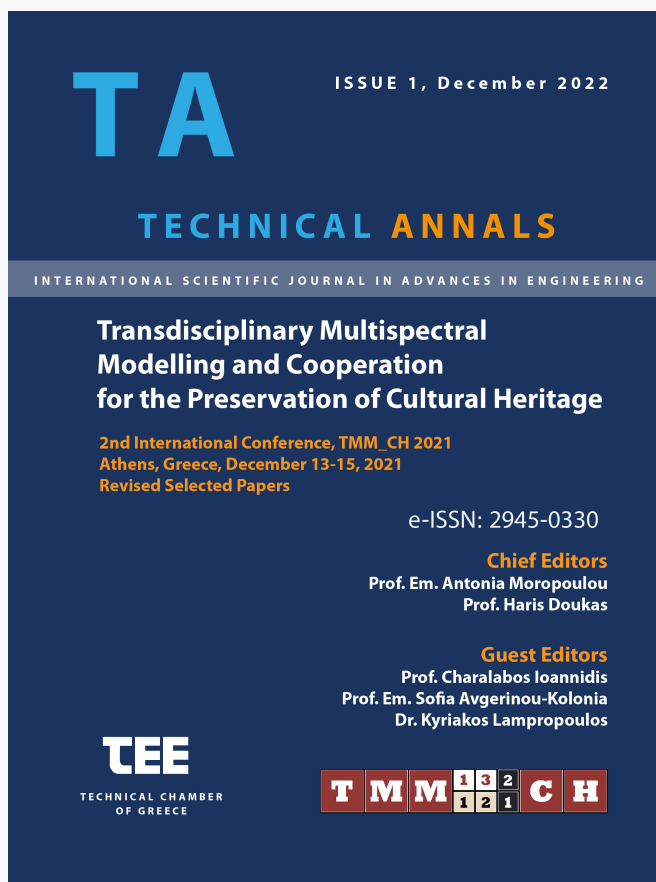


## Technical Annals

Vol 1, No 1 (2022)

Technical Annals



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doi: [10.12681/ta.32106](https://doi.org/10.12681/ta.32106)

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### To cite this article:

Zacharias , N., Panagiotidis , V., Valantou , V., & Rigas , G. (2022). The 'Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom' : Project: Technological and Management Advances for Cultural Heritage. *Technical Annals*, 1(1), 45–57.  
<https://doi.org/10.12681/ta.32106>

## The ‘Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom’ Project: Technological and Management Advances for Cultural Heritage

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to offer an overview of the Cultural Heritage Enhancement project “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” after its completion. “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” has been a co-financed by Greece and the European Union project which was placed under the wider scheme “Research, Creation and Innovation” NSRF (ESPA) 2014-2020. The project was implemented during the 2018-2021 period, i.e. by taking advantage of the celebration of the landmark of two centuries (1821-2021) since the uprising which led to the establishment of the Greek State. It was executed via a tripartite research association which consisted of the University of the Peloponnese, which assumed the role of the coordinator, the Community Enterprise of the Municipality of Kalamata (ΦΑΡΙΣ) and the film production company View Master Films. The project’s aim has been to augment the footprint of Kalamata’s unique modern heritage and make it known and accessible to wider and diversified audiences. The paper outlines the historical background and the conjuncture that inspired the project and thereafter traces the course of its deliverables, namely the production of the feature-length film “Wind of Freedom 1821”, the “Kalamata 1821 Digital Museum”, and the “Kalamata 1821” brand. It discusses how the pandemic affected the filming of the movie but despite the imposed delay it was fulfilled and screened in Kalamata’s Dance Hall in July 2021. It shows how the “Kalamata 1821 Digital Museum” set an example for raising the awareness of a city’s heritage via the employment of new technologies. It presents how the “Kalamata 1821” brand attempts to set in motion the various cultural currents of the city in order to blend the historical tradition with the contemporary creativity. Additionally, it showcases the most successful aspect of the “Kalamata 1821” brand, i.e. the “Flavours of ‘21” and it discusses the digital applications that were developed but eventually were not used due to the ramification of the pandemic-related restrictions.

