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**REPORT ON THE NATIONAL STOCKTAKING CONFERENCE ON**

**"THE REFORM OF HISTORY TEACHING IN SCHOOLS  
IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION"**

Suzdal, the Russian Federation,

12-14 December 1996

Report by the General Rapporteur

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## **1. CONTEXT**

The Suzdal Conference was organised jointly by the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. It focused on ‘the Reform of History Teaching in Schools in the Russian Federation’ and was attended by: some 40 delegates from the Russian Federation; representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Moldova and the Ukraine; and by Council of Europe experts and representatives of the Secretariat. The conference was jointly chaired by Mr Maitland STOBART, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport of the Council of Europe and Mr Vladimir BATSIN, Head of the Department for International Cooperation, the Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation.

The Conference took place over three days, the first day being devoted to inputs from speakers from the Russian Federation, the second day to inputs from Council of Europe experts and to discussion and the third day to further discussion and to a summing-up of issues.

Mr BATSIN welcomed delegates and referred to the close cooperation that there had been since the early 1990's between the Russian Federation and the Council of Europe. He drew attention to the opportunity which now existed for tying the history of Russia more closely to the history of Europe and to the central importance of objectivity in history in all post-Soviet states.

## **2. INPUTS FROM THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

### **Perspectives for change**

**Dr Alexandre ASMOLOV**, Deputy Minister of General and Professional Education in the Russian Federation, opened the conference by raising some of the challenges facing history and history teaching in the Russian Federation today.

He referred to the potential in the present situation for a re-analysis of Russian history in which the links and comparisons between the history of Europe and the history of Russia were made more clear and where the idea of the ‘inevitable progress’ of Russian history was re-considered. There were dangers in the traditional approach to history teaching in Russia in that it often centred on crisis or conflict, sometimes meant that myth became accepted as fact, resulting in a narrowing of interpretations. History teaching in Russia needed to move to a position where alternative ways of explaining the past and different perspectives on it became accepted and where there was greater emphasis on comparative and cross-cultural history. Dr ASMOLOV argued that this was not a question of ideology but of methodology.

Such changes would also have impact on textbooks which would need, in future, to strike a balance between European and world history and to set Russia’s place in those wider contexts. He also stated that textbooks were needed for the current period of transition in the Russian Federation. He concluded with a challenge to historians and educators to make the changes work.

### **A crisis of consciousness**

**Dr Victoria UKOLOVA**, Head of the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy for Education, began by stating that a crisis of consciousness was facing the educational world at the end of the 20th Century. It was essentially a crisis of self-identification for individuals, nations and continents. Whereas the traditional approach to history teaching had contributed to social and national stability, there was now a need for re-interpretation given the growth of ‘new’ histories such as womens’ history. In the Russian Federation, for example, there was a need for a new cultural and a new intellectual history to be written. She emphasised the importance of pupils recognising that what they study in history is, in fact, historical reconstruction. Although this concept was not yet on the agenda of schools and universities, it needed to be addressed because young people were increasingly sceptical of given interpretations. She stated that it was important for pupils to empathise with the past and to recognise interpretations of history.

Dr UKOLOVA also spoke about the challenge of creating an appropriate textbook on the history of Europe. Currently books still treated European history as the history of the

separate states rather than attempting to write a unique history of Europe and European culture and identity. A new approach would mean not only dealing with the major and minor European nationalities but with the major European themes which cut across national boundaries. This history should not just deal with European conflicts but deal with how European identity appeared. She stated that it was important for Russian children to call themselves Europeans and to understand what that meant. She emphasised that the teaching of Russian and European history needed to become more integrated and that there was a need for history today to reflect the histories of the individual states of the Russian Federation.

### **History education in a multicultural society**

**Mr. Vladimir BATSIN** focused on the problems of historical education in a multi-national Russia by asking some fundamental questions about the purposes and goals of history teaching. At the outset, he drew a distinction between university history education and school history education, arguing that school history should not copy university history but rather be adapted to the cognitive understanding of pupils at different ages.

Mr BATSIN stated that the purpose and subject of school education was the development of the human being and that history played an important role in this development. He stated that while humans create history and history shapes humankind, there also needed to be recognition of the fact that early influences on a child, such as family history or first notions of the past are also part of this shaping. There was a need to avoid to avoid the re-telling of myths.

He stated that there was a need for several textbooks reflecting different points of view, particularly at a time of national cultural renaissance in the Russian Federation. Textbooks should deal with why and in what ways the 120 peoples of the Russian Federation have different perceptions of Russian history. Mr BATSIN raised the question of what was Russian history. He stated that whereas it may be possibly easier to define national history in a small homogenous state, the Russian Federation was heterogenous in population, culture and historical development. Therefore, textbooks needed to approach history from the point of view of big themes and processes of transition.

