

Third Bulgarian History Competition

“Spare time in the mirror of history”

2003/2004

Report

The Values Foundation announced the 3rd Round of the Bulgarian History Competition in December 2002. According to the organizers and to the jury the topic “Leisure time in the mirror of history” offered a variety of individual research topics. The main aim of this competition was to explore the leisure time in its dynamics: how do economical, political and social changes influence the way how people spend their spare time? With the help of information material the participants could get an idea of how to describe spare time activities in the past. The competition’s magazine showed a variety of illustrations and articles on sports and tourism, dancing, carnivals, spare time activities in urban regions, leisure time in the period of political changes etc. The topic gave opportunities for working with a variety of sources: written sources, interviews, pictures etc.

239 students took part in the 3rd round of the Bulgarian History Competition and handed in 139 contributions. According to the regional distribution the largest number of entries (58%) came from 5 regions: Gabrovo, Pazardjik, Silistra, Dobrich and Sofia, 42% from 17 regions, 6 regions did not hand in any contributions. More than 50% of the contributions were written with the help of a tutor.

The topics of the contributions can be divided into 13 main topics as follows:

- Toys and games
- Festivities in times of political change
- Music
- Amateur art activities in community centres (established in XIX century during the Bulgarian renaissance)
- Folklore, customs and Masquerade
- Theatre and cinema
- Sports and tourism
- Dance
- Fairs and markets
- Recreation and amusement places
- Resorts
- Ethnical groups
- Specific towns and villages

The 3rd edition of the Bulgarian History Competition was finalized on May 29th with an official ceremony at the National History Museum in Sofia. The President of the Bulgarian Parliament, Prof. Ognyan Gerdjikov, and Mrs. Antonina Stoyanova, wife of the former Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov and President of the Values Foundation, handed over the prizes to the 15 award winners.

Within the framework of the official prize fund one 1st prize, two 2nd, three 3rd and nine encouraging prizes were handed over. All winners of these prizes and their tutors were invited to the ceremony as well as the students awarded with special prizes. These special prizes were donated by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the Bulgarian Artists' Union, the Bulgarian Teachers' Union, the Bulgarian Olympic Committee, the Folklore Institute, the National Polytechnic Museum, the National Agency of Archives, AstraZeneca-Bulgaria and the Lions Clubs-Bulgaria. The most successful participants in the competition attend the Aprilov High School, which therefore was awarded by the Ministry of Education and Science with a special diploma. The publishing house "Anubis" awarded five schools for having the largest number of participants. The publishing companies "Letera", "Prosveta" and "Trud" as well as the Faculty of History of the University of Sofia handed over book prizes to hundred other students, tutors and schools.

Velicha Vrancheva from Sofia won the first prize for her work about the construction of a mineral water resort Ludjene and its influence on everyday life in the 1930's. Two entries were awarded with the second prize: Irena Vassileva from Gabrovo wrote about the Gabrovo Carnival. Valya Ivanova and Borislav Valchev from Stara Zagora described the changes of leisure time activities between the World Wars in a small Bulgarian town.

After the ceremony the awardees and six tutors went to Bankya, near Sofia, for a two-day seminar on the topic "Young people in the European Union: Challenges and Hopes", which was co-organized by the Bulgarian section of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. Mr. Asparuch Panov, Representative of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in Bulgaria, Romanian and Southern Caucasus moderated the meeting. The lecturers were: the Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Yulian Nakov; Prof. Bogdan Bogdanov, Chairmen of the Board of New Bulgarian University; Mrs. Gabriele Woidelko, Executive Director of EUSTORY, and Dr. Rolf Steltemeier, Docent in Heidelberg University. During the first day lecturers and participants mainly discussed the educational systems in Bulgaria and Germany, their advantages, disadvantages and reforms.

The second day was organized as a workshop with three working groups divided by topics

- perception of young Bulgarians in Bulgaria,
- perception of young Bulgarians abroad and
- pluses and minuses of the Bulgarian educational system: What should be improved?

All groups presented their results at the end of the seminar.

Although we realize that the quality of the research works is constantly improving, we faced some problems in the 3rd edition of the competition. They could be grouped as follows:

1. The girls' predominance (201) in the 3rd round of the competition compared to the number of boys (38) is something that should be mentioned as a problem, even though we find the topic attractive for both sexes.
2. The tutors taking part in the competition are stimulated neither on school level (they do not receive any financial or moral support) nor on institutional level (the Ministry of Education and Science does not offer any vocational training for these purposes).
3. In spite of all methodical indications that were given in the information material (magazine and brochure), some contributions did not reach the standard of a scientific research work. As a result in some cases tutors, parents or pupils complained about the jury's evaluation of these works.
4. The interest of mass media was focused on the prominent award ceremony as it was attended by the President of the Parliament. As other competition organizers mentioned in their reports: "Usually media are not interested in educational issues".
5. Even though we have established contacts with Bulgarian and European business companies, non-governmental organizations and other institutions, we had more difficulties in finding sponsors compared to the previous two rounds. Unfortunately we did not find sponsorship for the publication of the awarded papers which we consider to be an important step for the popularization of the competition.

We would also like to stress some positive aspects of this third round of the competition. Some participants and tutors took part in the competition for the second or third time, which consider to be a sign for the growing popularity of the Bulgarian history competition. As a result of training seminars and the EUSTORY Summer Academies we have established a "strong" tutors' network. Good cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science was established during this third round of the competition. We have also created a web site for the Bulgarian history competition that could be found on www.values.bg/history.

All in all we can say that a tradition of the Bulgarian history competition has developed and that a network of governmental institutions, schools and tutors cooperating in the field of the competition has been established. In future perspective we do not only want to support the already existing fruitful contacts but establish new contacts and seek new additional stimulus for the future participants and their tutors.

Liliana Panova
Competition coordinator