**Keywords:** Kalamata, Cultural Heritage Enhancement, Digital Applications, New Technologies

## 1 Introduction

“Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” has been a co-financed by Greece and the European Union project which was placed under the wider scheme “Research, Creation and Innovation” NSRF (ESPA) 2014-2020. The project was put under the auspices of His Excellency the former President of the Hellenic Democracy Prokopios Pavlopoulos (Eleftheriaonline.gr, September 6, 2018). The project was implemented by a research association whose three distinct operators were the University of the Peloponnese which among others has been assigned with the role of the coordinator, the Community Enterprise of the Municipality of Kalamata (ΦΑΠΙΣ) and the film production company View Master Films. The major drive behind the project was the conjuncture of the bi-centenary celebrations of the Greek revolution of 1821; the struggle which led to the establishment of the modern Greek state and which was actually launched in Kalamata. In this regard, the project’s main aim was to identify, highlight and ultimately re-introduce to the wider public all the interconnections between the 1821 era at the level of the city of Kalamata and its adjacent regions, and the present. More specifically, the project tried, and to a great degree achieved, to showcase the links between the past and the present through roads of history, culture and trade. To this end, and by making use of an array of sophisticated digital tools, the project’s research association organized, undertook and oversaw the implementation of three major deliverables which could, and in some cases did, give space to initiatives that deserved special merit and account. On the other hand, the unforeseeable COVID-19 pandemic with its multifaceted impact could not but have a serious effect on the open social events that the project had prepared for the celebrations of March 2020 and March 2021 respectively. To be sure, a number of conferences, public lectures, presentations, happenings and activities had to be cancelled or, wherever that was feasible, transferred on an online virtual platform. The pivotal deliverable of the “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” project was the production of an original film that touched upon the 1821 uprising and the role of Kalamata in its success. The film production company View Master Films undertook the task and with the guidance of academic experts brought about the script of the “Wind of Freedom 1821” which was largely filmed in historic sites of Messenia. The movie, which reflects on the events and causes that led to the successful outbreak of the 1821 Greek revolution in Kalamata, was the only major film production that coincided with the bicentenary celebrations. Moreover, its inaugural premiere took place in Kalamata in July 2021. The second deliverable of the project pertains to “Kalamata 1821 Digital Museum” which since October 2020 functions in a room on the ground floor of Kalamata’s Old City Hall. The museum was destined to become, and to a great degree is, a multimedia applications room where the visitor can extract information related to the events of March 1821 and their connection with iconic sites and buildings of the modern city. Therefore, the very concept of the establishing of a digital museum encouraged the research on how digital applications could be used so as to enhance and ease the con-

nection of Kalamata’s residents and visitors with the city’s glorious past, and to do so in a creative and educative way. In this respect, various ideas were brought to the fore like employing augmented reality schemes. In view of the pandemic and the numerous restrictions it came along, these plans did not materialize but exist as a legacy and thus could and should inspire future projects in the field of Cultural Heritage Enhancement. The third main deliverable of the “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” project was the introduction of a special brand. The idea was to engineer the palpable involvement of the local business community in the landmark celebrations through the trade of products bearing the brand “Kalamata 1821”. The aforementioned products hold a distinct connection with the 1821 era and subsequently their distribution and circulation would raise the collective awareness germane to the unique events that took place in the region of Kalamata in 1821. Again the pandemic created seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Nevertheless, many initiatives went forward and one of them, the “Flavours of ‘21” was as widespread and successful as to resemble a distinct deliverable. In short, the “Flavours of ‘21” was the coupling of 1821 with the present through food. Academic research identified certain dishes and delicacies that were popular in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Messenia and encouraged local catering businesses to create dishes inspired by them. The subsequent introduction of tourists and residents to the selected dishes could not but widen the bridges between contemporary Messenia and that of the 1821 era.



