COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Recommendation Rec(2001)15
of the Committee of Ministers to member states
on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers
on 31October 2001
at the 771st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

The Committee of Ministers, in pursuance of Article 15.*b* of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members;

Bearing in mind the European Cultural Convention, signed in Paris on 19 December 1954, which called on its signatory states to encourage the study of the history and civilisation of the other contracting parties and to promote such studies in the territory of the other contracting parties;

Calling to mind the Vienna (1993) and Strasbourg (1997) summits, at which the heads of state and government of the Council of Europe:

– expressed their wish to make the Council of Europe fully capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century;

– expressed the need for stronger mutual understanding and confidence between peoples, particularly through a history teaching syllabus intended to eliminate prejudice and emphasising positive mutual influence between different countries, religions and ideas in the historical development of Europe;

– reaffirmed the educational and cultural dimensions of the major challenges in the Europe of tomorrow;

Confirming that ideological falsification and manipulation of history are incompatible with the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe as defined in its Statute;

Bearing in mind the Parliamentary Assembly recommendations on the European dimension of education (Recommendation 1111 (1989)) and on history and the learning of history in Europe (Recommendation 1283 (1996));

Bearing in mind Resolution No. 1, adopted at the 19th Session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education, on the theme of trends and common issues in education in Europe (Kristiansand, Norway, 1997) and the conclusions and resolutions of the 20th Session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education on the project "Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century" (Cracow, Poland, 2000);

Bearing in mind the declaration adopted at the Informal Conference of Ministers of Education from South-East Europe (Strasbourg, 1999), in which it is recommended that practical activities be undertaken in the thematic areas in which the Council of Europe had long-standing and recognised expertise, including history teaching;

Taking into account the declaration adopted at the Regional Conference of Ministers of Education of the Caucasus countries (Tbilisi, Georgia, 2000);

Having regard to Recommendation No. R (98) 5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning heritage education, in which the Ministers affirm that educational activities in the heritage field give meaning to the future through a better understanding of the past;

Taking into account Committee of Ministers Resolution (98) 4 on the cultural routes of the Council of Europe;

Considering Recommendation No. R(2000)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on fostering transfrontier co-operation between territorial communities or authorities in the cultural field, in which the Ministers affirm that transfrontier activities help the young to acquire transfrontier vision while raising their awareness of the diversity of cultural and historical traditions;

Taking into account the resolutions adopted at the 5th Conference of European Ministers of Cultural Heritage (Portorož, Slovenia, 2001) in which the ministers reaffirmed that history teaching should be founded on an understanding and explanation of heritage, and should highlight the cross-border nature of heritage;

Considering Recommendation No. R(2000)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on a European policy on access to archives, in which the Ministers, taking account of the increasing interest of the public for history, and noting that a better understanding of recent European history could contribute to conflict prevention, call for a European policy on access to archives, based upon principles compatible with democratic values;

Bearing in mind Recommendation No. R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on “hate speech”, in which hate speech is defined as all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia or antisemitism, and in which it is pointed out that the impact of hate speech is more damaging when disseminated by the media;

Taking into account the Council of Europe’s previous work in history teaching, based upon the idea of reconciliation and positive mutual influences among people, such as that of the post-war period, which focused on ridding history textbooks of bias and prejudice, and that of the project “History in the new Europe” and of the programme “History teaching and the new initiative of the Secretary General”, which assisted the republics of the former Soviet Union in developing methodologies to modernise history teaching, producing new textbooks and training teachers accordingly;

Having taken note of the results of the project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century” and of all the teaching materials presented at the project’s final conference entitled “The Twentieth Century: An Interplay of Views”, held symbolically at the House of History of the Federal Republic of Germany (Haus der Geschichte in Bonn, Germany, 2001);

Noting that the project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century” made it possible, among other things:

– to make appreciable progress in developing a pluralist and tolerant concept of history teaching, *inter alia*, through the development of individual research and analysis capabilities;

– to highlight educational innovations, using both information technologies and new sources of teaching material;

– to draw up examples of open approaches to the central issues of twentieth-century European history,

Recommends that member states’ governments, while respecting their constitutional structures, national or local situations and education systems:

– draw on the principles set out in the appendix to this recommendation, with regard to current and future reforms in both history teaching and training for history teachers;

– ensure, through appropriate national, regional and local procedures, that the relevant public or private bodies in their own country be informed of the principles set forth in this recommendation, with the support of the reference documents that underlie it, in particular the teaching resources prepared by the project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century”;

– on the basis of arrangements to be determined, continue activities relating to history teaching in order to strengthen trusting and tolerant relations within and between states and to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century;

– adopt an integrated approach, using other Council of Europe projects, in particular the project "Education for democratic citizenship" project and work carried out in the field of cultural heritage;

Ask the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to draw this recommendation to the attention of those states which are parties to the European Cultural Convention but are not members of the Council of Europe.

