

HEALTHY EUROPE. TRADITIONS AND LIFESTYLE A BOOK REVIEW

Economics PhD Aurelian Virgil BĂLUȚĂ

The book "Healthy Europe". Traditions. Lifestyle" written by Alexandra Radu and Andrea Șerban, published in Romanian by the Publishing House "Editura Fundației România de Măine" was launched at the Bookfest Bucharest 2023 Fair. At the same time the book "Healthy Europe". Traditions. Lifestyle", with a rich documentary in Italian, had in mind the quality of Italy's guest of honor at the respective book fair.

The general vision that was the basis for writing this book is formulated clearly and explicitly: <we do not want to approach European diversity from the perspective of segregation, but, on the contrary, through the prism of a unity that derives from the acceptance of this diversity, even more, from its transformation into -a fundamental coordinate of the common European spirit>.

About authors

The authors are Romanian language teachers for foreigners, translators and content cultural creators. Both Andrea Șerban and Alexandra Radu got to know Europe and European culture well thanks to the frequent trips occasioned by their professional activity, but also thanks to the consuming passion that guided their steps through Italy, Spain, France or England.

Alexandra Radu is a graduate of the Faculty of Letters and History from Craiova, author of poetry, essays and specialized articles in various magazines in Romania and abroad. She is a translator of philosophy, economics and history volumes from Romanian into Italian, or from Italian and French into Romanian (eg: THE PURPOSE OF PHILOSOPHY (in human spirituality) AND THE IDENTITY OF ROMANIAN PHILOSOPHY, author Ion Tudosescu). Gets involved in cultural, academic and promotion projects of Romanian and European culture in the world.

Andrea Şerban Andrea is defined by her positive energy and the generosity with which she shares her knowledge and shares her passions with others.

He graduated from the Faculty of Letters in Constanţa and received a scholarship at the University of Lecce.

He participated as a translator in economic missions that gave him the opportunity to gain thorough knowledge of European traditions and culture.

She is passionate about gastronomy and always experiments, combining her passion for written culture with culinary culture.

About the contents of the book

The book "Healthy Europe". Traditions. Lifestyle" has content organized in 11 chapters. Idea content is supported by well-selected photos and graphics. Through the bibliographic references inserted, it encourages the deepening of the knowledge presented.

The first chapter with the title "Brief history of Europe and the European peoples" is a genuine documented introduction to the issues addressed in the book. In this chapter we have an overview of the history of our continent. Chapters follow to delve deeper into health and lifestyle issues by group of countries with an important set of commonalities. In Europe, we cannot speak of homogeneity even within national states, let alone groups of countries or the continent as a whole.

The second chapter is entitled "Mediterranean Europe and Balkan Europe" and is about a vast area of the continent that has probably been best documented in the book. For connoisseurs of political history, it is a discreet but firm reply to the phrase <Balkans-the powder keg of Europe>. The respective region is presented as <a space in which Europe admirably reveals its diversity and in which a face of Europe strongly influenced by the oriental vein is revealed to us>.

The third chapter "Another Europe: Russia, the Baltic States, Turkey" leads us to the eastern tip of the continent. I think it is both a history and a visionary chapter. It was documented and written at a time when there is war in the Eastern part of the continent, Russia being practically in direct economic plus political and indirect military conflict with the rest of the

continent. Turkey's request to join the European Union, although submitted many years ago, is no longer on the political agenda of either confederated Europe or Turkey. But I am convinced that the whole book, including this chapter, will be on the reading table of readers and at a time when political Europe will coincide with Europe in its geographical borders, including Turkey and Russia. There is also a brief history of Russophobia in this chapter.

A very comprehensive area of research is covered in chapter 4 "Underground Europe". It is about <Europe that is literally under our feet>. Who has ever visited Europe <knows that all major European cities have an underground replica, a city under the city, each with its own history>. In fact, underground Europe is part of <the network of underground caves and corridors>. They <make our continent so beautiful and surprising>.

An important step towards the foundations of European unity in diversity is made in chapter 5 "The European spirit and spirituality. Religious diversity and European polyglotism". The idea is supported according to which <the cosmopolitan spirit of the Europeans is manifested both in terms of faith and linguistically, of the expression of various beliefs in words>.

The dimension of linguistic diversity only in the official space of the European Union is expressed by the twenty-four official languages, plus the unofficial languages that are spoken in smaller areas, but which complete the colorful picture of European multilingualism.

In order to maintain a high scientific level, the concepts are carefully selected.