From the meeting of the Research Association, March 2018

Source: <https://kalamatadromoielftherias.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/φωτο-kick-off-meeting-Μάρτιος-28-2018-scaled.jpg>

### **The Historical Background and Conjuncture as an Opportunity for Cultural Heritage Enhancement**

The Messenia region in general and the city of Kalamata in particular enjoy a unique heritage with regard to the 1821 revolution that paved the way for the founding of the modern Greek state. Messenia is the part of the Peloponnese, which itself has been rather restless since the failed 1770 Orlov revolt, where one of the most sig-

nificant Greek chieftains, Theodoros Kolokotronis, found sanctuary prior to the revolution. To be precise, Kolokotronis in January 1821 found shelter in the tower of Mourtzinos (Troupakis) family in Kardamili (Christou, 2013). Since early February Archimandrite Grigorios Dikaios, aka Papaflessas, is spotted in the Northern Peloponnese and then heads towards Messenia where he awaits the arrival of a crucial ammunition shipment. The cargo reaches its destination safely in mid-March which is no other than the bay of Almyros, an anchorage just a few kilometers east of Kalamata. Papaflessas arranges the transport of the gunpowder with his associates Nikitas Stamatelopoulos, aka Nikitaras, and Christos Papageorgiou, aka Anagnostaras, to Mardaki Monastery outside the Taygetos Mountain village of Megoloanastaso, modern Nedousa, and from there they distribute it to various monasteries overlooking Kalamata. From those spots armed clans headed to Kalamata on March 23, 1821. They were joined by the forces of Petrobey Mavromichalis, the ruler of Mani. The revolutionaries hand an ultimatum to the local Ottoman ruler, Voevoda Souleiman Agas Arnaoutoglou. The latter, having full knowledge of his precarious position, agrees to surrender the city which was therefore liberated without any bloodletting on March 23, 1821. As a result, Kalamata becomes the first major urban center that falls into the grip of the revolutionaries. Kalamata will stay in Greek hands for the most part of the revolution. Moreover, it was another place of the region of Messenia, the port of Navarino, modern Pylos, which became the theatre of the crucial namesake naval battle that tipped the scales of the confrontation in favour of the Greeks thereby paving the road to the official establishment of the independent Greek state. This unique heritage is celebrated in various ways and arguably the most prestigious relevant tradition is the ritual of the ‘Reenactment’ of Kalamata’s liberation every year on March 23.

With that being said it is obvious that the “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” project sought to honour a very real and outstanding heritage by amplifying the mechanisms and the rituals that connect the present with the past. It did not seek to replace or abolish any established ritual and activity. On the contrary it proposed alternative innovative ways that would breathe new life into the existing traditions by raising the awareness of the local heritage and its means of celebration. Indicatively, a visual exhibition in “Kalamata 1821 Digital Museum” is exclusively dedicated to the ritual or the ‘Reenactment’ and its journey through time, that is to say since the ritual was first incepted and performed in 1952 (Eleftheriaonline.gr, March 23, 2021).

Furthermore, it was the conjuncture of the bicentenary celebrations that inspired the overall project which was put on track in June 2018. In other words, it was also the simple belief that something special should happen on the occasion that would mark the passing of two centuries since the moment which the revolutionary fire was kindled in Kalamata in 1821. That is to say, a series of initiatives, events assisted by the new technologies with the aim of highlighting Kalamata’s unique role in the making of modern Greece. Thus, by enhancing its cultural heritage Kalamata would inevitably heighten its reputation and attract more visitors. Needless to say, by the time the project was making its first steps, nobody could have predicted the advent of the pandemic and the restrictions which it brought along. Yet, despite the difficulties “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” adjusted to the new conditions, went forth and brought about the scheduled deliverables.

