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ZPRÁVY/NEWS

MUSEUM WORK WITH GIFTED SCHOOLCHILDREN:
GEOLOGY OLYMPIAD IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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One of important tasks of museums is to educate the visitors and wake their interest in topics presented in museum exhibitions. The question is whether the museums are able to offer an extension to formal education in schools and become herewith their partner. The schoolteachers are trained pedagogues in individual disciplines but they rarely have expert knowledge in these special areas (for example in geology). Moreover, the extent and usability of school collections for educational purposes beyond the scope of regular teaching are considerably limited. Museums have much to offer to the schools; the extension of normal teaching mainly consists in the possibility of object learning, in which the museums find no serious rival due to their extensive collections. They also can offer a greater support to schoolchildren who are gifted in disciplines represented in museums. Museums thus play an important role in the field of object learning due to their collection items, and this fact must be shown in a transparent view.

A narrower cooperation of museums and schools in the Czech Republic, which goes beyond the scope of usual museum education programmes for schoolchildren, is now successfully realised, for example in the form of the Geology Olympiad (hereinafter GO). It is a subject competition for primary and secondary schoolchildren, testing their knowledge in geological disciplines. The aim of the competition is to enhance the teaching about inanimate nature,



Fig. 1: Written test – the first part of Geology Olympiad. Photo: Museum in South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2017.



Fig. 2: Practical work with products of inanimate nature. Photo: Museum in South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2017.



Fig. 3: Testing knowledge using geological museum collections. Photo: Museum in South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2017.

students are asked to determine individual samples.

Regional rounds of the competition are co-organised by the Committee for Public Relations and Museum Pedagogy of the Czech Association of Museums and Galleries, which coordinates the participating museums and represents a communication bridge between the museums and the guarantor – Masaryk University. Geologists in cooperation with museum pedagogues organise the regional rounds of the competition in individual museums and act as their professional guarantors. The main organisers in individual regions are regional or city museums.²

The first national round based on this concept has taken place in Říčany near Prague in 2017, and the second national round was organised by the Faculty of Science, Masaryk University in Brno, which provides for organisation of this event every year. A great success in 2018 was the participation of two winners of the GO national round in the international competition, which was held in Thailand.³

The success of the project is documented by the increasing interest of students in this competition. The number of pupils and students participating in the first GO was 378, in 2018 already 730 participants were registered,

² Following museums are involved: Museum of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Museum of West Bohemia in Plzeň, Ústí nad Labem City Museum, Mariánské Lázně City Museum, Museum of the Vysočina Region in Jihlava, Museum of Southeast Moravia in Zlín, Silesian Museum in Opava, Regional Museum in Olomouc, East Bohemian Museum in Pardubice, Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové, Museum of North Bohemia in Liberec, and Museum of the Bohemian Karst in Beroun.

³ *IESO 2018 Kanchanaburi Thailand: 12th International Earth Science Olympiad* [online]. IESO, 2018 [accessed 2019-04-29]. Available from [www: <http://www.ieso2018.posn.or.th/message.html>](http://www.ieso2018.posn.or.th/message.html).

search for talented schoolchildren and systematically support and develop their professional education in this area.¹ The initiator and author of the idea to organise the GO in museums was the geologist Petr Rajlich, who began to organise the Geology Olympiad in the Museum of South Bohemia in České Budějovice since 2015, in cooperation with the museum pedagogue Jitka Pešková. In the middle of 2016, the associate professor Rostislav Melichar from the Faculty of Science of the Masaryk University in Brno summoned the meeting of a team, who began to put the idea of organising the GO in all administrative regions of the Czech Republic into practice. The main aim was to add the GO to the other Olympiads, in which the pupils and students participate in various disciplines.

¹ The thematic scope of GO is primarily oriented on mineralogy, petrography, palaeontology, historical geology, geology of mineral deposits, hydrogeology, engineering geology, environmental geology, regional geology and dynamic geology. See Co je Geologická olympiáda. In *Geologická olympiáda* [online]. Česká geologická služba, 2018 [accessed 2019-04-11]. Available from [www: <http://www.geologicka-olympiada.cz/olympiade>](http://www.geologicka-olympiada.cz/olympiade).

Today the Geology Olympiad is already organised in the whole Czech Republic. The structure is the same as in most of the other Olympiads; it is composed of the school, district, regional and national rounds and the competition is held in two categories: category A for primary schools and category B for secondary schools. The announcer of the GO is the Masaryk University in cooperation with the Czech Geological Survey, which also are professional guarantors of the GO.

The school and district rounds are held in the form of an electronic test, which is secured by the Department of Geological Sciences, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, under the direction of Ass. Prof. Rostislav Melichar.

Regional rounds are held in museums with relevant collections, in this case with geological materials, and with experts in the given discipline. Regional rounds therefore have a high professional level. They are composed of two parts: a written test, and practical work with products of inanimate nature, where the pupils and

and in 2019 nearly 900 pupils and students are taking part.

The museums with their involvement in this project not only help to promote the geological science, but also demonstrate the potential of cooperation with schools. Museum is a suitable place for learning, where the students have a unique opportunity to meet experts.

Thanks to this form of cooperation, museums in particular regions become respected institutions in the field of non-formal education, which is inevitable for the school teaching and for educational work with gifted schoolchildren. This cooperation opens for the schools new possibilities of using both the commonly accessible permanent and temporary exhibitions, and the collection objects stored in depositories.

Most museums currently prepare educational programmes which are associated with Czech curricular documents for individual levels and types of schools – Frame Educational Programmes.⁴ These programmes are helpful in better understanding and fixing of topics taught in schools and in the development of key competences. They support the process of critical thinking, development of communication skills, working with information and asking questions. It is an area between formal and non-formal education, where the use of the educational potential of museums wipes out the boundary between two seemingly different worlds.

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⁴ National curricula. In *National Institute for Education* [online]. Prague, Czech Republic, 2011–2019 [accessed 2019-04-11]. Available from [www: <http://www.nuv.cz/our-work/framework>](http://www.nuv.cz/our-work/framework).

