



# **Task Force Education And Youth**

Enhanced Graz Process

Working Table 1, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

DGIV/EDU/HIST (2001) 16

Regional Seminar on

“The challenges facing history teachers in  
the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in a regional context”

Budapest, Hungary,

8 – 10 November 2001

**Report**

Strasbourg



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**Report by**

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The opinions expressed in this work are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The seminar was organised jointly by the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Education in Hungary within the framework of the Stability Pact. The Ministry generously hosted the Seminar. It brought together participants from 12 countries and included roughly equal groups of history teachers, initial and in-service teacher trainers and inspectors and other Ministry officials.

Ms Krisztina BENE, representing the Ministry's Department of International Co-operation and Strategic Planning, welcomed participants from so many countries within the region and stressed how important it was to be reflecting on the task of teaching about their common heritage and the sensitive issues of their shared past. Ms Alison CARDWELL welcomed participants on behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and expressed the hope that this seminar would lead to practical outcomes and new project proposals that could be supported within the next stage of the Stability Pact.

The Council of Europe provided the participants with a selection of publications on its work in history and history teaching, including reports on other regional history seminars and three books which emerged out of the project: Learning and Teaching about the history of Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

- The Misuses of History;
- The European home: representations of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe in history textbooks, by Falk PINGEL;
- Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> Century European History, by Robert STRADLING.

## **II. THE AIMS OF THE SEMINAR**

The overall aims of the Seminar can be condensed into the following:

- To introduce and reflect on the context of the Stability Pact for South East Europe and its significance for the modernisation and innovatory practice of history teaching and teacher training.
- To look at innovative approaches to teaching history in a regional or transnational context, with a particular emphasis on teaching controversial and sensitive issues, topics and themes, active learning, enquiry-based approaches and the use of out-of-school learning opportunities.
- To examine current approaches to initial teacher training for history teachers within the region and discuss possible future developments.

- To explore ways of helping history teachers trained in one pedagogic tradition to adapt to the innovative skills-based approaches to teaching and learning history which are central to another kind of pedagogic tradition.

The rest of this report has been structured around the four themes which underpin these aims.

### III. THE CONTEXT

This was the fourth Council of Europe regional seminar to be held in South East Europe in 2001. The first two were held in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Bulgaria in May, while the third was held in Bled, Slovenia, in October. All of these seminars were organised under the Programme of Activities of the History Working Group of the Stability Pact.

The Stability Pact for South East Europe was initiated in June 1999 and subsequently endorsed by 40 partner countries and international organisations. The main objective was to support the countries of the region in “*their efforts to foster peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity in order to achieve stability in the whole region*”. It was recognised from the outset that history education and history teaching at all levels of the educational system had an important potential role to play in encouraging mutual understanding and reconciliation in the region.

In October 1999, a workshop was held in Graz in Austria on “History and history teaching in South Eastern Europe”. The main aim was to identify, develop and support the implementation of a flexible framework of action for the region which would begin the process of establishing a network of organisations and individuals able to cooperate in developing a range of projects and regional initiatives in history teaching in primary and secondary schooling and in higher education.

The History Working Group subsequently identified four areas for development through collaborative bilateral and multilateral initiatives:

- Technical assistance for the development of new history curricula;
- Developments in the Initial and In-service training of history teachers;
- The development of teaching resources and textbooks;
- Innovative initiatives in academic history in higher education.

The History Working Group brought together a number of partner organisations, including the Council of Europe, EUROCLIO, the Georg Eckert Institute, the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in South East Europe, which is based in Thessaloniki, Greece, and representatives of institutions and



projects within the region. Initially the Working Group was asked by the Stability Pact to develop some Quick Start projects, i.e. projects that could be up and running immediately and would start to have some impact fairly quickly. To do that it was necessary to build on existing networks and expertise. It was therefore decided to give priority to projects which focused on either the comparative analysis and/or development of history textbooks and other teaching resources or on support for the initial and in-service training of history teachers, with particular emphasis on:

- Teaching regional history;
- Teaching history from a comparative perspective;
- Incorporating a multiplicity of perspectives into history teaching;
- Encouraging active learning;
- The application of enquiry-based teaching and learning methods;
- Source-based approaches for the development of critical thinking.