He questioned whether it was necessary for pupils to deal with the whole spectrum of history from prehistory to the present day, particularly for the 90% of pupils who did not go on to university. Rather, he argued, it was more important for pupils to develop understanding and the shaping of attitudes rather than for them to acquire received knowledge and absolute truth. Textbooks too needed to reflect the needs of average Russian pupils and questioned what sort of 'world view' the average pupil had.

In conclusion, Mr BATSIN said that it would be useful to develop books on local history

possibly linked to national or world perspectives, to develop a range of textbooks at local and inter-regional levels, and for history to reflect the multi-ethnic needs of the Russian Federation.

### **Content, structure and challenges**

**Mr Alexandre VODUANSKY**, Deputy Head of the Department for General Secondary Education of the Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation, spoke on the reform of the content and structure of history education in Russian schools. He set the work of the Ministry since 1991 in context by referring to the Soviet 'cult of State history' and the challenges faced with the end of communism in Russia. Education Ministry leaders working with intellectuals and methodologists had made the first steps to reform the history curriculum to reflect pluralist views. However, textbooks were still written from the old viewpoint. As the further process of democratisation continued within the State, this would be reflected in the school curriculum which would become increasingly de-politicised and de-ideologized and begin to prepare Russian citizens for the new multi-cultural society. He also set the work on reviewing the content and structure of the history curriculum in the context of the changing structure of Russian education, which now had a nine-year obligatory secondary education system with a degree of choice.

Mr VODUANSKY said that the challenges facing those reviewing the history curriculum had included:

- how to structure the history curriculum to cover from ancient times to the end of the 20th Century;
- whether to teach Russian history in the context of other histories. It had been recommended that Russian and general history be taught separately but that Russian history be seen in a world context;
- the lack of teacher knowledge of alternative views on historical events;
- although textbooks were beginning to change, in that they expressed different points of view and have more on religious, cultural, ideological and national themes, teachers were not necessarily trained to deal with these;
- the difficulties of teaching the history of world civilisations and writing the history of the 20th Century;
- whether the events of 1991 and 1993 should be covered in history or

whether history should end to avoid these controversies (and, if so, where);

- where to put limits on the historical knowledge needed at school by upper secondary pupils or whether greater emphasis should be placed on pupils' historical thinking and different points of view.

The Ministry was aware of the need to train teachers in historical method and was considering ways in which the Russian Federation might co-operate with the Council of Europe on this. The history curriculum had sought to strike a balance between local, national and world history - it was felt that national history was important since one of the aims was to prepare pupils to be citizens of the Russian Federation. 30% of the history curriculum was devoted to regional history, although often such coverage did not respect other minority groups. There was a need for textbooks which reflected regional perspectives on history. It was felt that there was not enough time to focus on European history but that what was needed as components on Russian history which matched European issues. Mr VODUANSKY thought the Council of Europe's list of central topics in European history was too complex.

## **Discussion**

During the discussions on the inputs from Russian participants, the following points were raised:

- whether a concept of history teaching could be created free of national and regional views. Should the myths of Russian history be avoided or should the traditions, culture and myths of a society be reflected in a nation's history? The task of the historian was to demythologise and the conference needed to have enough faith in Russian history and culture to tackle myths. It was felt that the Soviet view of history education needed to be broken and future discussions ought to be based on a presumption of intellectual honesty;
- the aim of history teaching should be to develop the whole person not produce a 'national patriot' as in the Soviet system . There was much to learn from 19th Century views on the purpose of history education in Russia, given the current general education programme's aim of the development of the individual and the preparation of individuals for society;
- the history curriculum should reflect the inter-relationship between Russian and world history and the development of pupils' historical skills of enquiry, explanation, chronology and comparison;
- there are no absolute answers in history. Teachers and pupils need to be equipped with appropriate historical methodology;
- history is always a construct and facts can be written in different ways. Different histories are needed from different points of view;
- whether it was appropriate for pupils to "revisit" the same history at secondary school and whether the curriculum provided an appropriate preparation for higher education;
- the meaning of 'standards', both in terms of what schools should deliver and of what should be expected of pupils;
- whether there should be rules for the authorisation of textbooks and, if so, who should authorise them - currently any author wishing their textbook to be authorised by the the Russian Federation submits it to an independent evaluator before it can receive approval as a federal textbook. Wider issues included whether academics or teachers should write the books (and, more

generally, the relationship between academic work and what goes on in school), what role publishers and market influences should play, the importance of presentation and language level of books and how teachers use textbooks;

- no one textbook will meet the needs of the different peoples of the Russian Federation, although it might be possible to create a nucleus of historical content which recognises cultural diversity.



