

Strasbourg, 6 November 1998

THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S NEW INITIATIVE

Preliminary Meeting

on

"The Tbilissi Initiative"

Kasbegy, Georgia,
Friday 2 – Saturday 3 October 1998

REPORT OF THE MEETING

1. Opening of the meeting

1.1 The meeting was opened by Professor Dr Alexander KARTOSIA, Minister of Education of Georgia, who welcomed the participants to the Preliminary Meeting on "The Tbilissi Initiative". He informed the participants of the support of the President of Georgia, Mr Eduard SHEVARDNADZE, for the Initiative.

He also stated that the Secretary General's Initiative was helping peacemaking in the Caucasus and that the intended Caucasian textbook would help the history of the Caucasians nations.

1.2 Ms Alison CARDWELL, Administrator of the Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. She informed the participants that the Secretary General attaches the highest political importance to the success of "The Tbilissi Initiative". She also informed the participants that the budget for the Programme of Activities would be examined by the Committee of Ministers' Deputies and adopted in November.

Ms CARDWELL stated that the activities in the Programme of Activities in 1999 would be the following:

- advisory missions to discuss the preparation of the chapters with each of the teams of authors;
- national seminars in each of the countries linked to topics to be included in the textbook, eg how to teach sensitive and controversial issues;
- a regional seminar bringing together participants from each of the countries involved in the preparation of the textbook on a topic of common interest linked to the textbook;
- a meeting of the group present at the Kasbegy meeting, which should act as an editorial board for the preparation of the textbook.

2. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted without any changes.

3. Election of the Chair of the Meeting

The participants decided unanimously that Mr George SHARVASHIDZE, First Deputy Minister of Education of Georgia, should chair the meeting.

4. Presentation of the participants

All the participants introduced themselves and gave a short presentation of their backgrounds and their present work.

5. Aims of the Meeting

Under this item, the participants discussed the aims of the meeting under the following headings:

5.1 Structure, themes and form of the textbook

Under this heading, the participants took Paragraph 6 of the Background Document for the starting point of their discussions. They discussed the structure proposed by the Secretariat:

- Preface

The participants agreed that the Preface should introduce the textbook and contain:

- i. messages of support from the Ministers of Education of the four countries involved;
- ii. an introduction by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

- A section on "The Caucasus: the land and the peoples"

The participants agreed that this section should be written by a historian from outside the region. It should be

- i. submitted in draft to the Secretariat;
- ii. sent to the teams of the authors in the different countries for comment;
- iii. discussed during the advisory missions and national seminars;
- iv. discussed and finalised during the next meeting of the editorial board.

The Secretariat is entrusted with the task of finding a historian who would be able to undertake the preparation of this section. The task of the historian responsible for this section would be to present a factual description of the geography, the different parts of the region and the peoples living in the region. This section should also include a general map of the physical geography of the region.

This section should be about 12 pages with one more page for the map.

- A section with four sub-sections on the history of each of the four countries (10-15 pages per country)

The four sub-sections should be written by the teams of authors of the four countries. The sub-sections should contain information on what each country would like pupils in another country to know about the history of their country, ie "what I – as an Armenian, an Azeri, a Georgian or a Russian – would like young people in neighbouring countries to know about my country's history".

The participants agreed to draw up a plan for their section to be submitted to the Secretariat by 15 December 1998 outlining the main points that should be included in their sub-section including introductions to the following periods in the history of the Caucasus:

- i. the Caucasian Region in ancient times;
- ii. the Caucasian Region in ancient times;
- iii. the Caucasian Region in recent history (18th Century – 1921).

The participants suggested that it may be necessary to invite an independent historian from outside the region to write an introduction to each of the sub-sections. This would be decided at the next meeting of the present group.

- a section on 10-15 key themes (50 pages)

There was considerable discussion on the proposal to identify 10-15 key themes. This was a completely new approach for the participants at the meeting.