### **The “Wind of Freedom 1821” Film**

The first and arguably most prestigious deliverable of “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” project was the production of a dramatized documentary by the film production company View Master Films; one of the three branches of the project’s research association. The audiovisual material would reflect on the events that led to the liberation of Kalamata in March 23, 1821. Everything would be based on the relevant historical research. As the preparations progressed the idea of a feature-length film gained ground and it was decided that an original movie with an original script would be filmed. Instead of simply narrating the facts via a dramatized documentary it was agreed that there would be a film that would follow the activity of Ioannis Filon, a fictitious senior member of the ‘Filiki Eteria’ (Society of Friends), in the pre-revolution Peloponnese and specifically in the regions of Messenia and Mani. Through the story of Filon, who travels and roams around under the cloak of a merchant, and his activity as a ‘Filiki Eteria’ cadre, one develops his/her understanding regarding the early 19th century society’s economy, daily life, dominant ideas and trends, and ultimately the conflicts of the era; all products of a relevant thorough historical research. The script not only is largely based on historical facts, but also is to a great extent inspired by the activity of Christophoros Perraivos, a prominent ‘Filiki Eteria’ member who travelled to the Peloponnese before the revolution with the aim of reconciling the powerful clans of Mani thereby sowing the seeds for the emancipation of the Greek nation.

The film was named “Wind of Freedom 1821” and apart from filling a notable gap in the existing 1821-related filmography, due to the manifold effects of the pandemic, it happened to be the only major Greek original production which referred to 1821 and was filmed on the eve of the bicentenary celebrations. Needless to say the pandemic imposed serious impediments on the production of “Wind of Freedom 1821” as well. Not only the initial rounds of filming were postponed due to the general lockdown, but also View Master Films’ colleague and renowned costume designer professor Ioulia Stavridou passed away prematurely in September 2020 after being infected with COVID-19 (Tovima.gr, September 9, 2020). Eventually the filming started in the fall of 2020 and for its purposes emblematic landmarks were selected and exploited by holding necessary permits granted by the Ministry of Culture. To be precise, scenes were filmed in Ancient Messini, Andromonastiro, Velanidia Monastery, Methoni Castle, Mourtzinos-Troupaki Tower in Kardamili and the historical church of Aghioi Apostoloi (Saint Apostles) of Kalamata.

As far as the casting is concerned, alongside the professional actors a number of auxiliary amateurs volunteered to embody the passerby crowds in the various scenes of the film. Many of those who hastened to participate happen to be members of folklore groups that have a role in the March 23 ‘Reenactment’. More importantly the project sought and guaranteed the participation of the main characters of the annual ritual. In other words, those who each year pose as the major Greek chieftains who entered the city, namely Kolokotronis, Papaflessas, Mavromichalis, Nikitaras, Anagnostaras answered the call with enthusiasm. This very collaboration underlines the intention of the project not to sideline or undermine the established norms that

honour Kalamata's unique heritage, but to operate with and alongside them by incorporating its protagonists to additional schemes that reach out to wider and different audiences so as to get closer to the aim of Cultural Heritage Enhancement.

The initial plan for the film was to reach the cinema theatres in early 2021 and to have a panegyric screening in Kalamata in March 2021. Again as a result of the pandemic which not only imposed delays in the actual filming, but also forbid cinema theatres from operating, the plan had to be revisited. Therefore, the movie "Wind of Freedom 1821" had its premiere in July 2021 in Kalamata's Dance Hall (Ertnews.gr, July 29, 2021). A large number of dignitaries and local officials were present in the screening and hailed the result of the effort of "Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom" project.



From the filming of "Wind of Freedom 1821" in Andromonastiro, December 2020  
 Source: <https://kalamatadromoieleftherias.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/4545.jpg>.

