

CENTER FOR JEWISH-BULGARIAN COOPERATION "ALEF"
ACTIVITY REPORT
2017

Center for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef" / CJBC / is a non-governmental organization established in Burgas in 2014. Among its founders are Jews and Bulgarians who have proved their social activity and sympathy for preserving and developing the Jewish-Bulgarian relations. "Alef" is a non-party, voluntary, democratic, public and self-governing organization, which carries out its activity in compliance with the adopted statute and the legislation in force of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Chairman of CJBC "Aleph" is Alberta Leon Alkalay.

The headquarter and center of management of the Center for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef" is in Burgas, Baba Ganka Square № 4, 4th floor.

CJBC "Alef" mission is:

- Creating initiatives to give good examples of integration between Bulgarians and Jews;
 - Exploration and popularization of the deep cultural and historical ties between Bulgarians and Jews during the millenniums;
 - Developing cultural, social and economic ties with Jewish and Israeli institutions, businesses and personalities;
 - Promotion of the act of salvation of the Bulgarian Jews during the Second World War and paying tribute and thanks to the Bulgarians who contributed to it;
 - Active actions to promote trust and strengthen the cooperation between Jewish and Bulgarian peoples, their states and the diaspora.
 - Countering any form of fascism, xenophobia, totalitarianism, terrorism, racism, anti-Semitism and all other anti-human ideologies and practices that constitute a crime against humanity;
 - Strengthening the ties with other ethnic communities in the spirit of the common human values - respect, understanding and tolerance;
- Informing and popularizing the concrete and socially significant contribution of Jews in the scientific, economic, educational and cultural life of Bulgarian society;
- Preservation, validation and development of Jewish and Bulgarian ethnic, linguistic and cultural values and traditions.

ACTIVITIES 2017:

REALIZATION OF A PROJECT FOR THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAM INTERREG BULGARIA - TURKEY

Center for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "ALEF" started the implementation of a project under the Interreg Bulgaria - Turkey Cross-Border Cooperation Program, financed by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance 2014-2020. The project "Path of legends- Establishment of New Partnerships for Development of Sustainable Cultural- Historical tourism" is carried out jointly with the Research Organization for Trans border Culture - Edirne. Beneficiary is Center Alef, which won the project in competition with other 195 project proposals. The contracts were handed over to the beneficiaries at a ceremony in the MRRB on 21 March 2017. The project partner is the Organization for Cross-Border Culture in Edirne, Republic of Turkey.



On June 28th, in Hotel Primoretz was held the first project event - a capacity building seminar for representatives of local authorities. It aimed at raising awareness, knowledge and skills for the development of sustainable tourism and financing of activities in this area. Mayors and officials from municipalities in Burgas region participated in the forum. The lecturers of the seminar were well-established specialists in the field of tourism and project management - Prof. Dr. Lina Anastasova from Burgas Free University, eng. Stefan Zlatarov - Director of Strandja National Park, Marina Dicheva - expert on European projects.

On July 17 and 18, 2017, a capacity building seminar for students in tourism was organized in Edirne. This was the second project event.



A photo exhibition, showing legendary places in Strandzha Mountain from the Bulgarian and Turkish side, was held on 12 September at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Edirne. The exposition contained 14 panels with photos and text, which introduced the inhabitants and guests of the Turkish city with mystical and cultural-historical sights on both sides of the border. Center "Alef" presented in the exhibition the legends about the emergence of Strandzha Mountain, Indipasha Sanctuary, Maharata Cave, Bastet's Tomb, the Dolmen - the Drama Houses, Sinemorean Sphinx, Fire-dancers.



On September 18, training for tourist guides in Strandzha was organized in Sozopol by Center Alef - the leading partner. The training was aimed at raising awareness, giving knowledge and skills to unemployed people from Strandzha's region to unlock the potential of the settlements in the field of tourism.



The most artistic event in the project was the Festival of Legends, presented in two cities- in Primorsko, Bulgaria on September 23 and in Enez, Turkey, on 30 September. Six Strandzha legends were presented, creatively interpreted by Bulgarian and Turkish art groups. Parallel to the art event in Primorsko was an eco-tour from the Thracian sanctuary Begliktash to the Lion's head in Bulgarian Part.



A trilingual edition (in Bulgarian, Turkish and English), containing Strandzha legends on both sides of the border, will be printed as part of the project. It is preceded by a research and collecting expedition of a team of Center Alef in the region of Strandja.

FINALIZATION OF IV LITERATURE COMPETITION

With a solemn ceremony on April 27th, the fourth edition of the national literary student contest "Who saved one human life, saves a whole universe" was completed.



The theme of the traditional competition, organized by the Center ALEF, was: "Shimon Peres and his Contribution to the Dimensions of Universal Humanism." The advice of the great politician and peacemaker to dream of the big things was followed by 161 students from 41 settlements in Bulgaria.

