



DGIV/EDU/HISTDIM (2010) 01 REV

Strasbourg, 20 April 2010

Project

"Shared Histories for a Europe without dividing Lines"

Launching conference of the new Project

"Interactions, convergences, conflicts : European lessons in shared histories"

Oslo, 16-17 June 2010

Conference organised in co-operation with the European Wergeland Centre with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Education.

Information document

Document prepared by the Secretariat

Introduction

The launching conference of the new Project "Shared Histories for a Europe without dividing Lines" will take place in Oslo on 16 and 17 June 2010. The conference is organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the European Wergeland Centre and the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Education.

This document reiterates the key aspects of the project adopted by the Steering Committee for Education in 2009 for its new programme 2010-2014 and presents the objectives of the Oslo Conference.

I The Project "Shared Histories for a Europe without dividing Lines"

Context

Interactions and convergences, as much as tensions and conflicts, have left their imprint on the history of Europe's living space. Despite the great diversity of cultures and identities, its inhabitants after the second world conflict embarked on the process of European co-operation and construction. This was because throughout the course of history the European realm has undergone developments and transformations common to every region and people, the upshot of which has been a freely expressed resolve to build a united future. Our history has made Europe a continent distinctive in the unique combination of our common features and the peculiarities that are the hallmark of each of our countries, continental subsets and also social groups.

These interactions and convergences, which have been neither straightforward nor free from contradictions, have affected a variety of fields. They have concerned values, art and culture, demography, the economy, science and technology, lifestyles, spatial planning and so on.

The previous project implemented by the Steering Committee for Education on "The image of the Other in History Teaching" highlighted the implications for politics, the objectives and methodology for teaching history of cultural diversity of European societies, globalisation and the need for accompanying, if necessary, the confidence-building process in post-conflict situations.

On the basis of these assets, the new project addresses three main concerns.

It is initially a question of highlighting the common historical heritage of the member States. In its recitals and more specifically in article 1, the European Cultural Convention of 1954 enables the signatory states to promote shared knowledge of their national history **and also to be committed to promoting raised awareness of their common historical heritage.**

This dual concern has been repeatedly reiterated, notably at all three Summits of Heads of State and Government and in Recommendation (2001)15 of the Committee of Ministers to the member states on “History teaching in twenty-first century Europe”

It is therefore advisable to contribute, through better knowledge of historical interactions and convergences of all kinds, to conflict prevention and support for reconciliation processes;

Finally, it is necessary to continue the dissemination and implementation of the recommendations of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue – “Living Together As Equals in Dignity” adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in May 2008.

With this in mind, the following objectives have been defined :

- to reveal the chief interactions and convergences which have characterised the development of Europe as a spatial entity and created the conditions for European construction;
- to produce definite proposals for strategies and methods towards awareness and knowledge of these dimensions of European history and better publicity in the context of history courses;
- to define the content but also the skills – of history teachers especially – essential to a sound understanding common trends in European history within a global context.

Methodology

The project will be implemented by bringing together historians, curriculum designers, textbooks and pedagogical materials writers and history teachers trainers.

The project does not aim to tackle the subject exhaustively and only a restricted number of well defined specific themes already well documented and concerning a maximum of member states will be selected during the first phase of the project.

A seminar will be organised on each of the selected themes. Restricted groups of specialised experts will be set up to elaborate and test teaching materials.

The production of these materials will proceed in the framework of an active, multiperspective methodology and a teaching approach focusing on the acquisition of identified key abilities.

History teachers’ initial and in-service training bodies will be closely associated with all stages of the project (particularly in conjunction with the CDESIR) and with the INGOs active in these fields.

Anticipated results:

At the end of the project the following materials should be available:

- teaching materials relating to significant historical examples of interactions and convergences within Europe as a spatial entity;
- recommendations as to the strategies, methods and teaching techniques which would be conducive to fuller awareness, comprehension and knowledge of these interactions and convergences in European history.

II Conference on "Interactions, convergences, conflicts : European lessons in shared histories"

The launching conference will take place in Oslo on 16-17 June 2010, as mentioned before.

Objectives

The aims of the conference will be to:

- . hold an exchange of views on the Project's philosophy and aims between historians specialising in the history of the European area and its relations with the rest of the world;
- . identify the work themes (see appendix below);
- . specify the types of content and forms of final results (teaching material, use of new information technologies, etc);
- . define the method and plan for implementing the project.

Participants

About a hundred conference participants will bring together representatives from the Ministries of Education of the member states and experts. Among them:

- . historians particularly committed to research into the European dimension of history and Europe's relations with the rest of the world;
- . authors and designers of educational material;
- . teacher trainers;
- . decision-makers involved in devising curricula and policies in the area of history teaching;
- . representatives of other international organisations active in this field;
- . representatives of non-governmental organisations involved in Council of Europe activities in the area of history or particularly active in this area.

