Balkanfila Newsletter

No 17, October 2026

Editorial

Philately Forward, Exhibitions, Articles and Events

Until the end of October was the deadline for FEPA's member- Federation to participate in its initiative to gather the best ideas for bringing new collectors into philately. Hopefully, new imaginative ways to promote philately will come up which would consequently be implemented.

The first two months of autumn, a number of philatelic exhibitions and events were organized which are presented in the current issue of Balkanfila Newsletter. For Balkanfila Newsletter it was the first time to enter a competitive exhibition being awarded a promising Vermeil medal.

Exhibitions have always been a core activity of organized philately and during past September-October period we a number of very interesting ones, such as EgyPhila 2026 with two Balkanfila group member-Federations -Croatia and Greece- taking part, SrbijaFila XVI with participants all the Federations of former Yugoslavia and International Philatelic Literature Italia 2026 with a number of Balkan Federations being present. Istanbul 2026 Thematic and Youth, "Sibiu Anniversaries 2026", Mytilene 2026 Stamp and Philatelic Literature exhibition and the 31st Forum of the Mediterranean Maritime Museums with philatelic interest. There are also reports on the upcoming Balkanfila XXII as well as TimFilEx 2027.

Italian Civil Post Office in Durrës, a new study of Bulgaria's First Postage Stamps, Stamps as a Message of Freedom, Year of the Horse - Serbia 2014 and the First Serbian Postage Stamp celebrating Bread Culture are the five article that enrich our current issue.

Three Events in One Day by the Union of Philatelists of Macedonia, 2026 Yehudi Menachin Prize and the 60th Anniversary of the Hellenic Philatelic Society of the Netherlands are the event presentations in this issue.

ITALIA 2026 : BALKANFILA NEWSLETTER 80p. VERMEIL MEDAL

EGYPHILA 2026

EgyPhila 2026 was organized by the Philatelic Society of Egypt, under its new President Hany Salam RDP, has revitalized philatelic events in Egypt by introducing new guidelines and procedures.

EGYPHILA 2026, held from 16 to 19 September at Cairo's Digital Innovation Centre "Creativa", attracted exhibitors from twelve countries across North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, with additional collections from the USA.



The exhibition consisted of 356 Frames, 111 Exhibits and 10 Philatelic Literature entries in ten classes. The Egyptian Post participated with a commemorative stamp marking the centenary of the country's first airmail stamp.



During the exhibition three exemplary Seminars were delivered by FEPA President Bill Hedley on “Venetian communications with Egypt in the late Middle Ages”, by the President of Croatian Federation of Philatelists and FIP Juror on “Rules and Regulations of Thematic Philately Exhibits” and by Mr. Oral Avci on “Mail & Might : The Struggle for Supremacy in Ottoman Jerusalem”.

Delegates were also offered a visit to a traditional desert village before the exhibition opened.

Two Balkanfila group Federations took part in EgyPhila 2026 : Croatia with 5 Philatelic Literature exhibits and Greece with 45 frames.

The traditional awards dinner was held at the Diplomatic Club. **The Grand Prix** was awarded to **Atef Sarian** (United Kingdom) for “**Egypt 1866-1867, The First Issue**”.



From left : Mr. Hany Salam Hany Salam RDP, President of the Philatelic Society of Egypt, Grand Prix Winner Mr. Atef Sarian (United Kingdom), His Highness Prince Mohammed Ali Fouad Farouk, the grandson of King Farouk.

ISTANBUL 2026 NATIONAL THEMATIC AND YOUTH STAMP EXHIBITION

Where Philately Meets Young Exhibitors

by Muzaffer Arda



A new chapter was added to the tradition of youth and thematic stamp exhibitions, which began in 1976, as it reached its 50th anniversary year.

The Istanbul 2026 National Thematic and Youth Stamp Exhibition took place from 26 September to 4 October 2026 at Rami Library in the Eyüpsultan district of Istanbul. Held alongside events forming part of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Türkiye Culture Route Festival, the exhibition introduced philately to visitors of different ages.



Rami Library, once a military barracks and left unused for many years before being restored and reopened as a library, hosted the exhibition. To ensure that the event ran smoothly, the library management provided a dedicated office for the exhibits' secure storage, a separate room for the jury's work, a hall for the opening and Palmares ceremonies, and another room for seminars.

50 Exhibitors, 200 Frames

All applications were submitted online through the Federation of Turkish Philatelic Associations' website, www.tfdf.org.tr. A total of 50 exhibitors applied for 200 frames. The exhibition featured Thematic, Open Class, Maximaphily, One-Frame (Limited-Theme) and Youth classes. Entries in the Open and One-Frame (Limited-Theme) classes were required to have a thematic narrative. The applications comprised 20 thematic exhibits, 6 Open Class exhibits, 2 maximaphily exhibits, 8 One-Frame exhibits and 14 Youth exhibits.



Exhibits were brought to the venue by commissioners and exhibitors and handed over for secure storage. After the storage checks had been completed, commissioners, exhibitors and volunteers mounted the Exhibitions in the frames. Every accepted exhibit took part, filling all 200 frames requested from PTT A.Ş.



Opened with a Ceremony , Enriched by Seminars

The opening ceremony took place at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 26th 2026. Those attending included Esengül Korkmaz Çiçekli, Deputy Governor of Istanbul; Dr Arslan Yurt, Governor of Eyüpsultan District; Taner Beyoğlu, Director General of Libraries and Publications; Ekrem Acar, Deputy Director General of PTT A.Ş.; M. Ziya Ağaoğulları, President of the Federation of Turkish Philatelic Associations; and numerous philatelists.

As in the previous year, seminars covering different areas of philately were held throughout the exhibition:

- Erdal Tanıl: “Everyday Life and Professions in the Ottoman Empire as Seen on Postcards”
- Yasemin Yazgan: “Thematic Philately Exhibits: From Past to Present”
- Murat İ. Çelebi: “The Wars of the Ottoman Empire Through Foreign Eyes: Philatelic Traces from Rise to Fall”

The program also included a seminar entitled “How to Start a Stamp Collection” for Alperen Kutlu’s school classmates, who visited with him as a Youth Class exhibitor. Alperen also gave an engaging presentation on interplanetary journeys told through postage stamps.



Festival Crowds Bring More Visitors to the Exhibition

Familyfest, held during the Culture Route Festival, brought a substantial flow of visitors to Rami Library. Children’s activities took place in the library’s central green area, while sales stands and a concert area were set up in a space previously used as a car park. Throughout the day, visitors could take part in activities with their children and shop, before enjoying free concerts in the evening. This lively atmosphere also helped bring the stamp exhibition to a wider audience.

Two Special Awards at the Palmares

The Istanbul 2026 exhibition introduced a special awards initiative to encourage entries in the competitive classes. The **“Best Thematic Exhibit”** was selected from the Thematic, Open, One-Frame and Maximaphily classes, while the **“Best Youth Exhibit”** was chosen from the Youth Class. Following their assessments, the jury members cast secret ballots. The votes were placed in envelopes, which were opened and counted on stage in front of the audience during the palmarès ceremony, before the winners were announced. The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure sponsored the Best Thematic Exhibit award, while PTT A.Ş. presented the Best Youth Exhibit award.



At the palmarès ceremony on Saturday, 3 October 2026, diplomas and medals were presented to all 50 exhibitors, and seven additional special awards were distributed. Young exhibitors competing in the Youth Class also received stamp albums and stamp tongs.

Enis Egilli won the Best Thematic Exhibit award with an exhibit devoted to **“the life and works of Leonardo da Vinci”**. Ada Arven Akdemir received the Best Youth Exhibit award for her Exhibit entitled **“A Journey to Middle-earth with Arven”.** Enis Eğilli received his award from Fatih Tezcan, Deputy Director General of PTT A.Ş.



A New Chapter in a 50-Year Tradition

The Istanbul 2026 National Thematic and Youth Stamp Exhibition, held in the 50th anniversary year of the youth exhibitions that began in 1976, witnessed a particularly meaningful moment. Albert Erikman, who had taken part in the Samsun 1976 Youth Stamp Exhibition as a young philatelist at the beginning of his journey, returned to exhibit at Istanbul 2026 in both the Thematic and Maximaphily classes. His participation is a tangible reminder of how important such exhibitions are in nurturing the philatelists and exhibitors of the future.

Istanbul 2026 National Thematic and youth Stamp Exhibition ended on Sunday, October 4th 2026. With its full frames, seminars, awards and engagement with visitors, the Istanbul 2026 National Thematic and Youth Stamp Exhibition added a new chapter to the 50-year tradition of youth and thematic exhibitions that began in 1976. Participants left with many happy and lasting memories.



Representatives of PTT, Rami Library and the Turkish Federation of Philatelic Associations pose together at the exhibition's awards ceremony.

Special gifts were also presented by



PTT A.Ş. to those exhibitors participating in the Youth Class



The Exhibition Jury team is at Work.

National Philatelic Exhibition
with International Participation "SRBIJAFILA XVI"
REPORT OF THE GENERAL COMMISSIONER

Belgrade, October 2026

The National Philatelic Exhibition with International Participation "SRBIJAFILA XVI" brought together exhibitors from Serbia and abroad and showcased the diversity of philatelic creativity, collecting, and research. A total of 108 exhibits by 81 exhibitors from 11 countries were shown.