However, the History Working Group is now moving into the second phase of its Action Programme and this will include new developments in the other priority areas, particularly support for curriculum development, teaching resources and history teaching in higher education.

An important component of Phase 2 will be the development of new projects which emerge directly from the region itself. For this reason the programme for each of the four regional seminars on history teaching held in 2001 included opportunities for bilateral and multilateral groups to get together to formulate outline proposals for new projects which then could be further developed and presented to potential sponsors in order to attract financial support. This process takes time and the Working Group cannot always predict what will and will not attract sponsorship. However, some interesting ideas emerged at this seminar in Budapest and it is to be hoped that some if not all of them can attract support and lead to practical outcomes.

#### **IV. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO HISTORY TEACHING**

In his presentation, "Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> Century European History", Robert STRADLING focused on *how* to teach 20<sup>th</sup> Century European history rather than on *what* to teach. As a result some of what he had to say would have applied to teaching national history as well as teaching transnational, regional or European-wide history. The main focus was on issues associated with introducing a more comparative approach and a greater European perspective into one's teaching, even into the teaching of a national history syllabus. This entailed recognising that national history does not take place in a vacuum and that students therefore should be helped to understand:

- how national events and developments could have been influenced by what was happening elsewhere and how national developments could also have influenced events and developments in other countries;
- how historical developments in their own country were perceived elsewhere and how this might have shaped external (international) responses;
- how other countries, including neighbouring countries, did not necessarily experience the same events and developments or did not experience them in the same way;
- how developments in national history can sometimes be shaped by broad trends and patterns (economic, cultural, social and political) without necessarily being able to identify specific causal factors, connections and linkages.

He also observed that the syllabuses on 20<sup>th</sup> Century history tend to be broken up into relatively short blocks of time (e.g. 1900-1914; 1914-1918, the 1920s, the 1930s, 1939-45, etc.) but it was always important to look at 20<sup>th</sup> Century topics and themes and ask: “*How far back in time do you need to go if students are going to be able to understand the events and developments they are examining?*” He suggested that it was not realistic to assume that all students would make the connections between later events and developments taking place earlier in the century or, indeed, in a previous century. This meant that history teachers, curriculum planners and textbook writers should either consider whether the conventional and strictly chronological approach is necessarily always the most appropriate one for approaching the century or look at ways in which they can help the students to make these temporal links and connections. Sometimes this might involve tracing a topic back to its roots or identifying the continuing influences of a legacy of a previous age, such as the legacy of the Hapsburg or Ottoman Empires, the legacy of the Balkan Wars or the legacy of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Similarly it was also important to look not only at the short term consequences and the significance of a particular historical event but also to help students to understand the longer-term consequences including the traces of that event or development that can still be found today.

He then went on to look at how some of the more sensitive and controversial topics of 20<sup>th</sup> century history, particularly for South East Europe, might be approached in the secondary classroom. He particularly emphasised the importance of analysing the language used when discussing such topics and also looking at them from a multiplicity of perspectives which reflect the contrasting views and accounts about what has happened and why.

Subsequent discussion highlighted wide variations between the different educational systems represented at the seminar in terms of the scope for introducing more innovative approaches to history teaching. To some extent the structure of the history syllabus, the amount of content to be covered, the time allocated for history teaching on the timetable, the textbooks available, the prevailing pedagogic traditions in initial and in-service teacher training can all constrain the extent to which history teachers can be more comparative or take a longer time perspective when looking at historical events. My impression is that at present the constraints on innovation are most severe in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. Undoubtedly it is very difficult to try out new approaches to history teaching when you are not being paid, you are using one out-of-date textbook and the only teaching aids are a blackboard and some chalk. However, it is fair to say that this was also the situation in some of the other countries within the region 10 years ago but there were still some teachers willing to pioneer new approaches and to cooperate with each other and with organisations such as EUROCLIO and the Council of Europe to establish history teachers' associations, organise in-service seminars and workshops and produce new kinds of teaching materials.

