# IV. ÉVÉNEMENTS

## THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE „*LATINITATE – ROMANITATE – ROMÂNITATE*" TWENTY YEARS AFTER

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The longevity and rhythmicity of an international scientific event greatly depends, naturally, on the social-economic and cultural context in which it is organised. In Romania, the latest decades have been extremely turbulent, with frequent and unexpected changes in the government configuration, which have entailed appropriate structural and strategic reorganisations in all fields, including the cultural-scientific and educational ones, which rely, to a large extent, on the decision-maker at the top of society. Sometimes, the novelty of some stages lay in the fact that there was no vision, no coherent strategy in organising a field of activity. However, at the micro level, some activities were successfully carried out due to precisely configured initiatives of strongly united and deeply motivated people, through an immense investment of energy, of professional competence and, last but not least, of subjective willpower, which made up for the hardships of the microsocial context.

This has been the case with the organisation of the International Conference "Latinitate-Romanitate-Românitate" in Târgoviște, known as the "LRR Conference" or in short "LRRx", *x* being the number of editions throughout the twenty years of existence of the event, 2001-2021.



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The initiative belonged to the author of these lines[1], the event being dedicated to the International Day of Latinity, proclaimed as such shortly before in the calendar of great international celebrations, on the 15th of May. The organisation which proposed this day of celebration was the Latin Union, an international body which comprises 37 states covering four continents[2]. In 2000, the same P. Gh. Bârlea had set up a branch (Antena Târgoviște) of the Romanian Office of the Latin Union within Valahia University of Târgoviște and organised almost all the editions of the conference under its auspices[3]. The organisational effort was supported by the University management (at that time, P. Gh. Bârlea was also the vice-rector of the university) and by the local authorities – Dâmbovița County Council, through the County Culture Inspectorate (director: Viorica Arghir), Târgoviște City Hall and Târgoviște City Local Council. Over the years, various other local or national institutions and bodies have become our partners. We should mention the National Museum of Romanian Literature (managed by Prof. Dr Lucian Chișu and Prof. Dr Ioan Cristescu); Dâmbovița County School Inspectorate, "Acta Legalia" Notary Office (through Doru Tudor Lucian) and, more recently, "Tony Bulandra" Municipal Theatre of Târgoviște. Of course, all these collaborations have been time-limited, lasting between three and seven years, in various stages – depending on objective or subjective circumstances. There was an edition when the initiator was left completely alone, supported materially and spiritually only by his family. That year, the host university simply provided a modest classroom, in which the conference was held – with a single extensive section.

But, immediately after this watershed, the collaborations rebalanced, new partnerships were established and the roles of each party involved were

[1] We are pleased to mention that, in usual conversations, including those of the local administration or the UVT management, another term has been used, "Bârlea's conference".
[2] The Latin Union was founded by 12 states in Madrid in 1954 and reached its peak in 1983-2000, when its headquarters were in Paris. It suspended its activity in 2012 due to financial problems.
[3] It should be noted that Antena Târgoviște of the Latin Union continued to function as an independent entity, though integrated into the structure of the DICE Cultural Association, even after the dissolution of the Latin Union in December 2012.



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very well assigned[4]. People like Prof. Gavriel Păunescu, a councillor with Târgoviște City Hall, or the economist Daniela Popa, the City Hall financial director, either remained with or got back to the initiator until the end. Valahia University rectors Florea Oprea, Ion Cucui (with an episode of temporary cancellation of the event), Călin Oros, Laura Gorghiu and vice-rector Gabriela Teodorescu have supported the conference; the latter helped us get the financial backing from the Ministry of Education and also took part in many conference editions. The County Cultural Centre has been a long-term partner through Dr Adriana Ion, an active and competent representative of the successive managements of the institution. The latest editions have benefited from the unconditional contribution of Prof. Dr Monica Ilie, Deputy Mayor of the City of Târgoviște, Economist Teodora Macarie, TMTB, Radu Florian, Columna TV etc.

They have provided the support on which a tightly-welded team of organisers has been built. In the beginning, this team included Mihaela Anca Vintilă, Anca and Andreea Fanea, Mihai Cuciureanu and so on. For several years now, the team has been coordinated by Prof. Dr habil. Raluca-Felicia Toma and its composition has been almost unchanged: Dana and Marius Diaconu, Adriana Ion, Marinușa V. Constantin, Oana Voichici, Georgel Stoica, Gabriela Chiran, with notable participations of Cosmin Moise, Andreea Popa Savu, Denisa Nistor, Rodica Enache, Valentin Lixăndroiu etc.

The initial purpose of the event was rather didactic-formative. We wanted the young teachers – assistant lecturers, lecturers, associate professors – to get acquainted with a matrix-organised form of scientific confrontation and meet great personalities of Romanian philology and their own colleagues from other parts of the country and of the world, therefore, to facilitate their professional inclusion in the large family of academics and researchers from the various subfields of the sciences of the word. On the other hand, we

[4] At the risk of being considered immodest, I should mention that, without exceptions, all institutional collaborations have relied on the initiator's personal relationships with the representatives of partner entities. Out of respect for the truth, it is also to be remarked that the conflicts which led to temporary or definitive ruptures with some of the partner institutions were also caused by the same personal approach to collaboration in organising the Conference.



