

*Marianna*

MARIANNA V. VARDINOYANNIS  
HER LIFE AND WORK

MARIANNA B. ΒΑΡΔΙΝΟΓΙΑΝΝΗ  
Η ΖΩΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΕΡΓΟ ΤΗΣ



# Love

*If I speak with the languages of men and of angels, but don't have love, I have become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but don't have love, I am nothing. If I dole out all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but don't have love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient and is kind; love doesn't envy. Love doesn't brag, is not proud, doesn't behave itself inappropriately, doesn't seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will be done away with. Where there are various languages, they will cease. Where there is knowledge, it will be done away with. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is complete has come, then that which is partial will be done away with. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child. Now that I have become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I was also fully known. But now faith, hope, and love remain -- these three. The greatest of these is love.*

**Paul, 1 Corinthians 13**

*"I always return to this text at difficult moments in my life. When I feel that hope is becoming lost. Let's we forget, love teaches. So let us teach it, first of all to our children and our country's young generation. With understanding, hugs and caresses, but also through a conscious everyday stance that will serve as an example, with empathy, giving and solidarity our main priority. Let LOVE be our legacy for Tomorrow."*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Yapiarra". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, sweeping initial 'Y'.

# Marianna: Her life

It may seem like a fairytale, but it isn't. In reality, the life of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis is the story of a woman who had to fight for her dreams, and who fought even harder for those around her. Her vision was to create a better world for all, guided by her values and principles and a heart full of love for humanity and her homeland, Greece. Never giving up, she completed an immense project of charity and solidarity, becoming a true legend in the hearts and minds of people in Greece and beyond.





*A young Marianna V. Vardinoyannis in Ermioni.*



*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis' family home in Ermioni.*

## Ermioni: Marianna's "small country"

**M**arianna V. Vardinoyannis was born and raised in Ermioni, her sunny "small country" as she liked to call the small, picturesque seaside village in the region of Argolis where she started out. From there, she went on to conquer the world with her hard work and compelling personality.

A traditional family with principles, morals and values, they were particularly close: Marianna's businessman father, Georgios Bournakis, her mother

Evangelia and her sister Eleftheria. In the family home, a lovely neoclassical house in Ermioni, Marianna grew up surrounded by love and warmth, learning that "true happiness comes from contributing, the ability to give, because that is the only way your heart will feel full".

Describing her childhood, Marianna states: "I was a happy child and I owe that to my parents, who taught me to believe in people and fight for what I think is right and just. My soul is guided by this childhood

*Flag-bearer at a  
school parade.*

happiness; it is my peace of mind.”

Filled with happy memories, Marianna’s childhood was spent by Ermioni’s deep-blue seashore and in the small pine grove at Bisti, ideal for carefree strolls and childhood games, which crystallized in her soul as a love for nature and the environment. Meanwhile, the Ermioni Elementary School, with its courtyard full of antiquities, became a treasure-trove for the young girl who’s thirst for knowledge taught her to respect history, to recognize culture and love archaeology.

Her early years in Ermioni left an indelible mark on her heart. Ermioni was always her personal refuge. Until the end of her life, she was always going back there, supporting her fellow villagers and offering the young people of the area infrastructure and scholarships towards a brighter future. The “Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Cultural Prize” that she established, with the support of her entire family, was just the first in a series of dreams she had for her home town.

Following her mother Evangelia’s example, who discretely and without fanfare helped those in need, Marianna learned from a young age what it means to give selflessly, to stand in solidarity with others, to support the weakest. Principles and values became her inspiration and compass, guiding her steps throughout the rest of her life. “The strongest memory I have from those days is the image of my mother discretely opening our front door at night, going out to leave a basket of food for those families she knew needed it most, without anyone ever seeing her. This memory of selflessness and my mother’s dictum that ‘we must always share the blessings God has given us’ impressed themselves on my young soul and shaped my character. I believe they determined the course of the rest of my life.”

Yet Marianna’s childhood was not without its struggles. The Civil War forced her family to flee to Piraeus, where they took refuge for a while. This was difficult for her family, but it made Marianna stronger and taught her to fight for her ideals and beliefs, no matter the cost.





*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis as a university student in the US.*



*Vardis and Marianna Vardinoyannis forever united, together through life's ups and downs.*



## Pireaus and meeting Vardis

For their time, Marianna's parents were open-minded and forward-thinking people, and firmly believed in the value of education. After excelling at primary school, where she was first in all her classes and selected as flag-bearer in the school parades, Marianna, urged by her mother, went to Piraeus to continue her schooling and start lessons in English and French.

While in Piraeus, family friends introduced her to Vardis J. Vardinoyannis, her first and only love. Descended from a prominent Cretan family, he was a young officer in the Navy at the time. The encounter changed the course of both of their lives; from the very first glance it felt as if their lives had been eternally joined.

Immediately after graduation, Marianna left for the US to study Economics at Colorado while living with relatives, but they never stopped thinking of each other. They corresponded almost daily, and when Vardis was assigned to Hawaii to take delivery of a naval warship, Marianna travelled there to meet him.

They married and began their life together in a small apartment in the Kypseli neighborhood of Athens, a young couple in love, possessing only their dreams: he, an officer in the Navy, and she, working as a journalist for the radio station at the American military base at Elliniko to support their family. This is a side of Marianna's story that not many people know, but for her it was important; it offered her many professional opportunities, including her first encounter with Melina Mercouri, who singled her out right away. Thus began a friendship that lasted a lifetime.

As Marianna herself tells it, "I met my husband Vardis at a very young age. I was still a schoolgirl and he was an officer of the Navy. We married several years later, but from the first moment we both felt that our lives would share a common path. We started our family in a small apartment. Naturally at the time I could not imagine all that happened later, which indeed changed the outer image of our lives, but never its substance. The raising of our five children, both of us constantly by their side, Vardis' exile to Amorgos during the Dictatorship...Innumerable moments of beauty, but also difficulties, as in every human life."



*From top to bottom:  
From the early years of their relationship.*

*Vardis and Marianna at their engagement with the family patriarch Ioannis Vardinoyannis and Vardis' brother, Sifis.*

*At their wedding, which took place at Saint Dionysius the Areopagite in Kolonaki.*

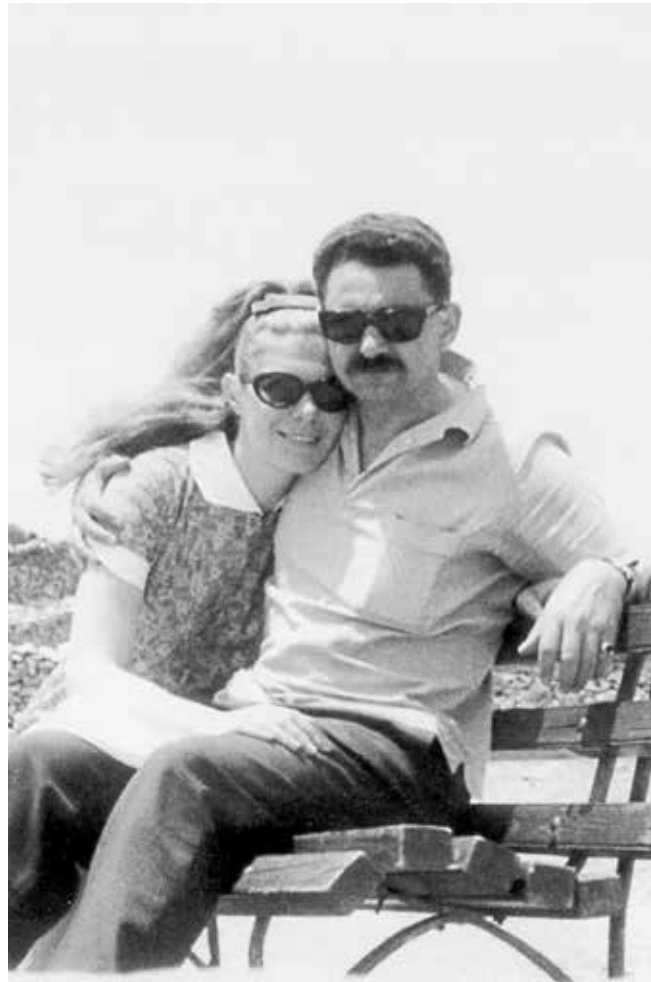
## Family, her most precious treasure

Vardis and Marianna had five children: Giannis, Christianna, Yorgos, Nikos and Vardianna. For Marianna, family was the center of life, her “most precious treasure”. A devoted mother and wife, she was always present for her children growing up, through each moment of joy or sorrow, at Vardis’ side, taking care of all of the details of family life with love, attention, and worry. Her wide open embrace offered protection; it gave, it inspired, comforted and strengthened.

“My life’s only dream was to have a happy family and I feel truly grateful and blessed that God granted me this precious gift. My husband Vardis and our children have always been my support and the source of my inspiration” she said of her family.



*Vardis and Marianna opened their arms to Greece, leaving an enormous legacy of social work.*



*Marianna followed Vardis into exile on Amorgos during the dictatorship. Conditions there were difficult, but they had the love and support of the island's residents.*

## Vardis in exile on Amorgos

A close family sticks together through thick and thin. When the Regime of the Colonels took control on 21 April 1967, Vardis J. Vardinoyannis and other naval officers who objected to the overthrow of democracy were exiled to the then isolated island of Amorgos. Without hesitation, Marianna followed him.

The young couple spent an entire year on Amorgos, under very difficult conditions. "My memories of the period of Vardis' exile on Amorgos are intense. We already had three children – the youngest still a newborn. My heart was torn in two: on the one hand my husband whom I adored, and on the other my children, the center of my universe. Taking a small boat in the middle of

winter, I went to Amorgos with my two older children, Giannis and Christianna. We lived in a house with no electricity, but were surrounded by the love and support of the island's residents. I shall never forget them... Every day, I would find something on the windowsill: a bottle of milk, two eggs, warm bread... Their love was balm to our souls..." she recalls, describing that period of period of her life. According to her husband Vardis, when she first arrived on the island by caique, she was met by all the women of the island. Exile on Amorgos changed her forever. For no matter how her potential increased, how much her fame and glory grew, she always remained genuine and grounded in real life.

## Vardis and Marianna open their arms to Greece

**A**fter the restoration of democracy in Greece and the untimely death of his oldest brother Nikos, Vardis J. Vardinoyannis took charge of the family enterprises. Through hard work, vision, principles and ethos, he evolved into one of the world's greatest businessmen, with Marianna forever by his side.

The family's business holdings grew enormously, and gradually Vardis and Marianna established themselves in Greece and abroad. They developed collaborations and friendly ties with international leaders, personalities, businesspeople, scientists, and luminaries from the world of art and culture.

Yet they never forgot their roots, and the principles with which they began their shared life. Individually and together, they are characterized by ethos, integrity, love of country, compassion, social solidarity and giving.

Together, guided by their love for their country and their fellow citizens, they offered tremendous social and charitable works that reach beyond the borders of Greece, placing them among the most significant national benefactors.

*Vardis and Marianna at the  
Zappeion Megaron in  
celebration of the 30th  
anniversary of the ELPIDA  
Association of Friends of  
Children with cancer (June  
2019).*









## A pioneer, Marianna forges new paths

**A**t the same time, drawing on her inexhaustible strength and inspired by motherhood, Marianna charts her own course, forging new paths in Greece and the world. Her children grown, she begins to take action personally. Using her international recognition and clout, Marianna begins her journey.

A pioneer envisioning a better world, Marianna founds “ELPIDA Association of Friends of Children with cancer” in 1990 to support children with cancer and their families. At a time when there is absolutely no infrastructure in Greece to deal with childhood cancer, Marianna and ELPIDA utterly change the country’s social solidarity landscape, putting Greece on the frontlines of the battle against cancer. The first oncological hospital in the country, created by ELPIDA, develops into a Center of Excellence and a model for Europe. Marianna’s vision to create a “Map of Peace and Hope” focused on health takes on flesh and bones through the creation of a collaborative network of the largest oncological hospitals around the world, aiming for health without borders for all the world’s children. At the same time, a five-story Guest House built by ELPIDA provides housing for the families of hospitalized children from around the country, acting as a second home for their parents and offering a huge, comforting embrace full of

support and love. Marianna’s interests also extend to other fields, beyond the right to health. In 1997 she founds the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation, through which she implements extensive humanitarian, educational and cultural projects on a global scale. Thanks to Marianna, the largest modern humanitarian movement in Greece launches in 2012, with more than 165,000 young people signing up to become bone marrow donors through the “Orama Elpidas – Vision of Hope Association”, to save a fellow person when needed.

