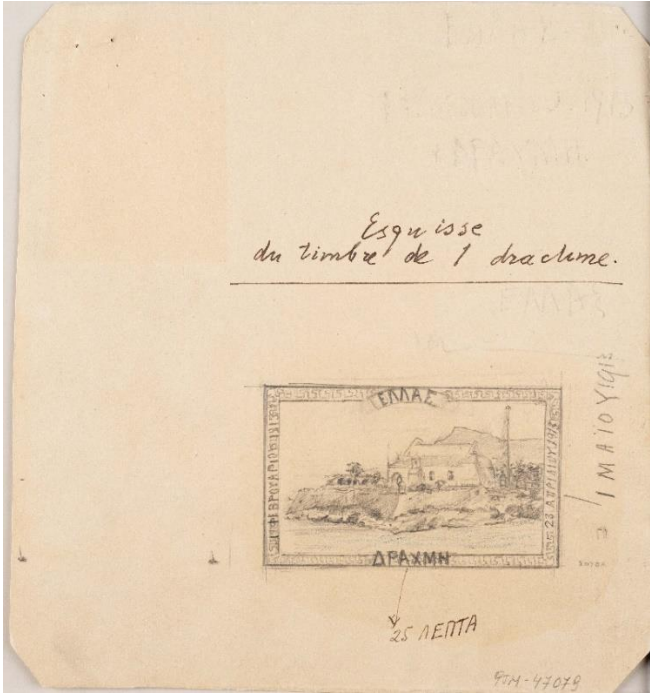
Widespread challenges within the Public Sector and the Postal Service have slowed improvements. In 2013, the Museum became part of the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, and a few years later, it was transferred to the Ministry of Digital Governance. This change prompted a steady reorganization, culminating in the major digitization endeavors of recent years, through which most philatelic and archival materials have been digitized and given basic documentation.

The Museum’s collection encompasses virtually every stamp ever issued by the Greek State, in both folio and draft form, along with printing plates dating back to 1861. It also includes stamps from territories under temporary Greek administration and notable rarities.

Examples include a draft design for Crete’s 1913 Union with Greece by Florentine Skouloudis–Kaloutsis (the first female Greek stamp artist), resistance organization issues from 1944 (EDES and ELAS), and folios of the 1896 Olympic issue (exhibited at the Louvre in 2024).



1913 “Suda” issue printed by “Bradbury Wilkinson & Co.



Drawing by Mrs. Florentine Skouloudis–Kaloutsis used for the 1913 “Suda” issue (left) and Letter of Appreciation from the General Administration of Crete (right) to Mrs. Florentine Skouloudis–Kaloutsis for the design of the “Suda” commemorative stamp for the Union of Crete with Greece (1912).



The Museum now stands at an important crossroads. While digitization continues to advance, the physical exhibition remains outdated.

Space is limited, though visitors are still welcomed in small numbers for free guided tours. Efforts are underway to secure a larger and more suitable building, but there is much to address beyond infrastructure – especially comprehensive cataloguing & documentation, which demand both time and specialized knowledge.

The Museum's scientific and technical staff consists of just ten individuals who work diligently behind the scenes. They document collections, expand the Museum's digital presence, guide visitors at no cost, plan exhibitions, publish articles on the collection, and manage the everyday administrative workload.

Despite their limited numbers, their commitment ensures these cultural treasures remain accessible and protected.



*Large Hermes Head Printing Plate of 10 lepta*

*Emmanuel Georgoudakis is a Philologist, an Art Historian and Head of the Exhibitions, Events, and Publications department of the Philatelic and Postal Museum of Greece.*



# The Manchukuo connection to the Philatelic Museum of Greece

by Christos Gikas



By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the northeastern province of Manchuria, then part of Imperial China, became an arena of intense geostrategic competition between China, Russia, and Japan. This rivalry culminated in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Despite Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War, Russia maintained its presence in Chinese Manchuria, with Japan continuing to perceive Russia's expansionist "threat" in both Manchuria and Korea.

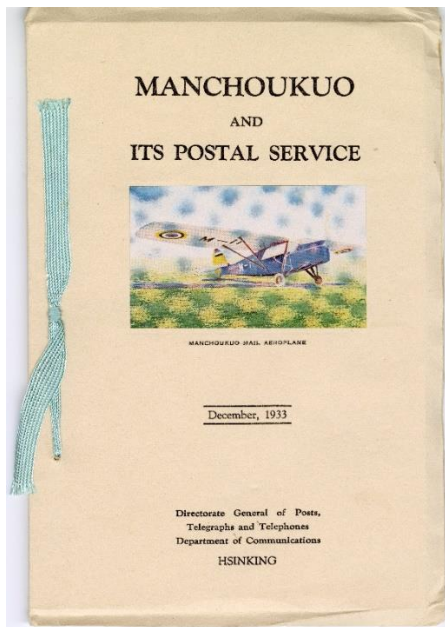


*Manchukuo Map*

On September 18, 1931, the explosion of a bomb on the Japanese-owned railway line near the city of Mukden (present-day Shenyang) – allegedly planted by pro-Russian Chinese according to Japan – served as the pretext for Japan's invasion of Chinese Manchuria.

