

Henry Morris Memorial Trust Romania

Project 2023 Final Report

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1. Organising the project

1a) Coming up with the idea

Before I was able to begin working on my project, I had to come up with an idea. After countless hours of reading articles, watching YouTube videos, reading books and more, I decided that I would like my project to be “travel-based”. However, I like to be unique and original. After looking at the past reports on the Henry Morris Memorial Trust Website, I realised that travel abroad is a common theme so my aim was to achieve something no Henry Morris Memorial Trust funded student has done before. At this time, I came across a

Youtube video by YouTuber Max Fosh (video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05iHyBqbRE4>) in which he meets with the Chief Minister of Gibraltar. Driven by this, my interest in politics and the fact I have not been abroad in years I got motivated to try and achieve this myself.

1b) Making contact

Driven by the previously mentioned determination, on the 2nd December 2022 I sat down and began writing emails to press offices of all the nations and territories in Europe. After days of writing emails, I achieved my goal and had an email sent to all press offices in Europe.

Figure 1: Document showing all emails sent and responses (green accepted, red declined, purple no response)

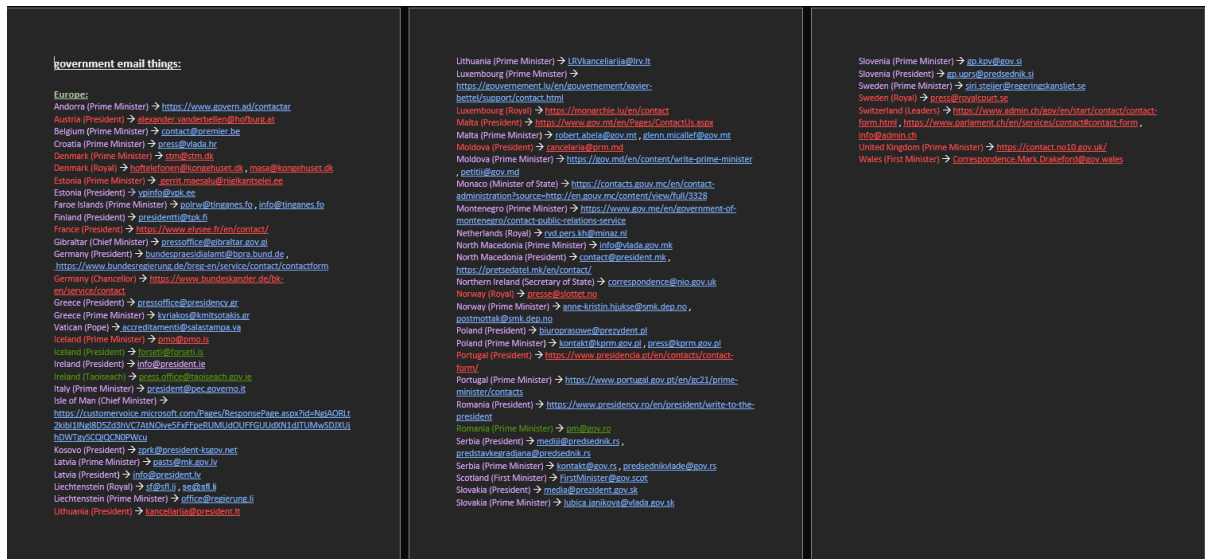


Figure 2: Example of an email sent (this sample is an email sent to the Office of Malta's Prime Minister)



Kuba Chatkowski kubachatkowski09@gmail.com

to robert.abela

sat, 3 gru 2022, 12:02 ☆ ↶ ⋮

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kuba Chatkowski and I am a 13 year old living in the United Kingdom.

In the year 2023, I will hopefully be creating a project about the geography, history and politics/leadership of Malta which would be in the form of a video.

I am writing to you today to ask if it would be possible to arrange an interview with Mr Prime Minister Robert Abela to include in the project. The project would be done between April-September with the recording hopefully taking place in April, May, June, July or August. The project would showcase the geographical locations, history of the country/territory and politics/leadership of the country.

Although April is still far away, the reason I am contacting you now is because I will be applying to the Henry Morris Fund for funding for this project. The Henry Morris Trust is a charity located in Cambridgeshire, UK that gives money to help do projects such as this. The other half of the funding would be through fundraising money (ie selling old things). The deadline for the application is January 31. This would mean a lot to me as I have always been interested in geography, history and politics and in the future would like to pursue a career in politics.

Even if this is unable to happen, I want to say thank you for taking your time to read this letter.