The actions and reputation of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis quickly spread beyond the borders of Greece. In 1999, UNESCO, the largest United Nations organization for culture, education and science, declares her a Goodwill Ambassador, the only Greek citizen to have received this title.

Her humanitarian work, her struggle for human rights and contribution to creating a better world is internationally recognized and she is awarded highest international distinctions, such as: Officer of the Légion d’Honneur of the French Republic (2015); Grand Cross of the Order of Beneficence of the Hellenic Republic (2020); and the Nelson Mandela Prize of the United Nations (2020), the highest honor awarded by the UN for humanitarian work.

*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis opened her arms to all children with cancer. Always present at the Children’s Oncology Unit, she knew each child by name.*





## Marianna: An eternal legacy of love

**T**hroughout her life, and in parallel with her inexhaustable social activism, Marianna remained a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother, having been blessed to see her five children grow up and create families of their own, with 13 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

“I am very proud to be a grandmother and very proud of each of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I also feel lucky to have started life with Vardis very young, and God saw fit to give us many years to enjoy this role, the role of grandfather and grandmother. As a grandmother I am how I was as a mother: present! Always by their side! It is a true blessing to watch your grandchildren grow up and become useful and aware individuals. I am moved when they take the initiative and chart their own course in life, with dreams and hope,” she confessed.

Her family, her children and grandchildren, the love that she generously gave throughout the course of her life, alongside her immense humanitarian work, are this great Greek woman’s most significant legacy: an eternal legacy of love and giving.

*Marianna was active in all large social issues, such as the refugee crisis. While visiting the Kara Tepe and Moria refugee camps on Lesbos, she offered her support to refugee children through her Foundation’s We Care Program (April 2016).*



# ELPIDA AND ORAMA ELPIDAS – VISION OF HOPE

Her five children grown, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, still brimming with maternal love, began to flesh out her personal vision for a better world, one in which healthcare and cutting-edge treatments are free and accessible to all. The “ELPIDA Association of Friends of Children with cancer” founded by Marianna became a beacon of solidarity, a great landmark in the history of humanitarianism in Greece. With healthcare infrastructure and a complete support network for children with cancer and their families, it gave life to thousands of children and earned international recognition for its important contribution to the treatment of childhood cancers.

*In the courtyard of the Children's  
Oncology Unit, which the State named  
“Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA”  
Children's Oncology Unit in recognition  
of her work.*

## Hope (Elpida) is born

In the 1990s, Greece had no infrastructure for dealing with childhood cancer. Although around 300 children a year suffered from neoplastic conditions, there was virtually no possibility of treatment within the country, especially if it involved a bone marrow transplant. Most bone marrow transplants took place in the US, but were extremely expensive: \$500,000. As a result, many children whose families could not afford it were lost, and the country's own infrastructure was incapable of treating an increasing number of children with cancer.

In May 1990, aware of the great lack of treatment options for children with cancer in Greece, but unwilling to condemn these children to their fate, a group of dynamic women rallied around Marianna V. Vardinoyannis and established the “ELPIDA Association of Friends of Children with cancer”. The Articles of Incorporation were signed by 48 notable, sensitive women who shared the vision of standing by children with cancer and their families.

Explaining the beginnings of the Association, Marianna recalls: “I remember quite well the moment that the wife of the American ambassador to Greece, Mrs. Estelle Sotirchos, spoke to me about the visa applications flooding the American embassy by families of children seeking to travel to the US for treatment. ‘We must do something for these children’ I thought. I was a young mother at the time and I could really understand the desperation of the parents trying to save their child and having to go abroad to do so. And then came Will. Determination. Unity. Hope. That we shared many times over. One inspired the other. I feel as if we didn’t have a choice. The decision to stand by these children and their families was obvious from the start.”

From the outset, ELPIDA was pioneering, changing the Greek social status quo. It initiated an awareness campaign and managed to do the impossible, to make the entire society of Greece embrace a subject that had been taboo up until that point: childhood cancer. At the same time, it secured the necessary funds in record time to create a Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, mobilizing the most prominent personalities and international artists who put on concerts to raise money for its foundation. The medical personnel that would run the Unit were sent to the US to the Dana Farber Institute in Boston and to Great Britain to the Royal Free Hospital and Bristol Children’s Hospital for retraining,

*At the ELPIDA Guest House, which has served as a second home to more than 2000 families of children with cancer, offering them undivided support and comfort throughout the child’s treatment.*





*Above: In the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, the ELPIDA Association's first large project, with doctors Stelios Grafakos, Vasiliki Kitra and Evgenios Gousetis.*

*Below: At the inauguration of the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit, with Manolis Papasavvas, Director of both Agia Sophia and P. and A. Kyriakou Children's Hospitals, former President of the Hellenic Republic Karolos Papoulias, and the then Minister of Health, Andreas Loverdos (October 2010).*

to bring their expertise on the latest treatment and bone marrow transplant methods back to Greece. Theory was instantly put into practice! In a novel take on humanitarian activism, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis was not merely the benefactor of ELPIDA, but remained an active part of the endeavor – it was not a financial donation but her life's work, her personal responsibility.

As she herself admitted, “one of the fundamental principles of my life has always been to stand by people. I profoundly believe that it is much more important to stick by those who are having a hard time and support them with an embrace, a smile or a heartfelt conversation, rather than offering impersonal financial support. I reject the term ‘charity’ because it contains a measure of conceit. A real ‘friend’ is not faceless, not superior, but is by your side. That is why I believe in the concept of social solidarity. To be there for the person who needs you, feel his problem, open your arms to him. That is the path I chose early in life, ever since I decided that I wanted to be ‘present’ in life.”

Thanks to her insistence, hard work and devotion to the sacred aim of saving children with cancer, Marianna along with the entire ELPIDA family managed to overcome all obstacles, and in just two years inaugurated the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit within Agia Sophia General Children's Hospital in September 1992. A few months later, the first pediatric bone marrow transplant was performed in Greece. It was a giant leap in the country's medical field, and there was finally “elpida” (hope) in the hearts of hundreds of families.

“I remember the evening before the first transplant operation. I couldn't sleep at all, I was so anxious. I remember the trembling hands of Professor Stelios Grafakos, a young doctor at the time, before he entered the surgery. ‘I want you by my side’ he said. ‘But I'm not a doctor’ I answered. Even so, I put on green medical scrubs and stayed in the operating theater watching every moment of the process. And afterwards I sat with the parents, counting with them every minute of agony while they waited to hear that everything had gone well. And I will certainly never forget the parents' tears of joy and embrace when their child was released from hospital and returned home, healthy. What words can describe that moment?” Marianna said later in an interview. Anyone who knew her in person knows that the moment the child returned home cured was for her the ultimate reward.





*Above: Laying the foundation stone of the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit, with the then Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Dimitris Avramopoulos, former President of the Hellenic Republic Karolos Papoulias, and late Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens and All Greece (April 2007).*

*Below: Together, former Health Minister Theodoros Kotsonis, former Mayor of Athens Dimitris Avramopoulos, Minister Ioannis Varvitsiotis, and Marianna V. Vardinoyannis inaugurate the ELPIDA Guest House (1999).*





## The life of even a single child is worth fighting for

**T**he response generated by ELPIDA was momentous, fueled by characteristics of Marianna's personality and activism: her undying and sincere love for children, her special sensitivity and compassion for every mother who worries at a sick child's bedside, the strength of her soul capable of overcoming all obstacles, her conscious decision to be present at all large or small moments in the Unit or for the children and the doctors, and her unique ability to bring people together from the entire spectrum of society – from the world of science, politics, arts, sports, journalism, business – and inspire them to serve a common purpose. For the first time, Greek society as a whole believed in something, embraced the work, made it personal. And this is because Marianna led and inspired.

"Because the life of even a single child is worth fighting for." With this phrase as her compass and guide, Marianna fought tirelessly, constantly taking new steps forward and raising the bar for ELPIDA as

well as for herself.

The next endeavor was a five-story Guest House built by ELPIDA to give families from the countryside a "second home and comforting embrace" for the duration of their child's hospitalization. An entire Social Service was created around the guest house, assisting families over time to regain their footing even after their child had been cured.

In Marianna's own words, the inspiration to create the ELPIDA guest house came in a single moment. "It was Christmas Eve and snowing. We had just finished creating the first pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Unit and the first transplants began to take place. It was a wintery evening and I was leaving the hospital. At the exit, I saw the parents of a child sitting on a bench. I asked if they needed anything. They didn't answer. They just bowed their heads. 'We're not from Athens' whispered the father eventually, but couldn't say more out of dignity. I held the frozen hands of the mother in my own, and thus our Guest House was born, the heart of ELPIDA, which has housed more

*Left: At the entrance to the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit, standing in front of the handwritten inscription dedicating it to the people of Greece.*

*Right: Marianna V. Vardinoyannis with young Stella, a child healed through ELPIDA, receiving an honorary distinction from Agia Sophia Children's Hospital on the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit.*



than 2000 families by now. We don't just house children, we house entire families. We become family: a family that sticks together in joy and sadness. A family that stands by the side of its children and supports them in their studies, in finding work."

Of course ELPIDA did not stop there. In 2010, thanks to ELPIDA and its donation, Greece acquired its first and only pediatric oncology hospital, today a Center of Excellence and a model for Europe. The Greek State, in recognition of the contribution by Marianna and the ELPIDA Association to this monumental, 138-bed hospital, named it the "Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA" Children's Oncology Unit and integrated it into the National Health System. Marianna's vision for equal access to healthcare for all Greek children with cancer has become a reality!

Indeed, these opportunities surpass the borders of Greece. Inventing a health diplomacy, Marianna drew on her personal contacts and allegiances with international figures to create a Twinning Program linking the hospital with the most advanced pediatric

oncology centers around the world, so that the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit remains on the cutting edge. At her urging, the Unit has signed agreements for cooperation and scientific exchanges with hospitals in Turkey, Canada, Azerbaijan, Serbia, Israel, US, the Netherlands, Cyprus, Georgia, Albania, China and Egypt.

At the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit, three out of four children were cured. But Marianna's heart could not stand to lose a single child, so she proceeded to try the impossible. She brought to Greece and the ELPIDA hospital the latest, most advanced customized treatments performed at just a few hospitals around the world, creating the innovative Center for Cell and Gene Therapy for children and adolescents, which was approved by the National Organization for Medicines. So far, it has completed 19 successful cellular treatments, considered the most advanced cancer treatment available, analogous with those undertaken at the largest hospitals abroad.



