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RIDEF 2026

Rencontre Internationale des Éducateurs Freinet

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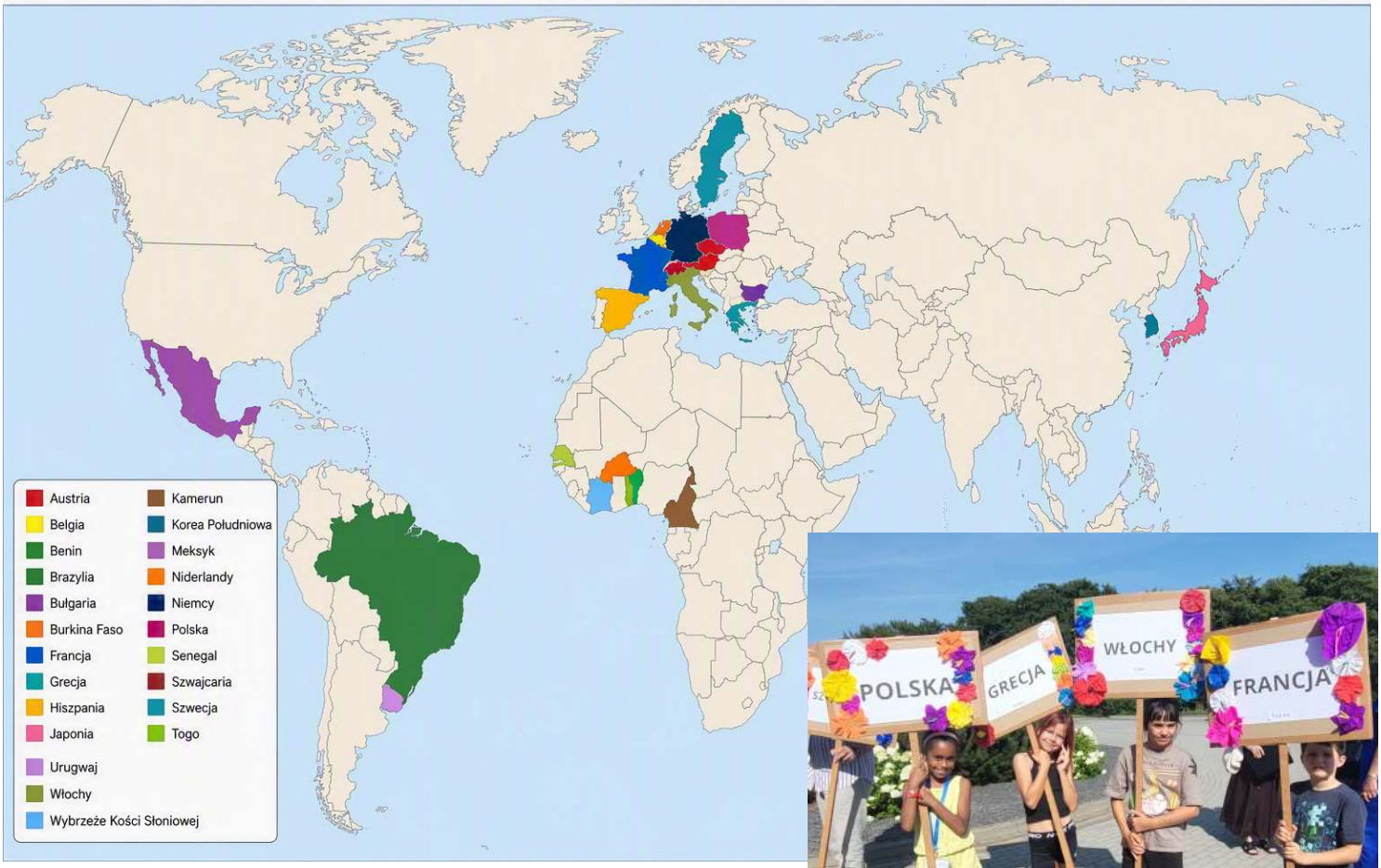




WELCOME TO GNIEWINO!