### 3. INPUTS FROM THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE EXPERTS

#### The Council's activities and vision

**Mr Maitland STOBART** outlined the origins of the Council of Europe, its aims and the current programme of work being carried out by the Council. Mr STOBART emphasised how the 1949 founders of the Council of Europe had seen how history had been misused in the past to show national or racial superiority. The Council's vision for history teaching was one which respected historians' quest for truth, made critical thinking central and respected different points of view. To further these aims, the Council of Europe worked with a range of people in the history world - including academics, teacher trainers, curriculum planners, teachers, publishers, the Georg Eckert Institute for textbook research and the Standing Conference of European History Teachers' Associations (EUROCLIO).

Mr STOBART described the work which the Council would undertake in 1997 on teaching 20th century European history in secondary schools, a project which would have the twin aims of helping young people understand the movements and forces which have shaped this century and to help them acquire the attitudes needed in a pluralistic society - intellectual honesty, open mindedness, respect for truth, tolerance, empathy and civil courage. Pupils needed to be helped to develop the key historical skills of research, critical thinking, detection of bias, to resist manipulation and to identify distortion and propaganda. Teachers also needed training and appropriate materials if they were to deal with sensitive and controversial topics such as The Shoah (Holocaust), deportation, treatment of minorities and military occupation. The Council had produced a Handbook for teachers *'the Holocaust in the School Curriculum - a European perspective'* and would hold a simulation of the 1919 peace conference for secondary school students in Cambridge in February 1997. It is the intention to publish teacher guides and teaching units on *Human Rights and Pluralistic Democracy in the 20th century*, *Women in 20th century Europe*, *Nationalisms* and *Population movements*. Mr STOBART also outlined the Council's continuing process of support for history teaching in Central and Eastern Europe through multi-lateral conferences and national workshops.

Mr STOBART drew attention to the value of teaching history and described the sort of history the Council of Europe wished to encourage. History teaching should be a synthesis of social, religious, cultural, economic history and not just be confined to political and military events. Learning history was not simply about learning facts but was an active process in which pupils should handle a range of sources. Historical study provided pupils with the skills of thinking for oneself, handling evidence, asking questions, recognising bias and arriving at reasoned and balanced conclusions. History helped pupils acquire the attitudes of intellectual honesty, academic rigour and tolerance. It was, thus, an important training for life in a pluralist democracy.

In a period where there was a new sensitivity to national identities, the role of the history teacher was essential if identity was not to become expressed at the expense of others and national history not to become nationalistic history. The Council of Europe had rejected the idea of a standardised uniform version of European history and recognised that there must be diversity and geographic balance. He questioned whether European history was only the sum of national histories and whether there were not common themes which could be explored.

### **Criteria for selection**

**Mr Gary BRACE**, Professional Officer for History with the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales in the United Kingdom spoke on the criteria for selecting content in the history curriculum and the balance between local, regional, national and world history with particular reference to Wales. In his introduction he touched on the issue of national identity and drew attention to the fact that any national identity is made up of a variety of cultures and traditions.

Mr BRACE stated that the history curriculum in Wales was based on the following principles:

- to provide pupils with a map of the past and a sense of chronology and of change;
- to develop pupils' awareness of the 'otherness' of the past and the differences between societies and periods;
- to help pupils understand the different perspectives of human experience (social, cultural, economic, technological, political and constitutional) at different planes (local regional, national, continental and global);
- to develop skills of enquiry, analysis and evaluation.

Teaching Welsh history was important because it was natural for pupils to approach history from the point of view of the society and country in which they were growing up. It contributed to pupils' sense of their Welsh heritage. Mr BRACE explained that Welsh history was more than local history and more than a regional exemplification of British history. However, he emphasised that it was not taught in isolation from the history of Britain, Europe and the world.

Moving forward from these principles, Mr BRACE described the content balance between local, Welsh, British, European and world history in the history curriculum in Wales. At Key Stage 1 (five to six year olds) develop an awareness of the past and the

ways it is different from the present, about changes in their own lives and about notable events and personalities. At Key Stage 2 (seven to 11 year olds) and Key Stage 3 (11 to 14 year olds), the historical content is structured into ‘study units’. The study units do not differentiate between Welsh history and British history - all units on British history are study units on ‘Wales and Britain’. At Key Stage 2, 60% focuses on the history of Wales and Britain, 20% on local history and 20% on a historical theme. At Key Stage 3, 60% focuses on the history of Wales and Britain set in an international context, 20% on 20th Century world history, 10% on local history and 10% on a historical theme. Mr BRACE also outlined the similarities and differences between the history curricula in the four parts of the United Kingdom.