The Japanese declared Manchuria's "independence," naming it Manchukuo. It's worth noting that the Qing Dynasty, the last Imperial Dynasty of China, was of Manchurian origin, and its last emperor, Puyi, had already been deposed in 1911.

Japan's effort to gain international recognition of Manchukuo as a legitimate and sovereign State by the League of Nations manifested in two ways: first, by installing the deposed last emperor of China, Puyi, as the emperor of Manchukuo, and second, by issuing postage stamps for this new State entity. After a year's delay, the League of Nations decided against recognizing Manchukuo, although certain Axis countries proceeded with recognition.



Manchukuo's postage stamps, as proof of national sovereignty, were sent as specimens to Postal Authorities worldwide, hoping to gain recognition for the puppet-State.

Recently, the Philatelic and Postal Museum of Greece "discovered" in its collections few sets of Manchukuo stamps that had been sent to the then-responsible Ministry of Communications of Greece.

The first set of Manchukuo stamps was issued on July 26, 1932, featuring two designs: the Liaoyang Pagoda and a portrait of Puyi, with Chinese text on the stamps reading "Postal Service of the Manchu State."



*Manchukuo Emperor Pu Yi*



*Liaoning city Pagoda*

In the next stamp issue of 1934, the inscription changed to "Postal Administration of the Manchu Empire." A year later, in 1935, stamps featured the Orchid (*Cymbidium goeringii*), symbol of the Manchurian imperial crest, and in 1936, a design depicting the "Sacred White Mountains" – Paektu, also known as Changbai Shan in Chinese).

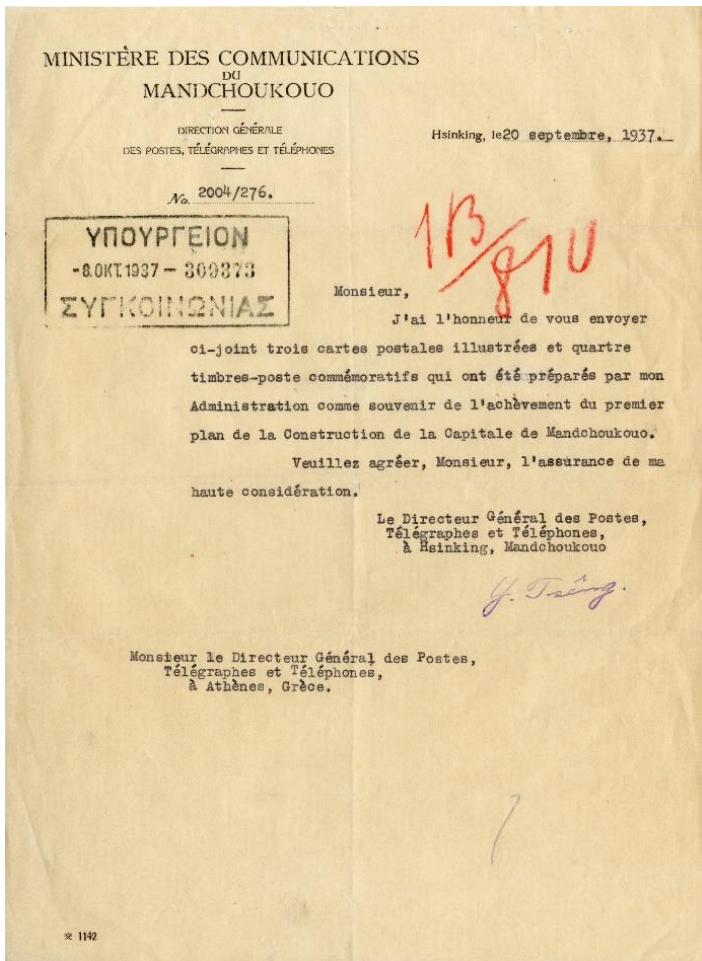


*Manhcukuo Imperial Crest*



*Sacred White Mountain  
(Changbai Shan – Paektu)*

A new definitive set depicting Landscapes was issued in 1936, again featuring the imperial crest with the Orchid, while from 1937 until 1945, a number of commemorative stamps were issued for anniversaries and events of the "Manchu Empire" as well as in honor of Japan.