On April 27th, the young authors, who in their essay say they have big dreams and intend to achieve them, take place on the stage of the Puppet Theatre in Burgas.



The competition continued in an open lesson called "Dreamtime". The actor Valeriy Elichov entered the role of a teacher and the audience joined the so-called "External evaluation" - her applause was a sign of approval and a signal for the jury to tilt the prize awards.

Among the audience in the puppet theatre were representatives of local authorities, politicians, businessmen, public figures, teachers and pupils. Especially to congratulate the winners from Sofia came Maxim Benvenisti, Chairman of the Cedaka Foundation at OEB Shalom and Moritz Machiah, Chairman of the Board of "Emil Shekerdjiiski" lucern in Sofia.



"The pupils have done very profound analyses of the complex personality of a

world-wide politician like Shimon Peres. Impressive is the volumetric bibliography they used. But even more impressive is their way of thinking and their value system, "said the chairman of the jury Mihailina Pavlova.

In its difficulty of point out the best works, the jury awarded more awards than usual.



The essay of Manuil Kasabov from Sveti Konstantin - Kiril Philosopher school in Rousse was ranked first. He was awarded the grand prize - a trip to Israel and participation in a week-long international seminar for young leaders in Herzlia. Manuel presented Bulgaria at a one-week international forum for young leaders in August this year at the expense of the organizers.

Two second awards of 200 leva and three third prizes of 150 leva were awarded. Martin Mihalev from Bourgas and Vladimir Iliev from Karnobat were ranked second. Diana Mihaylova from Montana, Melis Mehmedali from Chernoochene, Kardzhali and Angelina Alexandrova from Plovdiv took the third place.

Encouraging awards received:

Borislava Pangalova – Sofia
Georgi Minchev - Sofia
Gabriela Mankova - Kardzhali
Alexandra Mileva - Sofia
Nia Stoencheva – Sevlievo
Daria Dimova - Kardzhali
Gergana Ivanova – Bourgas

Marinella Getova - Plovdiv
Vesela Agorasteva – Pomorie
Dorothea Koleva - Encouragement for Research Contribution



All honoured received books and diplomas.
On behalf of OEB "Shalom" Maxim Benvenisti defined the competition as "the most meaningful competition held in Bulgaria on the topic of Bulgarians and Jews."



For the young artists, guests of Center Alef, the participation in the ceremony has become an indelible memory and an incentive for future creativity. The finale of the fourth literary contest gave them the opportunity to participate in a real story. The day after the award ceremony, they visited the Castle "In love with the wind" near Ravadinovo, where with maps and other aids, went to search for treasures, and later in the chapel of the Castle they also participated in the inscription of "Slavo-Bulgarian History" .

Център за еврейско-българско сътрудничество "Алеф"
обявява

V Национален литературен конкурс

Тема на конкурса: Издиганата и посломата на 17-годишната
еврейска дъщеря на български офицер
от първата половина на Втората световна война

Адрес: ученици между 8-ми и 12-ти клас
избрателе все по една от следните теми:

Първа тема: Ако имаше някога време, когато "всичко" в България
поса март 1943 година, как би постъпила?

Втора тема: Ако в бъдеще постъпи политически режим,
кой би извършил геноцид над евреите и негов, как би можело да
направен и какви жертви би могел да понесе?

Трета тема: Ако бият евреите от българини.

Награди:

I място – участие в еднодневен международен конкурс
за млади лидери в Херцлия, Израел
II място – 300 лева
III място – 200 лева

Национален конкурс за деца и юноши
с адрес: ул. "Св. Кирил" №10, София, БГ

Материалите по темата могат да бъдат намирани във
виртуалната библиотека на сайта на "Алеф" www.alef.org

Конкурсът е организиран от
партньорите си от некорпоративен сектор
при спонсорство на "Алеф" и "Св. Кирил" №10, София

Обществеността е поощрявана да участва в конкурса
и да се включи в работата на "Алеф" и "Св. Кирил" №10, София

Контактна информация: Булевард "Св. Кирил" №10, София, БГ
Телефон: 02 92 92 92 92, Е-пошта: info@alef.org, www.alef.org

On October 10, 2017, Center Alef announced the fifth edition of the National

Literary Student Competition "Who Saved one Human Life, Saves A Whole Universe". The creative race is dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews from the death camps during the Second World War. The idea is literary works to be inspired by the historical events, related to the deliverance of nearly 48,000 Bulgarian Jews and the deportation of 11,343 Jews from Vardar Macedonia, Aegean Thrace and Pirot to the Nazi concentration camps in 1943. Students can choose between three topics for their essays:

First Topic: If a time machine "took you back" to Bulgaria in March 1943, what would you do?