108	81	11	76
exhibits	exhibitors	countries	medals

The material on display included exhibits from Serbia, other former Yugoslav republics, Romania, Israel, the People's Republic of China, Great Britain, and Denmark. International participation added to the diversity of the exhibition and to the exchange of knowledge and experience among philatelists.

Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony was addressed by the Acting Director of Pošta Srbije, the general sponsor of the exhibition, **Zoran Anđelković**; the Advisor to the President of the Republic for Culture, **Dejan Savić**; and the President of the Philatelic Federation of Serbia, **Vladimir Milić**. On this occasion, Vladimir Milić presented gold badges of the Philatelic Federation of Serbia to Zoran Anđelković and Dejan Savić in recognition of their contribution and support.



Zoran Anđelković, Dejan Savić, and Vladimir Milić at the opening ceremony of the exhibition

Classes and Judging

The exhibits were arranged in five honor classes and ten competitive classes, in accordance with the Exhibition Regulations. Judging of the competitive exhibits was carried out under FIP rules, taking into account treatment and importance, philatelic and related knowledge, personal study and research, condition and rarity, and presentation.

According to the Jury Report, a total of 76 medals were awarded. The distribution of awards is shown in the table.

Medal level	Number
Large Gold	**4**
Gold	**13**
Large Vermeil	**9**
Vermeil	**6**
Large Silver	**10**
Silver	**11**
Silver-Bronze	**9**
Bronze	**14**



International Jury

Cooperation and Acknowledgments

The successful staging of the exhibition was the result of cooperation among the organizers, institutional partners, exhibitors, and numerous collaborators. I extend special thanks to Pošta Srbije d.o.o. and the Ministry of Defense, the Organizing Committee of the exhibition, the Philatelic Federation of Serbia, the members of the jury, the exhibitors, and everyone whose efforts contributed to its success.

The national commissioners of the participating countries also made a significant contribution.



National Commissioners

Accompanying Program

The accompanying program included presentations and lectures that enhanced the professional and educational character of the exhibition:

01 A Three-Year Journey of China Regional Philatelic Forum (CRPF) – Frank Zhao Zhongwei	**06** The Provisional Issue of Senta 1944 – Aleš Marinšek
02 King Peter in Caricatures – Prof. Dr. Milan Radovanović	**07** Thematic Philately – Yoram Lubianiker
03 Aviation and Airmail of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia – Ratomir Živković	**08** Presentation of the activities of the PTT Museum and a visit to the museum
04 Book presentation: Miodrag Vuković, "Postal Stationery of Serbia 1870–1915"	**09** Book presentation: Željko Matić, "Municipal Posts in Serbia"
05 Presentation of issue No. 287 of the journal "Filatelista"	**10** Open Class – Iva Moritsen



Details from the presentations and lectures

Grand Prix

According to the Jury Report, "SRBIJAFILA XVI" brought together 81 exhibitors from 11 countries, with a total of 108 exhibits. Across the five honor classes and ten competitive classes, 76 medals were awarded. The exhibition provided a venue for presenting philatelic collections and research, as well as for the international exchange of knowledge and experience.

At the ceremony held on October 10, 2026, **Grand Prix** of the exhibition "SRBIJAFILA XVI" was awarded to **Vladimir Milić FRPSL** for the exhibit "SERBIA 1880–1915: THREE KINGS." The award was presented by Peter Suhadolc FRPSL, member of the Board of the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP).



As General Commissioner, I thank everyone who took part in the preparation and staging of the exhibition. This report is based on data from the Jury Report and covers the judging results and the main participation figures.

A CELEBRATION OF ROMANIAN PHILATELY

National Philatelic Exhibition "Sibiu Anniversaries 2026"

Sibiu, September 2026

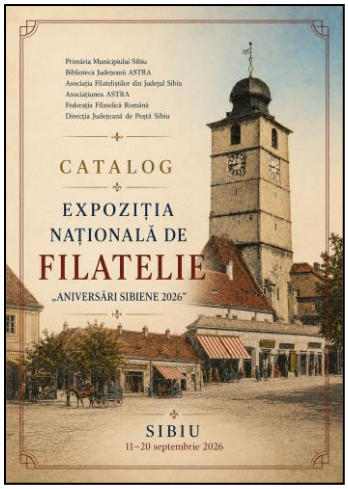
The National Philatelic Exhibition "Sibiu Anniversaries 2026" took place in Sibiu between the 11th and 20th of September 2026. The exhibition was organized by our Philatelists' Association in collaboration with the Town Hall, the ASTRA Association, the ASTRA County Library, the Romanian Philatelic Federation and the County's Post Office Department.

It was an honour for the local philatelists to organize an event meant to pay tribute to the city, its history and its philatelic tradition. The exhibition has celebrated the following: 165 years since the ASTRA Association and the ASTRA Library were founded, 475 years since Conrad Haas settled in Sibiu, 200 years since the Council Tower's new roof was constructed and 540 years since the Saxon University was established. These four anniversaries represent landmarks that remind us of the important role that this city has played in Transylvania and Romania's cultural, scientific and administrative areas.

For us, these four anniversaries were not merely dates marked on a calendar. They represent opportunities to rediscover people, institutions, ideas and achievements that have contributed to the identity of the city, and to make them known through philately.

Furthermore, Sibiu has a philatelic tradition of almost a century. In 1924, one of the first philatelic groups in the country (Timbrophilia) was founded here, and in 1930 the "first philatelic exhibition from Sibiu" took place, which was, in fact, the second exhibition ever organized in Romania. This tradition has not remained only a page in history. Generations of philatelists from Sibiu have continued the work of their predecessors, and in recent decades the city has regularly hosted national exhibitions and events with international participation. We recall that in 2025 the Philatelists' Association from Sibiu received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the European Federation of Philatelic Associations (FEPA), which proves that the city and the county remain an important centre of Romanian philately.

This new exhibition is the result of a collaboration which involved important philatelic institutions: Sibiu's Town Hall which co-financed our exhibition, the ASTRA County Library which hosted the venue, the ASTRA Association, the Romanian Philatelic Federation and the County's Post Office Department. We thank them all for their support, for their trust, and for understanding the cultural and philatelic value of this project.



As always, the Philatelists' Association from Sibiu produced a series of materials: the exhibition's catalogue, the diploma, four special covers and commemorative cancellations, a philatelic card, the exhibition's badge and the exhibition's medal.

















Additionally, the Romanian Post issued two prepaid postcards for our exhibition which could be sent free of charge, both domestically and internationally, by all those who were present at the event.

Finally, the exhibition included over 200 display frames, with the participation of 67 exhibitors and a philatelic literature class in which seven specialized works were presented. The exhibition's jury awarded no fewer than eleven diplomas corresponding to gold-medal level, confirming the high quality of the exhibits.

ITALIA 2026

a Milestone in the History of Philatelic Literature Exhibitions

The International Exhibition of Philatelic Literature, ITALIA 2026 held in Rome (15-18 October 2026) was organized by FSFI (Federazione fra le Società Filateliche Italiane) with the Italian Federation's President Bruno Crevato-Selvaggi as the General Commissioner.

The jury of Italia 2026 congratulates the Italian Federation on its decision to organise Italy's third international exhibition of philatelic literature, following Italia 82 in Milan -the first such exhibition in the FIP world- and Italia 2018 in Verona.



Bruno Crevato-Selvaggi for his unwavering determination achieved tackling the many uncertainties surrounding its organization and offer to philatelists an outstanding exhibition. Key feature for the impressive outcome of ITALIA 2026 were the exceptionally low entry fee, coupled with an intensive campaign of direct promotion, that attracted a substantial number of first-time exhibitors as well as an outstanding contribution of the exhibitors, who submitted 282 entries in total; 184 Monographs, 46 Periodicals, and 52 Digital entries.

The Italian Federation appointed Giancarlo Morolli as chairman of the jury which consisted of: Christopher Harman (UK), Gerald Heschl (Austria), Bernard Jimenez (France), Wolfgang Maassen (Germany), José-Ramon Moreno (Spain), Ari Muhonen (Finland) and, as apprentice, Marco Panza (Italy). Luca Lavagnino (Italy) supported the jury's activities as jury secretary.

In the previous three months the jurors conducted a preliminary assessment at home of all digital entries and approximately half of the other entries presented as PDF files. They formalised their evaluations of the digital entries during two online sessions and then met in Rome from 15 to 17 October. The exhibits were evaluated under the new FEPA regulations, which cover both paper and digital entries.

The Grand Prix was awarded to Lars Engelbrecht RDP with his exhibit, “Danmarks Helsager — Den Tofarvede Udgave 1871-1905”. Jonas Hällström RDP, representing the exhibition’s major sponsor, the Global Philatelic Network, presented the award.



From left : Bill Hedley, FEPA President, Bruno Crevato-Selvaggi President of FSFI, Jonas Hällström RDP, Lars Engelsbrecht FEPA Vice-President and Grand Prix Winner, Giancarlo Morolli Jury President and Claudio Manzati FEPA Director

Balkanfila members participated in ITALIA 2026

with 26 Exhibits

Albania 2, Bulgaria 2, Croatia 5, Greece 10, North Macedonia 1, Romania 2, Serbia 1, Slovenia 1 and Türkiye 2

8 of these Exhibits were awarded a Gold Medal.