*Letter from the Manchukuo Ministry of Communications addressed to the Greek Ministry of Communications accompanying Manchukuo sets of postage stamps, September 20<sup>th</sup> 1937.*

The definitive end of the "Manchu Empire" came with the Axis defeat and Japan's unconditional surrender at the end of World War II. However, the Manchu State issued stamps "survived," first being overprinted with the official title of the then sovereign and legitimate state entity "Republic of China" and with overprints from other Chinese local postal services, remaining in regular use from 1945 to 1949.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that Manchuria – in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – was a site of business activity for many Europeans among them a number of Greeks, particularly from Kefalonia island. The celebrated Greek poet of great sea voyages, Nikos Kavvadias was born in 1910 in Nikolsk–Ussuriysky close to the Russian–Manchurian border.

*Special thanks for providing the images of Manchukuo philatelic material to Emmanuel Georgoudakis, the Head of the Exhibitions, Events, and Publications department of the Philatelic and Postal Museum of Greece.*



# 19<sup>th</sup> UPU Competition Class 2024

At EFIRO 2008 World Stamp Exhibition in Bucharest, giving the fact that no class existed for modern philately, or for postal administrations, the UPU and the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP) decided to join forces to develop a competition class of contemporary postage stamps in one-frame, 16-page exhibits. The postal administrations were invited to “display” their creativity by presenting their novelties. This newly-created, annual competition was immediately approved by philately's highest authorities, and judged by FIP-accredited jurors.

For the designated operators, a UPU international competition class is an opportunity to showcase their philatelic expertise at a lower cost, and to promote the "made in" of each country worldwide. From 2024 onwards, the UPU and FIP have taken a major step forward, increasing their visibility even further. From 2024 onwards, the UPU and FIP have taken a major step forward, increasing the visibility of this competition and as a result the 19th Competition Class was exhibited on four continents : Europe (EFIRO 2024 and PARIS PHILEX 2024), North America (WESTPEX 2024), and Asia (CHINA 2024), raising the profile of modern philately. Organized according to traditional sixteen-page panels, each operator highlights the themes of their choice, reflecting their issue programs over the last three years. Each stamp includes full technical information (value, use, date of issue, etc.).

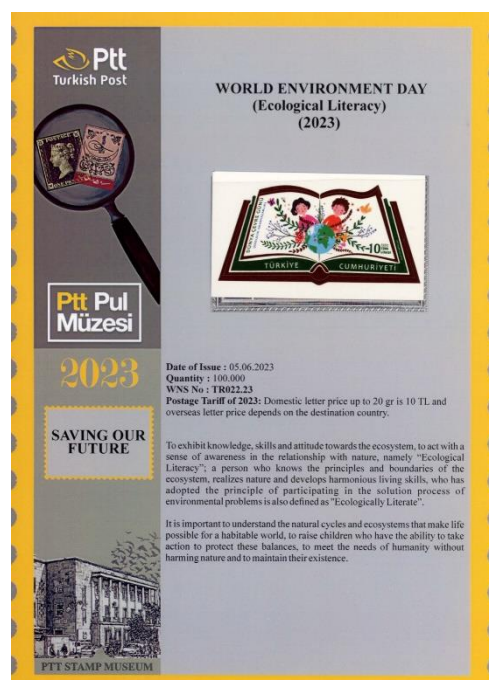
In the 2024, 17<sup>th</sup> competition class 28 postal operators participated across three categories according to their annual volume of stamp issues. The exhibits were judged by three FIP-accredited jurors. In these three categories were four Balkanfila group postal administrations among the top 3 winners :

## Group A:

1<sup>st</sup> place Slovakia; 2<sup>nd</sup> Morocco; 3<sup>rd</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina – BH Post, Sarajevo.