Second Topic: If in the future there is a political regime that engages in genocide over a particular ethnic group, what choice would you make and what sacrifices you could bear? The evaluation of the jury will take into account the knowledge of historical events and the personal position expressed in the creative interpretation of the themes.

Third Topic: I was one of the saved...

The works on this subject should be based on the authentic history of a Bulgarian Jew who experienced the events in March 1943.

DAY OF THE SALVATION OF THE BULGARIAN JEWS

At the initiative of Center "Alef", the memorable date for the Bulgarian Jews, March 10, was celebrated in Burgas with a screening of the film "To Remember". The event was supported by the Municipality of Burgas and the Regional Inspectorate of Education. The screening took place on the eve of the Day of Salvation of the Bulgarian Jews and a tribute to the memory of 11,343 Jews deported from Vardar Macedonia, Aegean Thrace and Pirot, as well as all Holocaust victims.



The event was attended by students from the PGHT "Acad. N.D Zelinski, GPAE "Geo Milev", Professional Trade School, Vocational High School of Mechanical Electrotechnics and Electronics, "Kolyo Ficheto" PGASC, PGT "Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov ".

In a conversation with representatives of Center ALEF after the show, they showed interest in settling the Jews in Bulgaria, the fate of the Jewish families in Bourgas after the Second World War, and the resonance of the act of salvation in the world.

INTERNATIONAL DAY IN A MEMORIAL OF THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

The International Holocaust Memorial Day in Burgas was celebrated in Bourgas on January 25 with a commemorative evening under the title "The Language of History", prepared by the students of the X grade of Vassil Levski School, with the methodical help of Center Alef. It went under the slogan "If we forget, then we are accomplices".



The event gathered writers with young people, called to convey the memory to the next generations. For the ten-graders from the Russian High School, this was the first meeting with the ominous events in the years of the Second World War. The most important in this evening was the book "The Night" by Eli Wiesel. "More than six million Jews have been destroyed. But this is just a statistic that would hardly reach the hearts of young people. When a particular destiny is described - the horrors experienced by a child, then the tragedy becomes personal.

That is why we directed youngsters towards Eli Wiesel and his memoir "Night", said Lyubov Jungourova, a literary lecturer, who united her students under the cause of memory. The hall was attended by heirs of Bulgarian Jews, rescued from the genocide and their friends. Some of them shared bitter memories as eyewitnesses.





Elie Wiesel's book "Night" was also one of the main highlights of the traditional holiday of reading in "Vasil Levski" high school. It was held on February 17 as part of the school's patron saint's program. Impressed by Eli Wiesel's narrative, Rossitza Gospodinova, Magdalena Trendafilova and Iliana Ilieva showed a presentation about the life and wide public activity of the writer and the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, making it possible for the world to know the truth about the death camps. Also a video about Elie Wiesel, created by the students Sava Baykov and Vassil Stoyanov, was presented at the commemorative evening at the Writers' House.

Center for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef" welcomes the European Parliament's resolution 2017/2692, which adopted the definition of anti-Semitism of the International Alliance for Holocaust Remembrance. At the initiative of "Alef", students from the Russian High School and writers from Burgas joined the action of the World Jewish Congress "We Remember". In the House of Writers in Burgas they took a photo with the message that was uploaded to the social networks.



PARTICIPATION IN MEMORIAL CEREMONY AT BURGAS AIRPORT

Center Alef once again participated in a commemorative ceremony gathering the relatives of those killed in the bloody bombing of Burgas airport on 18 July 2012. Flowers and wreaths were laid down on the memorial, build in memory of the victims of the terrorist act. Wreath on behalf of "Alef" was placed by the chairman of the association Alberta Alkalay.



PLACING A MEMORIAL SIGN OF BURGAS' JEWS SAVERS

The initiative, launched in 2015 by Center Alef, to place a memorial plaque for the rescuers of the Burgas' Jews was finalized after receiving the approval of the Executive Council at the Ministry of Culture.

The memorial sign will be installed in the southern part of the garden opposite the building of the Municipality. It will be opened at a ceremony in March 2018.



EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS WITH STUDENTS

Alef Center prepares a series of meetings with students from different classes from Burgas' schools to familiarize them with the history, traditions and culture of the Jewish ethnos. In an attractive way young people will learn what distinguishes the Jews from other nations, when and how they lived on the Bulgarian lands, what their customs and rituals were, how they participated in the public life of the country, when and how people who profess a different faith become a community, as well as interesting facts about the life of the Jewish municipality in Bourgas.



On 13 December in the former synagogue was the meeting with students from the history club at "St. St. Cyril and Methodius ".



5th graders from the "Alexander Georgiev - Kodjakafaliyata" Primary School attended in the synagogue.



The educational initiative will continue in 2018 and will include students from all schools.

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Approved Albertina Alkalay
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