BALKANFILA NEWSLETTER and BALKANFILA YEARBOOK 2025 in ITALIA 2026

	Treatment of contents (20)	Communication skills (10)	Significance (10)	Knowledge, research, information (35)	Usability features (20)	Presentation (5)	TOTAL	Award
Balkanphila Newsletter	16	7	8	29	16	4	80	V
Balkanfila Yearbook 2025 https://www.efo.gr/en/balkanfila-newsletters/	16	8	8	29	16	4	81	V

BALKANFILA NEWSLETTER 80p. VERMEIL Medal



BALKANFILA YEARBOOK 2025 81p. VERMEIL Medal



STAMP and PHILATELIC PRESS EXHIBITION "MYTILENE 2026"

The Philatelic Society of Lesvos (PSL) organized "MYTILENE 2026", a Stamp and Philatelic Press Exhibition to mark the 50th Anniversary of the continuous publication of the magazine *Philateliki Lesvos* ("Philatelic Lesvos"). The event was held in collaboration with the Hellenic Philatelic Federation (HPF) and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Lesvos. Hosted at the New Archaeological Museum of Mytilene from October 18 to 25, 2026, the exhibition was supported by the General Secretariat for Aegean and Island Policy, the North Aegean Region, the Municipality of Mytilene, and the Hellenic Post.

The opening ceremony was attended by representatives of local government, public institutions, and various associations, alongside members of the PSL and a large number of visitors. Mr. Christos Gikas, President of the Hellenic Philatelic Federation, who was present at the event, presented the PSL with a commendation in recognition of the uninterrupted 50-year publication of the magazine *Philateliki Lesvos*.



In his address, the president of the Philatelic Society of Lesvos (FEL), Mr. Michalis Vaitis, spoke about the history and evolution of the magazine, as well as the individuals who contributed to it -highlighting, in particular, the late Giannis Gougoulas, who conceived the publication and served as its editor for 20 years.



During the opening ceremony, a commemorative postmark was used at a temporary post office desk set up at the event venue. On the same day, a sheet of personalized stamps and a commemorative envelope were released to mark the 50th Anniversary of the "Philatelic Society of Lesvos."

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The exhibition featured 30 participants from Mytilene, Kalloni (Lesvos), Athens, Thessaloniki, Chania, and Rhodes, presenting 35 exhibits that spanned a wide range of philatelic categories: Traditional Philately, Postal History, Thematic Philately, Aerophilately, Maximaphily, Postal Cards/Postcards, Fiscal Stamps, and the Open Class (a combination of philatelic and other collectible items).



Additionally, a selection of philatelic and collectible magazines from Greece and Cyprus—as well as international philatelic publications with a focus on Greece—were put on display.

The exhibition attracted a large number of visitors throughout its duration. Members of the Philatelic Society of Lesvos were on hand to guide visitors through the exhibits.

Furthermore, organized visits were conducted by several schools from Mytilene as well as by the Hellenic Scout Association & the Hellenic Girl Guides Association; these visits included an introductory presentation on stamps and philately prior to the tour of the exhibits.



The exhibition served as an opportunity to introduce the general public to the cultural and historical dimensions of philately.

31st Forum of the Association of Mediterranean Maritime Museums

The 31st Forum of the Association of Mediterranean Maritime Museums (AMMM) was organized by the Maritime Museum of Crete (MMC) in Chania, from October 22 to 25, 2026. Across its two venues—the iconic Venetian fortress and the Moro Shipyard (Neorio Moro) in the harbor of Chania—the Maritime Museum of Crete houses, among other exhibits, philatelic collections related to maritime tradition.

This significant international gathering was hosted at the historic Moro Shipyard, located in the Venetian harbor of Chania, which houses the Maritime Museum of Crete's Permanent Exhibition on Ancient and Traditional Shipbuilding. The choice of this specific venue lent a profound symbolic dimension to the event, linking Crete's long-standing maritime and shipbuilding heritage with contemporary challenges regarding the preservation, study, and promotion of maritime cultural heritage.



The Forum brought together representatives from 50 maritime museums, universities, and cultural organizations and institutions. A total of 42 scholarly presentations were delivered, underscoring the international character and vitality of the Association as a key collaborative network in the fields of maritime history, museology, and cultural management.



At the opening of the three-day Forum, welcoming remarks were delivered by Dr. Tea Perinčić, President of the AMMM and Curator/Museum Consultant at the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral (Croatia); Andreia Filipa Correia Pinto Conceição, member of the ICMM Executive Council and Chair of the ICMM Ships Committee; and the Forum's host, Emmanouil I. Petrakis, Commodore (Ret.) of the Hellenic Navy and President of the Maritime Museum of Crete (Greece).



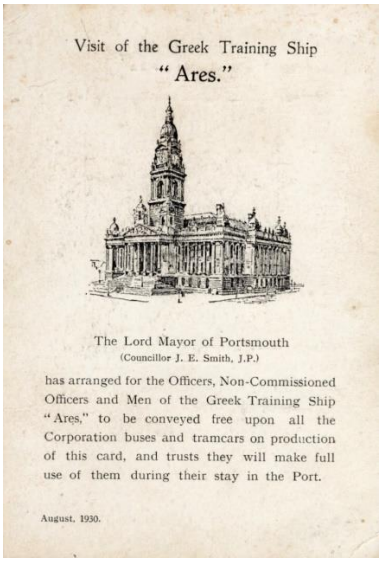
Their addresses focused on the Forum's central theme:

"Mediterranean Maritime Heritage: The Power of Networking – Challenges, Difficulties, and Future Prospects."

The 6 thematic sections, comprising 42 presentations, covered the entire thematic spectrum – ranging from "Networking Experiences Related to Maritime Heritage Across the Mediterranean" and "The Power of Partnerships for Developing the Blue (Maritime) Economy," to the systematic documentation of the lived experiences, the "Voice of Women in Mediterranean Maritime Heritage" and "The Future of Cultural Tourism and Innovative Educational Programs in Maritime Museums."



Three presentations focusing on collecting and philately were delivered at the Forum. Dr. Ilias Tempelis—a well-known collector, philatelist, and scholar, who serves as a Professor and Director of the Department of Humanities and Political Sciences at the Hellenic Naval Academy—discussed "An early form of 'Blue Tourism' in Portsmouth in 1930 for the crew of the Greek training ship *Aris*," drawing upon a specific collectible item.

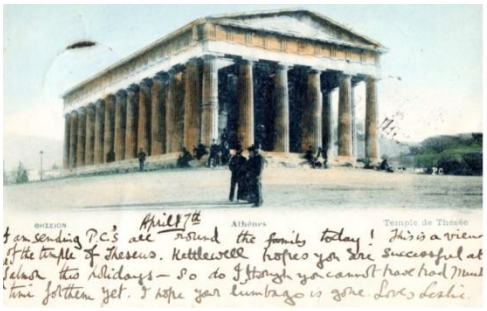

Visit of the Greek Training Ship
"Ares."

The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth
(Councillor J. E. Smith, J.P.)

has arranged for the Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men of the Greek Training Ship "Ares," to be conveyed free upon all the Corporation buses and tramcars on production of this card, and trusts they will make full use of them during their stay in the Port.

August, 1930.

Meanwhile, Christos Gikas, President of the Hellenic Philatelic Federation, presented on the steamship *Argonaut* (of London) and the "Cultural cruises from England to the Mediterranean in the early 20th century," based on philatelic material.





Beyond its role in organizing and hosting the event, the Maritime Museum of Crete also participated actively in the academic proceedings. Dimitrios A. Tsatsaronis, an MA candidate in History at the Maritime Museum of Crete, presented aspects of the museum's research, exhibition, and educational work in a talk titled "Mapping Maritime Heritage: The Historical Cartographic Collection of the Maritime Museum of Crete as a Tool for Learning and Engagement."

Due to its exemplary organization and unparalleled hospitality, the Forum succeeded in surpassing its primary objective: to create ideal conditions for collaboration among museums and cultural organizations, and for addressing various challenges related to the Heritage of the Mediterranean Sea.

Istanbul Maritime Museum has taken up the baton to host the 32nd AMMM Forum in 2027.

BALKANFILA XXII is well under way



The International Philatelic Exhibition BALKANFILA XXII continues to consolidate and develop the friendship between the philatelists from the Balkan Region. The exhibition will be held in Bucharest, from May 13th to 16th, 2027 at The MUSEUM of ROMANIAN RECORDS.

BALKANFILA XXII is expected to bring together 12 countries belonging to the Balkan Working Group as well as 3 invited countries and will comprise 500 frames in eleven competitive classes plus 200 frames out of competition.

Participating countries:

- Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldavia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey.

Invited countries:

- Cyprus, Israel, and Czech Republic.

BALKANFILA XXII is organized by the FFR (Romanian Philatelic Federation), with the valuable assistance of MRR (Museum of Romanian Records) being the exhibition's main sponsor, will be held under the recognition of the Federation of European Philatelic Associations – FEPA and FIP sponsorship.

The National Philatelic Exhibition with International Participation TimFilEx 2027

The Philatelic Association from Timișoara organizes between November 19th and November 21st, 2027 the National Philatelic Exhibition TimFilEx 2027, traditional for the philatelic life of the Association.

Having a long-term tradition, after almost yearly national exhibition, starting 2021, the Philatelic Exhibitions in Timișoara are held under the patronymic of TimFilEx. As they are closely tied to the city life TimFilEx were dedicated to : Industrial Timișoara (2021), Canis, the centennial anniversary of the first dog show in Romania (2022), the Europeean Capital of the Culture (2023), the personality of Queen Maria (2025).