Your sincerely,
Kuba Chatkowski

1c) Email results

After weeks of waiting, results began flooding into my email inbox. After messaging over 70 press offices, as expected I received many negative responses however I also received some positive. In the end, I received a successful result from the President of Iceland, Prime Minister of Romania and the Republic of Ireland's Embassy in London. Alongside this, I also received a signed photo of Olaf Scholz from Germany. Despite getting positive results from 3 countries, I could only decide on doing one for this project so after researching each country, I decided to settle with Romania. A country not visited by many, I wanted to see a country often shadowed by others in the Balkans.

Figure 3: Email response from Romanian Prime Minister's Press Office

Good morning, Kuba,

On December 4th, 2022, through an email to: pm@gov.ro, you requested an interview with Prime-minister of Romania, Mr. Nicolae Ciuca with the purpose to include it in a project you are creating about Romania

I am truly glad to tell you that Prime-minister Ciuca accepted to give you the interview. 3rd of April 2023, between 100-1100hrs or 1600-1700hrs, Romanian time, would be just fine.

To make things easier, it might be better for you (your parents) to inform the UK Embassy in Bucharest that you will travel to Bucharest.

To get access to Victoria Palace, two weeks before 3rd of April, we will need a copy of your ID and the adult ID that will come with you (probably your mom or dad).

Cheers,
Paula Cristea
State Secretary
Chief of Staff
Prime-minister Office

Following this, I had my Henry Morris Memorial Trust Interview on the 4th March 2023 at Queen's College in Cambridge. After being notified that I have been granted £250 in funding, we booked our tickets and were getting ready to go. Following the news of funding being received, I once again sat down in front of my laptop and began writing emails, this time to tourist attractions in Romania. After hours of writing, I got positive responses from all of these places and received free guided tours of all of them, allowing us to save huge amounts of money (a tour of the Palace of Parliament normally costs £500 per person but we got it for free!).

2. Politics of Romania

2a) Romania's Political System

Throughout the countries history, the political system of Romania has varied drastically: from a monarchy, to a communist dictatorship to a republic. As of 2023, Romania is a semi-presidential representative democratic republic with the Prime Minister being Head of Government and the President being Head of State. Being a democratic country, the legislative power of the country is vested in the Government and the two chambers of Parliament: the Chamber of Deputies (lower) and Senate (higher). However, the judiciary is fully independent from the Executive (President) and legislature.

As of 2023, the current President of Romania is Klaus Iohannis, an Independent politician who has been in power since the 21st December 2014. As the Head of State, the President is in charge of ensuring the Constitution is upheld, foreign affairs, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Chairperson of the Supreme Council of National Defense. The President is also the individual who nominates a candidate for the position of Prime Minister to the Parliament.

Since the 15th June 2023, Marcel Ciolacu of the Social Democratic Party has been Prime Minister of the country. However, when I visited Romania in April as part of my project, the Prime Minister was Nicolae Ionel Ciucă of the National Liberal Party. Now, he is the President of the Senate of Romania.

2b) Meeting the Prime Minister

However, the main highlight of my trip to Romania was the fact I had the opportunity to meet and interview the now former Prime Minister. On the 2nd day of us being in Romania, we headed to Victoria Palace located in Sector 1, the workplace of the Prime Minister. After arriving at Victoria Palace, we went through security and received a tour of the building, in which I saw many cabinet offices and conference rooms which gave me a clearer understanding of how the Government of Romania operates.

Figure 4: A conference room inside of Victoria Palace,
Bucharest



After receiving a tour of the building, I got invited into the Prime Minister's private office where I sat down, waiting for his arrival. At 09:00 am Romanian Time, the Prime Minister entered the room, beginning my meeting with him.

Figure 5: Shaking hands with Nicolae Ciuca, Prime Minister of
Romania



Following his arrival, we sat down beginning our interview. In total, the interview lasted 32 minutes and the questions ranged in topics, from me asking how Mr Ciuca got interested in politics, to the current situation in Ukraine and his former military career.

A few of the questions I asked include:

Me: “If you could sum up what you want to achieve in your term with three points, what would they be?”

Prime Minister: “First of all, to increase our capacity to absorb the EU funds which are really supporting our country. Second, it’s to develop the energy sector because at the minute it has a lot of potential in order to guarantee for ourselves and for our partners that Romania is not only an energy-producer but also an energy provider for other countries. And third, to continue to implement all the measures taken by the Government so far in order to reform the medical and educational systems.”

Me: “What is your fondest memory of being in the military?”