For example, the conceptual differences between polyglotism and multilingualism are clarified, and the reason for using the former in the chapter title is explained. In this chapter is important the section "Representations of the sacred vs. pagan representations, folk heroes, proverbs, sayings and...why not?, curses". Among the cross-border spiritual values presented, it is worth noting the similarity between the famous Păcală from Romania and the hero Giufà present in Sicilian popular literature (Italy).

Through chapter 6 "Panem dei (ritual food and European traditions), the use of vessels (European clay and ceramics)" history is closely connected to the everyday life of Europeans. We will also understand from here that stronger than the relative geographical distances there are close

ties that make us have in Europe individualized manifestations of everyday life and spirituality, but these individual manifestations are connected by numerous fibers belonging to a common basic fund. Some of these connective fibers are easier to observe empirically, but others require scientific tools to bring to light.

Chapter 7 "Traditions without borders in Europe (toponymy and anthroponymy)" leads to the modern concept of <spiritualization of borders>. The rich documentation regarding the names of some localities that cross the borders is worth appreciating. In addition to the famous Marseille, the case of the locality Slatina identified in Romania, Slovenia and Bulgaria is presented. As a general rule, in Europe the choice of name, even if it is oriented towards the child, often reflects the parents' personality and affiliation to certain beliefs, and this reflects the hidden interest and wishes regarding the child's future, however subjective they might hide.

In chapter 8 "Healthy food and herbs in Europe" we find a lot of useful information and advice in everyday life. We are sensitized to read this chapter by mentioning the fact that the Mediterranean diet is part of the intangible universal heritage. Sections such as "What are aromatic plants", "Cultivation of aromatic chains", "Fresh or dried aromatic plants" attract attention. From the list of aromatic plants presented in this chapter, I mention only basil, mint, thyme and dill.

We find deep problems in chapter 9 "The cult of the family in the European space. The figure of the mother in European culture". The authors claim that <most of the modern Europeans are bound by the values of the traditional family, by the idea of marriage consented before the law and in the church, but also by the descendants>. Thus, we observe how <the original European family is founded around the central figures, the father and the mother, who reconfigure at the micro-space level the central points of the macro-universe, the sky and the earth>. By deepening some linguistic studies <we will be able to find out how the family micro-cosmos is enriched with the figure of the grandfather or the older sister>.

Through Chapter 11 "Good taste and European good taste. Small compendium of recipes" we take the step towards the area where we understand and bring the European unity to the homes of every European citizen, in his everyday life. It is another chapter in which history teaches us something practical for the present.

About the importance of the book

The book <Healthy Europe. Traditions. Lifestyle> is part of an interdisciplinary research field, regional history and geography, the spiritual history of united Europe, the history of European civilization, etc. At the same time, it is a field of great relevance and with many direct implications in everyday life. We can say that by going through a historical theme we also get immediately usable information. At the same time, this book is based on an international experience of the two authors. The extensive area from which the information is gathered makes this book a true European synthesis of knowledge for important issues such as health, spirituality, everyday life. It is interesting how health is connected in the book to deep elements of the soul, such as traditions, including their transposition into a concrete lifestyle.

I like to say that this book is a plea for the European Union. Reading it carefully and understanding its spiritual essence, we will come to the conclusion that the European space is, despite a rich diversity, a unitary whole, at least from the point of view of the traditions and beliefs transposed into the lifestyle. The effort to keep the states of the old continent in an open confederation is not based on fleeting geo-strategic reasons. From the book "Healthy Europe. Traditions. Lifestyle" we can understand that in Europe we have a territorially dispersed common cultural heritage, composed of numerous elements closely related to each other. In terms of traditions and a healthy lifestyle, we can say, without the risk of being wrong, that Europe is unique and still has a lot to say for itself. In these areas Europeans have always communicated with each other. With this book, we have one more argument to convince the skeptics that we, the European peoples, want to be together and continue to learn from each other, in our common interest.

The book "Healthy Europe". Traditions. Lifestyle" demonstrates very well the principle of unity in diversity of Europe, so much invoked theoretically. The book is at the same time a scientific plea for a Europe united in diversity based on traditions and a healthy lifestyle, deep spirituality and fundamental aspirations of its citizens, but also on common history. Through this book we have evidence and arguments that <Europe is a great unity in diversity>. I am convinced that studies that will prove this unity in diversity and in other fields will see the light of day.

Recommendation

The book "Healthy Europe". Traditions. Lifestyle" I recommend that it be translated into the languages of the European peoples, after which it should be read with the eyes of the soul. We will be happy to learn that it was a source of inspiration for authors and books that will put into the circulation of European ideas other elements of the civilization and spirituality that unites us.

Tourism is one of the components of modern life. I think it would be useful to use the book. "Healthy Europe Traditions. Lifestyle" as a useful travel guide to maximize understanding of the places and people we encounter on our vacations.