TimFilEx 2025 at Universitatea de Vest

The next edition, from 2027 will be dedicated to art, celebrating the local artist, of national reputation Sergiu Oravitzan. As usual, all classes of exhibits are welcomed: Traditional philately, Postal history, Postal stationary, Aerophilately, Astrophilately, Thematic philately under Nature, Culture/ History, Technology, Fiscalotely, Moderne philately (from 1980 till today), Open, Experimental Class (single or 2/ 3 frames exhibits), Maximaphily, Picture postcards, Youth Philately, Philatelic Literature.

Besides these, the organizers will prepare a few surprises.
The first one, meant to encourage young philatelists, beginners, is the introduction of the "Class without Class": There are no rules to follow when putting together the exhibit, and they can be arranged according to the ideas or wishes of the author. Exhibits in this class will not be judged and will only receive a participation diploma. Their purpose is to encourage young collectors.

The second, as the exhibition celebrates the works of a painter, is the organizing of the Painting Salon. The art theme exhibits will be grouped together, adding real paintings, art exhibits which will agreea to participate at our exhibition.

We are inviting stamp collectors from Romania, other Balkan and Europeean countries to join TimFilEx 2027 in Timisoara.

We are sure it will be a pleasent opportunity to spend time together, to make changes – a philatelic fair will be organized the 20th of November.

TimFilEx 2027, 19 to 21 of November 2027 – Mark the Date!

ASOCIATIA FILATELICA TIMISOARA
L'ASSOCIATION PHILATELIQUE
PHILATELISTENVEREIN

ITALIAN CIVIL POST OFFICE IN DURRËS

by **Jovan BASHO**



The Italian Post Office in Durrës was opened on August 19, 1902. The opening of this post office was based on the Royal Decree of Victor Emmanuel III no. 434, dated August 2, 1902. This decree it is said: "Recognized the convenience of establishing an Italian post office in Shkoder of Albania, in order to ensure Italian residents with a speedy and more expedited postal service and thus benefit the interests of commerce and the prestige and influence of Italy in that locality". The decree also determines the date of opening of the Post Office in Durrës (1, 2).

The opening of Italian post offices in the territories of the Ottoman Empire was realized thanks to the benefits from the capitulation regime, signed between the two countries in 1861 (3). The capitulations of the Ottoman Empire were contracts between the Ottoman Empire and other powers in Europe, particularly France. Turkish capitulations, or Ahidnâmes were generally bilateral acts whereby definite arrangements were entered into by each contracting party towards the other, not mere concessions. (4). The Turkish Capitulations were grants made by successive Sultans to Christian nations, conferring rights and privileges in favour of their subjects resident or trading in the Ottoman dominions, following the policy towards European states of the Byzantine Empire. According to these capitulations traders entering the Ottoman Empire were exempt from local prosecution, local taxation, local conscription, and the searching of their domicile (4).

When the Italian Post was opened, Durazzo was considered the main center of Meddle Albania, the main city of the Sandjak of the same name and with a population of 5 000 inhabitants. Postal connections were provided by the ships of "Navigatione Puglia" with two trips per week from Bari to Durrës and vice versa. This post office was closed on September 30, 1911 (2, 3) due to the Italo-Turkish War (or as it is otherwise known the "Libyan War", from September 29, 1911 to October 18, 1912). The Durazzo Post Office was reopened again in early 1913. The Italian Post of Durrës was closed on February 24, 1916 (2). Whereas in this city also operated the Italian Military Post No. 50 (1).

At the beginning, in the Italian post office of Durrës, Italian stamps with ALBANIA overprint and values in Ottoman money were used, but also Italian stamps of the time (5, 6).

On September 1, 1902, three Italian stamps of 1901 were printed with the word ALBANIA and changed values in Ottoman money, namely "10 Para 10" over 5 c, "35 Para 35" over 20 c and "40 Para 40" over 25 c (Fig. 1). The royal decree of July 2, 1902, authorizing the issuance of these stamps, stated that they would be given to post offices at the Italian price and they would be resold at the overprinted price, thus leaving in charge of the Ministry of Post funds the difference that would be won or lost (2).



Fig. 1 Italian stamps printed on September 1, 1902, with the word ALBANIA and changed values in Ottoman money.



Fig. 2 Two registered covers circulated from the Italian post office of Durrës, respectively to Göttingen (Germany) on May 18, 1903 and in Bohemia (Austria) on February 25, 1905 with Italian stamps overprinted as above.

Along with this emission, on September 1, 1902, a postcard was also issued with the overprint ALBANIA and the changed value "20 Para 20" (7). One of these travel postcards is shown below (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 This postcard issued on September 1, 1902 with the value "20 Para 20", in Ottoman money above 10 c, was travelled from Durrës (November 24, 1902) to Zahlendorf (Berlin, Germany) where it arrived on November 28, 1902 (Marcelli Collection).

In November 1904, another postcard was issued, overprinted ALBANIA, with the value "20 Para 20", in Ottoman money over the Italian 10 cent postcard (Fig. 4) (7).



Fig. 4 This postcard issued in November 1904 with the value "20 para 20", over 10 cent, has circulated from Durrës to Venice (Italy), launched on September 14, 1909.

As mentioned above, Italian stamps of the time also circulated in Durrës, as seen in the photo below that shows the LIRIJA newspaper, which travelled from Durrës to Palermo (Italy) on November 03, 1908, to arrive there 3 days later (Fig.5).



Fig.5 Mailed newspaper with the Italian stamp 2 cent of the year 1901.



Fig. 6 Circulated cover from Durrës to Venice with the Italian stamp of the year 1901, overprinted 15 cents over 20 cents in 1905.

In May 30 and November 1, 1907, three more Italian stamps of 1906 and 1901 were overprinted again with the word ALBANIA and changed values in Ottoman money, namely "10 Para 10" over 5 cent, "20 Para 20" over 10 cent and "80 Para 80" over 50 cent (Fig. 7). The first two stamps were from 1906, the third from 1901. Along with this issue, the same postcards as those of 1904 were issued, but the portrait of the King was in profile (Fig. 8) (7).



Fig. 7 Italian stamps overprinted with the word ALBANIA
and new values in Ottoman money: May 30, 1907 and November 01, 1907.



Fig.8 Postcard issued in November 1907 with the value "20 Para 20".

Mailed covers with stamps of this emission are rarer. One of them (Fig. 9) has travelled from Durrës to Vienna (Austria), launched in March 1909.



Fig. 9 This registered cover with an Italian stamp of 50 cents of 1901, overprinted "ALBANIA" and "80 Para 80" in Ottoman money (1907), was sent from Durrës, to Vienna (Austria), on March 10, 1909.

On March 1, 1909 and in 1911, a new emission of 8 stamps was issued (Fig. 10) with the overprint "Durazzo" on Italian stamps of 1901, 1906 and 1908, with changed values in Ottoman money, namely "5 Para 5", "10 Para 10", "30 Para 30" (on stamps of 1906), "1 Piastra 1", "2 Piastre 2" (on stamps of 1908), “4 PIASTRE 4”, “20 PIASTRE 20”and “40 PIASTRE 40” (on stamps of 1901). The last value was overprinted in 1911.



Fig. 10 The full emission of March 1, 1909 and 1911 with the overprint "Durazzo" and new values in Ottoman money

Below are presented some philatelic material travelled with stamps of this issue (Fig. 11–15).



Fig. 11 Traveled postcard with an Italian stamp of 5 cent (year 1906), overprinted "Durazzo" and the new value "10 Para 10" in Ottoman money in 1909, from Durrës to Bologna (Italy), launched on October 31, 1909.



Fig. 12 Circulated cover from Durrës, September 13, 1910 to Pisa (Italy), with an Italian stamp 25 cent of 1908, overprinted "Durazzo" and new value "1 Piastra 1" in Ottoman money.

As mentioned above, the Italian Post Office of Durrës was closed on September 29, 1911 until the beginning of 1913. Below is a postcard sent on January 26, 1913, which must be one of the first postcards sent after its reopening (Fig. 13).



Fig. 13 Traveled postcard from Durrës to Kristiania (Norway), started on January 26, 1913, with an Italian stamp 25 cents of 1908, overprinted "Durazzo" in 1909.



Fig. 14 Registered cover, departed on May 24, 1914 from Durrës, to Baden-Baden (Germany), with an Italian stamp of value 50 c (year 1908) overprinted "Durazzo" and new value "2 Piastre 2" in Ottoman money (year 1909).



Fig. 15 Rare envelope traveled from Durrës (January 09, 1916) to Macerata (Italy) (January 15, 1916), with four Italian stamps of value 5 cent (year 1906), overprinted "Durazzo" and new values "10 Para 10" in Ottoman money (March 1, 1909).

On this envelope are two postage seals: 1. "BOLOGNA POSTA ESTERA" (Bologna was the place where the Italian mail that came from the East to Italy destination, even with a destination back to the East) (9) and 2. "28 VERIFICATO PER CENSURA". This is a rare envelope due to the date of departure from Durrës, a little more than a month before the closure of the Italian Post Office in this city, as a result of the entry of the Austro-Hungarian Army troops.

Together with the issue of March 1, 1909, another postcard (Fig. 16) was issued with the overprint "Durazzo" and the new value "20 Para 20" above 10 cent (7).