Prime Minister: “There are many. One of the most important ones was when I had been nominated to lead the Romanian Battalion in the operation in Afghanistan while Romania had

been invited to NATO. This was like an accomplished dream because in the 90's we were very much working towards the requirements for NATO acceptance.”

Figure 6: Sitting down with the Prime Minister



Following the interview, I was then awarded a Prime Ministerial Award for having the determination and doing the project which the Henry Morris Memorial Trust helped fund.

Figure 7: Being awarded the Prime Ministerial Award



2c) The Parliament of Romania

As Romania is a democracy, all laws and decisions in the country have to go through the country's legislative body:

The Parliament.

The Parliament of Romania is a bicameral system, composing of the lower house known as the Chamber of Deputies and the upper house known as the Senate. Each legislative bill that is brought up into the parliament is initially discussed in the lower house (Chamber of Deputies) before later being brought into the upper house (Senate) who make the final decision. The Chamber of Deputies is made up of 300 Deputies, with the majority being held by the Social Democratic Party with 107 seats. The Social Democratic Party also hold the majority in the Senate, with 49 senators.

The building housing the Parliament of Romania, the Palace of Parliament, is an iconic building that currently holds the title for the world's heaviest building and the world's second biggest building, just behind the Pentagon in the United States of America. The building itself is made up of 23 sections and took 13 years to build, under the command of Nicolae Ceausescu who was President of the Socialist Republic of Romania from 1967 until his execution in 1989, marking the end of the Romanian Revolution. The Palace of Parliament was originally named the People's House, however this name was not fitting in the slightest as entry was only granted to high-ranking individuals of the Romanian Communist Party and the works inside of the Palace were

confidential. To prove to the world that Romania can be a superpower, the palace was built fully out of materials found only in Romania, most notably the wood and marble which came from the mountainous Transylvania region. Alongside this, no ventilation was constructed in the Palace as Ceausescu feared of chemical or gas attacks. The construction of the palace was delayed by Ceausescu's demand for detail, with the main stairway being rebuilt over 20 times so that the steps matched with his height, so that he and his wife Elena (also his deputy) would be able to come down at the exact same time and greet guests. In 2022, the Palace was valued at \$4 billion, making it the most expensive administrative building in the world.

I had the opportunity to get a VIP tour of the Palace (normally £600 pp) for free so I had the ability to access rooms not normally open to the public.

Figure 8: The Palace of Parliament in Bucharest



Figure 9: Chamber in the Parliament

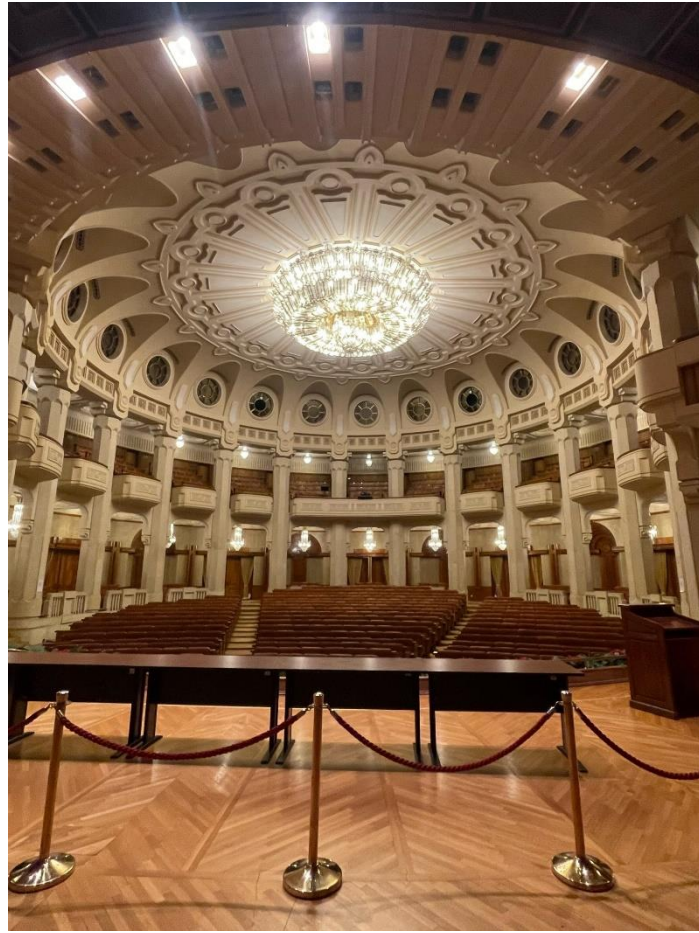


Figure 10: Marble design on the floor – designed to look like a birds eye view of the parliament building