A Welsh perspective on British history ensured that the history of Britain was taught in a balanced fashion, taking into account the experiences of Wales, Scotland and Ireland as well as those of England. It also meant that social, economic and cultural history of Wales was given considerable emphasis, because from the 13th Century, Wales had not had separate machinery of government. Valuing Welsh history was a reminder that the nation-state is itself a creation of history and not a universal form of human organisation. Recognising a people’s identity, independent of the structures of state power, helped pupils in Wales towards an understanding of the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society of present day Britain.

Mr BRACE concluded by outlining the understanding and skills developed through that historical content, stating that developing pupils understanding of interpretations of history and their skills of historical enquiry were safeguards against ‘national’ history from becoming ‘nationalistic’ history.

### **Objectives, standards and assessment**

**Ms Gisele DESSIEUX**, General Inspector of National Education (History and Geography Group) of the Ministry of National Education of France, spoke about objectives, standards and assessment in history teaching. She began by explaining that the history curriculum in France is a national one and that history is regarded as a component of general and civic education. History was, thus, present at all levels and types of education and in all examinations. The study of the history of France helped cement French national identity and has been broadened to include European and world history.

Ms DESSIEUX outlined the objectives of history teaching in France, which were to help clarify the roots of French culture and society, to facilitate pupils' understanding of today's world and to provide intellectual training, including helping pupils to think critically.

The history curriculum in France was currently in the process of change. Achieving an appropriate balance between national and more general history has been tackled by adjusting the balance between them at different levels and ensuring that French history was always taught as part of European and world history. The problem of time management has been tackled by recommending the length of time to be spent on a topic and by concentrating on teaching some aspects in depth.

Ms DESSIEUX explained how the current challenge being addressed is to define more closely the 'standards' (the achievements expected of pupils) in history by breaking each stage of education into cycles. History at primary level focused essentially on national history. Pupils study major periods from prehistory to the present day based around key events, dates, people and places. By the end of the second cycle of primary education, they should be able to identify main periods of national history, link a period with a person or achievement and have a basic historical vocabulary. At lower secondary level, pupils study the same historical period but with much greater emphasis on the gradual construction of a European cultural heritage. Pupils study major documents and identify major reference points. The curriculum also details the progression in skills expected of pupils with an emphasis on reading, observing, identifying and comparing by the end of the lower secondary cycles.

At the upper secondary level, the same moments of history are studied but with a focus on contemporary history from a longer term perspective and with a focus on analysis and synthesis. Pupils are expected to organise knowledge with increasingly independence, to analyse critically and to learn how the historian works. She also explained how the Ministry of Education was developing materials for the assessment of skills. These are used with pupils on entry to lower secondary and upper secondary levels. The aim of these tests as well as providing an indication of national performance is to help teachers

identify pupils' achievements and to adjust teaching accordingly.

Finally, Ms DESSIEUX, commenting personally, stated that the revised history curriculum in France might have been better introduced incrementally and the assessment materials more uniformly. She commented that the standards expected of pupils were more demanding and diverse than previously. It was very important, therefore, to clearly define skills, and to prepare teachers to implement the changes.

### **The role of history teachers' associations**

**Ms Joke VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD** from the Netherlands and President of the European Standing Conference of History Teachers' Associations (EUROCLIO), spoke about the aims, objectives and roles of independent history teachers' associations, the challenges facing them and their achievements. She explained that independent history teachers' associations were indispensable in democratic societies because they enabled individuals in the history teaching profession to unite to debate problems and to share in activities.

Ms VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD stated that the aims and objectives and functions of independent history teachers' associations were:

- to strengthen the position of history in the curriculum and to defend time allocated to history;
- to protect the intellectual freedom of history teachers and promote independent responsible history teaching;
- to organise in-service training;
- to support initial teacher training;
- to disseminate information on history teaching through national and international publications;
- to be a centre of information;
- to provide a forum for discussion of matters of common interest to history teachers;
- to lobby, advise and create networks of history teachers.

EUROCLIO performed these functions on an international level by for example: organising conferences where members can discuss matters of common interest to history teachers in Europe; designing projects on the history of Europe and its relations with the wider world, including encouraging the development of a greater European awareness through history teaching; disseminating information about member associations' activities; and promoting the development of history teachers' associations in countries where none exist.

