

First Slovak History Competition

“The picture of my city (village, street, district) in symbols and traditions of 20th century” 2003/2004

Report

The Eustory programme in Slovakia is coordinated by the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, Bratislava, namely by the coordinator PhD. Olga Pestukova and financially supported by the Körber Foundation. The first Slovak history competition was announced in September 2003 under the topic “*The picture of my city (village, street, district) in symbols and traditions of 20th century*”.

The main goal was to describe changes of certain localities in the 20th century as they are reflected in symbols (in particular: street names, monuments, memorial plaques, house decorations, banners, tables or tablets, shop signs etc.) and in traditions (such as hoisting flags, joining manifestations, meetings, voluntary services, different cultural and social events, etc.). The research should be based on primary sources (e.g. photographs, newspaper articles, chronicles, family albums, diaries, interviews with eyewitnesses) and compare symbols from the past with contemporary ones.

A guideline for students and their tutors informed about the requests on forms and means of research, contents and the form of the paper, its attachments etc. Moreover the pupils had the opportunity to consult professional historians while they were doing their research.

The competition coordinator informed history teachers and directors of 255 secondary schools about the start of the first Slovak history competition with the help of e-mail, letters, phone calls, personal visits, 500 information posters and advertisement in the national Teacher’s newspaper. A web site on the history competition and the EUSTORY network has been set up: www.vnjh.sk/eustory.

16 institutions form the Slovak Eustory National Partners Network, from whom the members of the evaluation committee and final jury have been chosen. These are the Slovak Association of History Teachers, the Methodical and Pedagogical Centre of Bratislava, the UNESCO Centre, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Science, the State Pedagogical Institution, the City Institute for Monuments Preservation, the Slovak National Museum as well as teachers from universities and secondary schools.

158 students from all over Slovakia participated in the competition and submitted 96 entries - 62 individual and 34 group researches. In their papers the students mainly focussed on the cities or villages they live in and on certain parts such as streets and squares, cultural institutions (theatres, schools, museums) or historical buildings (mills, bridges). A few students followed their family’s history or illustrated the fate of national minorities (German, Croatian, Hungarian, Jewish) during World War II.

The students used a great variety of sources (interviews, photos, newspaper articles, records, sketches) and sometimes even drew up their own pictures, drawings, maps and posters.

14 individual and 12 group works were awarded plus a special prizes for a handicapped participant. These entries will be published in a brochure in summer.

Juraj Vaculik from a Gymnasium in Zilina won the first prize for individual works. He based his entry „A Girls’ Gymnasium throughout the changing times“ on his grandmother’s memories. Anna Michalkova and Kristina Vargová from the evangelistic lyceum in Bratislava were awarded with the first prize for group entries. In their contribution they described how the Konventna Street in the old town of Bratislava changed throughout the years.

The award ceremony was held on June 11 in the premises of the Bratislava castle under the patronage of the President of the Slovak Parliament, JUDr. Pavol Hrušovský. The opening speeches were presented and prizes to winners were handed over by professor Ferdinand Devínsky, Head of the Committee for education, science, culture, youth and media of the Slovak Parliament, Mrs. Gabriele Woidelko, Executive Director of the EUSTORY network, and PhD Peter Maráky, General Director of the Slovak National Museum.

Each winner was awarded with Tesco shopping coupons. Moreover the students got additional prizes such as Microsoft PC software and games, mountain bicycles, books, free prescriptions for „History“ magazine, Slovak Devin Radio Club Cards, etc. These awards were granted by local donors (the Slovak National Museum, the Comenius University, the Slovak Devin Radio, bookstores, private companies, etc). A certificate and a small present was handed over to each participant in order to encourage them to join the second competition round in 2005.

After the award ceremony all guests were invited to the Museum of historical weapons and to Bratislava castle, where they visited historical expositions.

Students and history teachers from all over Slovakia welcomed the competition and appreciated the opportunity to participate in such a competition. Some of them labelled it as the best history competition in Slovakia.

The organizing committee thinks, that the history competition helped to establish an informal “national history network“ in Slovakia bringing together students, teachers and scientist who care about the history issues of our country. Not only the Jan Hus Educational Foundation as coordinator, but all persons and institutions from the national network strongly support the idea to organize this competition again.

Olga Pestukova
Competition coordinator