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greatly encouraged the participation in the event, even as mere auditors, of undergraduates, master's and PhD students. We wanted them to see other faces than their teachers' and become aware of other manners of presenting specialised knowledge, i.e. to get accustomed, from "an early age", to the competitive spirit that would provide sound and solid socio-professional training and moral sense. These objectives took into account the realities of those years: the mobilities, particularly those based on national, European, international grants, were much less officially supported than now and accessing grants, projects etc. was almost non-existent. All we could do was invite various higher education personalities and researchers from the country and abroad to come to our conference, offering them as many facilities as possible: accommodation and meals provided free of charge, exemption from any participation fee, organising visits, shows and trips on the last day of the event – an additional day, in fact – and sometimes reimbursement of travelling expenses. That is why we needed the financial support from local administration institutions and various partners. Thus, we encouraged established professors and researchers to come accompanied by their younger colleagues, by assistant lecturers, doctoral students, undergraduates – which is actually an older international tradition. In time, the conditions for participation have changed, as young people today move much more easily anywhere in the country and abroad.

From the very beginning, young people have had the chance to listen to and interact directly with the "authors of works in the specialised bibliographies", as they say in the academic metalanguage. In some cases, some of these contacts have materialised in doctoral internships, collaborations with specialised journals and collective volumes, joining teams of great national and international projects or even employment at research institutes or universities.

Over the years, the series of experts have obviously changed with the coming of younger generations. The first editions were patronised by Eugenio Coșeriu, Marius Sala, Eugen Simion, Iancu Fischer, Gheorghe Tohăneanu, Lucia Wald, Gabriela Creția, Silviu Sanie, Gheorghe Ceaușescu, Victor



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Grecu etc.[5] In the following decade, the invited specialists were Gheorghe Chivu, Baudouin Decharneux, Xavier Luffin, Olga Inkova, Emilio Manzotti, Cécile Vilandre de Sousa, Maurice Mathé, Sorin Dumitrescu, Silviu Angelescu, Lucian Chișu, Libuše Valentová, Alexandru Gafton, N. Georgescu, Ion Lihaciu, Ana Maria Minuț, Ștefan Găitănaru, Adrian Niculescu and others. Young assistant lecturers and lecturers have become, in time, well-known personalities in their fields, such as Florentina Nicolae, Mioara Codleanu, Cristina Tamaș, Ion Milică, Sorin Guia, Raluca Toma, Adina Chirilă, Alice Toma, Liliana Soare, Tomaš Vašut, Cristina Halichias, Maria-Luiza Dumitru, Ileana Tănase, Adrian Chircu, R.-M. Bârlea, Silvia Florea and many others. The youngest class of participants include Veronica Nedelcu, Cosmin Căprioară, Olimpia Varga, Florentina Rusu, M.V. Constantin etc.[6] Some of them have become, in their turn, doctoral advisors, occupying important positions within the university hierarchy and all of them have published books and articles of international renown.

The presentations delivered have been published in volumes, which has maintained a rhythmicity of the conference. We are referring, first of all, to the publication which has become the academic journal *Diversité et Identité Culturelle en Europe (DICE).* The title has its own history and so does the birth of the journal[7].

As of 2010, after the 9th edition of the Conference, all papers that were not selected for DICE were included in a separate collective volume called *Studii de limbă, cultură și comunicare,* coordinated by Raluca-Felicia Toma. Four such annual volumes were published, sometimes printed the year following the Conference at which the studies were presented. As usual, the series was marked with stars * – for the 9th edition, 2010, volume printed in 2011; ** – for the 10th edition, 2011, volume printed in 2012; *** – for the

[5] I now realise that of those listed here only Gabriela Creția and Eugen Simion are still alive.
[6] Regarding the participants who published their works in the first decade of existence of the journal DICE, cf. M. V. Constantin, "*Index locorum – DICE* 2004-2013", in: DICE, 10/1, 2013, pp. 203-216. However, it is to be mentioned that not all contributors participated in the Conference.
[7] Cf. P(etre) G(heorghe) B(ârlea), "DICE – An anniversary retrospective/Retrospective anniversaire", in: DICE, 10/1, 2013, pp. 7-18.



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11th edition, 2012, volume printed in 2013; **** – for the 12th edition, 2013, volume printed in 2014. The first two volumes were published by "Bibliotheca" Publishing House, Târgoviște, with an ISBN, whereas the next two – by the Publishing House of MLR (Romanian Literature Museum) in Bucharest – with an ISSN (2343-7782). These volumes also included a chapter dedicated to issues of didactics of the Romanian language and foreign languages – in pre-university and higher education.