*With H.M. Queen Rania of Jordan during the latter's visit to the ELPIDA Guest House.*



*With the First Lady of France, Brigitte Macron, during the latter's visit to the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit (September 2021).*



*Above: With T.M. King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of The Netherlands during their visit to the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit (November 2022).*



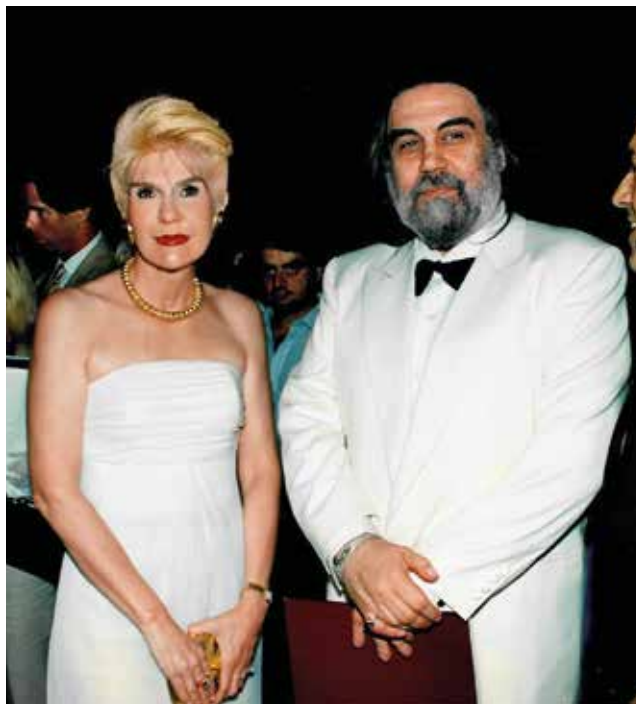
*With Prince Albert of Monaco at the philanthropic football match between the Star Team for Children and the Nazionale Piloti FI Drivers in Monaco. The match was dedicated to ORAMA ELPIDAS - VISION OF HOPE (May 2019).*



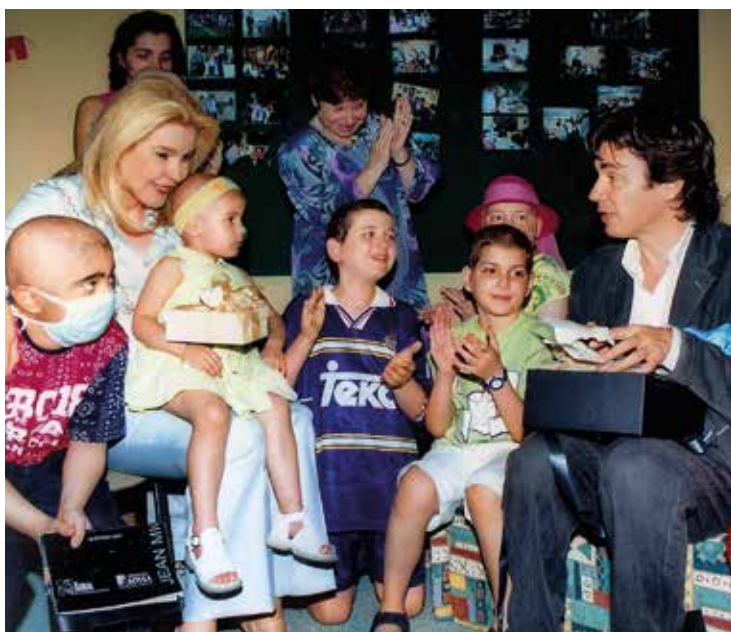
*Right: With H.M. Queen Silvia of Sweden during the latter's visit to the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit created by ELPIDA. Queen Silvia and Marianna also worked together on the Mentor International Foundation against youth drugs, active in more than 80 countries around the world.*



With legendary tenor Luciano Pavarotti, who dedicated his farewell concert, "Pavarotti Farewell Tour: A Night to Remember" at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in 2004, to ELPIDA.



With Vangelis, the famous Greek musician and composer, who gave a concert at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in support of the ELPIDA Association in 1993: "Vangelis Papathanasiou for ELPIDA".



Above: With her dear friend, international artist and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Jean-Michel Jarre, during his visit to the ELPIDA Guest House.

Below: With the famous tenor Andrea Bocelli in June 2003 at the concert he gave in support of ELPIDA at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus. With them is Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, wife of the late Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.



With Vanessa Mae, the world-renowned violinist, with the Acropolis in the background. Vanessa Mae gave a magnificent concert in support of the ELPIDA Association at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in 2000 under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture.



*With Alkistis Protopsalti, an Artist for ELPIDA and pianist Thomas Kontogeorgis at their concert for the children of the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit (May 2019).*



*Vardis and Marianna Vardinoyannis with George J. Vardinoyannis and Giannis Parios at a musical dinner to support the aims of the ELPIDA Association (February 2018).*



*With George Dalaras and Marinella, an Artist for ELPIDA, at a concert held to support the aims of the ELPIDA Association at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in 2006.*



*With Maria Farantouri, a longtime supporter of the ELPIDA Association.*



*With Artist for ELPIDA Michalis Hatzigiannis at the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit in June 2019.*



*With Marinella, an Artist for ELPIDA, at the concert "O Mythos (the Myth)" in support of the ELPIDA Association at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (February 2020).*



*With Artist for ELPIDA Antonis Remos at the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit (November 2017).*



*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis and Mikis Theodorakis enjoyed a close friendship. The eminent Greek composer was a longtime supporter of ELPIDA, giving many concerts for children with cancer.*



*The internationally-acclaimed Greek artist Nana Mouskouri shared a lifelong friendship with Marianna V. Vardinoyannis. An Artist for ELPIDA, she has given concerts to support the Association.*



*With Natassa Theodoridou, an Artist for ELPIDA, at the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit (June 2018).*



*With Sakis Rouvas, Messenger of ELPIDA, who has been a longtime supporter of the ELPIDA Association and the ORAMA ELPIDAS - VISION OF HOPE campaign.*



*With Stefanos Korkolis and Sofia Manousaki at the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit at an event in support of ORAMA ELPIDAS - VISION OF HOPE (October 2016).*

## ORAMA ELPIDAS – VISION OF HOPE becomes the largest Humanitarian movement

**M**arianna V. Vardinoyannis launched a new initiative in 2012, founding the ORAMA ELPIDAS – VISION OF HOPE Association after finding that Greece ranks among the lowest countries in the world in numbers of bone marrow donors, even though the country has hundreds of adults and children searching for compatible donors for life-saving bone marrow transplants.

“We are all committed to continuing the fight until there is not a single person without hope of life. We want you all by our side. Because united, we can achieve anything,” she stated when ORAMA ELPIDAS – VISION OF HOPE was taking its first steps. Over the next twelve years, thanks to her determination and untiring efforts, and thanks to the devotion of the staff of ORAMA ELPIDAS who spread over the entire country, the Bone Marrow Donor Registry is now a true humanitarian movement, with more than 165,000 donors, among whom nearly 400 have been found compatible and have given the hope of life to children and adults in Greece and abroad.

“The stories told by our compatible donors demonstrate the depth of humanism and solidarity in our society. Shall I tell the story of a father from Crete? As his wife was giving birth to their child, he was notified that a compatible patient had been found. He didn’t hesitate and was on the next flight, donating bone marrow for a child in need. And you know what he told us afterwards? ‘Today I had two children. The one that my wife gave birth to and the one we saved.’ Shall I speak of the mother from Tinos? With four children of her own, she wasted no time in donating bone marrow. When I asked her where she found such strength, she answered matter-of-factly: ‘I did what was necessary. I don’t distinguish between the child that was saved and my own.’ These stories and images give me hope. That there is still good in our society, it is in all of us. And that it only takes a small spark, a little nudge to rise to the surface,” Marianna said in 2019.



*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, founder of the ELPIDA Association and ORAMA ELPIDAS – VISION OF HOPE, with her daughter and current president of ELPIDA and ORAMA ELPIDAS – VISION OF HOPE, Christianna V. Vardinoyannis, who continues the important work of both organizations in cooperation with the invaluable support of their Board of Directors, members and staff.*



ORAMA ELPIDAS – VISION OF HOPE Board of Directors Vice President Manolis Papasavvas, President Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, General Secretary Ino Konstantopoulou and Scientific Director Stelios Grafakos, also a member of the board.

## The lasting legacy of ELPIDA

Immediately following Marianna's passing in 2023, there was an impressive outpouring of support and recognition for the work of ELPIDA from around the world, at once honoring her memory and recognizing her vision for humanitarian giving that she faithfully served throughout her life. The ELPIDA Association is now entering its fourth decade of uninterrupted action for children with cancer and their families. Guided by the principles and visions instilled by Marianna and with its new president, Christianna V. Vardinoyannis, with the invaluable support of Board of Directors, ELPIDA proceeds with determination towards new aims, continuing to be at the forefront with new actions, in allegiance with the Greek people.

ORAMA ELPIDAS – VISION OF HOPE continues to enroll new bone marrow donors and is expanding its network of cooperating centers and allies throughout Greece. Just over the past year, more than 100 new compatible donors gave new life and hope to an equal number of patients. The Marianna V. Vardinoyannis – ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit continues its mission, now as a Center of Excellence, with the Association funding the

acquisition of new equipment, the introduction of cutting-edge treatments, and the retraining of medical and nursing staff abroad, so that it continues to provide free services to young patients from Greece and abroad without waiting lists. The thousands of children's lives saved, the scientific achievements, and modern infrastructure speak for themselves. The mark left by Marianna through ELPIDA continues to strengthen and grow. For even though she herself is no more, the work she envisioned has blossomed and continues to grow, offering love and hope.

"I view the future of ELPIDA with optimism. Because the children themselves make us dream of a world without borders regarding health. A world where knowledge is shared and the rights to health apply to every child. A world where cancer can be beaten. All of us at ELPIDA will fight with all our might for this. With the strength that the children themselves give us. My dream is that someday this hospital will house not a single sick child, and will be turned into a vast playground." Delivered by Marianna at the 30th anniversary of the Association, these words serve as ELPIDA's eternal compass of love and giving.

# ELPIDA in numbers

*At the initiative of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, the ELPIDA Association has offered a tremendous body of work to Greek society since 1990:*

- The first and only Bone Marrow Transplant Unit for children in the country, with more than 1480 transplants having been performed so far. The Unit, a donation of Marianna and Vardis J. Vardinoyannis, occupies the third floor of the Children's Oncology Unit, with 18 beds in an area covering 1142 square meters.
- The Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit, the first and only pediatric oncology hospital in Greece, was created by the ELPIDA Association and donated to the Greek State in 2010, which named it in honor of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis and ELPIDA. The hospital complex comprises five buildings with a capacity of 138 beds, and is one of Europe's most modern hospitals. More than 46,276 patients have been admitted to the hospital to date, with more than 205,224 outpatient treatments. All hospitalizations are free of charge and there is no waiting list, while children from many Balkan and Mediterranean countries are also treated.
- The ELPIDA Guest House opened in 1999. Its aim is to meet the housing needs of children and their families who come from the countryside or abroad for the duration of their treatment. The Guest House, located near the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis- ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit, has 30 double rooms that become a second home for the children and their families. They are provided with specially trained social workers and psychologists for a holistic support network, and the Guest House also contains a school. Housing is available for as long as treatment is necessary, with more than 2000 families having been housed in the ELPIDA Guest House so far.
- With the aim of creating a Map of Peace and Hope for a health without borders, ELPIDA forges collaborations and twinning programs with the largest hospitals around the world.
- Through the ELPIDA Social Fund, the Association continues to support children and their families even after treatment is complete. ELPIDA becomes a second family supporting its children through each new stage, assisting with the family's daily expenses immediately following treatment, supporting continuing education and first career moves. At the same time, through the Social Fund, ELPIDA supports Greek society where needed, and is also present during large international humanitarian crises such as war and natural disasters.
- The ORAMA ELPIDAS – VISION OF HOPE Association, with 165,000 enrolled bone marrow donors. So far, more than 400 have been found compatible.
- In 2015, a new committee – ELPIDA Youth – was created by the younger members of the Association, headed by Marianna Lemos, with its aim to raise awareness and mobilize young people regarding the psychological care of children suffering from neoplastic conditions. Constantly active, the renovation of the ELPIDA Guest House and the organization of summer camps for recovered children are among its most important contributions.
- A short while later, the group ELPIDA Junior was created. The future of the Association, it is made up of school children who support ELPIDA.

