

“Year 1989: the end, turning point, beginning...?” Year: 2008/2009

In the 13th edition of the „History at Hand” competition participants were invited to stand up to the testimonies imprinted in memory of individuals and local communities related to the events of year 1989. The main objective of the competition’s task was to inspire schoolchildren to carry out their own research on events that happened in Central Eastern Europe 20 years ago. It was not an easy task given the fact that contemporary history is hardly represented in school teaching programmes and is being rarely taught in classes. At the same time it still represents an intense and controversial topic lively disputed both in public and private debates.



144 works by 297 pupils from 60 places in Poland were presented at the competition. Most of them were creative and sometimes even pioneering especially the awarded ones. They were a result of a serious research effort undertaken by the young people.

It was a great achievement of the participants to show their readiness of listening to the voices of different witnesses of history, to take up an effort to look at the events from various perspectives, and to show the courage in tackling the history which often directly affected, sometimes painfully, also their own families. Young history discoverers often clashed the current state of consciousness and memory of the period. Preparing a competition work was therefore a serious challenge and it gave the participants much broader knowledge compared to school programmes requirements.

Participation in the competition not only brought much satisfaction, not only taught critical thinking and research independence, not only made it easier to pass different exams at higher levels of education, but also - we are confident - will determine future choices of the participants.