Fig. 16 This postcard issued on March 1, 1909 overprinted "Durazzo" and the value "20 para 20", circulated from Durrës to Olpe (Germany), launched on November 06, 1910

In 1916, the stamp with the overprint "Durazzo" and the new value "30 Para 30" in Ottoman money, was overprinted again with another value of 20 cent. This relates to the increase in the Italian postal rate from 15 cent to 20 cent on January 1, 1916 (2). Apparently, this stamp did not used in Durrës, because it is thought that it did not reach this city before the closing of the post office (2). As mentioned above, the Italian Post Office of Durrës was closed on February 24, 1916, a few days before the entry of the Austro-Hungarian Army. I have not seen any mailed philatelic material with this stamp (Fig. 17).



Fig. 17 The stamp with the value 15 cent of the year 1906 overprinted "Durazzo" and new value "30 Para 30" in Ottoman money, overprinted again 20 cent, over 15 cent.

Based on the data we have; we think 2 types of date postmarks were used.

Type I: Quadrilateral seal with circular center with the inscription "DURAZZO (UFF. POSTALE ITALIANO)", and diameter 28 mm.

Type II: Circular stamp with the inscription "DURAZZO (UFF. POSTALE ITALIANO)", and diameter 27 mm (8)

In the well-known book by John S. Phipps “Stamps and posts of Albania and Epirus 1878 – 1945”, page 90 (2) mentions that the Italian express stamp of the year 1910 was not used in the Italian post offices of Albanian cities. But, in fact, the philatelic materials found prove the opposite. Below is a cover that has circulated from Durrës with this stamp (Fig. 18).



Fig. 18 Rare envelope traveled from Durrës (August 01, 1914) to Brindisi (Italy), with an Italian express 25 cent stamp of 1910, overprinted "LEVANTE, 1 piastra 1" and another 15 cent stamp, overprinted "Durazzo" "30 Para 30" in Ottoman money.

Finally, we are presenting two postal receipts of international correspondence sealed Durrës (Fig. 19).



Fig. 19 Receipts of international correspondence, sealed by the Italian post office of Durrës on November 18, 1915.

Conclusion

The Italian Post Office in Durrës represents one of the most important post offices during the period of Ottoman occupation of Albania and the first years of the independent Albanian state. Circulated philatelic materials are rare and very rare.

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Balkanfila Newsletter

A NEW STUDY of BULGARIA'S FIRST POSTAGE STAMPS

by GUIDO CRAVERI

A recent study has shed interesting new light on the debate over the authenticity of some of Bulgaria's earliest classic postage stamps. The stamps in question belong to the first three issues — the *Santimi*, the *First Stotinki* and the *Large Lion* series — printed in St Petersburg, Russia.



About a decade ago, a theory put forward by a philatelic expert in the mid-1990s unexpectedly gained acceptance among several researchers and collectors. According to this theory, examples from the early classic issues exhibiting extremely slight variations in the stamp frame were, in fact, modern forgeries dating from the 1950s or 1960s. I support a different hypothesis: that these examples are not forgeries at all, but originate from sheets printed using a second printing plate, which served as a reserve during the production of a particular issue — a practice characteristic of the State Printing Works in St Petersburg during that period. For this reason, I was particularly interested in the study.

The research was carried out at the Central Scientific Research Laboratory of the University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy, commissioned by collector Pavel Doynovski. Three specimens of the 50-santimi stamp issued in 1879 were examined: one attributed to the so-called Second Printing Plate and two from the "normal" issue. Two independent analytical techniques were employed: Fourier-transform infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy and Raman spectroscopy.

To put it simply for the non-specialist, these methods make it possible to examine the chemical composition and structural characteristics of the paper and printing materials. Every material produces its own distinctive spectral fingerprint. When two specimens are made from substantially different materials, characteristic differences will generally appear in their spectra.

This is precisely what makes the present study so interesting.

The principal spectral features of all three specimens were found to be consistent. This was established by FTIR analysis and independently confirmed by Raman analysis. The differences observed were mainly in signal intensity and the fluorescence background, rather than in the appearance of new, characteristic chemical components.

In other words, all three specimens exhibit the same fundamental material characteristics.

This finding is particularly significant in the debate surrounding the alleged forgeries.

If one specimen had been produced around 1950 while another was a genuine product of 1879, it would be reasonable to expect material differences — in the paper, pigments, binding agents or other components. No such substantial differences were identified in the present study.

An important qualification must be made here. Laboratory analysis cannot, by itself, establish the date on which a stamp was printed, nor can it replace a comprehensive philatelic expert examination. It can, however, answer another very important question: is there a demonstrable material difference between the specimens being compared? In this case, the answer is no.

Both analytical techniques revealed a high degree of similarity among the three stamps examined. No distinct chemical “fingerprint” was detected that would suggest that any one of them had been produced using substantially different materials.

In my view, this is an important finding.

It does not mean that a single laboratory analysis has definitively settled the entire question of the authenticity of Bulgaria’s classic stamps. It does, however, establish something equally important: the present study provides no scientific basis for classifying these specimens as later forgeries. On the contrary, the results are consistent with a common material origin.

Consequently, the hypothesis that such stamps were produced on a large scale during the 1950s or 1960s continues to require specific supporting evidence.

In philately, scepticism is valuable when it leads to further research. But when a claim can affect the reputation and value of an entire stamp issue, the evidence must be just as compelling as the claim itself.

This new study represents another step in precisely that direction.

STAMPS as a MESSAGE of FREEDOM

A series of stamps issued by the United States of America featuring the flags of occupied countries from Germany, Italy and Japan, between 1943–1944, also in honor of the flag of occupied Kingdom of Yugoslavia

Abstract

During the Second World War, postage stamps became more than instruments of postal communication. They also served as vehicles for political messages, national identity and international solidarity. One of the most remarkable American commemorative issues of this period was the *Overrun Countries Series*, comprising thirteen five-cent stamps issued between June 1943 and November 1944. Each stamp honoured a nation that had been overrun, occupied or annexed by Axis powers, presenting its national flag within a common symbolic design. The Yugoslav stamp, issued on 26 October 1943, is of particular interest to collectors and historians in Central and South-Eastern Europe. This article examines the series as a significant example of wartime commemorative philately and highlights the historical and symbolic importance of its Yugoslav component.

Keywords: United States, Overrun Countries Series, Yugoslavia, Second World War, commemorative stamps, national flags, wartime philately, international solidarity.

1. Introduction: when postage stamps carried a message

The history of philately is closely connected with political, social and cultural developments. Particularly during times of war, postage stamps can acquire a significance that extends far beyond their primary postal function. They may express solidarity, preserve national symbols and communicate political messages to audiences far beyond the borders of the issuing country.

An outstanding example is the American *Overrun Countries Series* of 1943–1944. Through thirteen commemorative stamps, the United States paid tribute to nations affected by the territorial expansion of the Axis powers during and before the Second World War.

The series deserves attention not only because of its distinctive graphic design but also because it demonstrates how a postal administration can use a familiar and widely circulated medium to acknowledge nations deprived of their freedom and to keep their national identities visible in the international public sphere.

2. The Overrun Countries Series, 1943–1944

The United States Post Office Department issued thirteen stamps in the series, each with a denomination of five cents. The European stamps appeared at intervals between June and December 1943, while the final stamp, commemorating Korea, was issued on 2 November 1944.

The countries represented were Poland, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Greece, Yugoslavia, Albania, Austria, Denmark and Korea.



Fig 1: FDC with Commemorative stamps, 1943 – 1944: Source: Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti

Despite the different historical circumstances of these countries, the series united them through a consistent visual concept. Each stamp displayed the national flag of the commemorated country in colour, accompanied by its name. The surrounding purple frame contained two powerful allegorical figures.

On the left, a phoenix symbolised renewal and rebirth. On the right, a kneeling female figure raised her arms while breaking the chains of oppression and enforced servitude. Together, these images conveyed a message of hope, liberation and the possibility of national recovery.

The visual unity of the series is particularly significant. Rather than presenting thirteen unrelated national commemorations, the American postal administration created a coherent set in which every country formed part of a broader narrative about freedom and national identity.

The stamps were printed by the American Bank Note Company in New York, using a combination of colour printing and engraved elements. Their catalogue numbers in the Scott system run from 909 to 921.

3. The Yugoslav stamp of 26 October 1943

The ninth stamp in the series was dedicated to Yugoslavia and was issued on 26 October 1943. Its design followed the established format: the Yugoslav national flag occupied the central position, while the surrounding allegorical figures connected the country's identity with the wider themes of resistance, liberation and renewal.

The date of issue gives the stamp particular historical resonance. Yugoslavia had been invaded in April 1941, following the political crisis that followed the country's accession to the Tripartite Pact and the subsequent coup. Its territory was then divided among occupying powers and allied

regimes, while armed resistance and competing political movements developed under exceptionally difficult circumstances.

By 1943, the war had profoundly transformed the political and military situation in the Balkans. Against this background, the American commemorative stamp presented Yugoslavia as a nation whose identity remained worthy of international recognition despite occupation and territorial fragmentation.

The stamp should therefore be understood as a symbolic commemoration rather than merely a miniature reproduction of a national flag. It placed Yugoslavia within an international group of countries whose national existence and freedom had been threatened by the expansion of the Axis powers.



Fig 2: U.S. postage stamp commemorating the attacked Kingdom of Yugoslavia, October 1943, attacked by Axis forces

For philatelists, the Yugoslav issue also provides an opportunity to connect American postal history with the history of South-Eastern Europe. It is a particularly meaningful item for collections devoted to Yugoslavia, the Second World War, national flags, political symbolism and international commemorative issues.