Figure 11: Lectern belonging to the President of the Chamber

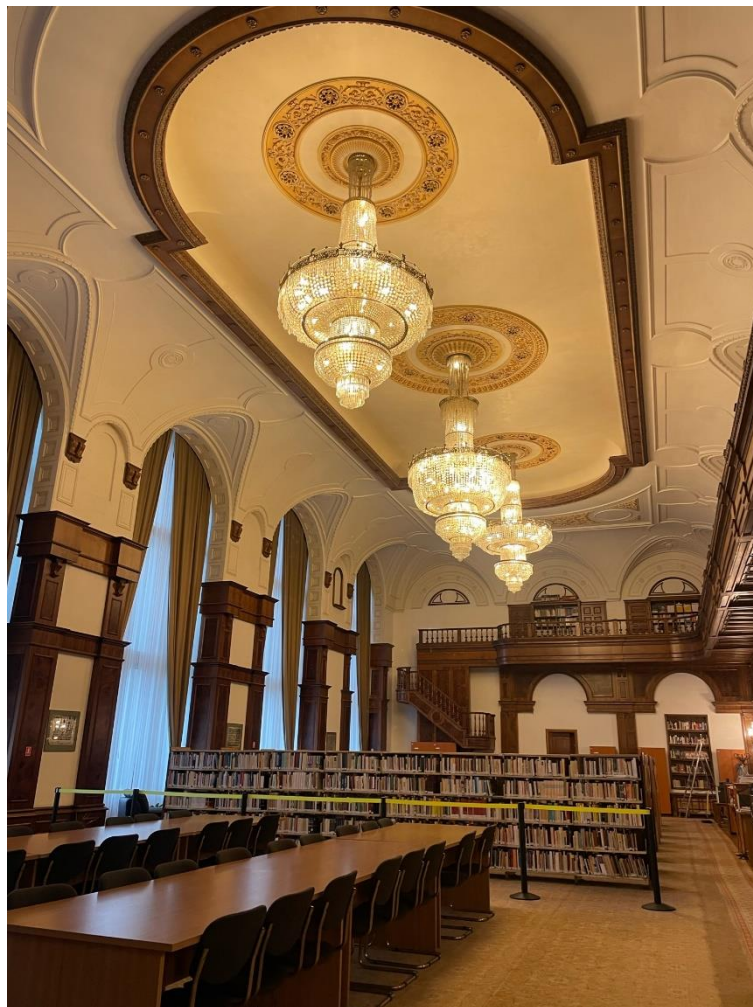


Figure 12: Chamber of Deputies





Figure 13: Library of the Parliament

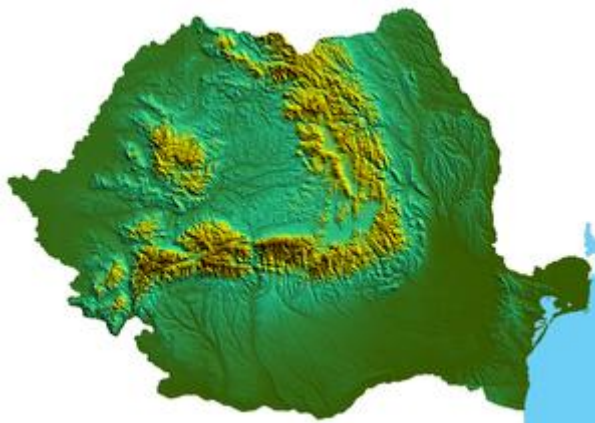


3. Geography of Romania

Being the twelfth-largest European country with an area of 238,397 km², Romania is a country with a vast contrast of different geographical regions. The country itself is located in the Balkan region of Europe and borders Moldova, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary, as well as having 245 km of coastline on the Black Sea.

The natural landscape of the country is 23% mountain, 39% plains 35% and 35% hills. The Carpathian Mountain Range spans through the country, with the highest point Moldoveanu Peak (2544 metres) being located in the Transylvania region of the country.

Figure 14: Map showing the Carpathian Mountains in Romania



The Carpathian Mountains Arc covers an area of 71000 square kilometres, and stretches across most of the country. The mountains are of varying heights and altitudes, however

at no point do they go wider than 100 km resulting in many settlements being built on the lower altitudes (with the most well-known one being the city of Brasov).

The Carpathian Mountains are rich in resources such as minerals, gold and silver which is where the materials for the Palace of Parliament were mined from, to prove to the world that Romania is a self-sufficient country. The areas where these resources are present are often referred to as the East Carpathians.