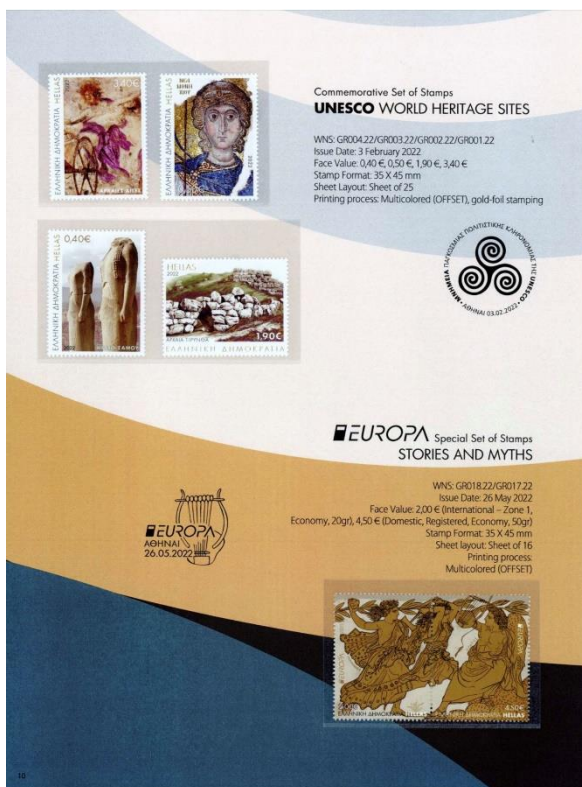
BiH Sarajevo 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Group A



Türkiye 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Group B

## Group B:

1<sup>st</sup> Macao, China; 2<sup>nd</sup> Belarus; 3<sup>rd</sup> Türkiye.



Greece 1<sup>st</sup> place in Group C



Romania 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Group C

## Group C:

1<sup>st</sup> Greece; 2<sup>nd</sup> Romania and United Nations Postal Administration (tied); 3<sup>rd</sup> France.

The upcoming, 20<sup>th</sup> Competition Class will travel to URUGUAY 2025 in February, BERNABA 2025 in Bern, Switzerland, in May, GASS 2025 in Chicago, United States, and PHILAKOREA 2025 in Seoul, in September.

To make competition classes more attractive and interactive, the International Bureau has introduced QR codes, displayed beneath each exhibition frame. One of these codes takes visitors to the participant's e-shop, while the other links to the WNS website. This means that visitors are now able not only to buy the stamps directly from designated operators' e-shops, but also to access these operators' entire philatelic output. This initiative also helps to raise the profile of the WNS and reinforce the link between traditional philately and e-commerce, while also promoting the development of e-commerce in philately.

All the 2024 exhibits can be explored at the following link :

<https://www.upu.int/en/universal-postal-union/activities/philately-ircs/upu-competition-class-2024>

# Posti, Finland Wins Design Competition

## Marking EUROPA Stamp's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2026



2026 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of EUROPA Stamps, a philatelic initiative launched to foster stronger relationships among European countries and promote lasting peace and unity. First issued in 1956 by six nations—Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, the founding members of the European Union—this initiative has grown to include 53 participating postal organizations.

Over the decades, the EUROPA stamp project has united postal administrations, particularly through collaborative designs for milestone occasions, such as anniversaries or acts of solidarity. The initiative has inspired postal operators to celebrate Europe's rich cultural heritage, creating timeless symbols of shared values and aspirations that continue to captivate new generations of collectors.

Last year, the PostEurop Stamps and Philately Working Group organized an internal competition to select a common design motif for the theme "70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the EUROPA Stamp: United in...". Guided by shared values such as communication, innovation, cooperation, and common roots, members submitted 15 creative proposals, each presenting a unique vision. Postal operators were invited to vote on their favourite designs.

With votes from 50 postal organizations, we are delighted to announce the **winner of the 2026 EUROPA stamp competition: Posti Ltd, Finland. Second place was awarded to "JP BH Pošta" d.o.o. Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and third place to Post Luxembourg, Luxembourg.**

The winning stamp designer Mr. Klaus Welp shared the inspiration behind his work :

"The design of the 2026 EUROPA Stamp combines abstract and symbolic elements. The diagonally ascending dotted line represents both the perforation of a stamp and the progressive work of the PostEurop. The seven dots, connected by a straight line, symbolize seventy years of unified effort by postal operators across the continent. The blending gradients and dotted patterns in the background form a cohesive and vibrant surface, reflecting the joyful mix of colours from the European flag and symbolizing the unity of all member nations".





## 100<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY of the DUBROVNIK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Dubrovnik is the only city in this part of Europe and one of the few in the world the orchestral music of which has been played continuously for seven centuries. The Dubrovnik Symphony Orchestra continues the long musical tradition that had already developed during the period of the Dubrovnik Republic (1358 – 1808). The first symphonic concert of the Dubrovnik Philharmonic was held on 13 April 1925 and later it operated as the City Orchestra of Dubrovnik, which, in the 1970s, undertook extensive tours in the USA and Canada (over 120 concerts), while in the 1980s it functioned as the Festival Orchestra.