*The ELPIDA Guest House was inaugurated in 1999. Its aim is to provide housing for children and their families who travel from the countryside or outside Greece for treatment. Becoming their second home, the hostel's 30 double rooms are available for the duration of treatment. So far, it has housed more than 2000 families.*





*The Marianna V. Vardinoyannis-ELPIDA Children's Oncology Unit, the first and only pediatric oncology hospital in Greece, was created by the ELPIDA Association and delivered to the Greek State in 2010. With five buildings and 138 beds, it is among Europe's most modern hospitals. More than 46,276 hospitalizations and 205,224 outpatient services have been rendered to date.*



# Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation

After the creation of the ELPIDA Association, Marianna intensified her efforts towards a better world. In 1997 she established the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation to expand her activism into areas such as the protection of childhood and the institution of family, support for vulnerable groups of the population, the consolidation and defense of human rights, the preservation of world cultural heritage, and education. The actions of Marianna and her foundation extend globally, and the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis foundation is recognized by the United Nations, including it in its List of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ESOSOC. Her continuous and uninterrupted actions through her foundation demonstrate that Marianna V. Vardinoyannis was a true leader in the field of humanitarianism, a visionary who created an enormous body of social work that emanates beyond the borders of her own country.

*At the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion during the impressive fashion show put on by the Greek designer Mary Katrantzou in support of the ELPIDA Association (October 2019).*



*With children of destitute families at the Social Support Structures for the homeless at Nikaia, operated by the UNESCO Club of Piraeus and Islands (December 2019).*

## “With every act of kindness is born a hope for a better tomorrow”

“I firmly believe that we have come into the world to make it better. Each in his own way and with his own means. With every small act of kindness is born a hope for a better tomorrow.” Guided by these words and inspired by motherhood and her mission to protect children’s rights, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis established the Foundation for the Child and the Family in 1997. At its inception, the Foundation created a strong alliance with the Fondation pour l’Enfance established by French First Lady Anne-Aymone Giscard d’Estaing, with whom Marianna shared bonds of mutual friendship and respect.

Children’s safety, the fight against exploitation and abuse such as pedophilia on the Internet, and the synchronization of policies among European countries on missing children are just some of the burning issues tackled by the Foundation for the Child and the Family, bringing them to the fore and raising awareness in Greek public opinion. “Every child is different, but all

children hide within themselves a special wisdom and great strength. The biggest lessons in life I learned from children. Even during the darkest hour they have great optimism and hope for life. Children are the future and we owe it to them to stand by them and protect them with all means possible,” said Marianna in an interview.

Her love for children gave her strength to continue fighting. A tireless activist, she joined forces with the largest international foundations and organizations and prioritized education and culture as the building blocks for a child-friendly, non-violent world.

Over the following years, the Foundation organized a series of international conferences, held meetings, launched campaigns and publications, and networked with international bodies to raise awareness among policy-making circles, promote the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, and support the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

## The Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation is recognised by the United Nations

**T**he significant works of the Foundation quickly brought recognition by the UN, which included it in the List of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) in 2004. A short while later, the Foundation for the Child and the Family was renamed the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation with a broadening of its aims, which nevertheless continued to focus on the protection of children's rights and the promise of a better tomorrow, with profound faith in the power of collective effort. Guided by the principles of UNESCO and the United Nations, and with social solidarity as the basis of all her actions, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis took a stand for children, not just in her own country but around the world.



*In Mytilene during her visit to the refugee camps at Kara Tepe and Moria, where she offered her support to refugee children through her Foundation's We Care program (April 2016).*

# Marianna fights for culture and the return of the Parthenon Sculptures

**P**arallel to her work on children's rights, Marianna organized emblematic events and exhibitions in Greece and Paris, UNESCO's headquarters, on the protection of cultural heritage, a field that was officially assigned to her by UNESCO. She inaugurated the "Return-Restore-Restart" campaign for reunification of the Parthenon sculptures with a series of international meetings, conferences and publications.

Marianna devoted a significant amount of energy to the return of the Parthenon marbles for many years, which earned her a seat on the Board of Directors of the Acropolis Museum. In an interview, Marianna recounted: "I had the great honor to be at Melina Mercouri's side from the beginning, with whom I share a strong bond of friendship, a fellow traveler at each stage of this 'good fight' for the return of our Marbles, with our 'weapon' being cultural diplomacy and all my international contacts. And from the moment I had the honor to become Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO, the return of the Marbles has always been at the center of my actions. I was among the last people to talk to her before she died. Her last words to me were: 'Marianna, I want you to promise me that you will continue to fight for the return of our Marbles. When they return, I will be reborn.' And these words never leave my thoughts and my priorities. I feel that this promise is not to be kept by me alone, but by all the Greek people. Every Greek man and woman, each of us who all these years have never stopped dreaming that this dream might become reality."

Marianna's great cultural activism led to her appointment by the State as Chairwoman of the Honorary Committee for the Thermopylae-Salamis 2020 anniversary year, celebrating 2500 years since the historical battles. The Foundation launched many initiatives within this framework that generated a great response both within and beyond Greece, always focused on showcasing Greek civilization as envisioned by Marianna: "We had the honor to be born Greeks. The values and concepts that we inherited from our ancestors run through our civilization down to today. Our homeland, our culture and our history are our natural space, the 'self-evident' in our lives. What is impressive, however, is that these values run, not just through Greek culture, but through Western culture as a whole."



*Above: Marianna V. Vardinoyannis and Melina Mercouri were close friends. They both worked passionately for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures; Melina's last words to Marianna were: "Marianna, when the Marbles return, I will be reborn."*

*Right: From the exhibition "The Unity of a Unique Monument. The Parthenon" in collaboration with the Melina Mercouri Foundation at UNESCO's Paris headquarters (April 2003).*





## Always standing up for the weakest

**A**lways by the side of the vulnerable, the suffering, Marianna opened her arms and appeared to be present everywhere, at all major crises, offering support, comfort and hope. She stood by those affected by the flood at Mandra in 2017, by the deadly fires at Mati in 2018, at the refugee camps, by the great earthquakes in Turkey, the war in Ukraine. Marianna was always “there”.

Of national significance, she symbolically adopted the village Makistos in Elis after it was destroyed by the forest fires of 2007, and undertook its complete reconstruction. The new town was inaugurated in 2010 in an emotionally-charged ceremony, at which Vardis and Marianna Vardinoyannis were declared national benefactors.



*With activist Kerry Kennedy at the Schisto refugee camp (April 2016).*



*At Makistos, the village in Elis destroyed by the wildfires of 2017. Vardis and Marianna Vardinoyannis undertook the complete reconstruction of the village and delivered it to its inhabitants.*



*Always standing by children and families in need, Marianna opened her arms so wide that all of Greece fit in her embrace.*

## The Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation today

Today, the Foundation holds a prominent position on the international stage and in the field of humanitarian aid. In Greece, it implements the Speak Truth to Power Educational Program for Human Rights by the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Foundation, retraining educators with regular seminars on the ways of communicating the ideals of human rights in the classroom, with the goal of guiding and inspiring students to be tomorrow's citizens. The program is approved by the Ministry of Education and is taught at hundreds of schools to thousands of students.

The Foundation supports vulnerable groups by distributing food and supports the elderly in remote villages through the program Support of Vulnerable Groups. It aids schools by providing materials and infrastructure through the program School Support, and is at the side of child victims of war, orphans and families who are victims of natural disasters.

The Foundation also participates in Initiative 21, an allegiance of 17 prominent Greek charitable foundations and the National Bank, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the War of Independence, organizing a series of actions in collaboration with scientific and social institutions in Greece and abroad. Among others, the Foundation supports the program for the protection of the monuments on Delos from rising sea levels, undertaken in collaboration with the Academy of Athens.

# Characteristic events and actions

Some of the most emblematic events organized by the Foundation since its inception are the following:

- Round Table “The Abduction of Europa” at the Athens Concert Hall (1997)
- European Meeting “Priority to the Dignity and Safety of Children in Europe” in Athens (1997), in collaboration with the European Office for Missing and Exploited Children
- Conference “International Convention for the Rights of the Child and the Role of the European Union” with the participation of members of the European Parliament and representatives of the European Commission (1997)
- European Forum “Family-Europe-21st Century: Vision and Institutions” at the Athens Concert Hall, under the auspices of the then President of the Hellenic Republic, Konstantinos Stephanopoulos, the General Secretary of the Council of Europe, Daniel Tarchys, UNESCO, and supported by the European Commission (1998)
- Conference “Family and the Media” at the Zappeion Megaron with the participation of well-known Greek and foreign journalists (1998)
- International Congress “Child and Family in the 21st Century”, in collaboration with the University of Europe. The congress was held at the University of Sorbonne, under the auspices of the President of France, Jacques Chirac (1999)
- European Congress “Sexual Exploitation of Children and Pedophilia on the Internet” in Athens, under the aegis of UNESCO (1999)
- Events celebrating Mother’s Day honoring “Mothers/Symbols” from Greece and abroad
- “Meeting of Athens and Delphi on Children and Peace”, under the auspices of UNESCO, in the context of the International Year for a Culture of Peace. During the conference, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis led the drafting of the “Declaration of Delphi on Children and Peace” in collaboration with internationally recognized peace activists (2000)
- Event “Child-Symbol of Hope, Will and Courage” to honor and support children who fought for their dreams and overcame natural or financial difficulties. The event was organized on the occasion of the anniversary of the International Convention for the Rights of the Child (2000)
- International Conference “The Child: Victim of War and Messenger of Peace” in Athens, under the auspices of UNESCO, in the framework of the International Decade (2001-2010) for a Culture of Peace and the Fight Against Violence for the Children of the World (2001)
- International Conference “Modern Societies – Multicultural Coexistence. The Position of the Child” at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, under the auspices of UNESCO (2002)
- Second European Summit of Lawyers on the subject of children, on issues of child pornography on the Internet and the sexual exploitation of children for profit. The summit was supported by the Hellenic Ministry of Justice and sponsored by the European Commission program GROTIUS II, as a continuation of the first meeting held in Paris at the initiative of the Fondation pour l’Enfance in France. Fifteen European Union member states were represented by three-person delegations comprising judges, prosecutors and governmental representatives (2003)
- Exhibition “Traditional and Modern Handicrafts of Jordan” in collaboration with the Jordan River Foundation, under the auspices of Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan and UNESCO. The aim of the exhibition was to promote multicultural dialogue, understanding and respect between peoples through art and social solidarity (2004)
- “Declaration on the UN Millennium Development Goals” drafted in collaboration with 22 Greek NGOs, submitted to ECOSOC at the High Level Segment (June 2005) and the UN Summit (September 2005)
- Round Table “The Business Community Against Human Trafficking” under the auspices of the Greek Interior Ministry and sponsored by Motor Oil (Hellas). The Round Table organized in Athens marked the beginning of the global campaign “End Human Trafficking Now”. Its aim was to raise awareness among the business community and ensure their commitment to a code of ethics, called “Athens Principles”, to put a stop to the phenomenon of human trafficking (2006). To support the campaign, a philanthropy dinner was held with distinguished guests



*Children were always the focus of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis' actions. "Every child is different, but all children hide within themselves a special wisdom and great strength. The biggest lessons in life I learned from children," she said.*

from the political, religious, business and artistic spheres. Mrs. Vardinoyannis was a member of the delegation that presented the "Athens Principles" at the World Economic Forum, Davos (2006)

- International Conference "Climate Change as a Challenge for Future Generations" under the auspices of UNESCO and in collaboration with Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, Chairman of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and General Director of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), which resulted in the "Athens Declaration for Vulnerable Children and Climate Change" (Athens, 2009)
- Program supporting marginal regions of Greece, including three villages in Thrace, Myke, Diomedea and Genisea, and the island of Phournoi, Ikaria. Additionally, libraries were created and equipped at Trigono in Prespes and at a school in Phournoi, Ikaria
- Signed an agreement of cooperation with the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights advocacy group in order to

start the educational program "Speak Truth to Power" in Greece and bring the respective curriculum to Greek schools (2013). In this context, the Foundation organized a lecture by Mrs. Kerry Kennedy entitled "Safeguarding Human Rights" at the Acropolis Museum, Athens (2015)

- International campaign "Return-Restore-Restart" for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures to Greece and their reunification with the Parthenon, launched in June 2014
- Launched We Care: Refugee Child Medical Assistance Program with the aim of providing first aid, medical care and immunizations to refugee children passing through Greece (2015). The program was implemented in collaboration with the Central Association of Municipalities and Communities of Greece, the Athens Medical Association, the Agia Sophia Children's Hospital and the humanitarian organization Apostoli
- Lecture by Kerry Kennedy at the Acropolis Museum entitled "Speak Truth to Power. Safeguarding Human Rights" (2015)



