



26-03-2026 Educational visit to the regional unit of Magnesia and awards Ceremony for the winning students of the 2nd student competition “Asia Minor-Pontus: Memories” (2025–2026)

On March 17-19, 2026, an educational visit to the regional unit of Magnesia took place as a prize for the winning students of the 2nd student competition for the creation of a historical narrative and poster on the theme “Asia Minor- Pontus: Memories”, co-organized by the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Education, the Special Synodical Committee on Cultural Identity of the Church of Greece, and the Chair of Pontic Studies of the Department of History and Archaeology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Students from Attica, Thessaloniki, the Peloponnese, and Chios participated in the competition for the 2025–2026 school year. The following schools were awarded:

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE – AWARDS

1. American Farm School of Thessaloniki “The Blood-Stained Headscarf”
2. 11th General High School of Patras “Mother, Is hide-and-peek over?”
3. Livaneio 1st Vocational High School of Kardamyla “The Stones Speak”

POSTER – AWARDS

1. 1st General High School of Oreokastro “The Melody of Memory”
2. 49th General High School of Athens “Le clocher de l’église Ste Photini – Unforgotten Homelands”
3. I. Tsiamoulis Private High School “All That Fits in a Boat”

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE – HONORARY MENTIONS

1. 1st Vocational High School of Aspropyrgos “Wagon 7”
2. E. Mantoulides Schools “Haunted Memories”

3. a. 4th General High School of Aigaleo “Words: Light in My Darkness”
- b. 1st Vocational High School of Aspropyrgos “The Tears of the East”
- c. Livanio 1st Vocational High School of Kardamyla “Memories Through the Flames”

Tie between 3a, 3b and 3c.

POSTER – HONORARY MENTIONS

1. 2nd General High School of Echedoros “From the Ashes of Smyrna to the Embrace of Memory”
2. I. Tsiamoulis Private High School “The Mother of Smyrna”
3. a. 2nd General High School of Echedoros “Oh My Burned Mother”
- b. Delasalle Private High School-College of Thessaloniki “Genocide and Uprooting of Hellenism in the East”

Tie between 3a and 3b.

For the group departing from Athens, meeting and conversing with His Beatitude, the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Mr. Ieronymos, was a unique experience.

During the educational visit to Magnesia, the winning students and their accompanying teachers visited the Holy Monastery of Panagia Xenia in Almyros, Volos, the Holy Monastery of the Taxiarchon in Pelion, and the Byzantine Museum in Makrinitza.

The city of Volos, marked by a strong refugee heritage, also offered many interesting experiences:

In the welcoming space of the Church of Evangelistria in Nea Ionia, the priest, Father Amfilochios Miltos, told the children how Asia Minor refugees, men and women alike, built this church with their own hands, which symbolized the link to the land of Ionia. In the women’s gallery of the church, students had the opportunity to admire heirlooms brought by the refugees from Asia Minor. A handwritten note by Chrysostomos of Smyrna, written on a pack of cigarettes belonging to a faithful who had asked him to perform the baptism of his child but, due to the circumstances, the baptism could not take place, was particularly moving.

At the Volos City Museum, the group had the opportunity to trace the history of the city into which the refugees from Asia Minor were integrated and to form a complete picture of its industrial, economic, and social development.

On the afternoon of Wednesday, March 18, 2026, the awards ceremony took place at the Thessaly Conference Centre by His Eminence the Metropolitan of Demetrias and Almyros and President of the Special Synodical Committee on Cultural Identity of the Church of Greece, Mr. Ignatios, and the Most Reverend Archimandrite Father Theoklitos Mentis, Secretary of the Special Synodical Committee on Cultural Identity of the Church of Greece. The students then presented their work and spoke about the message they wished to convey through them. The ceremony was coordinated by the representative of the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs, who also conveyed a greeting from the Secretary General for Religious Affairs, Mr. George Kalantzis, addressed to the students and teachers. A dinner followed at the Conference Centre.

The visit to Magnesia was a unique experience for these children who, like all participants in the competition, demonstrated the value of historical memory, as well as the creativity and sensitivity of the younger generation.

The General Secretariat for Religious Affairs thanks the co-organizers of the competition, namely the Special Synodical Committee on Cultural Identity of the Church of Greece and the Chair of Pontic Studies of the Department of History and Archaeology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. It congratulates the supervising teachers who guided and supported their students in this endeavor. The success of these children gives hope that future generations will continue to make both their homeland and their families proud.

The General Secretariat for Religious Affairs is committed to always standing by the educational community in promoting knowledge and culture.