In 1992, the orchestra changed its name to its current name for the last time. Today, it is an important part of Croatia's cultural heritage, performing regularly in the Rector's Palace and churches, as well as in major concert halls around the world. It has been awarded the prestigious Milka Trnina Award for outstanding artistic achievements, the City of Dubrovnik Award, the Award for Contribution to the Reputation and Promotion of the Dubrovnik–Neretva County in the Country and Abroad, as well as the Orlando Grand Prix at the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, presented by Croatian Radio and Television (HRT). It is important to mention the active role and involvement of the Dubrovnik Symphony Orchestra during the Homeland War.

As a cultural institution, it organizes several festivals throughout the concert season, preserves musical heritage and promotes Croatian composers in Dubrovnik and abroad. It pays special attention to the education and development of young musicians. The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Dubrovnik Symphony Orchestra is an excellent occasion to remember the people who contributed to the development of the orchestra and to celebrate this milestone with due honor. The program includes a concert on the exact day of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a rich program throughout the year, a celebratory concert in Zagreb and performances abroad.

The visual identity of the anniversary combines the number 100 with the orchestra's existing identity, where the letter "D" – a recognizable symbol and the initial letter of Dubrovnik – becomes a sound wave, symbolizing music traveling toward the audience. The color scheme of this year's identity places the Dubrovnik Symphony Orchestra in a contemporary context, moving away from traditional perceptions of an orchestra.

## "Iconic Greek Stamp Artists"

Hellenic Post honors the most important creators of the Greek stamp, releasing on 29 January 2025 the Commemorative Series of Stamps "Iconic Greek Stamp Artists", which includes 3 stamps.



**DIMITRIS BISKINIS (1891–1947)** lived at the crossroads between the realistic, classical art style of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the radical changes of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Born in Patras in 1891, he first entered the School of Fine Arts continuing his education at the Académie Julian and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris. His work gained swift recognition in the French capital, and he was invited to participate in the Salon des Artistes Français with four paintings.

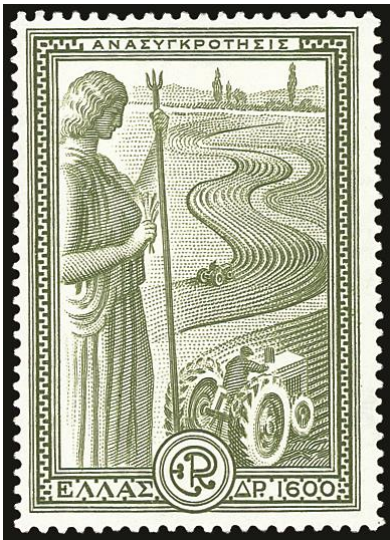


His art is chiefly inspired by mythological and religious themes, moving between symbolism and allegory. What dominates, though, whatever the subject, is the compositional integrity of the image, which Biskinis considered to be the most important aspect of the painter's craft. In 1928, he was appointed a professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts.

His association with Hellenic Post began with the decorative elements of a set commemorating the Greek Revolution. In 1933 and 1935, he was asked to design the issues *Democracy* and *Mythology*, respectively. Here, within a framework of symbolism, Biskinis found new ways to present even the most ancient archetypes.

He regarded *Mythology* as one of his finest achievements. Indeed, at the 1951 World Philatelic Congress in Buenos Aires, it was singled out to receive first prize among the world's best stamps. Unfortunately, this came four years after his premature death.

**YANNIS KEFALLINOS (1894–1957)** was born in 1894 in Alexandria, Egypt. In 1912, he graduated from the Averoff School and enrolled at Ghent University to study Engineering. The following year, however, he moved to Paris to study first at the École des Beaux–Arts and then at a free academy of painting. He graduated in 1920, and a decade later, in 1931, became Professor of Engraving at the School of Fine Arts in Greece.



Kefallinos was a reforming figure in his department. He set up a printing workshop, convinced that engraving should transcend the confines of book illustration to encompass all forms of printed material, whether large or small, public or private, official or commercial. For him, no aspect of the craft was unworthy of attention or exploration.

During the period he worked with the Hellenic Post, Kefallinos put himself forward to design the sets *Paul the Apostle*, *Reconstruction*, *National Products* and *Ancient Art*, which can be seen within the context of a wider move to reassess the historical and aesthetic continuity of Greek art.

Yannis Kefallinos's work earned widespread admiration, particularly for the unparalleled aesthetic quality of his stamps. His legacy extends also to his teaching and the example he set, which would inspire future generations of young engravers.

**TASSOS (1914–1985)** was born in Lefkochora, Messinia, in 1914. He studied painting at the Athens School of Fine Arts being also one of Yannis Kefallinos's first engraving students. He initially signed his engravings 'Tassos', before adopting the name by which he became widely known, 'A. Tassos'.