### **Kalamata 1821 Digital Museum**

The second main deliverable of the "Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom" project was the creation of a permanent exhibition that would employ the new technologies in order to introduce its visitors to the city's landmarks and highlight their connection with the 1821 era. Since October 30, 2020, and in accordance with the pandemic-related restrictions, this exhibition exists and functions in a room on the ground floor of Kalamata's Old City Hall (Eleftheriaonline.gr, October 31, 2020). This multimedia applications room constitutes a sheer novelty for the city and sets the example for similar efforts in the field of Cultural Heritage Enhancement. The main feature of the digital museum are two touch screens, one of them accessible to people with special needs, through which the visitor can explore buildings and sites of the city that although are heavily linked to the events of the March 23, 1821, the connection in question does not show and thus escapes the passerby's eye. In this regard, through the touch screens the visitor can access visual material and text that raises his/her understanding of Kalamata's distinct heritage in a creative, entertaining, and educative manner. Moreover, he/she is informed about certain routes that he/she could follow

within the city and thus to an extent live the experience and feel the spirit of 1821. Alongside the touch screens there are two TV sets playing with English and Greek subtitles material related to Kalamata's role in the outbreak and first steps of the revolution. Again he/she can watch the main characters of the 'Reenactment' outlining how the Voevoda Arnaoutoglou was forced to surrender the city without a fight to the rebels on March 23, 1821. There is also a screen where, among others, one can study the famous "Warning towards the European Courts", the first ever diplomatic document issued by a Greek authority. Besides the screens, on the very walls of the room the visitor can study digital prints of famous paintings by the renowned painter Evangelos Drakos. The later lived most of his life in Kalamata and his work has been inspired by the city's celebrated liberation. The digital prints displayed on the walls of the room reconstruct the collective memory of the crucial moments before and after the city's liberation. There is also a digital print of the "Warning towards the European Courts". Finally, the set is complemented by a number of authentic artefacts like a firearm and a sword which are carefully showcased.



From the opening of "Kalamata 1821 Digital Museum", October 2020  
 Source: <https://kalamatadromioielefthe-ri-as.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Museum-05-768x512.jpg>



From the opening of "Kalamata 1821 Digital Museum", October 2020  
 Source: [https://kalamatadromioielefthe-ri-as.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NIK\\_374-768x512.jpg](https://kalamatadromioielefthe-ri-as.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NIK_374-768x512.jpg)

## Information Technology, Smart Devices and Augmented Reality Applications for Cultural Heritage Enhancement

The most conspicuous repercussion of the pandemic on the "Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom" project was undoubtedly the cancelling of a series of events and happenings that were scheduled for March 2020 and March 2021 respectively. This unprecedented situation resulted in the shelving of an innovative tool that aimed at assisting the public to follow the various events. The latter pertains to the use of Augmented Reality (AR) technologies with the scope of enhancing the dissemination of the scheduled events. The term AR refers to technologies that digitally reproduce three-dimension (3D) objects in the natural environment in real time. AR has been applied in numerous and various fields like games, medicine and in military applications (Azuma 1997). AR differs from Virtual Reality (VR) because in the case of VR the user immerses into a holistic digital experience that does not allow him/her to see the

real world. On the contrary the AR user is allowed to move and interact with the real world which is enriched with digital virtual objects (Milgram & Kishino 1994). AR has also been employed in the field of culture with various museums using it to promote the interaction with certain artefacts (Sylaiou et al 2004).

The “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” project aimed to use AR technologies on the “Kalamata March 2020 Poster” (Zacharias and Panagiotidis, 2019). The poster was designed to interact with a smartphone application that could be downloaded with the mere reading of a Quick Response (QR) code. Thereafter, the user could use this application in order to interact with certain features of the poster. Consequently, the camera of his/her smartphone would recognize and activate material that would then appear on the smartphone’s screen. The idea was that the visitor would watch brief videos related to the events that the poster would advertise with the aim of making a strong impression to him/her, thereby increasing the possibility of convincing him/her to be part of the audience. Additional features in the poster would present the project itself and its deliverables. In this regard, the interaction of a certain element on the poster would trigger the reproduction of the “Wind of Freedom 1821” trailer. The fact that the pandemic- related restrictions did not allow the March events to take place deprived the city’s public to interact with a rather innovative tool. Yet, the work on the “Kalamata March 2020 Poster” could and should be deemed as part of the project’s overall legacy that is destined to be applied on similar Cultural Heritage Enhancement projects.



