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Letter of Support

in nomination for an Europa Nostra Heritage Champion Award

Ref: Varvara Buzilă, doctor in Philology, Associate Professor in Visual Arts, in the history of culture and civilization and Head of the Ethnography Department of the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, Republic of Moldova

Varvara Buzilă is a recognized and respected figure in contemporary ethnological research in Moldova and, equally, in Romania and other European and non-European countries.

Motivated by sincere feelings of high appreciation and respect for her intensive activity spanning more than four decades, I recommend her for the Europa Nostra Heritage Champions Award in 2025. Through extensive efforts in collecting, analyzing, researching, and interpreting the traditional cultural heritage specific to the area between the Nistru, Prut, Danube, Black Sea, and Carpathians, she has made interesting comparative interpretations of the phenomena specific to these cultural areas and those in their vicinity. The results of these scholarly endeavors are important contributions to European ethnological research.

In shaping her scientific and academic profile, alongside her university studies, her doctoral studies (pursued at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj/Romania, in philology, specializing in folklore) and multiple internal and international specialization internships, as well as constant and complex fieldwork and expeditions have marked her path of knowledge from the 1980s until today.

Her steady and efficient involvement in various research activities, museum work, commissions and working groups, the development of rigorous legislative frameworks related to identifying, safeguarding, and valorizing intangible cultural heritage, along with intensive promotion through all channels to the general public of knowledge and information through which she has shaped mentalities and directions in the transition decades following the dissolution of the USSR, positions her alongside reference personalities of these decades. For several years, I collaborated directly with her in creating four UNESCO projects related to cross-border intangible heritage of humanity. On academic, institutional, museum, and editorial collaboration, we had high-level scientific exchanges, she proved remarkable competence based on an almost overwhelming suite of information in a very broad thematic field and application of traditional culture. She is as rigorous as possible and very systematic in everything she communicates. However, she always doubles this scientific rigor with an evident attachment to research fields, a warm affectivity, which has drawn her to understanding the profound significance and special valences of traditional culture. She is one of the outstanding specialists from the generation formed and educated in respect for heritage values and predecessors, conscious of the moral obligation that falls to her for

protecting, safeguarding, valorizing, and transmitting all these values in a creative and consciously assumed way.

Dr. Varvara Buzilă is a prominent representative of ethnological research in the Republic of Moldova, demonstrating highly competent knowledge of the local Romanian traditional culture repertoire, understanding its complexity and especially its syncretism of languages. She did not choose to analyze or develop a single language of expression of this culture, but looked at the syncretic phenomenon as it genuinely manifests, and in this way, gave a broad and profound dimension to the meanings of this culture and its value in marking the identity of a cultural area. The syncretism of languages is characteristic of traditional cultures, robust cultures that have managed to survive many hundreds of years, in accordance with and taking into account the needs to update and adapt their phenomena to the conditions and dynamics of daily life, to the process character of the local cultural complex and its relations with factors that influence it, near or far, without ever forgetting the connection with the past. She has managed to view the phenomenon as a living process and not in an isolated way. She shows availability for new directions in ethnological research and has remarkable pedagogical talent.

Regarding the European interest in decades of involvement with local cultural heritage, it is very interesting to follow how the identity maps of various ethnic syntheses are constituted on the map of Europe. What Varvara Buzilă has done through her research, collections, expeditions she has undertaken, but also through carrying the message to various European cultural areas she has been interested in, where she had contact with local specialists, all this endeavor has been more than evocative for what means the identity of a culture expressed in the spaces where it was born, developed, and continues to exist. In the European context, different spaces can make up a whole without having always had direct contact, and that is most interesting. An approach of specialists from the last hundred years is to update the area of Romanity North and South of the Danube, with all that it represents, through the bearers of Latin-origin culture, in various forms of dialectal expression, such as Aromanian, Istro-Romanian, Megleno-Romanian, and also Romanians beyond the Prut. This identity area is well described and well placed on the map, especially following research such as that undertaken by Varvara Buzilă.

In conclusion, I consider this candidacy to be fully justified and I support this endeavor with whatever I can.

Yours sincerely,

Acad. Sabina Ispas

Director of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore "Constantin Brăiloiu",

President of the Section of Arts, Architecture, and Audio-visual of the Romanian Academy

Bucharest, 20.11.2024