

CONFERENCE ON “THE EUROPEAN IDEA IN HISTORY TEACHING”
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1. Our purpose is not to use history as propaganda for European unity, but to try to eliminate the traditional mistakes and prejudices and to establish the facts. The Conference is convinced that, in this way, the main lines of a European view of history will emerge.
2. It is especially necessary to avoid any interpretation of historical development which might be used in the particular interest of one state, or which might disturb the friendly relations between peoples.
3. The development of states is one of the essential features of modern times. It is, therefore, necessary to show its importance whilst studying the idea of European unity which, at the same time, never ceases to manifest itself.
4. In order to bring pupils by degrees to a European conception of history, teachers should be recommended to start from local and especially regional history, not only because it is more easily understood by young minds, but still more because it constitutes the only appropriate framework for the study of certain phenomena, the limits of which do not coincide with the frontiers of states.
5. It would be well to bring out the main aspects of the part played in the world by Europe in modern times, particularly the universal diffusion of its population, of its ideas and of its techniques. A study of the formation and evolution of the different empires should be treated within this general framework. At the same time, the characteristics of other civilisations and their contribution to European civilisation should not be neglected, for one should never lose sight of the fact that European history is an integral part of world history.
6. The phenomena common to several European countries should be studied not only within the framework of the existing states but in a general setting. It is particularly important to avoid treating international relations as a kind of extension of national history. The arrangement of certain events in relation to a country, a man, or a current of ideas dominating a given period is, however, legitimate.
7. Teaching should take account of present developments in historical studies, which are moving away from the older, too exclusively political views, in order to give due weight to cultural facts, to economic and social problems, to the main currents of ideas and to the religious element.
8. It would be desirable not to introduce into the past contemporary national antagonisms. On the contrary, one should emphasise that conflicts between states or between sovereigns did not necessarily involve the peoples themselves. In particular, a distinction should be made between the centuries before the French Revolution and the following period, and to show clearly that nationalism is not the general principle of modern history but simply a phase in the historical development of Europe.

9. We cannot understand the present situation of Europe without the background of recent history, in which the problems that we Europeans are facing today often have their roots.

10. If the younger generation is not taught recent history by historians, they will be left exclusively to the influence of press, film, radio, etc.

11. We should not be justified in being too sceptical about the possibility of scientific treatment of recent history. It must be realised that the method of historical criticism in recent history is rather different from that in the history of the Middle Ages. Whereas the sources for medieval history are relatively restricted, they are for modern history if anything too abundant, so that we are faced with the problem of choice. It is possible to make factual statements which stand up to criticism.

12. To develop the critical faculty, it is important that a pupil be presented with different sides of a question. The abundance of material makes this particularly easy in recent history.

13. As a matter of teaching practice, there is no doubt that pupils of certain ages are most interested in the contemporary world.

14. As an adjunct to civics, the study of recent history is invaluable, for, without in any way departing from historical accuracy, it is possible to make the pupil aware of both his rights and his duties as a member of the European community.

(Quelle: Council of Europe. (1995). *Against bias and prejudice. The Council of Europe's work on history teaching and history textbooks. Recommendations on history teaching and history textbooks adopted at the Council of Europe conferences and symposia, 1953-1995*. Strasbourg: Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC), S. 13f.)