The main challenges facing independent history teachers' associations were that most of the associations' work had to be done in officers' spare time; their lack of financial resources; the lack of recognition of the professional expertise of teachers by national experts; how to cope with the conflicting interests and demands of teachers and academics; and how to engage in national debates about the place and purpose of, and approach to teaching history in society.

On the other hand, independent history teachers' associations had many achievements, including a growing awareness in Europe that professional, non-governmental history teachers' associations were important instruments in history education. She gave some examples of the different roles that associations had played in recent curriculum developments in a number of countries, including in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic where they had achieved an increase in the time allocated to history in the curriculum. Many associations provided publications and journals, reviews of textbooks and teaching resources which teachers found helpful.

In conclusion, Ms VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD suggested that the following were the main challenges facing the Russian Federation and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe in developing history teachers' associations:

- the importance of ensuring the independence of the association;
- persuading local, regional and national authorities to remove bureaucratic hindrances to the formation of associations;
- finding sufficient financial resources;
- creating a network of good history educators;
- developing new teaching materials and organising training courses.

### **The preparation and publication of textbooks**

**Mr Andrzej CHRZANOWSKI**, Director of the publishing house *Wydawnictwa Szkolne I Pedagogiczne* in Poland, spoke about the preparation and publication of history textbooks from the point of view of an educational publisher. He began by outlining the place of history within the Polish education system. As far as new textbooks were concerned, the first attempts to cover areas of history not officially open to discussion, for example, aspects of Poland's history during the Second World War, were taken by *Wydawnictwa Szkolne I Pedagogiczne* in the 1980's before the political reforms. New textbooks for primary and secondary schools have appeared since 1990. *Wydawnictwa* have published alternative textbooks on the same content so that there is a choice of approach for teachers.

Mr CHRZANOWSKI discussed how *Wydawnictwa* selects authors. As a fully independent publisher, authors were found on the basis of contacts with teachers and academics. Once a contract has been agreed between the publisher and the author, the author interprets (rather than being 'a slave' to) the history curriculum. The publisher's commissioning editor supports the author by providing materials, organising artwork and trialling the book with teachers and pupils. Close contacts are maintained between the publishers and the academic world. Currently most secondary schools books authors used by *Wydawnictwa* are academics, although there are some teacher authors.

As far as the approach to the books is concerned, *Wydawnictwa* try to ensure that there is a balance between the author's narrative, source materials, illustrations and pupil tasks. All these elements are integrated. Textbooks also provide a range of different interpretations, particularly when dealing with controversial events, rather than providing a single 'right' answer. There is a significant focus on 19th and 20th Century history in textbooks for upper primary and lower secondary schools. These deal with European history and the histories of Poland's neighbours presented against the broad background of Polish and world history. Another aspect of *Wydawnictwa's* work is the publication of a bi-monthly magazine which deals both with aspects of historical study, issues in the teaching of history and book reviews.

In Poland, textbooks are reviewed and approved by the Ministry of Education. A book is approved when it receives a positive review from four experts on a Ministry list. Two experts are concerned with the contents of the book, one with methodology and one with appropriateness of language. Currently, there are 36 approved textbooks on the list for 1996 drawn mainly from *Wydawnictwa's* titles and seven other Polish publishers.

### **Textbook research and analysis**

**Dr Falk PINGEL**, Deputy Director of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Germany, spoke about the preparation and publication of textbooks from the point of view of the Institute. He provided some historical background to international textbook research and outlined the tasks and aims of the Georg Eckert Institute. He explained that the initiative for the work had begun in 1925 under the auspices of the League of Nations. This work was pursued after the Second World War by UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the Braunschweig historian, Georg Eckert, who established the Institute in 1951. The Institute acts for the Council of Europe as a clearing house for the exchange of information on history textbooks.

The aim of the Institute was to pave the way for peaceful conflict resolution, foster international understanding and strengthen the inter-cultural dimension in history textbooks. It organises conferences on textbooks, gives advice to authors, editors and others and offers scholarships. The textbook library of the institute holds 150,000 books from 90 countries and 47,000 in the research library. It publishes its own newsletter, *International Textbook Research*, as well as other reports.

