

CULTURE & HISTORY

Seven Women Who Changed Romania and the World

Ana Aslan

Ana Aslan was a renowned Romanian biologist and physician who some say managed to defeat time, as she discovered the anti-aging effects of procaine, which she used to create the drugs Gerovital H3 and Aslvital. The brand she created, Gerovital, is still being used today.

Ana Aslan was born in 1897 in Braila. She decided she wanted to become a doctor in the 8th grade, a job that was not seen as suitable for women at the time. She worked in hospitals during her studies and, throughout the course of World War I, she cared for patients in military hospitals.

After graduating from the faculty, in 1922, she completed her doctoral thesis under the supervision of Daniel Danielopolu. She got her M.D. degree in cardiovascular physiology and then, as her work was focused on aging, she began experimenting with the effects that procaine had on arthritis, and this is how she discovered other beneficial effects of this drug. This led to the eventual invention of Gerovital H3. In 1976, a pharmacist named Elena Polovrageanu invented another drug named Aslavital, which was a similar drug to Gerovital aimed to delay the skin aging process.

Her research activity brought Ana Aslan many international distinctions.



Sofia Ionescu-Ogrezeanu

Sofia Ionescu-Ogrezeanu is another Romanian woman who made history in medicine. She was the first woman neurosurgeon in Romania and one of the world's first.

She was born in Falticeni in April 1920 and, supported by her mother, applied to medical school in 1939. A few years later, in the fall of 1943, she became an intern at Hospital Nr. 9 in Bucharest. It was 1944 when, during the first bombing of Bucharest, she performed a successful emergency brain surgery on an injured boy. She was a neurosurgeon for 47 years at Hospital Nr. 9, being part of the first neurological team in Romania, which helped develop this part of medicine in the country.



Queen Marie of Romania

Queen Marie was one of the greatest personalities in Romania's history.

She was born on October 29, 1875, in Eastwell Manor, a property adjoined to the town of Ashford. Her parents were Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh (later Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha), and Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna of Russia. She married King Ferdinand I, who ruled Romania from October 1914 until 1927, a period which included the First World War and Romania's Unification on December 1, 1918.

Over time, she used her diplomatic talents to strengthen ties between Romania and England. At the beginning of World War I, she advocated for Romania's entry into the war alongside the Entente, the alliance that pledged to support Romania's claims for the unification of Transylvania and Bukovina to the Old Kingdom of Romania. During the war, she worked as a nurse, visiting the front and managing the field hospitals.

Once the war ended, she also played an important role in the recognition of the newly united Romanian state, using all her skills and charms to advance the Unionist cause during the Paris Peace negotiations.



Florica Bagdasar

Florica Bagdasar was a physician but she was also the first woman minister in Romania. She headed the Ministry of Health between 1946 and 1948.

Florica Bagdasar was born in a Macedonian-Romanian family, in Bitolia/Monastir in Macedonia. She attended school in Romania and graduated from the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine in 1925. After

further work, she received her doctor's diploma in medicine and surgery and the right to practice.

She specialized in psychiatry, and her work was in the field of child neuro-psychiatric and educational assistance. She contributed to the first local spelling book, a mathematics textbook, and the establishment of the Bucharest Mental Hygiene Institute.

She became a minister after the death of her husband, who was holding the same post. The big challenges of her mandate were the typhus epidemics in Moldova and malaria in Dobrogea.



Ecaterina Teodoroiu

A heroine of Romania, Ecaterina Teodoroiu fought and died in World War I.

Born in the village of Vadeni (nowadays a neighborhood of the city of Targu Jiu) in 1894, Ecaterina Teodoroiu wanted to become a teacher but the Romanian Kingdom entered World War I on the Allied side and she started working as a nurse. Later, after the death of her brother Nicolae, who died on the front, she

replaced him and became a soldier. It was an unusual decision for a woman at the time but she proved her worthiness as a soldier. She died fighting, during the battles in Marasesti, being hit by a machine gun.



Sarmiza Bilcescu

Sarmiza Bilcescu was yet another woman who “broke” the rules of her time. Born in 1867, she attended law school in Paris and was the first European woman ever to obtain a license and a Ph.D. in Law from the University of Paris. Moreover, she was also Europe’s first woman attorney, after being admitted to the bar association in Ilfov County in 1891. However, she never practiced and the next woman to apply for a Romanian bar association (which happened to be the same bar in Ilfov County) was not accepted.

Nevertheless, Bilcescu remained active in feminist circles and was among the founding members of the Society of Romanian Young Ladies, which was trying to fight for a higher level of education among women.



Elisa Leonida Zamfirescu

Another Romanian woman who made history is Elisa Leonida Zamfirescu, one of the world's first female engineers. But things were not easy for her. For example, she wanted to study at the School of Bridges and Roads in Bucharest after graduating from high school but was rejected due to her gender. She thus went to study in Germany and graduated in 1912 with a degree in engineering.

Back in Romania, she worked at the Geological Institute of Romania but, during World War I, she joined the Red Cross and managed a hospital in Marasesti. She returned to Bucharest after the war, where she headed several geology laboratories and participated in various field studies, including some that identified new resources of coal, shale, natural gas, chromium, bauxite, and copper. She also advocated for international disarmament.



Sources: Wikipedia, Bnr. ro, Europafm. ro, Romaniancentenary.org, Historia. ro, Blogs.loc.gov, Independent.co.uk, Gandul.info, Romania-insider.com

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