



Searching for my roots... 10 young people awarded for research into their family origins

Hang on granddad's every word when he talks about the war. Be curious about the jobs done by members of your family in the past century.

On Monday, 26 May, ten young people who took part in the *Searching for my roots...* history competition were awarded prizes at the BELvue Museum.

Main winners: Liselotte Denys, BARNUM Roeselare:

Saadet Ozyurt, Institut Saint-Joseph, Charleroi

- Safia Mukamana Nishimwe, Athénée Royal d'Evère
 - Valérie Delforge, Sacré-Coeur de Linthout, Woluwé-Saint-Pierre
 - Clarisse Harvengt, Athénée Royal René Magritte, Lessines
 - Salomé Vanhelsuwé, Athénée Royal René Magritte, Lessines
 - Mathilde Manche, Athénée Jules Bara, Tournai
- Jimmy de Hoon, VITO Hoogstraten
Arne Ribbens, VITO Hoogstraten
Glenn Veltmans, VITO Hoogstraten

EUSTORY is an European network of organisations in various countries that organise historical research competitions for young people. This year, the Fonds Bellevue, which is managed by the King Baudouin Foundation, also organised a history competition in Belgium.

The main topic was "family history". How did my grandparents and great grandparents live when they were my age? What was it like to be a young person in the society of those times?

The past twenty years have seen a marked increase in interest in history, starting in the immediate environment. The objective is for young people to view their own environment and try to determine how it fits in the context of a country, Europe and the world in general. The competition attracted more than 50 entries this year.

The aim was not for young people simply to find out what their parents, grandparents or great grandparents did between the ages of 17 and 19 and then merely reproduce that information in a piece of writing. The project involved delving below the surface and going beyond what young people already know about their ancestors.

The topic chosen was intended to foster communication and interaction between the generations. This may help throw some light on certain sensitive social issues of today, such as the continued inequality between the sexes. In the safety and confidentiality of their own family environment, young people could learn to set issues of this kind in an historical context. The ultimate objective was for young people to compare stories from the past with their own situation. They were asked to consider whether there were major discernible differences, or indeed whether little has changed, both in society in general and within the family.

Entrants had to set their own limits on the topic according to their personal interests and the sources available (grandparents still alive, family photos, etc).

Entries submitted to the jury included photo reportage, DVDs, PowerPoint presentations and written documents.

All the prize-winners had one thing in common: they were all glad to have had the chance to talk to their grandparents.

For their part, the grandparents were very glad to have the opportunity to tell their untold story without leaving anything out, including suffering, death and fear.

They were all aware of their good fortune in living in the here and now, but they also discovered the value of the research and received appreciation and recognition from the family and, of course, the jury for their efforts.

The competition was open to all Belgian students in the last two years of secondary education, across the entire spectrum of general, technical, vocational and art colleges.

The competition will be held again next years, using the same theme. The closing date for entries is 3 April 2009. Further details are available at www.knooppuntdemocratie.be.