Dr PINGEL discussed some of the issues involved in textbook research and showed how during the Cold War some very useful textbook analysis was done between nations from the two power blocs. For example, the report on the USA/USSR textbook study between 1977 and 1989 contained the statement *'Textbooks will continue to be written from the perspectives of each society. This needs not impede accurate textbook treatment'*. In defining 'accuracy', he stated that textbooks could be analysed by historical content ( a concern mainly of academics) and from the point of view of the pedagogy of the text ( a concern of teachers). He stated that it was vital that both sides entered a dialogue with each other to debate the criteria for selection of content. These included questions such as 'do we concentrate on content or skills or can we combine both approaches?' 'What content should we focus on - national history (in which case, how long have we been a nation?), regional history (in which case, how should the region be defined - politically, culturally, economically?)?'

He then went on to discuss the writing of textbooks set in an international context. He stressed that the key word was multiperspectivity. Good textbooks should relate to different historical experiences, for example, the political economic structure of society; individual actions and feelings; the variety of social strata and cultures in a society or societies; political, economic and cultural history; or the history of ideas (religion, beliefs, values).

Dr PINGEL ended by drawing attention to the principles agreed for the history curriculum and for writing textbooks in another country in democratic transition - South Africa. These principles were:



- the history curriculum should reflect advances in the discipline of history;
- the approach to the past should be inclusive and democratic;
- the approach to historical knowledge should be analytical and explanatory;
- skills and content should be seen as inseparable, the process of historical construction should be made clear to students;
- approaches to the past should reflect diversity;
- textbooks should present the past from different points of view;
- textbooks should offer opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of historical thinking;
- the production and selection of history textbooks should be open and fair;
- sufficient time should be allowed for research, consultation and trialling of textbooks;
- teachers need training to support innovations in history teaching.

He concluded by challenging delegates to tolerate others' history as well as their own. It was essential that a balance between local/regional, national, European and world history be found in order to emphasise international understanding whilst not neglecting the individuals' need for self-identification.

### **Discussion**

During the discussions on the inputs from the Council of Europe experts, the issues questions were raised:

- the number of hours per week allocated to history teaching in different countries in Europe;
- the value of teaching chronology to pupils;
- the amount of European history in the various European history curricula;
- how to define local history;

- the age at which history should cease to be a compulsory subject at school;
- the nature of history teaching in multi-cultural and multi-lingual societies;
- the perspective in history textbooks written for particular peoples e.g for New Caledonia or Wales;
- the links between history, geography and other subjects and history's role in education for citizenship;
- initial and in-service teacher training.

#### **4. THE OUTCOMES OF THE WORKING GROUPS**

The Conference divided into two working groups to discuss the conceptual basis and structure of school history and standards and textbooks.

The outcomes of the working groups were as follows.

##### **The conceptual basis and structure of school history**

The aims of history need to be devised from the point of view of pupils. An over-riding aim, therefore, should be to help pupils understand the present through a study of the past and to prepare pupils for everyday life during a confusing period of Russian history. History should be interesting, truthful and about people. However, it was felt that history teachers in Russia currently have the thinking, background and training of the Soviet era. There was a need for re-training.

One delegate suggested that the Russian Federation would need to go through three stages in the development of a new history curriculum: the formation of a new image of Russian history; awareness of a picture of a multiplicity of cultural values; and acceptance of different views of history.

The group discussed the content of the history curriculum. Some considered it important to make decisions about what content it was appropriate to teach at different ages. Some wondered whether the Russian Federation was ready for setting national history in the context of European history, how much world history should be included in the history curriculum in the Russian Federation and whether it should be integrated into Russian history or taught in parallel. The group also discussed when school history should end and current affairs begin. It was suggested that, for any history to be meaningful, one needed a degree of hindsight. That was not to say that pupils could or should not analyse near contemporary events, particularly if they were equipped to analyse at an early age. It was also suggested that there may be some events that were so controversial in certain regions that it would be sensible to avoid them to protect the sensitivities of individuals and families. Flexibility was needed in the history curriculum during the period of transition.

In discussing who should devise the history curriculum, the importance of partnership was emphasised. Partners should include teachers, history associations, education advisers, inspectors and resource providers. Once devised, teachers must be given the freedom to interpret the curriculum.

### **Standards and textbooks**

The group attempted to define ‘standards’. The group stated that in the Soviet period, the history curriculum itself was the ‘standard’. However, in defining standards today, the group concluded that they should include historical understanding, skills and personal attitudes, as well as historical knowledge. Any definition of standards should not be too burdensome and must be comprehensible to teachers. It was felt that it would be necessary to devise tools for the evaluation of standards but this would be a difficult process.

As far as textbooks were concerned, a new approach had been developing over the last decade, but there were still shortcomings in many books. For example, some included source material but with no provenance. All wanted change in textbook design. The group wished to see better written textbooks which:

- developed pupils’ historical understanding and skills, as well as their knowledge at an appropriate level;
- included source material which had purpose and which was not merely illustrative;
- included pupil questions and activities.