Themes and sub-themes

The debates will be organised in two parts.

First day

After an introduction on the conclusions of the finalised project on “the Image of the Other in History Teaching” and a presentation of the general orientations of the new project, the first day will be dedicated to the selected themes (issues and approaches of European history, the concept of shared histories and the diversity of histories,...)

Presentations will be made on three sub-themes during the plenary and followed by discussions in working groups:

- War and peace in the history of Europe, peace-building processes;
- Human rights in the history of Europe, building common references;
- Europe in the history of societies and cultures; interactions and convergences.

Second day

After a general introduction during the plenary, the second day will be more specifically dedicated to a discussion on the expected results of the new project (in working groups):

- Which strategies (curricula, partnerships,...) and which teaching material (school books and other materials, the use of new technologies...)?
- Common histories and specific histories: what to do in the classroom?
- Which initial and in-service training for history teachers?

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Wednesday 16 June

- 09.30 Official opening
Results of the Project “The Image of the Other in History Teaching”
Final recommendations of the Project
From “The Image of the Other to Shared histories”: general framework of the Council of Europe activities regarding history teaching.
- 11.30 Break
- 12.00 -“Shared Histories for a Europe without dividing Lines”: origin, assumptions, orientations of the new project.
- Two introductory presentations
“War and peace in the history of Europe, peace-building process”
“Human rights in the history of Europe, building common references”
- 13.30 Lunch
- 15.00 Introductory presentation
“Europe in the history of societies and cultures; interactions and convergences”
- 15.40 Discussion on the introductory presentations in three working groups
- 17.30 End of the first day

Thursday 17 June

- 09.00 Plenary
. Reports of the working groups
. Introductory presentation on “Shared histories: What implications for practice, teaching material and teacher training”
- 10.40 Break
- 11.00 Discussion in working groups
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.30 Plenary
Reports of the working groups
General discussion regarding working themes of the project (see appendix)

16.00 Statement on “Memories and emotions: their impact on history teaching in the classroom”

17.00 Conclusions and recommendations

18.00 Closure of the Conference

ORGANISATION

The conference is co-organised by the History Education Division of the Council of Europe and the European Wergeland Centre:

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APPENDIX

Identification of work themes

Since it will be unable to tackle the subject exhaustively, the launch conference should make it possible to draw up a list of suitable themes.

On the basis of prior discussions the Secretariat suggests that the following themes might be discussed:

- The industrial revolution and its sociological, cultural, scientific, economic and political consequences

The industrial revolution initiated in the United Kingdom at the end of the 18th century spread rapidly, at differing rates and in different forms, to the entire European area and the rest of the world. This was not just a technical revolution but a sweeping transformation of civilisation. The period was particularly rich in terms of interactions and convergences as well as tension and conflicts.

- European construction

Formally embarked upon after 1945, the European construction does not hinge solely on the forging and setting up of institutions. While it catered for the concerns of that time it has also directly or indirectly involved all European States in its development and radically transformed relations between the European continent and the rest of the world. Little by little it has deeply changed cultures and visions of the world and at the same time laid down the bases of a common future founded on democracy, peace and openness.

- Human rights in the history of art

The notion of human rights has a long history. The field of art offers a wealth of possibilities for analysing the long road travelled in Europe from the championing of the value of human life to sweeping changes in the system of values as a whole, a process leading to the development of new standards that would be reflected in documents such as the "Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms" and the setting up of specialised international institutions.

- Education

Developments in education, from traditional practices to modern education systems, have been marked by a great many interactions affecting the entire European area.

- From the rural world to urban civilisation

The gradual shift from a civilisation that was essentially rural to the urban model was both the result and then the driving force of sweeping cultural transformations whose specific features and interactions have been particularly rich.

- Europe and the world

The European area has never been closed. It has influenced the rest of the world as much as it itself has been deeply marked by outside influences. The programme covering the history of interactions in the Mediterranean area and between the Mediterranean area and the rest of the world could be particularly well suited to the project context as a whole.

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In order to maintain the overall coherency of the Project and above all ensure optimum impact for the results, each of the themes could be viewed from three angles:

- i) Interactions (exchanges, mutual influences in the strict sense).
- ii) Convergences (parallel developments not necessarily with systematic contact).
- iii) Tension and conflicts that may have arisen (origins, management and reconciliation processes).

Each of the themes chosen could be the focus of a seminar of experts bringing together specialists in a given area, trainers and authors or designers of educational materials. The seminar would be followed up by the production and provision of teaching materials.