What we have learned from history teachers' experiences over the last decade or so is that, initially, it is essential to "*think small*". To try, for example, to examine one or two topics in greater depth and breadth than usual. To collect some source material on a particular topic and help the students to examine it critically and to try and look at the same event from the perspectives of different groups and interested parties. In this respect it is also important for vanguards of teachers who want to be more innovative to develop and pilot in their own classrooms some examples of learning activities and teaching materials on just one or two topics and then share them with colleagues. Of course it can still be difficult to obtain a wide range of primary and secondary source material, particularly when teachers are unable to access archives or the Internet. But a lot of material is often available locally, in museums and in pupils' homes: photographs, letters, old posters, newspaper cuttings, magazines, and so on. Some of these will be of local interest only, but they also may reflect the broader historical changes which took place at the national and regional level over the century, e.g. urbanisation, industrialisation, changes in agriculture, transport, communications, and technology, changes in the patterns of everyday life, women's roles, children's lives, etc. Some of this material will also touch on wider issues and concerns - wars, military occupations, migration, changes in regimes - and how these were perceived at the time.

Even in the most unlikely circumstances it is still possible for history teachers to build up their own stock of source material and then share it with other colleagues in other schools. Using the links established through regional seminars and workshops, it should also be possible to obtain material from

colleagues in other countries to facilitate a comparative approach and greater multiperspectivity.

There is also a role here for the Council of Europe. Alison CARDWELL, in her presentation on the Council's recent work in the region, mentioned that she is going to have her own web pages for history education on the Council of Europe's website. So it should be possible to explore whether this site could be used to establish a bank of source material (photographs, key texts, audio-visual clips) which teachers could download. Alternatively it might be possible to produce a CD-ROM that serves a similar purpose. The regional seminars held in 2001 have clearly identified those topics on which source material of this kind would be welcomed by many history teachers in the region. The Council of Europe is also planning to bring out a short handbook on Multiperspectivity in history teaching some time in 2002.

## V. INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING FOR HISTORY TEACHERS

Professor Alois ECKER began his presentation by noting that what we teach and how we teach, whether in primary, secondary or higher education, is increasingly challenged and questioned, not least by the students. At the same time the demands on teachers have expanded in recent years both in terms of curriculum content and pedagogy. He went on to observe that, if those responsible for providing teacher training continue to base their courses on a traditional, didactic understanding of history education, then they will not be adequately preparing the next generation of teachers for the new demands on them and the gap between teachers and students would probably widen. In the particular context of the initial training of history teachers, the emphasis in most Universities and other Higher Education Institutes within the region was still on the transmission of historical knowledge, the methods of historical research and the pedagogical elements of the training tend to be normative (what the pupils should do and learn during history education) but this was rarely grounded in "*empirical observation, description and analysis of what really happened in the interactions between teacher and pupils*". At present he believed that, in many training courses offered in South East Europe, there was a gulf between the teaching of academic history and the pedagogic training which potential history teachers receive and more needed to be done to achieve a better integration between the two.

This is a problem which is not restricted to the region. It can also be found in some initial teacher training being offered in Western Europe as well. In the United Kingdom, for instance, they adopt a consecutive model of teacher training for secondary education. That is to say, professional training is at a postgraduate level and all intending secondary-level history teachers require a history degree before they can register for initial teacher training. This ensures that the initial teacher training concentrates almost wholly on the processes of teaching and learning, with a large emphasis given to classroom practice

through school experience placements. Nevertheless this does not necessarily ensure a more effective integration of academic history and pedagogic training than the concurrent model which is more common in South East Europe. Some (a minority) of the academic history degrees offered by Universities in the United Kingdom are very content-based with few opportunities for the student to have firsthand experience of doing some research in an archive or record office or to be introduced systematically to the study of historiography. This can raise problems when they begin their initial teacher training since it is difficult to expect them to develop their school students' skills in collecting primary source material or analysing primary source evidence if they have not been introduced to this in their own history education.