The group advised textbook writers not to take too academic or theoretical an approach. There was considerable consensus on the need for books to reflect different points of view rather than give undisputed ‘right’ answers. The group discussed the role of authors, publishers and the evaluation and approval of books.

## **5. SUMMING-UP BY THE RAPPORTEUR**

### **Overarching issues**

The following were the main issues which emerged during the Conference:

#### **i. How do we define history?**

Two main conceptions of the purpose of history emerged. One view of history was where the story of the past was made to fit into a particular world view or ideology, whether that ideology was a Soviet or post-Soviet one, and, where ‘myths’ were perpetuated for the sake of social cohesion. The other view of history recognised that in the very selection of facts to produce a narrative, description or explanation, one was creating an interpretation of the past. This view accepted that if historical study involved intellectual honesty, then historical judgements had to be provisional and liable to re-interpretation in the light of new evidence. This view also rooted history in the historical sources available rather than in a pre-conceived version of history or particular method of historical analysis.

Both views recognised that history was a ‘construct’, but the latter accepted the possibility of different interpretations or points of view. Such debates at the academic/intellectual level influenced decisions about school history.

#### **ii. What do we mean by school history?**

The Conference saw an emerging recognition of the distinction between academic ‘university’ history and school history. Very few pupils would go on to study history at university. School history, therefore, needed to prepare average pupils for their presents and their futures. There was some agreement on the contribution of history to national consciousness, self identity and preparation for citizenship in older and newer democratic, and, often multi-cultural societies.

It was suggested that it might be helpful to consider two equally important aspects in defining school history - that school history was both the story of the past and the way in which the past is studied, that is, about equipping young people with the skills of the historian, for example, critical thinking, intellectual honesty, empathy, tolerance, the valuing of different points of view and enquiry skills. All these skills were valuable to young people in democratic societies whether they continued with the study of history or not.

### **iii. The content and structure of the history curriculum**

Three general issues emerged: the historical content of the school history curriculum: how to define the historical understanding and skills to be developed through history; and how to structure the history curriculum.

On content, delegates discussed whose perspective on history should be reflected and had broadly concluded that, while it was right for a people's perspective to be reflected in a history curriculum, it was essential that multi-perspectives and points of view were reflected in all history curricula. The Conference had also discussed the balance between local, regional, national, European, and world history and in what proportions these should be experienced by pupils at different ages. Delegates discussed the selection of historical content and whether it was valid to 'leave things out' of the school history curriculum, and, where history should end and the present day begin.

On defining historical understanding and skills, there was an emerging view that history was more than the regurgitation of historical facts. Consequently, there were issues about defining precisely what pupils should be able to understand and do and what should be expected of pupils at different ages and different abilities. Most European countries, for example, give considerable emphasis to work based on historical sources which pupils had to comprehend, analyse and evaluate.

On structuring the history curriculum, the Conference had shown that individual nations tackle this within the context of their structures of education and their curricula in general.

### **iv. Textbooks**

The Conference illustrated a number of different approaches to, and views about what a textbook is for and how it should be used, for example, whether it should be the manual of historical information which all pupils learn, or, whether it should be an aid to teaching, alongside the many other devices which a good teacher uses? The Conference discussed what should be in a textbook - whether to include only factual information (and, if so, how much, and designed for which ages and abilities) or whether to include historical information, historical sources and activities and questions for pupils. Should textbooks attempt to cover everything or was it more useful to be selective about the amount of history covered, and instead, include different points of view on the same events?

The Conference considered who should produce or commission the production of textbooks, the role of the educational publisher and whether academics or teachers should write school textbooks. The conference also discussed whether books should be reviewed, recommended or approved by Ministries of Education, and if so, how. A

range of different approaches emerged at the conference, from Ministries recommending a single book, to a range of books on an approved list to complete freedom for teachers to select from the range of books produced by commercial publishers.

**v. What do we mean by ‘standards’**

Delegates to the Conference used the term ‘standards’ in different ways. Some used the term ‘standards’ to define the history curriculum in schools, that is, the knowledge, understanding and skills that teachers should teach. Others used the term to describe the levels of knowledge, understanding and skills which are expected of pupils at different ages and abilities. Some used ‘standards’ to describe the quality of textbooks, for example whether they met the requirements of the history curriculum and the needs of pupils.

It would be important to use the term ‘standards’ in a common way, before any further useful work could be done on them.