4. The significance of the series for thematic philately

The *Overrun Countries Series* offers several possibilities for thematic and traditional philatelic research.

First, the thirteen stamps form a coherent chronological and graphic unit. Their common frame, denomination and symbolic figures make the set readily identifiable, while the individual flags provide the national distinctions essential to its commemorative purpose.

Second, the series demonstrates the relationship between philately and iconography. The phoenix and the broken chains are not incidental decorations: they are central elements of the message conveyed by the stamps. They transform the national flags into part of a wider visual statement about oppression, resilience and the hope of liberation.

Third, the series provides a valuable starting point for examining how national symbols were represented abroad during wartime. A country's flag on a foreign stamp can become a form of international recognition, particularly when that country is unable to exercise full sovereignty over its territory.

Finally, the issues invite collectors to move beyond the stamps themselves and investigate first-day covers, postal cancellations, correspondence, postal rates and the historical circumstances of their use. Such material can enrich an exhibit by linking the design of the stamps with their practical postal function and contemporary reception.

5. The Yugoslav issue in a European philatelic context

The Yugoslav stamp has a particular place in a European collection because it connects three historical dimensions: American commemorative policy, the experience of occupation in Europe and the continued significance of Yugoslav national identity during the Second World War.

Placed alongside the other stamps in the series, it reveals how a common visual language could acknowledge countries with different political histories and experiences of occupation. At the same time, its individual national symbolism preserves a distinct historical identity.

This combination of common design and national specificity is one of the principal strengths of the series. It makes the set suitable for comparative study, international exhibitions and educational presentations on the relationship between stamps and twentieth-century history.

The series is also a reminder that the interpretation of wartime stamps requires historical precision. The thirteen countries did not all experience occupation or annexation in identical circumstances, and Korea's historical position differed from that of the European countries represented. Their

inclusion should therefore be understood in the context of the commemorative concept adopted by the United States.

6. Conclusion: small objects, enduring historical messages

The American *Overrun Countries Series* of 1943–1944 is an important example of commemorative philately in which graphic design, national symbolism and international political circumstances converge.

Through thirteen five-cent stamps, the United States placed the flags of affected nations within a shared visual framework of renewal and liberation. The Yugoslav stamp, issued on 26 October 1943, is a particularly relevant item for collectors interested in the history of Yugoslavia and the representation of occupied nations during the Second World War.

More than eight decades later, these stamps continue to invite historical investigation. They demonstrate that even a small postal object can preserve a powerful message: national identity can survive occupation, and the symbols of a nation can continue to speak when its freedom has been taken away.

For the international philatelic community, the series remains a compelling meeting point between postal history, political iconography and the history of nations in wartime.

Acknowledgement

The Yugoslav issue and the wider *Overrun Countries Series* were presented in a philatelic collection by **Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti, master's degree** at the exhibition held at the Parish Hall of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from September 16th to 27th, 2026.

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Janez Cerkvenik, Ph.D. & Gregor Cerkvenik,
Lovro Košir Philatelic Society Škofja Loka

YEAR of the HORSE — SERBIA 2014

by **Vladimir MILICH** (FRPSL)

The Year of the Horse issue, released by the Serbian Post on 31 January 2014, belongs to the long-running stamp series dedicated to the Chinese Zodiac. The series began in 2010 with Year of the Tiger and has continued annually, combining elements of Eastern symbolism with modern Serbian graphic design. Within Serbian philately, it represents one of the most coherent and visually refined thematic sequences, forming a lasting artistic dialogue between Serbia and the other countries and regions.



Concept and Artistic Approach

The series Years of the Chinese Zodiac was conceived as a fusion of Eastern motifs and Western visual culture. Its purpose is not mere illustration but interpretation — each stamp seeks a visual balance between traditional symbolism and contemporary design. Clean lines, geometrical rhythm, and the restrained use of gold and ochre create continuity throughout the series, evoking the harmony of classical Chinese art while maintaining the clarity of modern European aesthetics.

2014 Year of the Horse marks the Year of the Wooden Horse in the Chinese lunar calendar, one of the most auspicious signs symbolizing vitality, progress, and creative energy. The issue consists of two stamps, with denominations of 22 and 46 dinars, corresponding to domestic and international postal rates for letters up to 20 grams.

The composition presents a stylized horse in motion, with its foreleg raised and mane flowing. The design is based on the contrast between golden and earthy tones — colors traditionally associated in Chinese culture with prosperity, balance, and happiness.

Symbolism of the Stamps

The two stamps form a conceptual and visual pair. The 22-dinar stamp depicts the earthly horse — firm, grounded, and loyal — representing endurance and physical strength.

The 46-dinar stamp introduces stylized wings that elevate the horse into a celestial or "dragon-horse" (龙马, longma), a mythological being combining the energy of the earth with the purity of the heavens.

This contrast between grounded and winged forms embodies the duality of matter and spirit, a recurring theme in both Eastern and Western philosophy. In Chinese tradition, the phrase longma jingshen (龙马精神 — "the spirit of the dragon and horse") denotes vitality, perseverance, and divine strength. Through these two designs, the artist captured that idea of balance — motion with restraint, strength with grace.

The Artist and His Hidden Mark "G"

The stamps were designed by Bojan Savić, a Belgrade-based painter and graphic artist who has created several commemorative issues for the Serbian Post. In his philatelic works, Savić often incorporates a discreet personal mark — the letter "G" — derived from a family nickname and hidden within the design itself.



On this issue, the mark appears inside the shaded feathers of the horse's left wing, most clearly visible on stamp no. 18 of the sheet. It is drawn as a small curved line following the wing's texture, almost invisible to the naked eye but recognizable under magnification. This hidden "G" functions as a symbolic seal of authorship, comparable to the subtle red stamps (chops) used by Chinese painters. By embedding his initial directly into the artwork, Savić merges Western ideas of authorship with the Eastern concept of invisible signature — presence without self-promotion.

Printing and Technical Details

The stamps were printed in four-color offset on white glossy paper, in sheets of 25 (5 × 5), by the State Printing Works of the Serbian Post (ZIN, Belgrade) — the institution responsible for most of Serbia's modern commemorative issues.

Print run: 175,000 (22 RSD) and 65,000 (46 RSD).

A First Day Cover (FDC) was issued simultaneously, bearing both stamps and a circular postmark Belgrade, 31 January 2014 – First Day. The cover depicts a galloping golden horse surrounded by ornamental motifs and the Chinese character 马. The postmark itself features a stylized horse's head that complements the overall theme.

Cultural Parallels and Symbolism

In the Chinese calendar, 2014 — the Year of the Wooden Horse — symbolized courage, honesty, progress, and freedom. The horse represents forward movement and optimism, and these ideas are echoed in the dynamic composition of the Serbian issue. Savić's design conveys motion through line and light rather than through literal detail, embodying the vitality and refinement that characterize traditional Eastern art.

The use of golden tones also carries multiple layers of meaning. In Chinese symbolism, gold evokes success and spiritual fulfillment, while in Serbian iconographic tradition, it signifies divine illumination — light as truth. Thus, the stamp unites two different visual languages in a single aesthetic gesture.

The Horse in Serbian Mythology and Folk Tradition

In Serbian epic tradition, the horse is not merely a companion of the hero but his alter ego — a bearer of strength, loyalty, and moral essence. The best-known pair is Prince Marko (Marko Kraljević) and his legendary horse Šarac, who understands human speech, offers counsel, and

often saves his master from peril. Through Šarac, the Serbian epic expresses the unity of strength and wisdom, body and spirit — a duality equally present in Eastern philosophy.

Another figure of deep symbolic meaning appears in the Kosovo cycle — Damjan Jugović and his horse Zelenko. Zelenko, whose name literally means "the Green One," senses the coming tragedy of the battle and laments his master's death. His color connects him to nature, renewal, and immortality, transforming him from a warhorse into a mythic messenger between life and the afterlife.

Through both Šarac and Zelenko, Serbian folklore conveys the ideal of absolute loyalty and spiritual continuity. The horse transcends its physical form, becoming a bridge between the human and the divine. In that sense, it mirrors the dragon-horse (longma) of Chinese mythology — uniting courage with wisdom, and the powers of earth with those of heaven.

Thus, in both Serbian and Chinese traditions, the horse stands as a symbol of energy, honor, and eternal striving toward harmony, embodying the shared human vision of balance between body and spirit, motion and meaning.

Philatelic and Cultural Significance

From a philatelic perspective, Year of the Horse – Serbia 2014 stands among the most accomplished modern issues in the Zodiac series. It unites refined design, symbolic depth, and technical excellence. Beyond its aesthetic quality, the issue serves as a visual statement of Serbia's cultural openness — showing that a national stamp can embody universal themes through artistic interpretation rather than imitation.

The series Years of the Chinese Zodiac has since become one of the most recognizable pillars of contemporary Serbian philately, admired for its continuity, elegance, and international appeal. With this issue, Serbian designers achieved what few small countries have managed to do — to contribute an original artistic voice to a global philatelic tradition.

Through its dynamic motif, harmonious composition, and warm palette, the Year of the Horse expresses vitality, optimism, and reverence for tradition. Just as the horse in folklore remains the faithful companion of the hero, so in philately it becomes a symbol of nobility, spiritual strength, and the timeless link between East and West.