*At Mandra standing by those afflicted by the flood of 2017. Marianna always offered unmitigated support, comfort and hope to those in need.*

- International program “Welcoming Cities for Refugees” in collaboration with UNESCO. In this context, the Foundation organized the Athens Meeting entitled “Promoting Inclusion and Protecting Refugee Rights” at the Athens Concert Hall (2016). During the event, the UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova was presented with the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation International Prize, conferred by the then President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Prokopios Pavlopoulos
- International meeting “Addressing the Humanitarian Challenges of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership” in collaboration with the Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC) at the Acropolis Museum amphitheater (2017)
- In 2018 the Municipality of Ermioni established the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Cultural Prize in honor of her work and benefaction. Events to honor recipients took place in 2018 and 2019. In 2019, the Foundation awarded three scholarships to students from the Argolis region who excelled at the university entrance exams and were admitted into Archaeology departments, in the context of the Ermioni Municipality’s Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Cultural Prize. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 events did not take place
- Conference “Greece in the Modern World: National Identity and 21st Century Challenges” under the auspices of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Prokopios Pavlopoulos, at the Acropolis Museum, in collaboration with the Panathinaiki Panhellenic Women’s Movement (2018)
- The first Interactive Conference “Promoting the Acceptance of Diversity in Schools” at the Zappeion Megaron, in collaboration with the Association of Social Responsibility for Children and Youth (SKEP) (2018)
- Lecture by Kerry Kennedy entitled “Defending our Human Rights in History” at the Acropolis Museum (2019)
- In 2019 the Foundation published a book on the Monuments of Greece inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage Monuments List. Accompanying the book

presentation at the Acropolis Museum was a lecture by Nikolaos Stampolidis, Professor of Archaeology and Director of the Museum of Cycladic Art

- Commemoration of the Thermopylae-Salamis 2020 Anniversary Year (2019-2020). Events included the inauguration ceremony at the Zappeion Megaron (16 October 2019), a scientific event at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (20 January 2020) and a scientific conference in collaboration with the University of Athens (22 January 2020). There were also art competitions for primary school pupils and essay contests for middle and high school students.
- With the closures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Foundation redirected funds intended for Anniversary Year celebrations towards supporting vulnerable groups and the elderly in various parts of Greece, sending food and medical supplies
- Hosted the 20th High Level Meeting of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center in Athens (2020)
- Web-Conference “Shared Future – Shared Responsibilities” in collaboration with the Nizami Ganjavi International Center on occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations (2020)
- International online discussion “Women in the Age of the Pandemic” in celebration of International Women’s Day (2021). At the invitation of Mrs. Vardinoyannis and with the participation of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou, twenty women from around the world, members of significant international organizations and decision-making bodies and active in the sciences, humanitarian aid, politics and the media exchanged experiences and opinions regarding the important role that women can and must play in difficult times, as well as the great challenges they face during the pandemic
- Online Mother’s Day event co-organized by the Foundation and ELPIDA Association, “The Power of Motherhood in the Age of Covid-19” (2021). At the urging of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, mothers from around Greece and abroad united their voices online and spoke from their heart about the amazing power of motherhood to keep our societies upright during such difficult times as the Covid-19 pandemic. The event was inaugurated by a greeting from the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou
- Tribute event on the occasion of International Nelson Mandela Day (18 July) at the Zappeion Megaron, “Human Rights and Education: The Vision for a Better Future” (2021). The event, in honor of the work and legacy of Nelson Mandela, took place in the presence of the CEO of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Mr. Sello

Hatang. In recognition of the great work performed by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Mrs. Vardinoyannis awarded the “Honorary Award of the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation 2021” to the Nelson Mandela Foundation

- International Conference “Greece and Cultural Heritage” organized by the Foundation under the auspices of UNESCO, at UNESCO’s headquarters in Paris (2021). In the context of Initiative 21 on occasion of the 200th anniversary of Greek Independence, it was broadcast live to the world through the UNESCO website, sending the message that Greece is a power to be reckoned with in the international community. Many of the voices at the conference, including that of President Sakellariopoulou, spoke of the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece. The event took place on the edges of the 41st General Conference of UNESCO, where 193 member-states had the opportunity to watch it live. The event culminated in a musical performance by the internationally acclaimed Greek violinist Leonidas Kavakos accompanied by the well-known Italian pianist Enrico Pace.
- Emblematic event in the Parthenon Gallery at the Acropolis Museum, “The Parthenon’s Expatriate Goddesses”, in celebration of International Women’s Day, attended by the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou (2022). The keynote speech was delivered by leading British art historian Tom Flynn. The event sent a strong message to the world regarding the urgent need to return the Parthenon Marbles, as well as to return to the values that the monument symbolizes: Democracy, Equality, Solidarity. The event culminated in an excerpt from the musical production “Fragments of Silence”: songs and lyrical narratives performed by Maria Farantouri to music by Lena Platonos.
- Exhibition “Raiment of the Soul” at the Acropolis Museum, inaugurated by the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou (2022). The exhibition included 70 impressive works by the photographer Vangelis Kyris and embroiderer Anatoli Georgiev on the subject of Greek traditional costumes from the National Historical Museum. The exhibition ran from December 2022 to March 2023.
- In 2022 Marianna V. Vardinoyannis delivered the opening remarks at the International Conference “The Parthenon and Democracy” held at the Acropolis Museum and broadcast globally via live-streaming. The Conference was held in the context of the General Meeting of the International Association for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures, with the participation of distinguished figures from around the world who are working for the return of the Marbles.



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# UNESCO

In 1999, after many years of significant, internationally recognized humanitarian and social actions, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis was given the honorific title of Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO by the then Director-General Federico Mayor. She is the only Greek citizen to have received this title. Marianna spent the next 25 years faithfully serving the ideals of UNESCO, steadfastly working towards the vision of protecting global cultural heritage, standing up for education, peace, for refugees, and working on issues of climate change, while at the same time supporting the Development Goals of the United Nations.

*At the splendid ceremony organized at UNESCO headquarters in Paris celebrating 25 years of service by Marianna V. Vardinoyannis to the organization (June 2023). In her honor, the amphitheater was lit with the blue and white colors of the Greek flag.*



*With her mission to create a better world, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis served the ideals of the United Nations and UNESCO with devotion.*

## A Greek woman with eyes turned to the world

“It was 1999, I had already established the Foundation for the Child and the Family, and ELPIDA, and I was working closely with the former First Lady of France, my dear friend Anne-Aymone d’Estaing, with a focus on children. We had implemented many actions in France and at UNESCO for the protection of childhood innocence. For one of these actions, we collaborated with the then Director-General, Mr. Federico Mayor. We developed a relationship of profound mutual respect, which led to the honorary offer to join the UNESCO family. As he said, he saw in me ‘a Greek woman with her eyes turned to the world’. I don’t forget these words, as they shape the way I operate as Goodwill Ambassador.” This is how Marianna described one of the most important moments in her public life: her appointment as UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador.



*Vardis and Marianna V. Vardinoyannis with the then Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova.*



## Serving a global mission with integrity and respect

**F**or Marianna, the title was a global mission that she served with ethos and absolute respect for the noble ideals of UNESCO to promote peace, safeguard human rights, protect education, culture, solidarity, and to build a child-friendly world.

Her actions within UNESCO were continuous, varied and untiring. She enthusiastically participated in each initiative by the international organization to build a better world and closely followed its evolving modern needs, embracing each new UNESCO goal with her pioneering spirit and sharp intellect.

She participated in the annual meetings of the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors, a body made up of distinguished figures from the 194 member-states, as well as various events and programs by UNESCO within and beyond Greece, contributing her energy to issues with social, humanistic, educational and cultural significance, and in particular the promotion of peace, the safeguarding of children's rights, the

protection of tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage, the fight against illiteracy, the dialogue between different cultures, and for an open science in the context of regulating artificial intelligence. Indeed, she reinforced these actions with parallel actions by the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation and through her position on the board of many significant international organizations.

She worked with all the Directors-General of UNESCO: Federico Mayor, Koichiro Matsuura, Irina Bokova and the present head, Audrey Azoulay. She also had the opportunity to develop relations based on mutual appreciation, friendship and respect with all the Goodwill Ambassadors.

"To belong to a group of people who set the policies for the next decades on many important issues such as culture, humanism and education – and to suggest solutions for today's problems – makes you a 'citizen of the world'. It makes you see life with new eyes,



*Above: With UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and Goodwill Ambassador Jean-Michel Jarre at the annual meeting of Goodwill Ambassadors in 2021.*

*Left page: With Federico Mayor, the then Director-General of UNESCO, when she was proclaimed Goodwill Ambassador (1999).*

beyond yourself, beyond your country, even beyond your own time. That role, of Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO, is for me a great honor and an enormous responsibility, and for more than 20 years I have served it with all my power and it has determined my life, just as the actions of my Foundation have,” Marianna said in regard to her role as Goodwill Ambassador.

She served the institution of UNESCO with great devotion until the end of her life, having her eyes turned toward the world, but her heart always dedicated to her country, making sure to represent it in the best possible way and putting Greece at the center of the international stage. “Greece is my homeland, the beginning of everything. It is light, soul, honor. The history of Greece, democracy, free thought, culture and the traditions of this country are the compass that guides my steps wherever I happen to find myself in the world. My soul is always bathed in

Greek light and the blue of the sea. I am proud to be Greek, to me it is an honorary title,” she said.

One of the highlights of Marianna’s public life came on 16 June 2023 when she was honored by UNESCO for 25 years of service in the organization. Important figures from around the world were present in the impressive amphitheater at the organization’s Paris headquarters, which was lit with the blue and white colors of the Greek flag in her honor. The speech by Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, summarizes in the best way Marianna’s journey, devotion and contribution to the organization and the world: “There are very few people in the world who can bring together the society of civilians, artists, scientists, institutions and governments as you do. Over my tenure, I have found that you can even move mountains for the common good! You are distinguished by your passion, devotion and generosity. You are a woman of hope – and this is



*With UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay.*

precisely the name of your foundation, ELPIDA. You have dedicated your whole life to working with and for the most vulnerable, especially children. You have offered an enormous body of work in the field of education, human rights, global culture and the culture of your homeland. We thank you, Marianna.”