Tassos began working with Hellenic Post in 1954. The 58 sets of stamps he created between then and 1967 were steeped in ancient Greek and Byzantine tradition, while his study of the austere simplicity of the Cretan School of Byzantine icon painting taught him how to distil the essence of his subjects into his designs.

Tassos eliminated anything that might hinder clarity, producing works that followed their own internal rules, even within the limited space of a stamp. Simultaneously, he played a key role in the technical changes that were taking place, and in the transition from monochrome to colour images.

Through his personal style and practical expertise, Greek stamps gained a distinct identity. His influence was so profound that the history of philately in Greece is often divided into the pre- and post-Tassos periods.



## Moldova

On January 4<sup>th</sup>, the Moldova Post Office circulated a set of stamps titled “Personalities” depicting four remarkable literary authors :

- **Alexandru Gromov** (22.04.1925, Ismail Romania – 12.06.2011, Chişinău Republic of Moldova) was a Bessarabian Jew, Soviet and Moldovan writer, translator, publicist, film critic and journalist. He is considered the initiator of the science fiction genre in post-war Moldova.
- **Valentin Roşca** (7.01.1925, Alexăndreni Edineţ — 28.09.1987, Chişinău Republic of Moldova). Poet, prose writer, publicist and translator, he traveled an impressive literary path and left a valuable legacy in various genres and literary forms.



- **Paul Gore or Pavel** (27.07.1875, Chişinău – 8.12.1927 Chişinău Republic of Moldova) was a Romanian Bessarabian historian, prose writer and publicist, honorary member (1919) of the Romanian Academy, president of the Moldavian National Party.
- **Mihai Eminescu** born Mihail Eminovici (15.01.1850, Botoşani Republic of Moldova – 15.06.1889, Bucharest Romania) was a Romanian poet, prose writer and journalist, generally considered to be the most famous and influential personality in Romanian literature.

## Romania

### The Morning Star of the Romanian Poetry, Mihai EMINESCU



Romfilatelia introduces into circulation on Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> of this year, a philatelic issue dedicated to the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mihai Eminescu's birth, entitled **The Morning Star of Romanian Poetry, Mihai Eminescu**. The issue includes a postage stamp, a perforated souvenir sheet, two minisheets, a First Day Cover and a philatelic folder with a special block in a limited run printing.

The birthday of the greatest national poet, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1850, has, for a decade and a half, also become the National Culture Day.

Poet, prose writer, playwright, and journalist, Mihai Eminescu is regarded by posthumous literary criticism as the 'unequaled poet', whose work transcends time. Through Eminescu's writings, the Romanian literary language reached its pinnacle.

Eminescu's work is a historical synthesis of popular tradition, combined with elements of the Romanian people's experience and national culture. The universe of profound ideas and elevated emotions in Eminescu's creations continues to enrich our thoughts and feelings to this day.

In remembering the great and unexampled poet, Constantin Noica wrote: 'Through Eminescu and the miraculous legacy left by him, we have been given a gift that other cultures, even the great ones, have not had. On the scale of our culture, Eminescu's role may be more alive than that of Shakespeare in England or Goethe in Germany, for he is not merely a poet, nor a tormented soul, but a consciousness of complete culture, spanning from an openness to mathematics, which he barely knew, to an openness to history'.

The postage stamp of the current issue (face value of **LEI 14**) features a portrait of the poet accompanied by a facsimile of verses from the manuscript of the poem *The Prayer of a Dacian*, and the philatelic souvenir sheet depicts on the postage stamp image (face value of **LEI 30**), a portrait reproduced from an engraving by the great artist Ioan Octavian Penda, framed by a compositional graphic design featuring symbols of the poet and his poetry (the quill pen and inkwell), along with a portrait of Raluca Eminovici, the poet's mother.

## Year of the Wood Snake

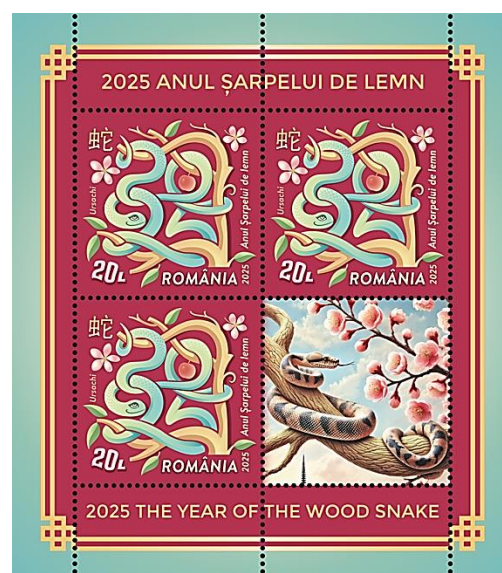


On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025, Romfilatelia introduced into circulation, an issue dedicated to the Chinese Zodiac and New Year under the general name: **Year of the Wood Snake**, consisting of a postage stamp, a First Day Cover and a maxicard for the maximaphily enthusiasts.

