

ISTORIA MEA – EUSTORY
Romania's historical research competition

Sixth edition, 2009-2010

World of labor yesterday and nowadays: professions, lifestyles, representations was chosen as theme for the sixth edition of the Romanian historical research competition. This choice was consistent with the more general philosophy of the Romanian competition and of the EUSTORY network to document and to help fostering social involvement, economic responsibility and human values.

The sixth edition of the Romanian historical research competition for young people was organized by the DRIFI Association with the support of the Körber Stiftung and in cooperation with the Center for Historical, Economic and Social Studies. The competition was supported institutionally also by the Ministry of Education and Research, by the National Bank of Romania, by the Romanian Cultural Institute, by the Romanian National Archives and by the historical journal "Magazin istoric". The President of Romania, Mr. Traian Băsescu, agreed to be the patron of this edition. A Scientific Board formed by academics from Bucharest, Cluj and Iasi 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, by Adelina Oana Stefan, M.A. and by Iulia Cristina Bulacu, M.A.

The theme of the sixth edition and the general rules of the competition were publicly announced on June 2, 2009, 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 "Historia", radio and TV further disseminated the information.

The competition was open to all young people born after January 1, 1990, without any discrimination. The participants were granted about 9 months to prepare their contributions, the deadline for submitting their entries being fixed for January 15, 2010. Upon demand, the competition staff supplied further advice either by phone, by e-mail, and by normal mail.

Although the history of labor is not at the core of history teaching in school, a significant number of young people answered to the challenge. There were received 198 entries, to which contributed a number of 389 participants. Although this represents a progress compared with previous editions of the competitions (139 entries at the previous edition), the numbers do not match the expectations of the organizers. Participants came from most counties and all historical regions of Romania, but mostly from an urban background; nevertheless, in comparison with other editions there was an increase in the participation of village pupils. Olt County leads in the number of participants, followed by the counties of Iasi and Dambovită. Participating girls clearly outnumbered the boys (297 vs. 92). Most entries were individual, but we had also a respectable share of group entries; most groups numbered 2-4 participants.

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/DVDs, exploring original ways of presenting the findings.

Two different juries, formed by university faculty and secondary school teachers 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, 11 third prizes, 30 fourth prizes, and 3 other special prizes for the most active schools and for the artistic presentation of the entry. 3 of the prizes were sponsored by the Romanian Cultural Institute. The Romanian Cultural Institute, the National Archives and the Museum of the Romanian Peasant donated also publications for prizes.

The variety of topics was considerable. The entries presented for this edition dealt with both classical narratives such as the description of various crafts as well as with innovative subjects and historical methods like the comparative analysis of labor during Communist and Nazi/Fascist times in Romania, Germany and Spain. Various papers also tried to challenge the official paradigm by bringing into discussion the social and professional significance of certain so-called taboo occupations such as that of priest and monk or by contrast the condition of a convict. Family histories and/or the history of local communities were at the core of most of the papers. 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 Parliament on June 4, 2010, and the president of the Chamber of Deputies, Mrs. Roberta Alma Anastase personally 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 tour of the House of Parliament.