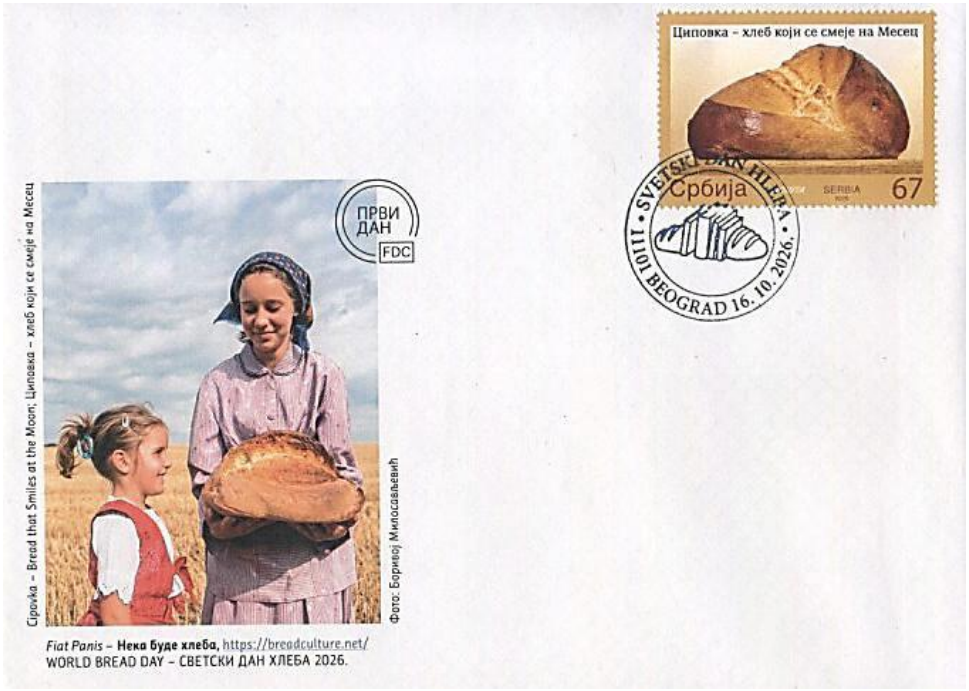
First Serbian Postage Stamp and FDC celebrating Bread Culture

In celebration of World Bread Day, we are proud to present the MARKA project, a unique initiative connecting philately with the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage. At its centre is the first Serbian commemorative postage stamp and First Day Cover (FDC) dedicated exclusively to bread.

The Bread that “Smiles at the Moon”

How did bread with prunes sustain Serbian soldiers during World War I? Why does the Vojvodina cipovka “smile at the Moon,” and how did it become the star of the first Serbian postage stamp dedicated exclusively to bread?

Every region in Europe boasts a distinct type of bread it takes pride in a true staff of life served daily. Each of these traditional loaves reflects the unique baking skills of its culture, differing in preparation, flour type, shape, taste, and aroma. In Vojvodina, that traditional, everyday "bread of pride" is Cipovka!



Characteristics and Traditional Preparation

The characteristics of this bread are its spherical shape, remarkably pleasant aroma and taste, easy digestibility, a delicious caramel-colored crust, and a freshness that lasts for several days. The average weight ranged from 3 to 5 kg. Cipovka must be kneaded by hand and baked in traditional village clay ovens (furune) or brick-built "Turkish ovens".

The ingredients for making Cipovka are simple: white flour, yeast, water, and salt. However, the true secret of an authentic Cipovka lies in its preparation specifically in the homemaker's or baker's skill of kneading and folding the dough, a craft passed down from generation to generation.



The Secret of the Shape

Its unique shape comes from a precise cut made with a sharp knife near the top side of the spherical dough just before it goes into the oven. When the bread is taken out of the oven, it is immediately "washed" with clean water and placed on a wooden rack to cool. The traditional recipe and craftsmanship skill of Cipovka are officially inscribed on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Serbia.

Author: Dimitrije Vujadinović

Official Source: https://breadculture.net/

UNION of PHILATELISTS of MACEDONIA :

THREE EVENTS IN ONE DAY

Philately and dynamics are two concepts that do not go together. By the word philately we mean activity in peace and quiet. The subject of interest for us philatelists, the tiny postage stamp, requires both concentration and calm or even silence. In our clubs, in a quiet atmosphere, with binders in front of us and with a magnifying glass or tweezers in our hands, we usually do not attract attention.

Our Union is an association of citizens who are primarily collectors of stamps and various postal materials, but our members are collectors with a variety of interests, from old books, posters and maps to various memorabilia, some are numismatists and sphalerists. This extensive assortment allows the Union to present itself and its principal activity, philately, in various contexts organized by other associations.



We have become convinced that it is most important to determine a topic that will connect us with our counterparts. When this happens, we move away from the model of stillness. It has also proven to be a great opportunity to compare ourselves with other enthusiasts and to think of innovative presentations to the audience.

It is not common for philatelists to have three public appearances in one day in different settings.



We had such an overlap on October 3rd this year. We joined other event organizers, left the tranquility of our clubs and went out in front of the audience. What represent those small colorful pieces of paper arranged in regular rows and columns, was a frequent question. Additional attention is attracted if banknotes and coins are displayed on the counter. It is clear that such colorfulness is not to be seen very often.

Festival "Civil Organizations Day" known to the public as “Civica Mobilitas” was held in the City Park. It is a gathering at one location of hundreds of associations from all over the country who, at stands, panels or open-air conversation, explain why they exist, what they offer to citizens and what they plan for the future. In direct communication with visitors, they strive to gain their visibility on the public stage. Of course, for us philatelists, such an environment is not usual. But that's why we have friendly associations here who invited us to display our information poster alongside theirs with the slogan "Come and join us". We used their counter to welcome interested visitors and to invite them to visit our premises, hopefully this would bring new members. The interest shown and the questions asked about our projects and collections give us grounds for optimism.

At noon in the House of Culture we held the Autumn Collectors' Bazaar, which is slowly securing a permanent place in our Annual Activities Calendar. We are starting with a modest number of bidders, two dozen. All around are exposed out binders, albums and commemorative sheets, from general collections to specialized thematic exhibits. Of course, there are also numismatists with samples of banknotes and coins from countries from A to Z, including those that no longer exist.



We welcomed with due attention the citizens who brought their own material that they keep in their possession but have no idea of its value. As it is usual in every bazaar, the price has been formed with trickery and a smile: for the seller the price is always low, for the buyer it is unacceptably high. The bazaar will live!

On October 3rd – Skopje does not sleep! The city lives to the rhythm of "White Night 2026". The doors of cultural institutions remained open until midnight. The city of Skopje connected the squares, quays, streets, museums and galleries in a joint night of culture. Crowd of people observed the permanent displays, exhibitions, installations in public spaces, and an offer that united the audience of several generations. All this accompanied by songs by children's choirs, musical groups, lined up on several stages and ended with popular DJs. A night walk through Skopje, filled with art, music and meetings. And our club opened its doors, our modest contribution to the enrichment of the cultural offer. The poster on the sidewalk signed that there are also interesting exhibits in our club. It is clear that we cannot compare ourselves to museums and galleries, but we add another puzzle to the mosaic of cultural events. Our message is: We are here and our offer deserves also your attention.

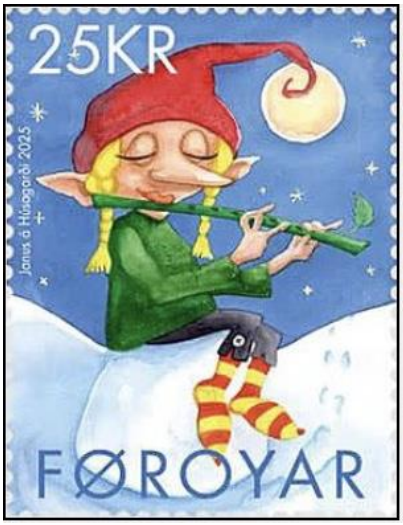
2026 Yehudi Menachin Prize for the “Waltz King”

Famous persons on stamps are popular among philatelists and this was proved once again during the voting for the Most Popular Music Stamp issued in 2025. The winner commemorated the 200th anniversary of Johann Strauss the undisputable “King of Waltz”.



The winning-stamp combines the figure from the Johann Strauss monument in Vienna’s Stadtpark with a detail from the title page of the first edition of the piano score for the waltz “The Blue Danube” (*An der schönen blauen Donau*), published by C.A. Spina in Vienna in 1867. The stamp was designed by Viennese artist Kirsten Lubach, who is being honored with the 2026 Yehudi Menuhin Trophy for her work. Lubach had also received the Yehudi Menuhin Trophy in 2023 for the “Trombone” stamp -part of the “Musical Austria” series- which was voted the most popular music-themed stamp of 2022.

The second stamp was the Christmas stamp “The Pixies’ Christmas” from the Faroe Islands and the third place was achieved the German stamp “Semper Opera House” from the “Historic Buildings in Germany” series. The graphic artist Jan-Niklas Kröger utilized the AI image generator DALL·E. for its design.