Used for over three thousand years, the Chinese Zodiac precedes European astrology. The concept of this zodiacal system has become a formidable concept compared to that of the West when it comes to defining people's character. Unlike astrology, whose predictions are based on the position of the Sun, stars, and planets, the Chinese calendar, based on the phases of the moon, assigns the name of an animal to each year of a 12-year cycle. It is accepted that each of the 12 animals has the ability to endow the person born under that sign with certain qualities.

The year 2025 is associated with the 'Wood Snake', with the Chinese New Year starting on January 29<sup>th</sup> and ending on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026. It is noteworthy that the element 'wood' is associated with flexibility and renewal. Positioned in the middle of the Chinese Zodiac (the sixth sign), the snake is regarded as a manifestation of intelligence, mystery, and introspection. It is not only a symbol of rebirth and renewal but also a seeker of new beginnings and new paths, leaving the past behind.

The postage stamp with the face value of Lei 20, presents, in a specially designed graphic, a snake outlining the numbers indicating the year 2025, in a green shade (justified by the name Green Snake). The wooden branches in the composition conceal an apple, alluding to the fact that, in the Christian concept, the snake is also an element of evil (the one who tempted Eve to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree).



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## Stained Glass Windows from Peleş National Museum

On February 12<sup>th</sup> circulated a new postage stamps issue consisted of four stamps and titled “**Peleş National Museum, Stained Glass Windows**”, showcasing artistic creations from a valuable collection of stained glass, part of the heritage of Peleş Castle.

The stained-glass collection of Peleş Castle is practically unique in Romania and South-eastern Europe. Commissioned by King Carol I at the Zettler workshops in Munich, the stained glass windows were created in an initial phase between 1881 and 1882. Their artistic design includes flags, shields, heraldic symbols, coats of arms of German cities, portraits of royal family members, tilts, hunting scenes, and more.



Religious themes also find their place, with compositions depicting Saint George, Archangel Michael, Saint Nicholas, and Adam and Eve. Additionally, there are compositions illustrating scenes from European fairy tales such as *Snow White* and *The Beautiful Mélusine*, found in Queen Elisabeth’s study. Romanian fairy tales are also represented, including *Ana Doamna [Lady Ana]*, *Înșir-te mărgărite [Get strung, pearl]*, and *Ciocârlia [Skylark]* by Alecsandri, which can be seen in the Old Music Hall. The last stained-glass windows were created to decorate the New Audience Hall of the Castle, arranged between 1911 and 1914.

The execution techniques of the period, while preserving the tradition of glass production and the use of colours inherited from 16<sup>th</sup>-century art, were beneficially complemented by new discoveries in glass manufacturing and colour chemistry. Applied and thoroughly heat-treated, the colours have remained vivid and brilliant even after more than a century and a half since the works were created.

The postage stamps reproduce images depicting scenes from the fairy tale *Snow White* (the stamps with face values of **Lei 4** and **Lei 6**), a wedding ceremony titled *Bridal Procession* (in Romanian, *Cortegiul nupțial*) (the stamp with the face value of **Lei 5**), and the overall architecture of Hohenzollern Castle, which belonged to the family of King Carol I (the stamp with the face value of **Lei 14**).

The design of the First Day Cover features an interesting scene from the commercial domain under a well-thought-out title: *The Jewellery Merchant*.

## Slovenia

Slovenian Post on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025 issued five new postage stamps that illustrate and pay homage to a wonderful Alpine lake, a remarkable lady that the essential mission of her life became the care of the blind, the global celebration of romantic love, the father of the Slovene comic strip as well as a lady that married a Count and paid that with her life.

### Ivarčko Lake



Slovenia has many lakes but Ivarčko Lake is notable for being the lowest-lying Alpine lake in the country. Originally a natural lake, it was emptied at some point in the past. A scout troop from Črna na Koroškem who camped here in 1937 and 1938 gave it the nickname Beaver's Lake. This man-made lake lies at an elevation of around 645 metres above sea level, and the lake surroundings are a popular destination for a day out and offer considerable potential for the development of a recreation centre that could operate in all seasons

### Minka Skaberne (1882–1965)

Alongside innovation, creativity is an important driver of economic and social development. For this reason, Slovenia's Intellectual Property Office has decided to draw attention to five notable women who were active in the fields of literature, theatre, journalism, translation and education in the 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.