The participants, therefore, decided to postpone a decision on the key themes until the plans for the sub-sections on the history of each of the countries have been prepared. It may be that some key themes emerge from these sub-sections. In the meantime, it was decided that possible key themes could be the following:

- i. images of the Caucasus: natures and peoples, geography;
- ii. heritages;
- iii. conflict;
- iv. trade and commerce;
- v. traditions and customs;

- vi. migration and population movements;
- vii. etc.

- Key people and key events in the history of the region (12 pages)

The teams of authors should begin working on the lists of key people and key events. The key persons and key events should have a short paragraph giving the most important details about them.

- Time chart, index and source material

The participants decided that it was premature to discuss the time chart, index and source material and that they should be looked at during the advisory missions and national seminars.

5.2 The Guidelines

The participants accepted the Guidelines to be respected in the preparation of the various sections of the textbook. These Guidelines appear in Appendix III to the present document.

5.3 Timetable for the preparation of the textbook

The participants will submit a plan for the structure of the sub-section of their country to the Secretariat by 15 December 1998.

The next stage of the work will begin with a series of advisory missions to the four countries to work with the teams of authors and to discuss the preparation of the textbook. The Secretariat will fix the dates for the advisory missions at the beginning of 1999.

The participants all agreed that the textbook should be ready by the end of 2000 and published in the first half of the year 2001.

5.4 Working methods

The participants all agreed with the working methods proposed by the Secretariat, ie:

- advisory missions. Two experts invited by the Council of Europe would work with the teams of authors for one day;
- national seminars. A national seminar in each of the countries would be held annually on different aspects of the textbook with ministry officials, academic historians, teacher trainers, teachers, textbook authors, etc;

- regional seminars. One regional seminar each year should be organised on a topic linked to the preparation of the textbook.
- one meeting each year of the group present at the Preliminary Meeting to ensure that the textbook is advancing properly, discuss progress and difficulties and act as an editorial board.

Ideally, each of the four countries should host a regional seminar or a meeting of the group present at the Preliminary Meeting.

5.5 Target group

After considerable discussion, the participants decided that the target group should be pupils aged **14-16 years**.

The textbook should be a supplementary textbook and should not replace the textbooks on national and world history used in schools in the four countries. The participants were of the opinion that the Caucasian textbook would be useful because little is taught about the history of the Caucasus in the schools in the four countries.

The importance of the Ministries of Education being fully involved in the preparation of the textbook was stressed, because, in most cases, they are responsible for authorising the use of textbooks.

5.6 Form of the publication of the textbook

The textbook is destined for use by teachers and pupils in the four countries involved in "The Tbilissi Initiative". It should, therefore, be published by publishing houses in the four countries.

However, it may be possible to find British educational publisher for the English version of the textbook.

6. Presentations by the experts and the Council of Europe

6.1 Ms Susan BENNETT (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, United Kingdom) presented the thematic approach to teaching history. She explained that a theme could be chosen such as "warfare" or "medicine" and it could be treated through a certain number of ages. A number of different perspectives could be used for the themes and the pupils would also be encouraged to undertake extra work and research on the given topic.

The participants agreed to look at the possibility of the thematic approach. This is a topic which could be discussed during the advisory missions and national seminars. As was mentioned in Paragraph 5 above, some themes may emerge from the introductions by the four countries in addition to those proposed by the Secretariat in Paragraph 6.4 of the Background Document.

6.2 Mr Girvydas DUOBLYS (Lithuania) presented the Baltic History Textbook Project and informed the participants about:

- the working methods used;
- the problems encountered in preparing the textbook;
- the successes of the project;
- the use of the textbook.

Mr DUOBLYS informed the participants that the Project began in 1995 and that each of the three Baltic States had been responsible for the preparation of its section on each of the periods agreed upon for the textbook.