Marianna V. Vardinoyannis’ actions as Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO include the following:

- Support for programs on the protection of world heritage monuments, including the Parthenon and Hagia Sophia in Istanbul
- Always at the epicenter of her actions, she undertook important initiatives to promote the return of the Parthenon Marbles, such as the exhibition “The Unity of a Unique Monument: The Parthenon” in cooperation with the Melina Mercouri Foundation at UNESCO’s Paris headquarters, with Jules Dassin in attendance (April 2003)
- The creation of the Athena Childcare Center in Belgrade (Zemun Municipality) under the aegis of UNESCO to support child victims of war in the Balkans, the creation of a surgical center in Gracanica, Kosovo in collaboration with Doctors Without Borders, and the supply of 120 tons of medical supplies, medicine, food and clothing in relief for families after the war
- The establishment of the Early Childhood Resource and Training Center in Bethlehem in the context of the UNESCO program “Bethlehem 2000”. It was unfortunately destroyed during fighting in the region. The first stone was laid in a ceremony in April 2000, under the auspices of Mrs. Suha Arafat. During her visit there, Mrs. Vardinoyannis had a formal meeting with the then President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat in Ramallah. The Center was incorporated in the “Chain of Peace” program of the Foundation for the Child and the Family



*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis participated in the impressive anniversary celebration honoring 75 years of UNESCO at its headquarters in Paris (February 2022).*

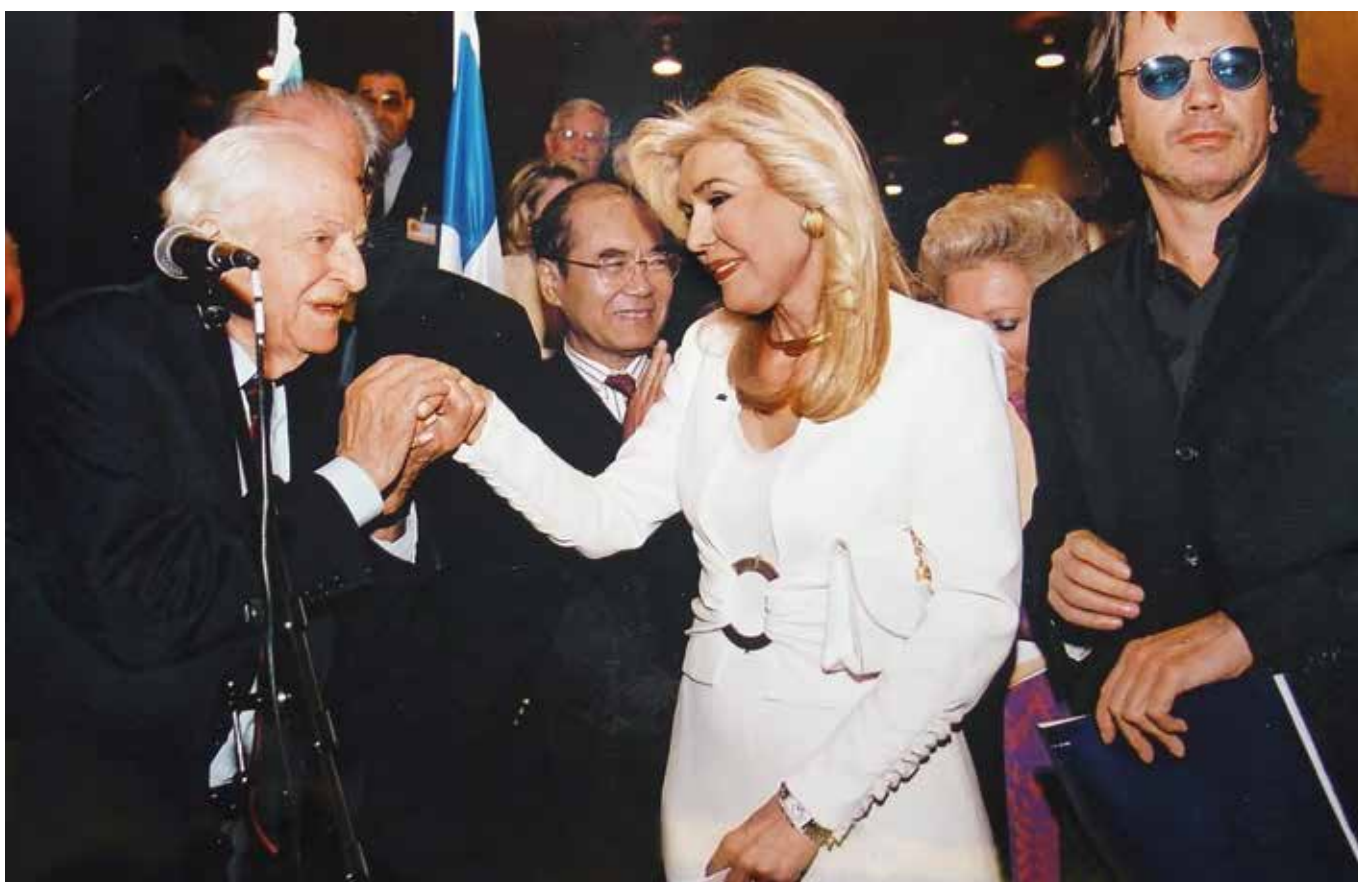


*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis worked with all UNESCO Directors-General and forged bonds of friendship and cooperation with her fellow Goodwill Ambassadors. Here she is with UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Goodwill Ambassador H.R.H Maria Teresa, Grand Duchess of Luxembourg.*

- Sponsorship of events and programs such as the publication of the children's book *The Land of Two Suns* on peaceful co-existence and the protection of monuments from natural disasters (June 2010); the program "Educating Girls" in Gaza (September 2009); the exhibition on Cultural Diversity at UNESCO's Paris headquarters (May 2008); the organization of the international seminar "Managing Disaster Risks for World Heritage" by the UNESCO World Heritage Center at Ancient Olympia (November 2008); the program "Safe Schools" by the Jordan River Foundation and Queen Rania of Jordan (2007); the concert by the Purcell School at UNESCO to promote musical education and support young talent, with Charles, Prince of Wales in attendance (February 2003); and more
- The organization of conferences, exhibitions and other cultural events, such as the international conference "Women in the Service of Peace" at

UNESCO headquarters (June 2004), with the aim of highlighting the decisive and essential role of women in consolidating peace between peoples, and defending their right to participate as equals in the peace-negotiation process and in political decision-making; the exhibition of paintings by women artists from the Islamic world, "Breaking the Veils" under the auspices of Queen Rania of Jordan in collaboration with the FAM Network at UNESCO headquarters (March 2003); and the photographic exhibition for World Cultural Heritage in Venice (November 2002) and at the UN headquarters in New York (December 2002)

- Additionally, the organization of many conferences in Greece under the aegis of UNESCO, such as the first European Forum "Family-Child-21st Century: Vision and Institutions"; "Meeting of Athens and Delphi on Children and Peace"; "The Child: Victim of War and Messenger of Peace"; "Sexual Exploitation of Children and Pedophilia on the



*With Jules Dassin and Jean-Michel Jarre at the exhibition "The Unity of a Unique Monument. The Parthenon", held in collaboration with the Melina Mercouri Foundation at UNESCO headquarters in Paris (April 2003).*



*With Queen Rania of Jordan, Goodwill Ambassador Maria Teresa, Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, Goodwill Ambassador Jean-Michel Jarre, and UNESCO Director-General Kōichirō Matsuura at the exhibition of paintings by Islamic women, "Breaking the Veils", on display at UNESCO headquarters in Paris under the aegis of Queen Rania of Jordan in collaboration with the FAM Network (March 2003).*





Above: With UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace, the famous actor Forest Whitaker.

Left page top: Mareva Mitsotaki, Brigitte Macron, Audrey Azoulay, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis and Maria Diamantopoulou, former Ambassador of Greece to UNESCO, at the event in honor of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis at UNESCO headquarters in Paris (June 2023).

Left page bottom: With UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Princess Caroline of Monaco.

Internet”; “Modern Societies – Multicultural Coexistence. The Position of the Child”; “Climate Change as a Challenge for Future Generations”, etc.

- Marianna V. Vardinoyannis delivered a message of peace in the film *Children of Peace* (produced by UNESCO) along with other significant figures including the Dalai Lama, Kofi Annan (Nobel Peace Prize laureate), Yasser Arafat (Nobel Peace Prize laureate), Rigoberta Menchu Tum (Nobel Peace Prize laureate), Federico Mayor (former Director-General of UNESCO), and others. An article by her was included in the UNESCO album *60 Women Contributing to the 60 Years of UNESCO*, profiling 60 women whose actions and collaboration with UNESCO contribute to constructing the foundations of a new society of peace and cooperation between peoples

- Marianna V. Vardinoyannis spoke at the international meeting “The Hague Appeal for Peace” on the subject “Building a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence”. At the meeting, she organized a Round Table entitled “The Effects of Radiation on Children’s Health” in collaboration with the International Peace Bureau, making an appeal for the cessation of war and an end to nuclear testing
- At the celebration for the 65th anniversary of UNESCO, she was invited by Director-General Irina Bokova to present her book entitled *Labouring with the Challenges of Female Identity: Insights into Minoan Society* published in 2010 based on her postgraduate thesis in Archaeology at Sheffield University. Present at the event were past UNESCO Directors-General Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow, Federico Mayor and Koichiro Matsuura, as well as numerous Goodwill Ambassadors



*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis at UNESCO headquarters in Paris*



*With Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay during the Greek leader's visit to UNESCO headquarters in Paris (October 2021).*

- During the announcement of the 70th anniversary of UNESCO in October 2014, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis was invited by Director-General Irina Bokova to be the keynote speaker at the opening ceremony, dedicated to the memory of Nelson Mandela, to take place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. In April 2015 she was the formal guest at the celebration of the 70th anniversary of UNESCO in Paris with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in attendance. In November 2021 she was present at the magnificent ceremony celebrating UNESCO's 75th anniversary, along with 28 heads of state and other important international figures
- In 2017 the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation co-organized with UNESCO the Conference "The Human Face of Immigration: Historical Perspectives, Testimonies and Policy Considerations" at the organization's Paris headquarters
- In 2019 she organized the presentation of UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report, entitled "Migration, Displacement and Education: Building Bridges, Not Walls" at the Officer's Club in Athens
- Organized the 2021 Symposium "Greece and Cultural Heritage" at UNESCO's Paris headquarters during the 41st General Assembly, in collaboration with Initiative 21. The Symposium was attended in person by representatives of the 193 UNESCO member-states
- Under the auspices of UNESCO, organized in February 2022 the online meeting "Open Science – Artificial Intelligence: New Horizons, Visions and Limits"
- Together with UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, attended the Conference "Next 50: The Future of World Heritage in Challenging Times. Enhancing Resilience and Sustainability" in November 2022, organized by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports on occasion of the 50th anniversary of the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, 1972)



# International actions

With global actions and world-wide collaborations, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis became distinguished as an international Greek whose work reached beyond the borders of Greece. Holding firm to the belief that only united can we envision a better tomorrow for future generations, she worked in conjunction with the most significant figures of our era and joined forces with international organizations, creating strong allegiances of hope and building bridges of friendship between peoples, scientists, politicians, athletes, and artists and intellectuals from around the world.

*At the Bibliotheca Alexandrina  
where she created the  
Alexandria Center for  
Hellenistic Studies, one of  
Marianna V. Vardinoyannis'  
most significant gifts to the  
younger generation.*



She brought the light of Greece  
to the whole world

**W**ith her heart as her compass, Marianna and her husband Vardis J. Vardinoyannis contributed significantly to bringing Greek history and culture to a global audience. They established the Chair of Greek Immigrants and the Ioannis P. Vardinoyannis Library at New York University, as well as the Constantine Karamanlis Chair for Hellenic and Southeastern European Studies at Tufts University.



*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis collaborated with some of the most important personalities of our era to create a better world for all. Here she is with Gordon Brown, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and UN Special Envoy for Education, and Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, wife of the Emir of Qatar, at an international conference on education held in Doha, Qatar, in 2013.*

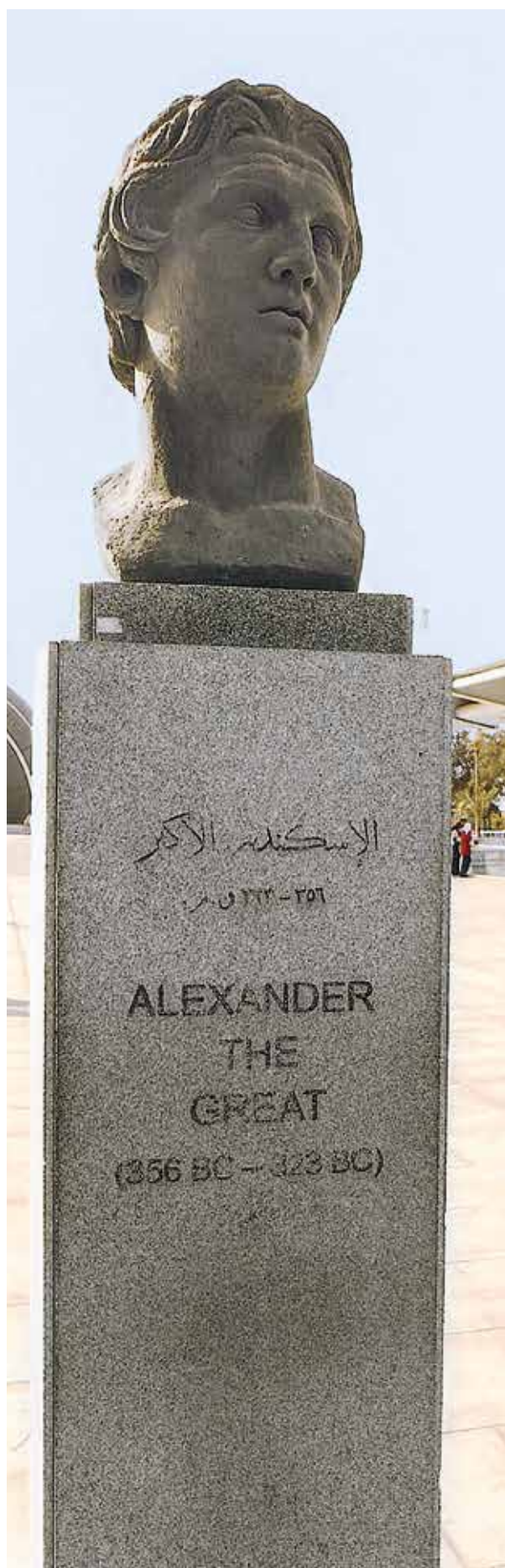
## “United, we can achieve anything”

“United, we can achieve anything” Marianna V. Vardinoyannis often said, profoundly believing in the need for global solidarity and collaboration between states and peoples so as to face major global challenges.