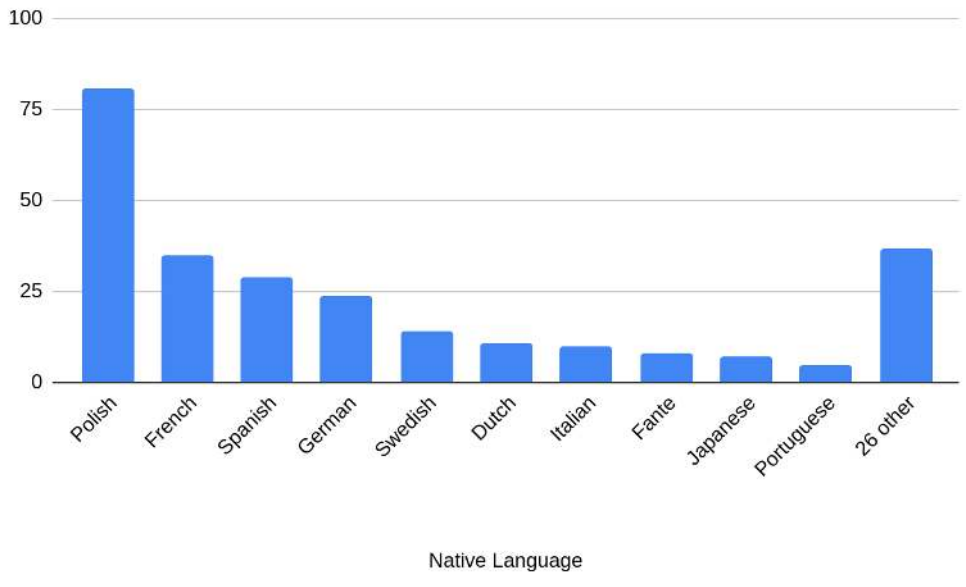
OUR FIRST DAY HERE!

This newspaper was made during the workshop by:
Gosia, Pierre, Gina, Arnout, Marguerite,
Giancarlo, Aurélia, Kamila, Angelika



The languages in this RIDEF

RIDEF brings together people from all over the world. There are people from **25 different countries!** België, Benin, Brasil, България, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Deutschland, Ελλάδα, España, France, Ghana, Italia, 대한민국, México, Nederland, 日本, Österreich, Polska, Schweiz, Senegal, Sverige, Togo, Uruguay.
This is reflected in the attendee's **languages - 36** in total:Akan, Baoulé, Bété, български, език, català, Deutsch, ελληνικά, English, español, Eton, Ewe, Ewodo, Fante, français, Gomala, Gouin, 日本語, 한국어, italiano, Kabyè, Fon, Malinké, Mina, Mooré, Mvae, Nederlands, 國語, polski, português, Pulaar, românește, Sénoufo, suomi, svenska, Twi, Wolof.



Unfortunately, some of these people were not able to join after all because of visa issues. Read about it tomorrow.

Arnout

Opening speech by the head of Wejherowo County

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to Wejherowo County, and to Gniewino—a place that, over the coming days, will become the world's capital of dialogue on education, cooperation, and our shared responsibility for future generations.

It is a great honour for us that the International RIDEF Congress 2026 is being held here, in the heart of the Kashubian region. For nearly sixty years, this event has brought together teachers, educators, researchers, and everyone who believes in the idea of an open, creative school capable of meeting the challenges of today's world.

The theme of this year's Congress—"Solidarity, Freedom, Democracy"—resonates with particular significance today. These are not merely words deeply rooted in the history of Poland, Europe, and the world; they are, above all, values that shape human relationships, strengthen communities, and form the foundation of responsible education. It is in schools that these values truly come to life and gain real meaning.

As a local government, we fully understand that investing in education means investing in the future. We can build modern schools, equip classrooms with state-of-the-art facilities, and develop educational infrastructure. Yet the greatest asset of every school will always be its people—teachers, educators, principals, and all those who devote themselves every day to inspiring young people to discover and develop their full potential.

The days ahead will be filled with conversations, the exchange of experiences, and inspiring discussions. I am confident that the meetings held during this Congress will give rise to new ideas, international partnerships, lasting friendships, and projects that will benefit children and young people around the world.

I also hope that your stay in our region will give you the opportunity to discover the beauty of Kashubia—its rich history, vibrant culture, and unique heritage. Here in Wejherowo County, you can experience a remarkable blend of tradition and modernity, where openness to the world goes hand in hand with respect for local identity and cultural roots.



May this Congress reaffirm that, regardless of the country we come from or the language we speak, we can work together for the advancement of education, because the future of our societies depends on its quality.

I wish you fruitful discussions, valuable experiences, many new friendships, and wonderful memories of your stay in Wejherowo County.

Marcin Kaczmarek
Head of Wejherowo County (Starosta)

Opening speech by the mayor of Gniewino

Gniewino, 31 July 2026
Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Teachers and Educators, distinguished Guests of the International RIDEF 2026 Teachers' Congress!