As you go down from the Carpathians, the plains and flatlands of the country are visible, spreading in all directions. Here, you will find most of Romania's farming industries, due to the good quality of soil. On these plains you will also find the lowest point of Romania, that being the Danube Delta where the mighty Danube comes to an end at almost 3000km before going into the Black Sea.

Figure 15: The Danube Delta



Aswell as mountains and flat plains, you will find many rivers

and lakes (3500 lakes) within the country of Romania, including 1075 km of the Danube as well as other rivers (including some which are located entirely in Romania ie the Olt River which is 615 kilometres.

Due to the large amount of water bodies within the country, hydroelectric power is becoming increasingly popular in the country, with many people relying on it. Most notably, one of Europe's largest hydroelectric stations is located in the country known as the Iron Gates, which provides energy not only for Romania but also for surrounding countries.

Figure 16: The Iron Gates Hydroelectric Station



Figure 17: Map of Romania



4. History of Romania

Although not known by many, Romania has a history dating back thousands of years, with many historians claiming it is an undiscovered historical jewel.

Settlement of the modern day region we now know as Romania began in the Lower Paleolithic period, by Dacians who belonged to the Kingdom of Dacia. The earliest evidence of this comes from Book IV of Herodotus' Histories, which was written in 440BC approximately.

Figure 18: Reference to Dacians in Book IV

The Dacians are the most law-abiding and the bravest of the Thracians. They believe they are immortal, forever living in the following sense: they think they do not die and that the one who dies joins Zalmoxis, a divine being.

—Herodotus

For many years the Kingdom of Dacia remained as an independent and united state, however tensions began to escalate within the states making up the kingdom, resulting in civil wars. At the same time, tensions were rising between the Kingdom of Dacia and the Roman Empire, which resulted in Romans attacking the Dacian people. Following many battles, the Romans got control over Dacia, with Emperor Trajan declaring the imperial province of Dacia Felix, also known as Roman Dacia in 106AD

Figure 20: Map of Roman Dacia



In AD 275, the Romans abandoned the province to the Carpi people.

For the next few hundred years the land of modern Romania was fought for by many tribes and countries, with many republics and areas forming.

Most notably, the most prominent of these regions and

kingdoms were Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania who in 1848 decided to launch a revolution in hopes of full independence and autonomy in the region. The Principality of Transylvania was most influential and prosperous, however the revolution failed and led to the idea of unification. For the next 2 decades this idea was discussed, with a decision being made to have two families on the throne at once from the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, leading to the formation of the United Principalities of Romania in 1862. However, the Principality of Transylvania was not included in this unification.

However, this co-principality was not long lived, as in 1866 a coup d'état occurred where Cuza (Prince of both Wallachia and Moldavia) was exiled and replaced by Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. Following the coup, he was appointed as Prince Carol of Romania. Under his reign, Romania declared independence from the Ottoman Empire and in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, Romania was officially recognised as a country. In 1881, Romania's Principality Status was raised to a Kingdom, and on the 26 March 1881 Prince Carol was crowned King Carol I of Romania.

Under King Carol's rule from 1878, the Kingdom of Romania became a superpower in the region and was one of the most stable and progressive countries in the region until 1914.

Due to King Carol's German heritage, he kept close connections with Germany and kept set up a secret alliance with the country of Germany. This alliance was unknown to

the public, until he revealed it an emergency midnight council meeting after the First World War began. However, this alliance was unpopular so the King's decision was overruled and Romania decided to remain neutral. Carol I died on 10 October 1914 and the crown was passed onto King Ferdinand I of Romania, who was in favour of the Entente. On the 4 August 1916, the King signed the Political Treaty and Military Convention which meant that the Kingdom of Romania was now officially in the war, with the country being promised the Transylvania region in return.

After the war ended in 1918, a few months later in 1919 the Treaty of Saint Germain gave the Bukovina region to Romania and on the 1 December a vote was held to unite Transylvania into Romania. This day is now celebrated as a national holiday in Romania, Great Union Day. A few months after this, in 1920 the Treaty of Trianon was signed, establishing the new Romanian borders and giving Romania full control over the Transylvania region.

Figure 21: Map of Greater Romania following unifications



Now known as Greater Romania, the country was soon on the front covers of newspapers all around the globe as scandals emerged involving the royal family and democracy

was slowly deteriorating into a fascist dictatorship. In December of 1937, King Carol II met with Adolf Hitler and following discussions, on 10 February 1938 Carol II overthrew the government and began a fascist monarchy, with him in charge of all ministries within the country and government. However, this was short lived and less than a two years after democracy was reinstated.