Through her role as Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO, and as a great Greek philanthropist, she achieved international recognition and participated in numerous actions and initiatives by important organizations, including:

- Member of the Board of Directors of the Acropolis Museum
- Member of the Board of Trustees of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt (2002-2008, 2022-2023)
- Member of the Advisory Board of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt (2008-2022)
- Founder and Honorary President of the Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies, Egypt
- Member of the Leadership Council of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Foundation, US
- Member of the Board of Directors of Mentor International Foundation, Sweden
- Member of the Board of Directors of The Hellenic Initiative
- Member of the Leadership Council of Concordia, US
- Member of the Board of Directors of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center
- Member of the International Council of the Ashinaga Institute, Japan
- Founding Member of the Global Humanitarian Forum, Switzerland
- Member of the International Committee of the Foundation for a Culture of Peace, Spain
- President of the Honorary Committee of the Special Olympics Hellas
- Member of the Board of Directors of the Light of Africa Foundation





## Bibliotheca Alexandrina

One of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis' greatest international achievements was the foundation of the Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, operational since October 2008.

She was a founding member of the Board of Trustees of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and member of its Advisory Board, remaining the only Greek representative in its administration. Apart from her uninterrupted presence at the Board's annual meetings and at the most important Bibliotheca events, she also launched many initiatives to enrich and promote its work.

In this context, she took the initiative to create the Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies, a modern beacon of knowledge, offering studies to hundreds of post-graduate students free of charge.

The Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies was funded by the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation with the aim of promoting Hellenistic civilization abroad and showcasing the history of the Hellenistic period, the time when the ancient Library of Alexandria was established. Departments at the Center teach History, Philosophy, Literature and Fine Arts. The Center also houses the Library which, in collaboration with the University of Alexandria, confers Master's and Ph.D. degrees.

In recognition of her remarkable initiative, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis was declared Founder and Honorary President of the Center in 2019 by unanimous decision of its Board of Directors.

*The Bibliotheca Alexandrina. Marianna V. Vardinoyannis was a founding member of the library's Board of Trustees and a member of its Advisory Board, remaining the only Greek representative in its administration. Apart from her uninterrupted presence at the Board's annual meetings and the most important Bibliotheca events, she also launched many initiatives to enrich and promote its work.*



*Left: With former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in Geneva at an international conference on the rights of women.*

*Right: At an event announcing the foundation of the Global Humanitarian Forum in Geneva, with former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and other important international figures (October 2007).*



## Present at the world's largest meetings

In the frame of her international collaborations, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis participated in international congresses and meetings as a speaker or panelist, as well as in many international and European discussions and fora, such as:

- The first global congress on the sexual exploitation of children (August 1996) in Stockholm, at the invitation of Queen Silvia of Sweden
- The meeting organized by the Fondation Pour L'Enfance (November 1997) in Paris to present the work of the European Office for Missing and Exploited Children, at which she gave a speech
- The international meeting on missing children organized by INTERPOL and Fondation Pour L'Enfance in Lyon (1999)
- The conference "Hague Appeal for Peace" (May 1999) at The Hague, where she spoke on "Building a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence". She also organized a special session at the conference in collaboration with the International Peace Bureau and the ELPIDA Association of Friends of Children with cancer on the topic "The Effects of Radiation on Children's Health", at which she called for an end to war and nuclear testing
- The "International Conference for a Culture of Peace" organized by the Foundation for a Culture of Peace, Madrid (December 2000), at which she gave a welcoming address at the conference's opening
- The International Nights for the Child organized every year at the Palace of Versailles by the Fondation Pour L'Enfance
- Events for the "Paris Charter Against Cancer" organized by David Khayat, Professor of Oncology, in France
- Awards ceremonies and philanthropic galas organized by Queen Silvia of Sweden to support the Mentor International Foundation
- "International Forum of Vienna to Fight Human Trafficking" organized by UN.GIFT and UNODC
- Participation in: the "International Campaign for the Protection of Children", Cairo, in collaboration with ICMEC (February 2009); the international meeting "Human Trafficking at the Crossroads of East and West" at Manama, Bahrain under the auspices of Princess Sabeeka (March 2009); as well as the "International Forum Against Human Trafficking" at Luxor, Egypt (December 2010)



*The inauguration of the Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, in the presence of Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria and All Africa, Bibliotheca Director Ismail Serageldin, the then Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Kassimis, and Antonis Papadimitriou, President of the Alexandros S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation. The Center was made possible by the initiative and sponsorship of the Vardinoyannis Foundation and the Alexandros S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (November 2008).*



*With the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama, at an event at the Robert F. Kennedy Foundation (2018).*



*With King Charles of the United Kingdom at the concert by the Purcell School held at UNESCO to promote musical education and support new talent (February 2003).*



*With former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan during his visit to Greece (2017).*



*With the former President of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and his wife, Anne Aymone, with whom Marianna maintained a strong friendship.*



*With Queen Sophia of Spain.*



*With the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, during his official visit to Greece (2018).*



*Linked by a close friendship, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis and Princess Diana shared a common vision for the creation of a better world.*



*With the former US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, at the Appeal of Conscience Foundation's annual awards ceremony in New York (September 2018).*



*With the 42nd President of the United States, Bill Clinton.*



*With Queen Rania of Jordan.*



*With H.I.M. Farah Pahlavi, the widow of Persian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.*



*With the famous French actress Catherine Deneuve.*



*With the former President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev.*



*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, Pierre Cardin, Gregory Peck with his wife, Veronique Passani, and right next to them Monique Raimond, at the Concert for Peace at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.*



*With Pope Francis at the Vatican.*



*With Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.*

# Education and publications

Marianna, possessing a restless soul and a profound belief in the value of education and life-long learning, never stopped evolving and broadening her horizons, always looking toward the future. Her thirst for knowledge and education in general explains the rich legacy she left behind in educational programs aimed at the younger generation, scholarships, and school infrastructure, as well as a substantial body of essays and publications.





*Snapshot of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis receiving an honorary doctorate from the Department of Medicine, School of Health Sciences, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Athens, with the then Rector, Professor Meletios-Athanasios Dimopoulos (March 2019).*

## Education, the highest virtue

**E**ducation, in the ancient Greek sense of the term, that aims at “virtue” and the all-around development of the human person, has always been at the core of Marianna’s life and actions. Rooted deep in her childhood, she held firm to the conviction that the only way to create a better world is through education.

“My mother was a person ahead of her time, and believed in the value of education. From a very early age she insisted we get the best possible education, something that I as a mother did for my own children. And certainly education was high among my priorities in the context of my public actions, since I believe that only through education, art and culture can we dream of a better world.” This is how Marianna described the primary importance she placed on education, which she demonstrated first and foremost through her own example.



## Education broadened her horizons

**A**n exemplary student, Marianna learned English and French at a young age. After finishing High School in Piraeus, she traveled to the US to study Economics at the University of Denver in Colorado.

Although her first degree in Economics reflected her practical, rational side, she never forgot her great love for history and archaeology. Already a mother of five children, she decided to follow her dream and go back to study Art History. A few years later, she achieved yet another goal, a Master's in Archaeology from the University of Sheffield.

Describing herself, she said: "From childhood I was strongly drawn to our civilization and ancient history. Things happened and I ended up studying something different. I accompanied my husband on

his missions, I studied Economics abroad, hoping to find work and support him as best I could. But my love for our civilization and history never left me. So, after I became a grandmother, I fulfilled my childhood dream and studied History of Art at Deree and wrote a MA thesis in Archaeology at the University of Sheffield entitled *Labouring With the Challenges of Female Identity: Insights into Minoan Society*."

Apart from her studies, she expressed another aspect of her personality and love for the arts through painting, a fact known only to a few. A student of the illustrious Greek painter Nikos Hatzikyriakos-Ghika, she created numerous works that she never publicized. Painting was a love that she only shared with her closest circle.

## Her vision for a better world for the younger generation

**M**arianna believed in the next generation, that they can change the world for the better. Standing by them in support, she provided opportunities for a higher quality of education through specially created educational programs and investments in infrastructure. Her aim was always to open new paths for the next generation, to inspire, to offer tools and possibilities, to provide motivation so that young people would create a better and more just world.

Among the greatest aspects of Marianna's legacy for the younger generation are: the creation of the Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt in 2008, a beacon of knowledge within the Library of Alexandria that offers free doctoral and postgraduate studies to students from around the world; the implementation in Greece of the Educational Program "Speak Truth to Power" in collaboration with the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Foundation to teach human rights at hundreds of Greek schools; and the granting of scholarships to High School graduates from her home town of Ermioni. At the same time, Marianna supported the field of education in general, creating infrastructure in cases of natural disasters, such as rebuilding the Agios Nikolaos preschool in Ano Liosia after the 1999 earthquakes,

reconstructing the 2nd preschool at Mandra after the flood of 2017, and providing all manner of equipment and support to dozens of schools around Greece. Beyond her support through special programs and donations, Marianna also made an effort to be "present" for the younger generation. She gave speeches at schools, visited Greek schools around the world, and supported various actions, student initiatives and competitions, such as the annual Panhellenic Drawing Competition in collaboration with the Children's Art Gallery of Greece. Marianna was "present" for the next generation, together building an equal relationship of trust and appreciation, taking care not only to teach, but to be taught by them – to learn the new trends, modern technology, every new thing. "I believe in the youth. I always believed in the next generation. I am truly happy because I see around me young people with principles, opinions and dreams. Yes, I am optimistic that the new generation of Greeks will manage things better," she said in an interview.

It was a mutual relationship, since the younger generation believed in and followed Marianna, too. A characteristic example is that students from eight different European countries awarded her the Malala Prize at the meeting of the European Student Council in Strasbourg.





## Her books

In parallel to her continuous, uninterrupted action, Marianna published two books: *Labouring With the Challenges of Female Identity: Insights into Minoan Society* which transformed into words her love for Crete, archaeology and her faith in women's strength, while the book *From Mother to Mother* is a guide for all new mothers written with great love and sensitivity for children and new mothers. "The child is the only creation in the world where the creator belongs to the creation, and not the creation to the creator," is one of the characteristic phrases in the book, and she often repeated it throughout her life.

