

## ► NEWSLETTER ◀

### New Tolerance education centers have been established

The network of Tolerance education centers was supplemented with 4 new members: Venta gymnasium in Akmenė district, Salomėja Nėris primary school in Vilkaviškis, Žemaitė gymnasium in Telšiai and Marija Pečkauskaitė gymnasium from Židikai in Mažeikiai district.

### Varėna hosted already the sixth national song festival “Songs from the exile”

On 28 March the Culture Center of Varėna hosted a national song festival "Songs from the exile". The event was held for the sixth time.

The first song festival "Songs from the exile" in 2014 took place in Vilnius, and since 2015 every year has been held in Varėna. Within those five years, 79 schools of general education of Lithuania participated in the event.

The event is traditionally held in March, when Lithuania marks the exile operation „Priboj“ (the swash), dated 25-28 March 1949. This year, 22 Lithuanian schools participated, ensuring a large number of participants in the event. Ronaldas Račinskas, Executive Director of the International Commission, prompted the goals of the song festival – to get historical awareness, to feel the history and to understand it through songs and lyrics. At the festival the pupils performed authentic songs of partisans and deportees. Many of the old songs sounded anew and artistic compositions were specially prepared for the event. Varėna deportees' ensemble "Viltis", which participates in the festival every year, also performed historical songs at this event. According to the Mayor of Varėna Algis Kašėta "history is very important to us, even the one which broke destinies of people."

The song festival "Songs from the exile" was organized by the Secretariat of the International Commission for the Evaluation of Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, together with the Tolerance education center of Ažuolas gymnasium in Varėna.



## The pupils of Tolerance education centers participated in the review of “Who will write our history”

On 20 and 21 March, pupils from Jonas Jablonskis gymnasium of Kaunas and Simonas Daukantas gymnasiums of Vilnius took part in a review of the film "Who will write our history". The film was presented at Martynas Mažvydas national library of Lithuania in Vilnius.



Reviews of the film, produced in 2017 (directed by Roberta Grossman), were ongoing in various countries in 2019, commemorating the International Holocaust Remembrance Day - January 27. The Secretariat of the International Commission has contacted the UNESCO organization and obtained the rights to organize a review of the film „Who will write our history“for educational purposes. The Secretariat of the International Commission together with UNESCO Lithuania and Martynas Mažvydas national library of Lithuania invited schools of Tolerance education centers to participate in film reviews. The first ones to answer were two gymnasiums, whose pupils, accompanied by teachers Saulius Skučas and Vytautas Stundžia attended the film reviews in English.

The film tells about a ghetto in Warsaw, where a group of imprisoned intellectuals decide to write down everything that happens in the ghetto. Writing the daily history has become the goal to preserve evidence for history of what people have experienced and have felt.

## A conference in Mažeikiai on Jews of Samogitian towns

On 15 March a conference "Jews as a part of Samogitian towns" was held in Merkelis Račkauskas gymnasium in Mažeikiai. About 100 guests from the Samogitian region attended the conference.

The conference started with a documentary "Time and destiny", created by Mažeikiai Merkelis Račkauskas gymnasium. This film told about Jewish pupils and teachers. The film mainly focused on the story of Israel Lempert, who succeeded to escape.



The historian dr. Linas Venclauskas spoke at the conference about anti-Semitism and its causes, giving examples, related to the Samogitian region. There were many presentations about Jewish communities in Samogitian towns and townships: Telšiai, Akmene, Raseiniai, Ariogala, Vieکشniai, Tirkšliai, and Seda. Teachers and pupils shared their impressions – what information, pictures they have managed to find and what cultural heritage they have discovered.



A guest of the event, director of the Jakovas Bunka Support and Charity Foundation, Eugenijus Bunka, summarized the event by saying: "Seek, preserve, write down and publicize, as it is the real history of the towns, which has to be preserved".

The conference was organized by the Tolerance education center of Mažeikiai Merkeliš Račkauskas gymnasium together with its partners: the Secretariat of the International Commission and the Good Will Foundation.

### **The civic initiative „The living flower of the nation“ was attended by close to 300 education institutions of Lithuania**

Every year, as 11 March – the day of restoration of Independence of Lithuania-approaches, general education institutions are invited to join the citizenship initiative "The living flower of the nation".



The civic initiative "The living flower of the nation" was held for the sixth year to celebrate the important date of the Lithuanian State – the day of restoration of Independence - in a happy and creative way. Teachers, educators, students, children of all educational institutions (schools, preschool education institutions) were invited to use colors of the Lithuanian national flag (yellow, green and red) to create a live composition and to make photos for the record.

291 educational institutions participated in the civic Initiative in 2019 - pre-school institutions (kindergartens) were extremely active.

The civic initiative "The living flower of the nation" has been taking place in Lithuania since 2014, initiated by the International Commission together with the authors of this idea - Kastyčio Ramanausko kindergarten in Panevėžys.

More moments from the civic initiative of 2019 in the [photo gallery](#).

## The seminar focused on discussion not only the topics of history, but also the advantages of teamwork

On 5-6 March, the Multicultural center of Kėdainiai Regional Museum hosted a seminar for teacher and school leaders, who work in schools with Tolerance education centers.

The participants of the seminar listened to lectures on xenophobia and the causes of stereotypes. Dr. Algirdas Davidavičius talked about the development of empathy in discussions on sensitive historical topics. The historian of the International Commission dr. Arūnas Bubnys analyzed the prevailing stereotypes when it comes to totalitarian regimes.

A review and discussion of the film “The Purim Miracle” was held at the event. The teachers were introduced to new, interactive exhibitions of Kėdainiai Regional Museum, and participated in a cognitive excursion in Kėdainiai environs.

The seminar focused not only on the topics of history, but much was discussed about teamwork at Tolerance education centers, cooperation between Tolerance education centers and opportunities to implement projects that foster historical memory.

The seminar was organized by the Secretariat of the International Commission in cooperation with Kėdainiai Regional Museum.



## At a seminar for teachers - knowledge of the history of the Jews of Lithuania



On 18-19 February a seminar was held in Kėdainiai for the teachers from Lithuania, interested in the history of Lithuanian Jews and the way to present this topic in the classroom and during after-school activities.

The seminar "The history of Lithuanian Jews in the context of the general education curriculum" was held at the Multicultural center of Kėdainiai Regional Museum.

The seminar was organized by the Secretariat of the International Commission in cooperation with the Regional Museum of Kėdainiai and the World Jewish Congress International Yiddish Center Vilnius.