In 1939, as Nazi Germany invaded the 2nd Polish Republic, the country entered the war in support of the Nazis. From the first day Romania was in a crisis, as Soviet troops entered the country and Romania suffered tremendous losses. Romania lost a large amount of their territory (especially in Transylvania) and people lived in poverty. Following the end of the war, many communist parties began to emerge, with the King being forced to abdicate in 1947, making way for a one-party communist dictatorship. The first communist leader of the people's republic was Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej from 1948 until his death in 1965. Within the first months, the one-party state was noticeable, with over 60000 political prisoners being detained for opposing the state. Following the death of Gheorghiu-Dej, Nicolae Ceausescu was elected President, with his ideology being clear: remain a communist country however be independent from the USSR. A few years later in 1968, the Warsaw Pact members invaded Czechoslovakia, apart from Romania which was the only country not to do so. Ceausescu made his voice clear that he was against this invasion, and gained the support of many Romanians.

Figure 22: Ceausescu speaking against the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia



However, the good times were short lived as in just 4 years between 1977-1981, Romania's debt went from \$3 billion to over \$10 billion (due to the President's spending habits such as destroying 1/5 of Bucharest to build the Palace of Parliament). Hatred towards Ceausescu began to grow as his autocratic ways were clear and those who opposed him disappeared.

Figure 23: Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, Elena



In 1989, under the orders of the President a genocide against the people of Timisoara was ordered, which resulted in over

1000 deaths. Following this, people began to protest across the whole country, with a mass rally in Bucharest on the 21st December 1989 whilst the President was addressing the nation turned violent. After days of unrest, the situation escalated and the Ceausescu's fled Bucharest in a helicopter, however they were eventually caught and trialed in court, however their fate was already destined. Minutes after the court hearing ended, the pair were executed for genocide on Christmas Day 1989.

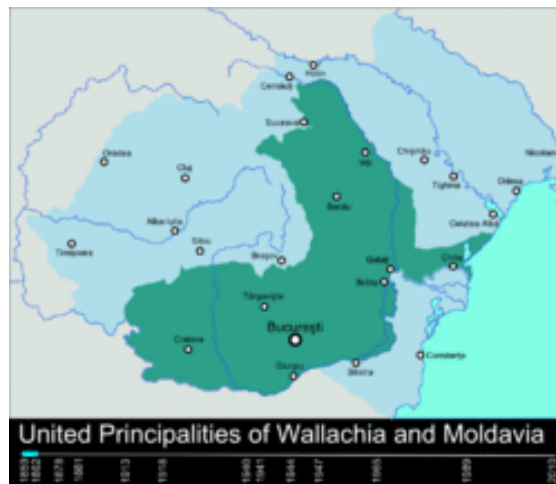
Figure 24: The Ceausescu couple fleeing Bucharest in a helicopter



After the fall of communism, the National Salvation Front came into power with Ion Iliescu becoming the President, and re-introducing a free market and democracy into the country. Since 1989, Romania has begun to improve its economy and is now a part of NATO and the EU.

Figure 25: Animated map showing the change of Romania's

territory through time



5. Culture of Romania

As per most Balkan nations, the culture of the Romanian people has not changed much, preserving traditions and ways that people acted and behaved hundreds of years ago. In

Romania, 84.8% of the population identify as Christian (mainly Orthodox), and this is a key part of the Romanian culture as religion plays a huge role - Romania is considered one of the most religious countries in the world.

Another important part of the Romanian culture is the food, which is something that many Romanians are proud of.

During my time in Romania, I had the pleasure of trying homemade traditional Romanian food.

Figure 26: Romania's National Dish: Sarmale (stuffed cabbage leaves filled with rice and minced meat)



Figure 27: Traditional Romanian Dessert: Papanasi
(Traditional fried donut made with soft cheese)



In my opinion, Romanian food is one of the best cuisines I have tried in my life, especially when it is homemade.

When I was in Bucharest, I had the opportunity to visit the Dimitri Gusti Village museum, which is a traditional Romanian village showing the traditional way of life experienced by Romanians.

