

**XIV Polish EUSTORY competition – “History at Hand”
“Stigma of World War II – fates and memory”
2009/2010**

The topic of the XIV Polish history competition organized within the framework of the “History at Hand” program, addressed to high school and middle school students, had been formulated as: “Stigma of World War II — fates and memory”.

413 competition entries were submitted (109 group works and 304 individual), prepared **by 703 students** (the girls – 78% of the authors), from 208 schools, located in 155 Polish towns and cities. (Only 6 % of all entries were sent from the largest cities.). The largest number of entries was submitted from Lesser Poland, Silesia and Lower Silesia voivodeships (105 works, constituting 25%). 67% of entries were submitted from middle schools; 25% were written by students from schools that participated in the competition for the first time. 239 tutors, mostly teachers, accompanied the students in their research.

The participants were asked to evoke a memory of World War II and to search how the War “put its stigma” on the fate of men, families or local communities. The main objective of the competition’s task was to describe war awareness of present generations. Students reconstructed a lot of interesting fates, discovered topics hardly known, forgotten or failed, also very difficult issues to understand like a situation of Silesians or Poles enlisted to the German army (Wehrmacht).

The authors succeeded in presenting daily life under nazi and soviet occupations of Poland. Competition entries described mainly a whole spectrum of repressions against civilians (expulsions, forced labour, executions, concentration camps), also resistance movement, conspiracy or underground education.

Submitted entries imply certain difficulties which the students have encountered with discovering of “stigma of the war” – not only visible traces of war, but also the hidden ones, existing in social tissue or mentality. It seems the generation of present students hardly manage to recognize this stigma. Not all participants familiarized themselves with the competition instructions, in which the organizers tried to facilitate the understanding of the topic.

Even though sometimes the works were a collection of a great number of interesting and valuable, well-elaborated and excellently presented sources — the Jury had to either reject them entirely as inconsistent with the regulations of the competition.

Students were awarded: 12 first, second and third prizes (6 group and 6 individual); 34 consolation prizes of the first level – financial prizes – financial prizes (16 group and 18 individual), as well as 66 second level consolation prizes – book awards sent by mail (38 group and 28 individual). 112 contributions and 229 authors were nominated.

Also 7 teachers, tutors of student contributions, were awarded financial prizes. Tutors of all awarded contributions were honored with diplomas and books.