The logo of the Project seen as a 3D element through AR

*Source: Zacharias N., & Panagiotidis V. (2013). Innovative Technological Application in the Project ‘Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom’: The Augmented Reality Poster (in Greek), Presented in the 3rd Panhellenic Conference of Digitised Cultural Heritage – EuroMed 2019, Conference Annals p. 328.*

### **The “Kalamata 1821” Brand**

The third deliverable of the “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” project was the creation and promotion of a distinct brand. Based on the notion that cultural growth cannot occur in the absence of the community that is the bearer of the concerned heritage, the project sought to interact and work together with the local productive and entrepreneurial enterprises. To this end the project, from its earliest phases, organized

seminars and workshops so as to get into touch with representatives from the tourist sector, the catering business, dancing schools and produces of traditional local products. The project's scope and ambition had from the outset been to go beyond the necessary anniversary celebrations. In this regard, it aspired to amplify the footprint of the local heritage by contributing to the ever-developing exposure of the city and the region of Messenia in general. In other words, by introducing the “Kalamata 1821” brand to selected products and services with a distinct connection with the 1821 era, it would fortify and expand the collective memory of the events of March 1821 thereby prompting more people to rediscover them and concomitantly giving a notable boost to the economic activity in general, and the tourist industry in particular. All these were being discussed and organized before the advent of the pandemic which changed everything with regard to travelling and catering. To be sure, as the economy came to a halt, the effort to promote the “Kalamata 1821” brand was met with serious impediments yet it settled some noteworthy scores. Indicatively, local producers were convinced to grow again the traditional ‘rovitsa’, a green mung bean in the size of the lentil (Eleftheriaonline, October 23, 2020). ‘Rovitsa’ was quite popular in the Peloponnese in the early 19th century but its crop has been abandoned for decades. The revival of ‘rovitsa’ was boosted by the will of certain local restaurant owners to introduce dishes with the “Kalamata 1821” brand. The dishes in concern were inspired by the culinary habits of the 1821 era that the research of the “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” project brought to the fore.



From the presentation at the Peloponnese EXPO, December 2019

Source: <https://kalamatadromoieleftherias.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Gal-4-01.jpg>

## Flavours of ‘21

One of the success stories of the “Kalamata 1821” brand is the “Flavours of ‘21” scheme. The above resulted from the tremendously rich material of the historical study on the period of the Greek Revolution in the Messenia region. The memoirs of 1821

heroes and the written narrations of European travelers demonstrate that the period of the War for Greek Independence was featured by flavours and products which are still in use and production, with recipes many times either identical or slightly modified with necessary drops of creative imagination. To be precise, the research identified basic elements of the era's food and delicacies which we still cook and thus recognise as traditional Messenian dishes. That being said, the "Flavours of '21" constitute an inspiration guide for the making of dishes that correspond to the diet of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Messenia residents. The "Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom" project worked to bring back those flavours to limelight and, in this regard, to motivate both locals and tourists to look for and subsequently taste them as part of their tasting peregrination. To this end, it first reached out to local restaurants and caterings business with many of the latter answering to the call with little, if any, reluctance.

The "Flavours of '21" are also connected with producers of local traditional products. The recipes of dishes drawing their inspiration from the era of the revolution are based, as it was after all expected, on products thriving across the Messinian land. Products like figs, olives, raisins, 'pastelia' (sesame seed candies), 'lalaghia' (local pancakes) cheeses, and wines. Unsurprisingly their producers occupy a prominent place on the manufacturing chain of these special dishes and therefore are expected to be benefitted by their appeal to the public. In this context, the "Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom" project, as it should, made an effort, in many respects successful, to facilitate a constructive collaboration between producers and entrepreneurs in the field of catering business.