**vi. The training of teachers**

The Conference was very aware of the implications of the changing situation in the Russian Federation and the resulting training needs of history teachers. These were likely to include training on the aims of history teaching, in historical concepts and skills and methods of teaching history based on historical sources. Differences were identified between the needs of initial teacher training, on-going training of existing teachers and between the generalist needs of primary school teachers and secondary school subject specialists. A further question was who should provide such training since the background and conceptual understanding of history teacher trainers were from the Soviet era.

It was suggested that the future work of the Council of Europe might be with specific groups, such as curriculum developers or teacher trainers in the Russian Federation.

**vii. The importance of partnership**

The experience of many European countries was that developments in history education were most effective when they involved a partnership between the Ministry of Education, teachers, academics, history associations and providers of resources.

It was suggested that an area worth exploring in the longer term might be the role of the history advisers and inspector in the Russian Federation, who might help, for example, to initiate, develop and help others implement the curriculum and then monitor its effectiveness.

**viii. The role of history teachers' associations**

This issue mainly came from the Council of Europe experts. The Conference recognised that many associations existed in Europe and some existed in areas of Russia. The key message from the Council of Europe experts was that they should be initiated and developed by teachers and be independent of Ministries of Education.

It was suggested that Ministries could play a valuable role in allowing independent associations of history teachers to flourish, develop and, where needed, to remove potential bureaucratic hurdles to their existence.



## **6. CLOSURE OF THE CONFERENCE**

Mr BATSIN stated that the Conference had increased the mutual understanding of participants and thanked the Council of Europe for its help. He looked forward to a historic epoch in history education in the Russian Federation. Mr STOBART thanked the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation and looked forward to the second phase of the Council of Europe's co-operation with the Ministry, which from 1998, would be more action-based.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Programme of the Conference**

#### **WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER**

10.00 Departure from Moscow to Suzdal

13.00 - 16.00 Sightseeing visit to the City of Vladimir

17.00 Arrival at the hotel in Suzdal

19.00 Welcome Dinner

#### **THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER**

10.00 - 11.30 **OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE**

**Chaired by : Mr Maitland STOBART & Mr Alexandre ASMOLOV)**

**Presentations by:**

- i. Mr Alexandre ASMOLOV, Deputy Minister of Education of Russia;
- ii. Mr Maitland STOBART, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe;
- iii. M. N. GURBATOV, Head of the Department of Education of the Vladimir Region

11.30 - 12.00 Pause

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12.00 - 14.00 **PANEL SESSION**

**Presentations by Russian experts:**

- i. Goals of history education in Russia, its methodological foundations
  - Mr N. SAKHAROV, Head of the Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Education;
  
- ii. The contents and structure of history education in Russian schools
  - Mr A. VODUANSKY, Deputy Head of the Department for the Development of Secondary Education

14.00 - 15.30 Lunch

15.30 - 17.00 Discussion of the presentations in plenary session - views, opinions, comments on the problems

17.00 - 17.30 Pause

17.30 - 19.00 Continuation of the discussions

19.00 Dinner

**FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER**

09.00 - 11.00 **PANEL SESSION**

**Presentations by the experts invited by the Council of Europe**

- Criteria for selecting curriculum content and the balance between local, regional, national and world history, by Mr Gary BRACE, United Kingdom
- Goals, standards, evaluation in history teaching, by Ms Gisèle DESSIEUX, France
- The preparation and publication of history textbooks from the point of view of the Georg-Eckert Institut, by Mr Falk PINGEL, Germany

11.00 - 11.30 Pause

11.30 - 12.30 Continuation of the presentations

- The preparation and publication of history textbooks from the point of view of an educational publisher, by Mr Andrzej CHRZANOWSKI, Poland
- Initial and in-service teacher training in the Netherlands, and the role of associations of history teachers, by Ms Joke VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD, The Netherlands

12.30 - 13.30 Lunch

13.30 - 17.00 Excursion to the Suzdal Convent

17.30 - 18.30 Dinner

18.30 - 20.30 Group discussions on the following topics:

- Goals of history education, conceptual approaches to the problem;
- Standards, norms in history education, examinations

### **SATURDAY 14 DECEMBER**

09.00 - 11.00 Round table discussions on the following topics:

- textbooks and teaching materials for history education;
- modern classroom technology;
- associations of history teachers;
- project activities, development of future trends of international co-operation in the area of history.

11.00 - 11.15 Pause

11.15 - 12.00 Presentations by the Rapporteurs on the results of the working groups

12.00 - 13.30 **CLOSING SESSION**

Conclusions

15.00 Departure of the participants from Suzdal

## **APPENDIX II**

### **List of Participants**

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