**Minka Skaberne** was born in Kranj and studied at the Teachers' Training College in Ljubljana. In 1911 she went to Vienna to take a course in instruction for the blind. In 1917 she visited Slovene soldiers at the institute for the blind in Graz and familiarised herself with the Braille library there. She later established a library in Ljubljana along the same lines.

She continued to teach, but care of the blind became the essential mission of her life. She began by organising a course in writing and reading Braille, for which a hundred volunteers registered, working in their own homes under her supervision and in a single year they transcribed 60 works by Slovene writers. By the time of her death, she had transcribed hundreds of books that today form the principal library for the blind in Slovenia. She died in Ljubljana.

## Love is born, love abides, but love can also die!



The global celebration of romantic love known as Valentine's Day has been observed in Slovenia since the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> c. Before that, the Feast of St Valentine was above all a celebration of early spring and one of the dates in the calendar associated with the mating seasons of birds and the reawakening of nature after the winter. The latter is referred to in the old saying "Valentine brings the keys to unlock the roots".

The introduction of new globalised content to this traditional feast day took place rapidly and was largely based on consumerism. Yet the essence of this celebration is still linked to love, in other words to relationships between individuals, at all stages of life. Love is one of the most powerful forces that exists, but we must still be careful to develop, nurture and consolidate it. It is part of our lives from the moment we are born until old age, taking on different forms and expressing itself in different ways in each new phase that we live through.

## Miki Muster – Centenary of his Birth



Miki Muster is known as "the father of the Slovene comic strip", "a giant of the seventh art", "the Slovene Walt Disney" and he has left a powerful impression among people in Slovenia, regardless of what generation they belong to, everyone experiences his works for the first time with wonder and enthusiasm. Miki Muster's works still remain an example of fearlessness, creativity and goodness.

## Veronica of Desenice – 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of her Death

Following the death of his first wife, Elizabeth of Frankopan, Count Frederick II of Celje, eldest son of Count Herman II, secretly married Veronica of Desenice against the will of his father. The furious Herman imprisoned his son in Celje's Old Castle. Veronica went into hiding but was eventually tracked down and brought before the court. Herman accused her of having used witchcraft to entrap his son in marriage, of having attempted to poison him (Herman). The unfortunate young woman incarcerated in Ojstrica Castle and finally on 17 October 1425 she was drowned by Herman's knights.



source : Slovenian Post, Bulletin 154





**Since antiquity Berries has been considered as beneficial for human health the latest Türkiye Post Office postage stamp issue depicts four of them : the Blackberry, the Dog Rose, the Raspberry and the Wild Pear.**



**For Suggestions, Comments and Inquiries, kindly contact the National Delegates**

Albania : **Julian Demeti** [julian.demeti@gmail.com](mailto:julian.demeti@gmail.com)

BiH Kanton : **Danijel Potocki** [tockipo@gmail.com](mailto:tockipo@gmail.com)

BiH Repubika Srpska : **Radenko Radanović** [radenkoradanovic@gmail.com](mailto:radenkoradanovic@gmail.com)

Bulgaria : **Boncho Bonev** [bnb11@abv.bg](mailto:bnb11@abv.bg)

Croatia : **Capt. Slavoljub Katancevic** [katem-sjeme@pu.t-com.hr](mailto:katem-sjeme@pu.t-com.hr)

Croatia : **Julije Maras** [julije@maras-filatelia.com.hr](mailto:julije@maras-filatelia.com.hr)

Greece : **Christos Gikas** (editor) [xgikas@gmail.com](mailto:xgikas@gmail.com)

Moldova : **Andrei Adam** [ufrm@mail.com](mailto:ufrm@mail.com)

Montenegro: **Tomo Katuric** [tomokaturic@t-com.me](mailto:tomokaturic@t-com.me)

North Macedonia: **Sinisha Pavleski** [unionofphilatelists.mk@gmail.com](mailto:unionofphilatelists.mk@gmail.com)

Romania : **Francisc Ambrus** [franambrus@yahoo.com](mailto:franambrus@yahoo.com)

Serbia : **Svetislav D. Jelic** [svetislav.jelic@gmail.com](mailto:svetislav.jelic@gmail.com)

Slovenia : **Igor Pirc** [ipirc711@gmail.com](mailto:ipirc711@gmail.com)

Turkiye : **Mehmet Akan** [studiotasarim@gmail.com](mailto:studiotasarim@gmail.com)