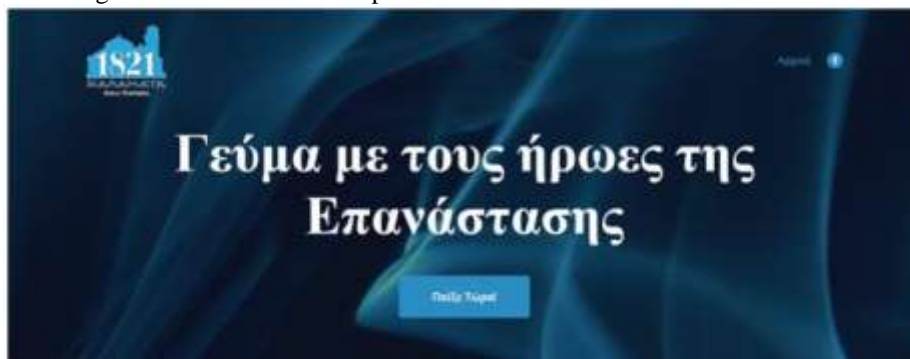
In the view of the need to make the scheme known to the wider public which by default would boost the chances of success of the entrepreneurs who decided to get involved, the "Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom" research association organized two events before the advent of the pandemic. Specifically, in February 2020 and early March 2020 local chefs and associations exhibited their 1821-inspired dishes at the premises of 'Ek- paideftiria Bouga' (Eleftheriaonline, February 14, 2020) and the city's central market (Tharrosnews, March 6, 2020) respectively. Moreover, the project collaborated with Tharros (Θάρρος) one of Kalamata's prominent and traditional local newspaper so as to dedicate its annual edition of *Gastroploia* (Γαστροπλοΐα) to the "Flavours of '21". The special edition was circulated on the last day of 2020 (Tharrosnews, December 30, 2020) and in its coloured illustrated pages one could read about the dishes bearing the "Kalamata 1821" brand and in which places he/she could find them.



From the presentation of “Flavours of ‘21” at ‘Ekpaideftiria Mpouga’, February 2020  
 Source: <https://kalamata.dromioieleftherias.gr/wp-content/uploads/slider3/Gal2-06.jpeg>

In addition an online educational game «Invitation to a dinner with the heroes of the Revolution» was developed, addressed to the younger visitors of the project’s website, providing in an entertaining and fun way, information about everyday dietary, available food ingredients, cooking habits, all these connected with historic places around the city of Kalamata and in Mani and the heroic protagonists of the War of Independence, Kolokotronis, Nikitaras, Papaflessas and Petrobeis Mavromichalis, well known from the liberation of the city of Kalamata on March 23, 1821.

Our approach to presenting nutrition habits of the area of Kalamata and Messenia through this online game comprises a variety of history sections alongside with food ingredients, such as objects, views of costumes and the everyday life, connected with the events that took place for the liberation of the city of Kalamata, on March 23, 1821. Through this concept young learners gain a complete view of the era, expand their knowledge and connect with their past.



Screen presenting the initial page of the online game

## 2 Future Aims

Presented above is the overview of the “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” project and its course of implementation since its launch in June 2018. The project could and should be seen as an exemplary case study in the field of Cultural Heritage Enhancement. It took a city with high cultural added value and significant conjuncture, and sought via a series of distinct deliverables to raise the awareness of the city’s heritage to broader audiences. To this end it used innovative technologies so as to bridge the past with the present in a creative, entertaining, and educative manner. Moreover, as the project was faced with the impediments of the COVID-19 pandemic, it had to adjust and revisit its methods and objectives. Consequently, and although most of the goals that the “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” project had set were eventually achieved, a part of the initial planning failed to materialize. Indicatively, the use of AR in the effort to disseminate public events which the pandemic did not permit to take place. Moreover, the interaction between entrepreneurs, authorities and institutions like the university with the aim of enhancing the cultural heritage of the region should deepen and undoubtedly this is the bet for the future. In the same vein, initiatives like the “Digital Museum Kalamata 1821” should be supported with the enrichment of its content and the upgrading of its applications. The collective experience and accumulated knowledge from the implementation course of the project constitutes a priceless legacy that will prove useful in future schemes of Cultural Heritage Enhancement.

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