Figure 28: Dimitri Gusti Village





Figure 29: Elisabeta Palace located in Dimitri Gusti (home of the former royal family)



6. City of Bucharest

The City of Bucharest is situated in the southeast of the

country, on the banks of the Dambovita River. As well as being the capital of Romania, it is also the largest city in the country, serving at the cultural, financial, entertainment and media hub of the country, having a significant influence in the whole Eastern and Balkan region of Europe. The City is split into 6 administrative sectors, with Sector 1 housing the government and law-making institutions. However, the most notable and well-known part of Bucharest is the historic old town, known for its French-like architecture (giving Bucharest the nickname Paris of the East), vibrant nightlife and history.

Within the city, you will find many tourist attractions including the Palace of Parliament, Herastrau Park, Dimitri Gusti village or the National Central Bank of Romania. I had the privilege of being granted access into the Central Bank and I got to see behind the scenes of how the countries main national bank operates and the hard work that many people don't know about. Originally founded by Vlad the Impaler in 1459, the city has had a rough history ranging from Ottoman invasions to revolutions however the citizens of Bucharest and Romania have preserved. Unfortunately, despite being the richest city in the country, Bucharest is still hit hard following the communist dictatorship. The city is crowded with communist-era flats, with most of these falling apart however people still live within these buildings as they don't have a choice. Poverty within the city is high, with many people living on the streets due to their financial situations or other reasons. When me and my father were inside of a taxi, we began to have a conversation with the driver who told us how to survive in the capital you need to earn at least £1600

a month (double the monthly average wage) which is why he and many of his friends have to work many jobs, meaning they barely get to spend time at home with family. The financial situation may be tough, however as always the people of Bucharest have persevered and that should not go unnoticed.

Another noticeable building within the city is the Romanian Athenaeum, one of the oldest and most well-known music venues in Europe. The building is most well-known for its connections to famous Romanian musician and composer George Enescu and its iconic architecture, with detail being a key focus when it was being built. I also got VIP access to this building, and was able to see behind-the-scenes of how the venue operates, and I also got to see a rehearsal involving a orchestra currently on world tour.

All in all, Bucharest is a beautiful city with a lot of potential and it is clear that change is happening, however nobody is sure when change will be noticeable.

Figure 30: The House of the Free Press, Bucharest



Figure 31: Arcul de Triumf

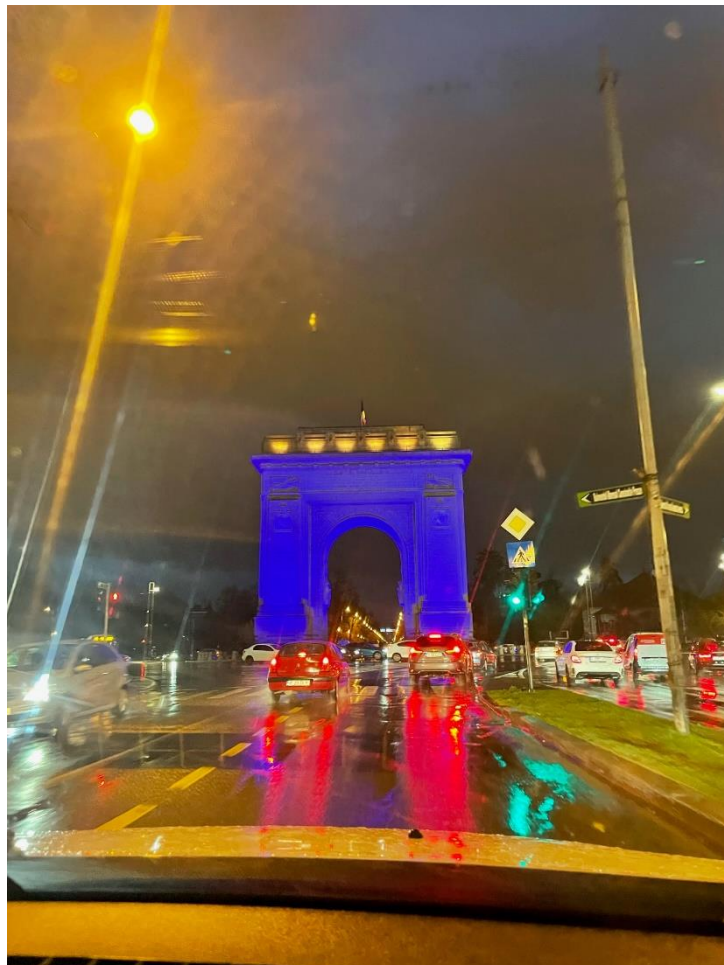


Figure 32: Example of an apartment building in Bucharest



Figure 33: Romanian Athenaeum





Figure 34: National Bank of Romania



7. City of Brasov

Located in the Transylvania region of Romania, the City of Brasov is considered to be the most famous and well-known city in the region. Surrounded by the Southern Carpathian Mountains, the city is located right in the heart of them.

