

ISTORIA MEA – EUSTORY
Romania's historical research competition

Fourth edition, 2005-2006

Home Yesterday and Nowadays: People, Places, Customs was chosen as theme for the fourth 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 document and to help fostering social cohesiveness and human values.

The fourth 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 Economic, Social and Historical Studies. The competition was supported institutionally also by the Romanian National Commission for UNESCO, by the Ministry of Education and Research, by the Ministry of Culture, 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, by Adelina Oana Stefan M.A. and by Bogdan Popa, M.A.

The theme of the fourth edition and the general rules of the competition were publicly announced on April 14, 2005, 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, 1986, 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, 2006. 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 133 entries, to which contributed a number of 330 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 Constanta County. Participating girls clearly outnumbered the boys (224 vs. 86). Most entries were individual, but we had also a respectable share of group entries; most groups numbered 2-4 participants, the biggest group consisting of 19 children from the „Avram Iancu” School, Baia Mare. The members of this group were 9 and 10 years old, by now this being the youngest group participating in MY HISTORY- EUSTORY Competition.

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, 11 third prizes, 30 fourth prizes, and 4 other special prizes for the best diary, for the most active school, for the youngest participants and for the connecting history within the local community. The Ministry of Culture sponsored two prizes, the Catholic Archbishopric of Bucharest supported one prize and the Orthodox Archbishopric of Roman offered financial assistance for another prize. We also have received a book donation from the National Archives of Romania.

The variety of topics, and the way they were approached, was considerable: from the memorial houses to “home for the others”, 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 19, 2006, and the representative of the Romanian President Traian Băsescu, Mr. Bogdan Tătaru Cazaban together with other outstanding personalities 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.