The aims of the textbook were to:

- join efforts to prepare an integrated textbook of the Baltic countries;
- use practical methods in the preparation of the textbook;
- include in the contents what is the common to the history of the Baltic countries as well as what is different;
- remove the stereotypes about the uniformity of the Baltic States;
- show the cultural life and history of the national minorities in the region;
- provide some teacher training to enable teachers to work with the textbook and strengthen relations between the teachers in the three countries.

He informed the participants that, one of the major problems, in preparing the textbook was the quantity of information which each country wanted to include in the textbook. Also, the representatives of each country had a different approach to the preparation of the textbook.

He told the participants that, at each stage of preparation, there had been teacher training in the use of the textbook. The textbook is a supplementary textbook to be used alongside the textbooks on national and world history. It will be published by the end of 1998.

6.3 Mr Andrzej CHRZANOWSKI (WSIP, Poland) informed the participants about the Polish/Ukrainian textbook and said that, at the start, four countries were to have been involved: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus. However, it was only possible to produce a joint Polish/Ukrainian textbook. He stated that the project had started in 1997 and that the aims of the project were similar to those of the Baltic History Textbook Project. The Polish/Ukrainian textbook is also a supplementary textbook to be used alongside the textbooks of the two countries on national and world history.

Mr CHRZANOWSKI indicated that the positions of the two countries were not the same on certain issues, and that there was also the problem of which facts and events from their joint past should be reflected.

He hoped that teachers from both countries would be able to meet and agree on approaches to teaching the history of both countries.

6.4 Ms Tatiana MILKO (Council of Europe) presented the European Secondary School Students' Conference – The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, and the Treaty of Versailles, which was held at Cambridge, United Kingdom, in February 1997. The report of the Conference can be found in document CC-ED/HIST/Eur (98) 3 which was distributed to the participants at the Kasbegy meeting.

The Simulation of the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles was a good example of how to treat a controversial and sensitive issue. The pupils had to take the roles of the delegations from the different countries present in Paris and Versailles, but never to play the role of the delegation of their own country. This proved to be an interesting and valuable experience, and it is one that could be adapted to other countries and events.

7. Handbook for teachers on teaching sensitive and controversial issues

The participants were of the opinion that this would be helpful, and asked the Secretariat to look for an author, who would be able to present his outline of the Handbook at the next meeting of the present group.

8. Other business

9. Close of the meeting

The meeting ended during the afternoon of Saturday 3 October 1998.

APPENDIX I
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the draft agenda
3. Election of the Chair of the Meeting
4. Presentation of the participants
5. Aims of the Meeting
6. Presentations by the experts and Council of Europe
7. Discussion of the background document
8. Handbook for teachers on teaching sensitive and controversial issues
9. Other business
10. Close of the meeting

APPENDIX III

GUIDELINES FOR THE TEAMS OF AUTHORS

In order to ensure that the Textbook is readable and comparable, agreement must be reached at the Preliminary Meeting on the way in which the teams of authors should produce their parts of the Textbook and the language which should be used.

The following Guidelines should, therefore, be accepted by the teams of authors at the Preliminary Meeting. If these Guidelines are not respected, the teams of authors will be informed and invited to re-do their sections.

* * *

The teams of authors, therefore, agree to the following Guidelines:

1. Each of the sections of the textbook should have a balanced approach and **not** be written in a triumphalist, polemic or even vindictive style. The style should be neutral and realistic and give different points of view where appropriate.
2. The Textbook should be free of political and ideological stereotypes where historical events are used to reinforce the political problems of the present day.
3. The Textbook should contain no information which could be interpreted from a nationalistic or xenophobic point of view.
4. Each of the sections should include:

cultural, economic, social and spiritual as well as political and diplomatic history. It should not concentrate on military issues, although obviously military history and battles, lost and won, will have to be dealt with.
5. The question of "multi-perspectivity" should be included in all the sections of the Textbook, to awaken in the pupils their reasoning skills and their ability to read history critically.
6. The photographs should be chosen for valid historical reasons and not be controversial.
7. The maps should be agreeable to all the countries involved and not be controversial but acceptable to all.