The Working Group which looked at Initial Teacher Training also stressed the importance of better integration between the academic and pedagogic elements of the training courses and also stressed the importance of increasing the time spent by student teachers on practical experience in the classroom. In this respect it was recognised that an extension in the time available for teaching practice in schools depended to a large degree on changes made at the institutional level and might not lie in the power of individual pedagogic specialists within the Universities. On the other hand they felt that it was possible to be more innovative in one's own approach to training teachers by using such techniques as micro-teaching or simulated classroom experience.

The main theme of Professor ECKER's presentation was whether it was possible to construct a professional profile of the history teacher which could be used as a standard for initial teacher training. To facilitate this he and a group of colleagues had conducted a comparative study of the initial training of history teachers in 13 countries. The countries involved were Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain and the United Kingdom. There was evidence of professional profiles of the history teacher having already been developed in five of these countries, while some institutions in two other countries had developed their own profiles and in two other countries discussions were being held about the possibility of profiles being developed. These profiles have emerged for a variety of reasons. For example, the growing concern with quality assurance at the governmental level in much of northern and western Europe in the 1980s and '90s, and the move towards greater harmonisation of teacher training within the European Union and the resulting pressure on other states to conform with this as part of the process of preparing for accession to the EU.

He then went on to discuss in some depth three profiles from Austria, England and France respectively. All three were competency-based profiles which identified the different areas of competence and the different specific skills and abilities required of the qualified history teacher. There were some common

elements in all three but also some interesting differences which may well reflect institutional (or even national) differences in approach.

Profiles of this kind are a valuable starting point in the design of new courses or the reform of existing provision. They also have a potential use in evaluating provision, but they have sometimes proved to be controversial when used to assess the performance of student teachers or, for that matter, serving teachers. Some of the competences tend to be highly specific, particularly in relation to knowledge of the subject, classroom management, classroom organisation, lesson planning and preparation. Others, however, are very general and often appear to be broad objectives that have been “converted” into competences by the addition of an active verb, e.g. “ability to reflect on one’s developing competence as a teacher of history” or “ability to identify the possible learning difficulties presented by the study of history...”, etc. Very few people would argue that these are not admirable objectives for the initial training of teachers but they often seem to be ‘catch-all’ statements which, in practice, probably incorporate a number of competences, capabilities and attitudes. The issues relate to how you “operationalise” them within the context of teacher training. In some cases it may be necessary to break down these general statements into a series of specific actions which highly experienced history teachers employ in particular classroom situations or when individual children encounter specific learning difficulties. This can be difficult if the HE tutor does not have recent (or any) experience of classroom teaching. Competences relating to reflective teaching are particularly apposite here. Hardly anyone working in teacher training would argue against the aim of producing reflective practitioners but a lot of research has suggested that it is very difficult to identify reflective teaching “in action”. It is that problem of the gap between rhetoric and reality again.

The process of converting broad aims and objectives into more specific lists of competences is an important starting point. But, I would suggest, the concept of professionalism within teaching implies something more than this. Firstly, it implies a capacity for exercising professional judgment and making decisions in real situations, with real students in real time. We hope that this capacity improves with experience but we also need to look at how we can ‘sow the seeds’ of professional judgment during initial training. This entails a recognition that teaching is a holistic process which is more than the sum total of its constituent competences and capabilities. Secondly, professionalism also implies not only competences but also attitudes relating to what it means to be a professional teacher: a commitment to the job and to the students, a commitment to their own continuing professional development and attitudes relating to what is and is not appropriate within multicultural, multi-ethnic or multi-faith schools and societies.

