

ISTORIA MEA – EUSTORY
Romania's historical research competition

Fifth edition, 2007-2008

Journeys and borders yesterdays and nowadays. Encounters, separations, finding together was chosen as theme for the fifth edition of the Romanian historical research competition MY HISTORY - EUSTORY. This choice was consistent with the more general philosophy of the Romanian competition and of the EUSTORY network to link the historical investigation of the young participants with their personal/family experiences.

The fifth edition of the Romanian historical research competition for young people was organized by the DRIFI Association with the support of the Körber Foundation and in cooperation with the Center for Economic, Social and Historical Studies. The competition was supported institutionally also by the Romanian Cultural Institute, by the Ministry of Education and Research, by the Ministry of Culture, by the Romanian National Commission for UNESCO, by the National Archives of Romania, by the National Bank of Romania and by the historical journals "Magazin istoric" and "Dosarele istoriei". The President of Romania, Mr. Traian Băsescu, agreed to be the patron of this edition. A Scientific Board formed by academics and university teachers was charged with the choice of the general theme and with the final assessment of the entries. As national coordinator of the competition was appointed Prof. Dr. Bogdan Murgescu, who was assisted by Dr. Mirela-Luminița Murgescu and by Adelina Oana Stefan M.A.

The topic of the fifth edition and the general rules of the competition were publicly announced on May 3 2007, at a ceremony hosted by the National Bank of Romania. Posters were sent in all schools with the help of the Ministry of Education and Research, and booklets with specific advice and information were disseminated both through the network of the Ministry, and by the competition staff. Various newspapers, the historical journals "Magazin istoric" and "Dosarele istoriei", radio and TV further disseminated the information.

The competition was open to all young people born after January 1, 1988, without any disadvantage. The participants were granted about 9 months to prepare their contributions, the deadline for submitting their entries being fixed for January 15, 2008. Upon demand, the competition staff supplied further advice either by phone, by e-mail, and by normal mail.

Although the history of everyday life is not at the core of history teaching in school, a significant number of young people answered to the challenge. There were received 139 entries, to which contributed a number of 317 participants. Participants came from most counties and all historical regions of Romania, but mostly from an urban background. Oltenia, a region from the South of Romania leads in the number of participants, followed by Bucharest and Dâmbovița County. Participating girls clearly outnumbered the boys (219 vs. 98) even in comparison with the previous edition the number of boys slightly increased. Most entries were individual, but we had also a respectable share of group entries; most groups numbered 2-4 participants. The most numerous group counted 17 participants and came from the "Grigore Moisil" high school, town of Deva, Hunedoara County.

The entries varied a lot, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Generally, the participants preferred to use oral sources, but many of them corroborated the information obtained through interviews with the data obtained from various written materials, newspapers and even archival sources. Many of the entries included photos, audiotapes and/or videotapes with interviews, and other various additional materials. Some of the entries were realized on CDs, exploring original ways of presenting the findings.

Two different juries, formed by university teachers, secondary school teachers, and specialists working in museums, assessed the entries. After these assessment sessions, the Scientific Board also assessed the best entries and decided the final list of prizewinners. There have been awarded 3 first prizes, 5 second prizes, 10 third prizes, 31 fourth prizes, and 2 other special prizes for the best diary and for the most original graphical representation of the competition topic. The Ministry of Culture sponsored one first prize, the Romanian Cultural Institute three prizes and the educational software company SIVCO Romania SA. also one first prize.

The variety of topics, and of the ways they were approached, was considerable: from voyaging in conditions of war to virtual traveling on internet and from a very literate style to a more analytical one. The award-winning entries distinguished themselves through the large set of sources, including eye-witness interviews, articles from newspapers, photos and archival materials, and through the effort of researching the events from multiple perspectives.

The award ceremony was hosted by the Romanian Presidency on May 27, 2008, and the Romanian President, Mr. Traian Băsescu awarded the prize winners, in the presence of a significant number of teachers, journalists and officials. The program for the awardees included also a guided visit of the Cotroceni Museum.