On behalf of the Municipal Government, myself, and the residents, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Municipality of Gniewino, located in the heart of Northern Kashubia in the Pomeranian region. I welcome you to a place where this year's Congress motto, "Solidarity – Freedom – Democracy," has always embodied fundamental values with the human being at their very center.

At the same time, I welcome you to a rural municipality that has long stood out across the region for its openness to innovation and development. Today, we proudly view the opening of the RIDEF Congress as yet another event through which the Municipality of Gniewino opens itself to the world and new directions.

What is particularly meaningful is that I stand before you not only as the Mayor of the Municipality of Gniewino, but also as an educator, teacher, and art therapist. Throughout the years of my professional career, I have pursued the teaching vocation with all my heart, experiencing every aspect of educational work, including serving as a school principal and facing the many challenges of the modern school. This makes it an even greater pleasure for me to welcome the teaching community on behalf of the people of my municipality.

"Let children experience the world by feeling their way,
let them extend their roots, experiment,
explore, discover and compare, (...)
allow them to embark on journeys of discovery—
sometimes difficult, but enabling them to find
what will truly nourish them."

This was the vision of the Congress's patron, the creator of the modern educational system, Célestin Freinet, who from the very beginning of his path dared to go against the current, steadfastly defending his freedom to proclaim his educational truths and discoveries. Similarly, the Polish pioneer of education, Janusz Korczak, spoke of teachers' work and of the child as an active participant in learning. One of his best-known maxims reminds us that: "Children are born with wings. Teachers help them unfold them." Janusz Korczak also gave a profound testimony of humanity and devotion to children—in 1942 he accompanied the orphans in his care on their journey to the German extermination camp at Treblinka and into the gas chamber.



As we recall the Second World War and the fate of children, I ask you for a moment of reflection and tribute to the approximately six thousand child soldiers aged 9–17 and about three thousand eighteen-year-olds who

fought in the Warsaw Uprising. No nation lost as many children and young people in a patriotic uprising during the Second World War as Poland. Why do I mention this? Because tomorrow, on 1 August at 5:00 p.m., we will commemorate the "W Hour," marking the 82nd anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising. And because this has a profound connection with education and upbringing.

The moral path of learning is not the passive absorption of lectures and demonstrations, but rather "learning through exploration and free expression." A child's natural curiosity is the greatest source of motivation, and the best educational outcomes are achieved when learning grows out of action rather than ex cathedra instruction.

Each of us present here feels deep in our hearts that education must never cease to evolve. It must keep pace with technological, social, and cultural changes—with changing lifestyles, systems of values, and priorities. In this changing world of the 21st century, we owe it to the generations of children and young citizens who begin their education in our schools every year, expecting us—teachers and educators—to illuminate the paths of their lives and help them spread their wings.

The event beginning today—the International RIDEF 2026 Congress—is part of the ongoing evolution of modern education based on the competencies of understanding, empathy, and responsibility. It is also a tremendous opportunity: an opportunity for educators to exchange experiences and knowledge so essential to their profession; an opportunity for representatives of different countries and cultures to get to know one another and jointly seek solutions to the global challenges of education; and an opportunity for all of us to engage in dialogue about how to build communities founded on the values of solidarity, freedom, and democracy, and how to nurture these values in everyday life and educational practice.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

I wish all Congress participants productive work and inspiring meetings here in the Gniewino region. I thank the Congress organizers for choosing Gniewino as the host municipality. I wish you to build intercultural bonds and engage in dialogue that builds bridges instead of walls. May the values born of openness of heart guide educational systems around the world to be founded upon the principles of Solidarity, Freedom, and Democracy.

Dr Wioletta Majer-Szreder
Mayor of the Municipality of Gniewino

August 1: A Day of Remembrance for Poland

This Saturday, August 1, at 5 p.m., we didn't hear any sirens. Yet they are sounding throughout the country, and everyone is observing a minute of silence in tribute to the Warsaw Uprising. The people rose up against the Nazi occupiers and wanted to show the Soviet army that the Polish people would remain free. Unfortunately, this courage was not sufficiently supported by the Allies from the West and not at all by the Soviets. As a result, the Polish side suffered heavy casualties over a period of more than two months.

August 1 commemorates the absolute need for freedom, and it serves as a reminder that solidarity was lacking at a time when the people needed it most.

For our congress, these are fundamental principles.