The latter component established itself through the ever-closer collaboration with the School Inspectorate in organising the Conference, especially as the former graduates, master's and doctoral students of Valahia University of Târgoviște had now become middle- and secondary-school teachers. Many of them had participated as mere auditors in earlier editions of the Conference, during their student years, and now they had their own papers on all thematic aspects of the scientific event, particularly the didactic one. In fact, from that period, all LRR editions have necessarily included a didactic section as well and the number of participants has grown year after year. In 2014 and 2015, this conference proceedings were entitled *Cultură și Comunicare*, being coordinated by P. Gh. Bârlea and R.F. Toma. Both were printed by the MLR Publishing House, Bucharest, but with the old tribulations of CIP registration: that of 2014 – with ISBN (978-973-167-2441), that of 2015 – with ISSN (2343-7782). As usual, R.M. Bârlea, Constantin G. Stoica, M.V. Constantin were involved in their materialisation. Of course, the chapter on didactics was preserved in the volume structure, not to mention that many contributions of those particular teachers covered other chapters as well ("Interculturalitate"; "Comunicare și discurs"; "Probleme de limbă și stil" etc.).

In 2016, we decided to divide the papers selected for publication into two volumes: one kept the title *Cultură și Comunicare* (CC), the other was entitled *Studii de didactică a limbii și literaturii* (SD). P. Gh. Bârlea and R.F. Toma remained the two editors and, in 2017, Marinușa Constantin joined them. In 2017, Roxana Magdalena Bârlea became the sole coordinator of the CC collection, as did F. Toma and M.V. Constantin for SD in 2018.



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Since 2016, all three publications – *DICE* (semestrial journal, registered by CNCS and indexed in several international databases); *Cultură și Comunicare (CC); Studii de didactică (SD)* – annual collective volumes, have become accessible in PDF format, on the website of DICE Cultural Association (asociatiadice.org); also, a separate site has been created for the DICE journal (diversite.eu), a requirement imposed by the new international academic conventions. In 2017, the editorial board and the relationships with the publishing house were settled, with MLR București as the only publisher. DICE editorial secretaries are Constantin Georgel Stoica and Oana Voichici; the latter has also undertaken the difficult task of translating those abstracts and key words that are not written in English – which is a must for DICE – or even entire articles, many of them with a high degree of linguistic difficulty.

In 2020, a fracture in the process of producing the printed version of the three volumes occurred. The changes in the political and economic structure at the top of Romanian society and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for the publisher to print CC 2020 and SD 2020 as well as DICE 18-1/2021. The publications were however available on the two abovementioned websites.

Anyway, the general social-political and economic situation in Romania and worldwide causes major disfunctions in the most unexpected ways. The 20th edition of LRR, which was supposed to be an anniversary one, was held in a relatively modest format, imposed by the sanitary precautions – of actual distancing in space, which meant a reduction in the number of face-to-face participants[8] etc. – that we deemed to be more important than the festive display to which we might have been entitled.

On the other hand, the general spiritual atmosphere in not too serene either. In every place, there is a discouraging fatigue, if not the very effect of a(n) (inter)cultural negativism, with disastrous movements in education at all

[8] In fact, the total number of participants was comparable to that in the previous editions "of the good old days", but we designed an alternative participation system: *online* and *in praesentia*. More specifically, we reduced the duration of the Conference to three half days, with face-to-face attendance of only one third of the participants in the central amphitheatre and the halls dedicated to section works; the other two thirds were present *via electronica*. Naturally, the overall atmosphere was not the same as before…



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levels, in scientific research, in cultural production as a whole. Extremisms of all kinds, gathered in the avalanche of ignorance, hate, racism, intolerance, functional illiteracy, codified as *cancel culture*, have come to light with a recrudescence that no one would have imagined. It is unbelievable that people with higher education can so easily become disseminators of conspiracy theories; it is incomprehensible how spoken and written word professionals may promote ideologies of behavioural deviation and denial of fundamental human values.

What is now happening in the world seems to cancel everything that has been achieved in the last decades in terms of respecting one's cultural identity in diversity. Multilingualism, acculturation and socio-professional integration strategies, acquisitions in the fight against prejudices, the stereotypes and cliches in the frequent process of generating identity attributes, liberal and democratic conducts acquired through the vast phenomenon of mobilities of entire generations of young people for training and educational purposes, with a view to building a better world seem to have been achievements lacking substance and general vision.

There is no need for us to become more sceptical than the surrounding realities impose, but it is with sadness that we should remark how disoriented the generation which should take over the initiatives leading to the aforementioned achievements is now, already too exhausted to struggle with an increasingly harsh life, in a context that is ever more devoid of safe landmarks. In other words, the challenges of the immediate future are growing and those who must face them are gradually becoming more and more unsure of themselves.

Are we perhaps to leave it all to chance, relying on the idea that the unpredictable may at times have a silver lining as well?



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