During my visit in April, we were in the city when it was snowing, adding onto the cities beauty. Within the city, there are many attractions for offer, such as:

The Biserica Neagra (The Black Church) – a gothic church dating back to 1477, when it replaced an older church that previously stood on that site. The church gained its name after it got blackened by smoke from the 1689 great fire.

Mount Tampa – a mountain in the middle of the old town reaching a maximum altitude of 900m with the Hollywood-style “Brasov” sign near the summit. You can reach the sign by hiking or by taking the cable car.

Although not in the city, just outside in the village of Bran you will find the globally iconic Bran Castle – the castle associated with Dracula and Vlad the Impaler (although he had no connection with the castle whatsoever!) Once again, I had been gifted to receive a VIP tour of the castle for free, with access to every single room in the castle (including rooms not normally open to the public). The castle itself is located on the Transylvanian side of the Transylvania-Wallachia border, and was used as a fortress. The castle is well-known all around the world as Dracula’s Castle and the home of Vlad the Impaler (voivode of Wallachia) however it is very unlikely that Stoker knew about the castle when he wrote the book. The first castle was built in 1212 by the Teutonic Order as a

fortification at the entrance of a mountain pass, allowing them to control who came in. However, just 30 years later in 1242 this initial castle was destroyed by the Mongols. In the years following, a stone Bran was built by the Hungarians and was passed on from princes to kings to voivodes. However, all this time the castle was a strategic military fortification. The castle was located in Hungary, however after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 the land was given to Romania, and the castle became a Royal Residence. It became the favourite residence of Queen Marie, and her daughter Ileana converted it into a hospital during WW2, however it was seized by the soviets. The castle was then returned to the Hasburgs in 2006, and in 2009 it was opened to the public.

Also near the city of Brasov is the small village of Sinaia, home to the royal residence of Peles Castle. Built between 1873-1914, the castle acted as a holiday residence for the royals. Built out of locally sourced resources to prove that Romania is self-sufficient, the castle had advanced technology at the time, with things such as a closing roof. The castle was seized by communists however it got returned to the royals and is still used by the former royal family, however it is currently under lease to the government.

Figure 35: Brasov



Figure 36: Brasov sign on Mount Tampa

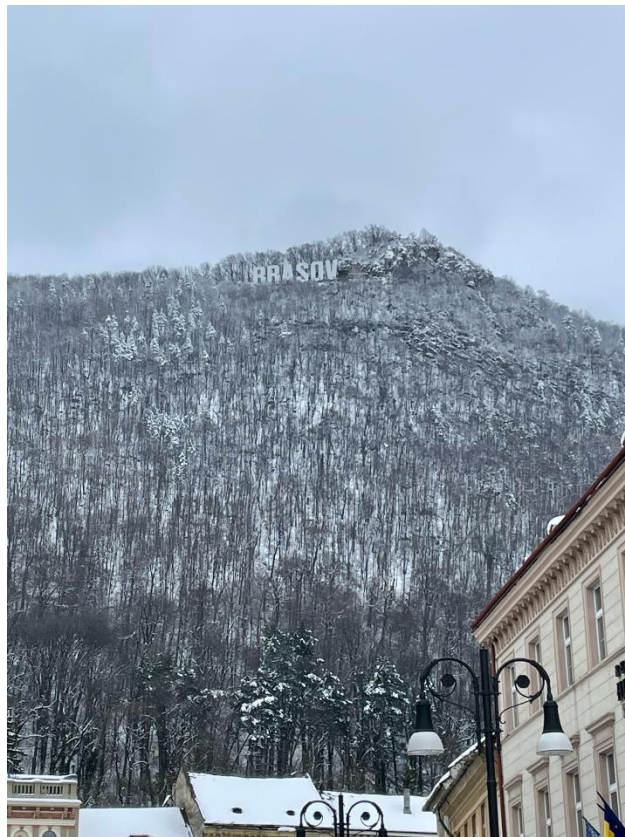




Figure 37: Black Church



Figure 38: Peles Castle



Figure 39: Bran Castle



Figure 40: Brasov at night



8. Conclusion

In conclusion, my trip to Romania has shown that despite stereotypes about a country, you should always see for yourself and I have seen that Romania is a country worth visiting. Yes, it is the poorest country in the EU however that should not put you away from visiting Europe's hidden gem.

I would like to thank the Henry Morris Memorial Trust for funding my trip.