This brings me to another point emphasised by both Alois ECKER and the Working Group on initial teacher training: the need to train the trainers. Again this relates to the gap between rhetoric and reality. If the academic historians and the pedagogic specialists rely almost solely on lectures and see their role primarily as the transmitters of scientific knowledge then this is giving the students, including those intending to qualify as history teachers, a message which contradicts an apparent commitment to promoting active learning, enquiry-based learning and other student-centred approaches. If we are talking about history teachers becoming good managers of learning - an important part of Professor ECKER's thesis - then this objective also needs to be taken seriously by the trainers, including the academic historians.

Finally, institutions as well as teachers and teachers trainers also need to be reflective. Indeed, the term "the learning organisation" has now been coined to describe the institution which is reflective, self-critical and self-evaluative. This also has implications for those international organisations, NGOs and even project teams who are seeking to promote new approaches to history teaching and the training of history teachers. It is not enough to run workshops and seminars on innovative approaches. It is also essential to provide participants with practical advice and guidance on how to bring about change in their own institutions.

## **VI. IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING FOR HISTORY TEACHERS**

It is not difficult to think of good topics and themes for in-service training seminars and workshops. Indeed, during the course of the Budapest seminar the Working Group on In-service Training came up with their own very useful list, which included nationalism in the region, fundamentalism, World War 2 and its consequences, and the history of 'the other' in the former countries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, as Joke van der LEEUW-ROORD pointed out in her presentation, the critical issue for those who are responsible for planning in-service training programmes for history teachers in South East Europe is not which topics to cover but how best to help teachers trained in one pedagogic tradition to effectively adopt the approaches and develop the skills which are central to a very different pedagogic tradition. This is particularly important in a context where recent developments in history curricula in the Balkans have emphasised the importance of multiperspectival approaches, interactive learning methods, working with sources and different interpretations, developing pupils' critical thinking and their ability to undertake historical enquiries. This represents a major shift in approach and for this to happen History Teachers Associations and the Teacher In-Service Institutes will have to develop and run intensive courses and the Educational Authorities will need to find the resources to finance such courses.

Ms van der Leeuw-Roord began her presentation by observing that a major characteristic of history education, whether in the Balkans, or in Europe as a whole or elsewhere, is the distinct focus on national history and, within national history, on the perspective of the dominant or 'national' majority. *"There is little place for ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities and even gender history does not play a significant role."* She went on to note that *"school history presents national mirrors of pride and pain"*. By this she meant that the pupils tend to be made aware of national sufferings and of the actions and achievements which present the nation in a positive and creditable light. But the treatment of others, particularly if they were the victims of one's own country or of the dominant majority within the country will hardly feature in history curricula or textbooks. As a result many pupils leave school with a biased picture of the past. There was an alternative view though which runs counter to this tradition and which starts from the premise that history is an interpretation of the past, the result of a process of selectively reconstructing that past and interpreting it from specific perspectives. This has clear implications for teacher training, particularly for planning in-service training for teachers who have little experience of helping their pupils to deal with the processes of historical interpretation and multiperspectivity.

To initiate discussion on what needs to be done in the future and on what would represent good in-service training for history teachers in the region, Ms van der Leeuw-Roord drew on an extensive list of priorities which had emerged from an in-service training planning workshop which she had run in Athens in September 2000<sup>1</sup>. In summary outline the seminars and workshops would need to focus on:

- How to introduce new interpretations of the past?
- How to teach controversial and sensitive issues, particularly transnational issues?
- How to introduce a variety of perspectives?
- How to extend the focus of national history courses to incorporate ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity?
- How to develop active learning in the history classroom?
- How to develop enquiry skills, critical thinking and historical understanding?
- How to adjust one's teaching to the differential needs of various ages and ability groups?
- How to assess what students are learning through these new approaches?
- How to develop additional teaching materials to support these new teaching and learning strategies and approaches?

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<sup>1</sup> The list is too extensive to be reproduced here in full but the complete version can be found in R. Stradling, *The Initial and In-service training of history teachers in South East Europe*, Conference Report, Athens, 28-30 September 2000 [DGIV/EDU/HIST (2000)07 available from the Council of Europe Directorate General IV, Strasbourg].