Along with the books she wrote herself, she took initiatives and published numerous important works on art, culture and education:

- *10 Basic Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1997), illustrated by the artist Manolis Charos, issued by the Foundation for the Child and the Family (Greek/English)
- *The Abduction of Europa* (1997), publishing the proceedings of the Round Table (Greek/English)
- *Proceedings of the European Forum Family-Europe-21st Century: Vision and Institutions*, Livani publications, 1998 (Greek/English/French)
- *Proceedings of the European Meeting Child and Family in the 21st Century*, Sideri publications (French)
- *Proceedings of the Conference Sexual Abuse and Pedophilia on the Internet*, Sideri publications (Greek/French)
- *Proceedings of the Meeting of Athens and Delphi Children and Peace*, Sideri publications (English)
- *ACROPOLIS. An Album of the Concerts by Jean Michel Jarre at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus*, published by ELPIDA
- *Album of the Exhibition "The Unity of a Unique Monument. The Parthenon"* (English)
- *Album of the Painting Exhibition "Breaking the Veils"* (French)
- *Proceedings of the Meeting The Child as Victim of*

*From the presentation of the book by Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, Labouring with the Challenges of Female Identity: Insights into Minoan Society, at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in 2010 during the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the signing of UNESCO's foundation charter.*



*With the Director  
of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Dr.  
Mostafa El Feki and graduates of  
the Center for Hellenistic Studies at  
the Bibliotheca Alexandrina  
during celebrations for the 10th  
anniversary of its creation  
(October 2019).*

*War and Messenger of Peace, Sideri publications  
(English)*

- Proceedings of the International Conference on Climate Change (2009), Livani publications (English)
- Proceedings of the International Meeting on the Parthenon on the occasion of the Global Campaign RETURN-RESTORE-RESTART (2015) (Greek/English)
- Proceedings of the Conference *Hellenistic Alexandria. Celebrating 24 Centuries* (2017), Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, Christos S. Zerefos, Archaeopress Publishing Ltd
- Proceedings of the Conference *Greece in the Modern World, National Identity and the Challenges of the 21st Century* (2018)
- Greek Monuments on the UNESCO World Heritage List (2019)
- Quotes by Nelson Mandela, on occasion of the 2021 Panhellenic Drawing Competition by the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation in collaboration with the Children's Art Gallery of Greece, entitled "If there are dreams, there are also roads that lead to their goal" (2021)
- Proceedings of the Honorary Event on Occasion of International Nelson Mandela Day, Human Rights and Education: The Dream of a Better Future, (2021)
- Proceedings of the Symposium *Greece and Cultural Heritage* which took place at UNESCO's headquarters during the 41st General Assembly, in collaboration with Initiative 21 (2021)
- Proceedings of the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Cultural Awards by the Municipality of Ermioni (2021)
- Proceedings of the Online Symposium *UNESCO: Open Science, Artificial Intelligence. New Horizons, Visions and Limits* (2022)
- *Raiment of the Soul*, published on occasion of the exhibition "Raiment of the Soul" by Vangelis Kyris and Anatoli Georgiev at the Acropolis Museum (2022-2023)





Below is a complete list of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis' studies and academic distinctions:

#### EDUCATION

- MA in Archaeology (University of Sheffield, UK)
- Bachelor's Degree in Art History (Deree – The American College of Greece)
- Bachelor's Degree in Economics (University of Denver, US)

#### ACADEMIC HONORS

- Honorary Doctorate from the Medical School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (2019)
- Honorary Doctorate from Tbilisi State Medical University (2016)
- Honorary Degree from the University of Georgia (2011)
- Honorary Doctor of Humanities from Deree – The American College of Greece (2010)
- Honorary Doctor of Philosophy from London Metropolitan University (2008)
- Honorary Doctor of Law from the University of Sheffield (1997)





*The United Nations Nelson Mandela Prize awarded to Marianna V. Vardinoyannis in 2020 is considered the organization's highest honor for humanitarian work. Marianna V. Vardinoyannis dedicated the prize to her homeland, Greece, and to all the young heroes of ELPIDA.*

## Honors and distinctions

Marianna V. Vardinoyannis and her work have received innumerable awards from around the world. Such accolades were never her purpose, but she accepted each with her characteristic humility and dedicated all to the children of ELPIDA and her homeland, Greece.



*Left: One of Marianna V. Vardinoyannis' greatest honors was to be awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Beneficence of the Hellenic Republic by President Katerina Sakellariopoulou in 2020, in recognition of her exceptional service to the country.*

*Right page top: In 2002, the former President of the Hellenic Republic, Konstantinos Stephanopoulos, awarded Marianna V. Vardinoyannis the Gold Cross of the Order of Beneficence for her national and international work.*

*Right page bottom: The Academy of Athens, represented by its President Loukas Papadimos, awarded its highest medal to ELPIDA "for its active and continuously expanding public benefit work", at its celebratory meeting on 21 December 2017 held in the Hall of Ceremonies.*

## For her, love was the greatest reward

**F**or Marianna, the supreme reward for her life's work was love: "For me, the greatest reward is the look: the look of a happy parent; a healthy child. It is not easy to talk about something that reflects all that one feels but cannot say. And they don't have to say anything. The embrace of a young child who calls you by your first name, how can you not feel your heart full? I feel love. Is there any greater reward than that?"

Like precious treasures, she always kept near her the artwork made by young children, their mothers' handicrafts, the letters from people whom she had helped, the amulets and religious icons sent to her from every corner of Greece by ordinary people expressing their gratitude. For her, these souvenirs were the most valuable prize and she made sure to thank each and every person for whatever they had offered her.







J'ai découvert ce secret : après avoir gravi une haute colline,  
on s'aperçoit qu'il reste beaucoup de collines à gravir.» Nelson Mandela



*Above: With the President of Italy, Sergio Mattarella, at the Quirinal Palace in Rome with Dr Vaira Vike Freiberga and Dr Ismail Serageldin, co-Chairs of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center (2019).*



*Right: Valéry Giscard d'Estaing bestowed on Marianna V. Vardinoyannis the honorary title Officer of the Légion d'Honneur of the French Republic in 2015.*

## She dedicated all her honors to the children and to Greece

**M**arianna frequently said that the innumerable honors bestowed on her from around the world in recognition of her invaluable humanitarian work did not belong to her alone, but to “the heroes of ELPIDA, the children” and to Greece.

Heads of state, international organizations, universities and other institutions honored Marianna’s work, awarding her dozens of honorable distinctions, which she received with her characteristic humility and unique sense of measure.

In 1999, she was appointed Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO. The only Greek citizen to have received this title, she admirably served in this role until the end of her life, with her eyes turned to the world but her heart forever committed to Greece. Among the greatest honors and distinctions she received throughout her life are the following: the title Officer the Légion d'Honneur of the French Republic bestowed by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 2015; the Grand Cross of the Order of Beneficence of the Hellenic Republic awarded by the President Katerina

Sakelaropoulou in 2020, the only woman to have received this title; and in 2020 the United Nations recognized her global contribution to humanitarian work and the protection of human rights by awarding her the Nelson Mandela Prize, considered the highest honor awarded by the UN. She dedicated this prize to her beloved homeland and to all the Greeks: “I remember quite characteristically the moment I received the phone call from the UN offices informing me that I got the prize. I shared this moment with my family as nothing would have been possible without their wholehearted support: my husband Vardis, our children and grandchildren. I cried tears of joy and pride. Not because I felt it was a recognition of my own work, but because I felt that it was a validation for all the Greeks who have been standing by my side for 30 years. All that I have achieved has not be done on my own. I always had Greek society at my side. In my person, therefore, a life’s struggle was vindicated, a fight in which all Greeks rallied, each in his own way.”



*Marianna V. Vardinoyannis receives from Ethel Kennedy the Ripple of Hope prize of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Foundation (2018).*



*Former Cypriot President Nikos Anastasiades awards Marianna V. Vardinoyannis the Medal for Outstanding Contribution of the Republic of Cyprus in the presence of his wife, Andri Anastasiades (2018).*



*In February 2014, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis received the highest international distinction for the fight against cancer, the Grand Prix de la Charte de Paris contre le cancer from the association's President David Khayat, Professor of Oncology, awarded annually to a figure whose constant actions and social work have contributed significantly to the battle against cancer.*

# Awards bestowed on Marianna V. Vardinoyannis



## 1987

- International Humanitarian Award (US)

## 1995

- “Paul Harris Fellow” (highest distinction by Rotary International)
- Award of the Panhellenic Association of Volunteers and Blood Donors of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Social Security
- Award of the Rotary Clubs of Western Attica, Glyfada and Kifissia

## 1996

- Woman of Europe Award with the mission of promoting international summit meetings for the protection of human rights, particularly of children
- Gold Medal of Honor and Benefaction of the Municipality of Athens
- Award of the Lions Club of Greece
- Award of the Soroptimists Union of Greece
- Honorary Distinction of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Greece
- Honorary Citizen of the Municipality of Ermioni
- Culture and Education Award of UNESCO Club of Dodecanese
- Distinction “Honor of Rethymno City”

## 1997

- Honorary Distinction by the Municipality of Thessaloniki
- Honorary Distinction by the 251 General Hospital of the Hellenic Air Force
- Award of the Rotary Club of Western Attica
- Academy of Athens Award

## 1998

- Special Award by the Association of Greek Olympic Champions

## 2000

- Honorary Member of UNESCO Club of Attica

## 2001

- Honorary Citizen of the Municipality of Ano Liossia

## 2002

- Honorary Distinction by Demokritos Research Center
- Gold Cross of the Order of Beneficence of the Hellenic Republic

## 2005

- Award of the Hatzikyriakio Foundation for Child Protection

## 2006

- Chevalier of the Legion d' Honneur of the French Republic

## 2007

- Medal of the International Association of the Friends of Bibliotheca Alexandrina

## 2008

- UNICEF Award
- Award of the Ecumenical Hellenism Organization
- Office of the Great Lady of the Patriarchal Throne of St. Mark (Patriarchate of Alexandria)
- Honorary Distinction of the Special Olympics International Committee

## 2009

- Honorary Distinction of the "Pisti" Association of Parents and Guardians of Children with Neoplastic Diseases
- Honorary Distinction of the Hellenic Society of Haematology

## 2010

- Honorary Distinction of the "Panathenaiki" Panhellenic Women's Movement
- Honorary Distinction of the "Nea Pedia" Schools

## 2011

- Excellence Award for Social Contribution of the European Council for Youth Mobility in Research and Technology
- Excellence in Solidarity Award of the European Institute of Law, Science and Technology
- Award of the Pancretan Association of Athens
- Award of the Hellenic-American Institute
- Medal of the Hellenic Olympic Academy

## 2012

- Award of the Society of Culture, Science and Social Intervention
- Award of IRITEL International Research Institute for Telemedicine and Home Care
- Award of the Athanasios Botsis Foundation
- Excellence in Philanthropy Award of the Global Thinkers Forum

## 2013

- Nizami Ganjavi International Award
- Pro Bono Humanum – Prix Galien Greece

## 2014

- Grand Prize of the Paris Charter Against Cancer (Paris)
- Excellence and Solidarity Award of the Greek National Olympic Academy
- Maria West Lifetime Achievement Award of the American College of Greece (ACG)
- Award of the Hellenic Sports Federation for persons with disabilities

## 2015

- Officer of the Légion d'Honneur of the French Republic (Paris)
- Ripple of Hope Award of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Foundation (New York)
- Mother Theresa Medal of the Republic of Albania (Tirana)
- Medal of Excellence by the Tbilisi State University of Georgia

## 2016

- National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Award
- Award of the Biomedical Research Foundation of the Academy of Athens
- Athens Medical Association Award
- Honorary Member of the Hellenic Coast Guard Club

## 2017

- Academy of Athens Award
- Hellenic American Leadership Award of The Hellenic Initiative
- Medal of Honor and Distinction of Palestine (Athens)
- Gold Cross with Gold Laurel Branch Medal of the Hellenic Red Cross

## 2018

- Medal for Outstanding Contribution by the Republic of Cyprus
- Medal of the Dostlug Order of Friendship of Azerbaijan
- International Award of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center

## 2019

- Honorary Doctorate of Medicine, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

## 2020

- Nelson Mandela Prize by the United Nations
- Grand Cross of the Order of Beneficence of the Hellenic Republic

*We should never  
give up.  
Even in  
the darkest hour  
there is light,  
there is hope.*

*Marianna*

MARIANNA V. VARDINOYANNIS





ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΑΡΙΑΝΝΑ Β. ΒΑΡΔΙΝΟΓΙΑΝΝΗ  
MARIANNA V. VARDINOYANNIS FOUNDATION