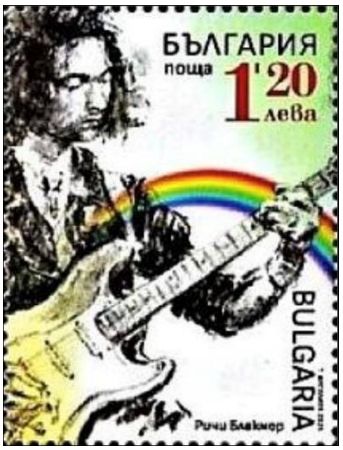
It is fascinating to observe the diverse graphic approaches taken with these three stamps: ranging from collage and poetic, fairy-tale-style illustration to the use of artificial intelligence — though one hopes that postal authorities will not succumb to the temptation of replacing the craftsmanship of graphic artists with AI.

Once again, stamps from 66 postal authorities were in the running for the title of “Most Popular Music Stamp of 2025” and collectors from 36 countries participated in the online vote.

From the Balkanfila Group the following six countries took part to this year’s competition

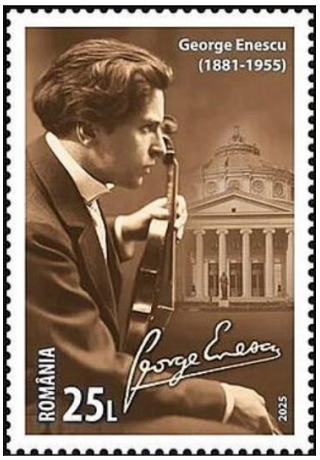
Bosnia (Serbian Republic), Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Romania and **Serbia**.













All 2025 participations can be seen at the following link :

https://www.motivgruppe-musik.com/en/musik-philatelie/yehudi-menuhin-trophy/schoenste-musikbriefmarke-2025-die-kandidaten/

60 years of the **Hellenic Philatelic Society** of the **Netherlands**



The Hellenic Philatelic Society of The Netherlands -PV Griekenland- was founded in 1966 and on the 23rd and 24th October celebrated its 60th Jubilee with a two-day festivities.

The Hellenic Philatelic Society of The Netherlands is a society of philatelists from Greek-speaking territories with about 90 members.

During the two-day festivities were organized five Philatelic Lectures, A Large Auction as well as a Society's Members and friends' dinner.

H.P.S.N has a number of activities including :

Four times a year magazine "Hermes",

Four times a year a members' meeting in Zeist (The Netherlands) that includes a lecture and an Auction,

Publications on Greek stamps and Postal History,

An extensive library where one can borrow books and articles,

Society's legacy committee, which advises on sales and acts for you if necessary and

A Study group for members' specialized research.


Invitation

For the 60th anniversary of the

Hellenic Philatelic Society of The Netherlands

Date:
23 and 24 October 2026

Locations:
Postex 2026 (daytime program)
De Veluwehal, Nieuwe Markt 6, 3771 CB Barneveld (NL)

And
(diner and overnight stay)
Bilderberg Hotel 't Speulderbos
Speulderbosweg 54, 3886 AP Garderen

HELLENIC PHILATELIC SOCIETY of the Netherlands


Program

23 October 2026

10:30 am – opening by the Chairman
11:00 am – lecture by J.Meijer
11:45 am – lecture by R.Verberne
12:30 pm - lunch
13:30 pm – lecture by J.Meijer
14:14 pm – lecture by R.Verberne
19:00 pm – Joint Dinner

24 October 2026

10:30 am – reception
10:45 am– lecture by B. Eberhardt
11:30 am– Large Auction
13:30 pm - Closure

HELLENIC PHILATELIC SOCIETY of the Netherlands

The website of the Hellenic Philatelic Society of the Netherlands is rich in content with news, articles and awarded exhibits and can be accessed at :

https://www.pvgriekenland.nl



CROATIAN Post – MOSTAR

The 100th anniversary of Anton Puntigam's death – Fr. Anton Puntigam SJ

Croatian Post Ltd. Mostar on September 9th, 2026 has issued a commemorative postage stamp on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Anton Puntigam's death.



Anton Puntigam was born on May 15, 1859, in Salzach (Austria). He entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in 1879. He was ordained a priest in 1893. He was one of the first Austrian Jesuits who, at the invitation of the Archbishop of Vrhbosna Josip Stadler, came to the newly opened seminary and gymnasium in Travnik and began working on the education of youth. He stayed in Travnik during two periods, from 1886 to 1890 and from 1895 to 1908.

Father Puntigam's contribution is especially significant as the initiator and organiser of the consecration of about 160,000 Croatian youth to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1900.

Father Puntigam went to Vienna in 1908, only to return a year later to the seminary in Sarajevo, where he remained until 1918. He left at the request of his superiors due to his personal safety and the safety of the local Jesuit community. He lived and worked in Bosnia with great love and dedication for 27 years. He passed away in Vienna on September 4, 1926. Croatian Post Ltd. Mostar has issued a commemorative postage stamp in a sheet of 10 stamps, a postmark and a first day cover (FDC).

100 years since the death of St. Francis

Croatian Post Ltd. Mostar on October 3rd, 2026 has issued a commemorative postage stamp in a sheet of 9 stamps, a postmark and a first day cover (FDC).



St. Francis of Assisi (Giovanni Francesco Bernardone) was born in 1182 in Assisi; his parents were Pietro and Pica.

He loved company, parties, and luxury, which he would renounce after returning from war captivity.

In the small church of St. Damian, in the autumn of 1205, he heard the call of the Crucified three times: "Francis, go and repair my house which, as you see, is falling into ruin!". After restoring the church, he spent his time in prayer and publicly renounced his father's inheritance before the bishop of Assisi. The order founded by Francis spread very quickly across Europe, and then the world. On the territory of Croatia, a Franciscan province was established even during Francis's lifetime. The monastery of St. Francis in Zadar is the oldest Franciscan monastery outside Italy.

Embraced by his brothers, Francis welcomed Sister Death in the Porziuncola, who returned him to the Father's home on 3 October 1226. Just two years after his passing (16 July 1228), Pope Gregory IX celebrated Francis's canonization.

950th anniversary of the coronation of the Croatian King Zvonimir

Croatian Post Ltd. Mostar on October 8th, 2026 has issued a commemorative postage stamp to commemorate the crowning of Dmitar Zvonimir, one of the most successful medieval rulers of Croatia, who was crowned on 8 October 1076, after swearing to Pope Gregory VII that he would be his faithful subject. In the coronation basilica of St. Peter and Moses in Solin, he was crowned with the royal crown by the Pope's envoy, Abbot Gebizon, who also presented him with other symbols of royal authority: a sceptre, a sword, and a papal flag. Zvonimir's oath, which secured a political and defensive alliance with the Holy See, was a legal recognition of the state of the Kingdom of Croatia.



It was a period without major wars,
so the King strengthened
the economy and culture.
He had a three-nave basilica built
in Biskupija near Knin,
where he held his seat.



Of all his gifts bestowed upon churches and monasteries, the most famous is the gift to the monastery of St. Lucy in Baška on the island of Krk. This is evidenced by the Baška Tablet, on which a description of the donation was carved in the Glagolitic script around the year 1100, and which mentions the name of King Zvonimir. He died in the first half of 1089 under unexplained circumstances.

Croatian Post Ltd. Mostar has issued a commemorative postage stamp in a sheet of 8 stamps, a postmark and a first day cover (FDC).

Ethnological Treasure 2026 – Egg shoeing in Kreševo

Croatian Post Ltd. Mostar on October 9th, 2026 has issued a commemorative postage stamp. In Central Bosnia lies the small town of Kreševo, which has inherited a rich blacksmithing tradition dating back to the time of the Bosnian Kingdom. The art of blacksmithing was passed down from generation to generation, and a special tradition was egg shoeing. According to legend, a hardworking but poor blacksmith fell in love with the daughter of a wealthy nobleman. He proposed to her, but her father set an almost impossible condition for winning her hand. He asked the suitor to shoe an egg. The blacksmith fulfilled the task, displayed the shod egg in the window of his house, and won the hand of his beloved girl. After that, no young blacksmith in Kreševo could marry if he did not know how to shoe an egg, thereby proving his ability to provide for his family.





Today, the shod egg is a permanent symbol of Kreševo and a valuable souvenir known throughout the world. The horseshoe is made of lead and attached with small nails to the shell of an egg that has been carefully blown out and preserved. The egg is then coloured using various techniques and decorated with different motifs. The tradition of egg shoeing in Kreševo is still practiced by several skilled and creative individuals. Within the Croatian Cultural Society "Napredak" in Kreševo, a section called "Guardians of the Kreševo Tradition of Egg Shoeing" operates with the aim of preserving this unique craft.

Croatian post Ltd. Mostar issued a definitive postage stamp in a sheet of stamps, a postmark and first day cover (FDC).

The stamps and accompanying materials can be purchased at HP Mostar post offices and online at www.epostshop.ba

GREECE

On September 7th 2026, the Hellenic Post issued the commemorative set of four postage stamps "**Thessaloniki 1926-2026**" highlighting four iconic institutions of the city that are celebrating a century of history: the *Thessaloniki International Fair* (TIF), *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki* (AUTh), *PAOK Football Club*, and the *Military Medical School*.



The Denominations	Designs	Quantity
€1,20	100 Years Military Medical School	25.000 pieces
€2,00	100 Years Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	25.000 pieces
€1,20	100 Years PAOK F.C	25.000 pieces
€2,00	100 Years Thessaloniki International Fair	25.000 pieces

ΧΡΟΝΙΑ
ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ
1926-2026
ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ 7.9.2026



Shoeing an Egg

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