To reiterate the point made in relation to initial teacher training, teachers are most likely to adopt the methodologies associated with active, enquiry-based and evidence-based learning through practical experience of these approaches. That suggests an emphasis on workshops rather than conferences or seminars. It also suggests workshops which lead to tangible, practical outcomes. EUROCLIO has developed an appropriate model for in-service training based on a phased strategy where workshop participants engage in the process of developing teaching and learning materials and activities on one or two topics which they then try out in their classrooms, evaluate and share the results with other colleagues who also attended the workshop.

It is also important, in planning such workshops, to ensure that participants are potential 'multipliers', i.e. those who will go on and disseminate the thinking and approaches to others, either through a cascade model of INSET or through writing textbooks and developing other teaching materials.

While opportunities to meet and cooperate are important, it is also vital that distance learning approaches to in-service training are also developed for history teachers who are working in the more remote, rural areas.

## **VII. INFORMATION EXCHANGES**

The informal and formal processes of sharing information and experiences are important elements in any multilateral workshop or seminar and this was certainly the case in Budapest. The Working Groups provided a good opportunity for participants to talk about developments in their own countries and to talk about the projects and initiatives in which they were already involved. In addition there were several unscheduled plenary sessions where further information was provided about specific activities. Alison CARDWELL talked about several Council of Europe initiatives in history teaching, including work in the Russian Federation, a multilateral project involving the three Baltic States, the Tbilisi Initiative and the Black Sea Initiative. Reports on all of these activities were available from DG IV of the Council of Europe.

András NYIRI (Hungary) reported on the project "Chances of Coexistence in the Carpathian Region". Jelka RAZPOTNIK provided information about provision for the in-service training of history teachers in Slovenia and outlined the problems that had been experienced and also the benefits which were already apparent.

## **VIII. CONCLUSIONS**

As we discovered at this seminar, a number of projects and teacher in-service programmes which were implemented under the Stability Pact's Quick Start initiative have now come to fruition. Undoubtedly those who participated in

these activities gained much from them in terms of their own work as history teachers, teacher trainers, school inspectors and textbook writers. But there also needs to be a systematic and wide-ranging dissemination programme which targets all those groups who in various ways have some influence over history teaching in their respective countries:

- Ministers of Education;
- Ministry officials and curriculum committees;
- Textbook writers and publishers;
- University lecturers teaching academic history;
- Pedagogic specialists engaged in initial and in-service teacher training; and last but not least;
- History teachers.

Two common and related themes in the Working Group discussions and in the plenary presentations were the need to spread new ideas and approaches about the practice of history education beyond the vanguards of innovative teachers and teacher trainers who could be found in each country within the region and the importance of finding ways of bridging the gap between rhetoric and reality. On paper significant changes are proposed or even claimed, in practice it is often difficult to find evidence of change. This raises important issues about how best to disseminate new ideas and practices, not just to individuals who are already receptive to change but also to institutions.

Mr NAIDIN, representing the Regional Envoy of the Stability Pact, pointed out at this seminar that we need to think strategically. In particular there needs to be some effective lobbying at the policy-making level. I would conclude therefore by recommending that Alison CARDWELL, in her role as Coordinator of the Stability Pact's History Working Group, should explore ways in which the projects and initiatives that were completed in Phase 1 could be brought to the attention of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Education and Culture Committee of that Assembly and the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education. It would be important to use such opportunities not just to publicise and describe what has been done but also to highlight the constraints and problems which still exist and which currently prevent the gap between rhetoric and reality being effectively bridged. It will also be important to ensure that those individuals and groups from the region who are proposing new initiatives and projects for the second phase of the Stability Pact make provision for an effective dissemination programme in their planning and budgeting. In this respect they could find no better guidance than that offered by Joke van der LEEUW-ROORD in her second plenary presentation, which focused on how to seek funding for projects and is reproduced as an Appendix to this Report.

**APPENDIX**

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