- Aurelia Stedransky

Keeping the ember alive

Last night, something simple happened. Dishes were placed on a table. Languages crossed one another. Hands served, translated, guided, welcomed. Laughter moved between people who, sometimes, did not yet know each other. Nothing spectacular. And yet perhaps the essence of this RIDEF was already there: solidarity not as a theme on a programme, but as a shared table.

That is when the image of the ember came back to me. An ember is not a great flame that dazzles. It is more discreet, more fragile. It asks us to come closer, to protect it from the wind, to breathe gently onto it. It is passed from hand to hand, from classroom to classroom, from country to country. Last night, around that table, we did not only share food: we recognized that each of us, in our own way, carries a little of that fire.

We have come to Gniewino with our languages, our stories, our tiredness, and sometimes our anger. We have also come with a shared stubbornness: not to give up on a human school. A school where children can speak, inquire, write, cooperate, make decisions and grow without humiliation. A school where free writing, the newspaper, correspondence, inquiry, experimental trial and error, and the cooperative council are not museum pieces, but living gestures, taken up, transformed and reinvented.

I do not think we are here to explain once again what Freinet pedagogy is. We know it through our classrooms, through our fragile successes, our failures, and our attempts to begin again. We know that freedom cannot simply be declared: it has to be organized. We know that cooperation is not always comfortable. We know that a council can be slow, that a newspaper takes time, that a child does not speak because we order them to, but because an environment gradually allows them to dare.

In a world that ranks, controls, measures and separates, this ember flickers. It flickers when school confuses autonomy with adaptation, assessment with selection, efficiency with obedience. It also flickers when comrades cannot join us, especially because visas have been refused. Their absence is not an administrative detail. It reminds us that solidarity must also name the borders that prevent encounters and rank lives.

But the ember does not go out. It lives in modest gestures: a prepared table, a whispered translation, a child reading a text, a group searching for a fair decision, a newspaper that circulates, a correspondence that opens the world, a teacher who continues despite fatigue. It lives because we are not alone.

So may this RIDEF help us breathe again. May it make us more lucid, more united, more courageous. And when we return to our classrooms, may we keep this simple certainty: keeping the ember alive does not mean preserving an inheritance under glass. It means caring together for a school worthy of children and a world worthy of human beings.

Warmly, Pierre, Belgium, Éducation Populaire.



Two such surprising instruments!

At the opening of Ridef, the Kashubian dance group delighted us after the interresting speeches, but they also had a surprise for us: the discovery of two instruments that exist nowhere else!
The “burczybas” is a barrel sealed with a membrane, through which a horse’s tail is threaded (we hope the animal wasn’t sacrificed for the sake of music!). It produces a very resonant vibration when the horsehair is wet and pulled in jerks.
The “devil’s violin” is a long handle that is struck against the ground, equipped with several sound-producing parts, including a cymbal that is struck off-beat. The sound is truly infectious and makes you want to clap your hands and learn Kashubian songs and dances!
Thank you so much for these presentations! We’re excited to explore this culture further!

- Aurelia Stedransky

INVITATION TO THE SHORT WORKSHOP "PEACE EDUCATION"

ORGANIZED BY COMMISSION 14



We invite you to join us for a workshop that will take place over two sessions: a workshop full of activities and surprises.
We'll try to alternate hands-on activities with games, songs, and dances, because the theme of peace engages the whole person.



We will begin with a presentation of the activities developed by Commission 14 during the two years between RIDEFs, which are documented: The "Let's Make Peace in..." proposals, the 2024 international webinar, letters written regarding the situation in Palestine and Ukraine, as well as in other countries, particularly in Africa (e.g., Niger), and the issue of the Multilettre published in March.
We adults will also try our hand collective writing—just as we ask children to do—in order to encourage those in power to reflect and respect the rights of the world's peoples and children.
Through play as well, we will experience listening, emotions, pain, suffering, and mutual support.
We will reflect on the main directions of peace education:

- Education about peace: Information, research, dossiers, etc.
- Education in peace: The democratic and cooperative organization of the classroom and the school.
- Education for peace: Projects and positive actions to learn how to participate.

We will submit proposals for the Commission's work and for all our Movements to the FIMEM General Assembly.
We look forward to seeing you there!



August 1st - Short workshops

Amazing Hat Collage – a workshop led by Alicja Żółtko, exploring the art of upcycling—giving objects a second life. This creative activity combines artistic expression with environmental awareness and promotes sustainable living.





Painting on silk – a workshop led by Monika Marczyk-Zabinska, creating colourful designs while developing creativity, patience and fine motor skills.





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Maximum 1 page, including one or two pictures