Appendix to Recommendation Rec(2001)…

1. *The aims of history teaching in the twenty-first century*

History teaching in a democratic Europe should:

– occupy a vital place in the training of responsible and active citizens and in the developing of respect for all kinds of differences, based on an understanding of national identity and on principles of tolerance;

– be a decisive factor in reconciliation, recognition, understanding and mutual trust between peoples;

– play a vital role in the promotion of fundamental values, such as tolerance, mutual understanding, human rights and democracy;

– be one of the fundamental parts of the freely agreed building of Europe based on a common historical and cultural heritage, enriched through diversity, even with its conflictual and sometimes dramatic aspects;

– be part of an education policy that plays a direct role in young people's development and progress, with a view to their active participation in the building of Europe, as well as the peaceful development of human societies in a global perspective, in a spirit of mutual understanding and trust;

– make it possible to develop in pupils the intellectual ability to analyse and interpret information critically and responsibly, through dialogue, through the search for historical evidence and through open debate based on multiperspectivity, especially on controversial and sensitive issues;

– enable European citizens to enhance their own individual and collective identity through knowledge of their common historical heritage in its local, regional, national, European and global dimensions;

– be an instrument for the prevention of crimes against humanity.

2. *The misuse of history*

History teaching must not be an instrument of ideological manipulation, of propaganda or used for the promotion of intolerant and ultra-nationalistic, xenophobic, racist or anti-Semitic ideas.

Historical research and history as it is taught in schools cannot in any way, with any intention, be compatible with the fundamental values and statutes of the Council of Europe if it allows or promotes misuses of history, namely through:

– falsification or creation of false evidence, doctored statistics, faked images, etc.;

– fixation on one event to justify or conceal another;

– distortion of the past for the purposes of propaganda;

– an excessively nationalistic version of the past which may create the “us” and “them” dichotomy;

– abuse of the historical record;

– denial of historical fact;

– omission of historical fact.

3. *The European dimension in history teaching*

As the building of Europe is an expression of both a decision freely entered into by Europeans themselves and a historical reality, it would be appropriate to:

– show continuing historical relationships between local, regional, national and European levels;

– encourage teaching about periods and developments with the most obvious European dimension, especially the historical or cultural events and tendencies that underpin European awareness;

– use every available means, particularly information technology, to promote co-operation and exchange projects between schools on themes connected with the history of Europe;

– develop pupils' interest in the history of other European countries;

– introduce or develop teaching about the history of the building of Europe itself.

To promote the European dimension in history teaching in an enlarged, democratic, peaceful Europe, it would be appropriate to:

– take account of the results of the work done during the project "Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century" conducted by the Council for Cultural Co-operation, in terms of both content and methodological approach;

– draw on Council of Europe programmes on the reform of history teaching and on the preparation of new textbooks and methodological guides during activities to develop and consolidate democratic stability;

– draw on Council of Europe programmes for raising awareness of and teaching about heritage;

– disseminate as widely as possible the teaching materials produced by the project "Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century" by making appropriate use of information and communication technologies;

– increase assistance in the preparation of new syllabuses and standards in history teaching, including production of new textbooks, in particular in the Russian Federation, the Caucasus countries, South-east Europe and the Black Sea region;

– take advantage of the Council of Europe's In-Service Training Programme for Educational Staff to help teachers acquire this new knowledge in a European context enabling them to compare views and experience.

4. *Syllabus content*

History teaching, while it must avoid the accumulation of encyclopaedic knowledge, must nevertheless encompass:

– awareness-raising about the European dimension, taken into account when syllabuses are drawn up, so as to instil in pupils a "European awareness" open to the rest of the world;

– development of students' critical faculties, ability to think for themselves, objectivity and resistance to being manipulated;

– the events and moments that have left their mark on the history of Europe as such, studied at local, national, European and global levels, approached through particularly significant periods and facts;

– the study of every dimension of European history, not just political, but also economic, social and cultural;

– development of curiosity and the spirit of enquiry, in particular through the use of discovery methods in the study of the heritage, an area which brings out intercultural influences;

– the elimination of prejudice and stereotypes, through the highlighting in history syllabuses of positive mutual influences between different countries, religions and schools of thought over the period of Europe's historical development;

– critical study of misuses of history, whether these stem from denials of historical facts, falsification, omission, ignorance or re-appropriation to ideological ends;

– study of controversial issues through the taking into account of the different facts, opinions and viewpoints, as well as through a search for the truth.

5. *Learning methods*

Use of sources

The widest variety of sources of teaching material should be used to communicate historical facts and present them to be learnt about through a critical and analytical approach, more particularly:

– archives, open to the public, especially in the countries of central and eastern Europe, which now provide never previously available access to authentic documents;

– documentary and fictional films and audiovisual products;

– the material conveyed by information technology, which should be individually and collectively studied, with the teacher playing a vital part;

– all types of museums of the twentieth century set up throughout Europe and the historically symbolic places, which promote a realistic perception by pupils of recent events, especially in their everyday dimension;

– oral history, through which spoken testimony on recent historical events can make history come alive for young people, and which can offer the viewpoints and perspectives of those who have been omitted from the "historical record".

Personal research

Pupils should be encouraged to carry out personal research, according to their level and circumstances, thus fostering their curiosity and initiative in terms of information collection and their ability to distil the main facts.

Group research

Groups of pupils, classes and schools should be encouraged to engage in research projects or active learning, so as to create conditions for dialogue and for the open and tolerant comparison of opinions.

The cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary approach

The learning of history should at all times make use of the educational potential of a cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary approach, forging links with the other subjects on the curriculum as a whole, including literature, geography, social sciences, philosophy and the arts and sciences.

The international, transfrontier approach

Depending on the circumstances, encouragement should be given to the implementation of international, transfrontier projects, based upon the study of a common theme, comparative approaches or the performance of a common task by several schools in different countries, with advantage being taken *inter alia* of the new possibilities opened up by information technology and of the establishment of school links and exchanges.

6. *Teaching and remembrance*

While emphasising the positive achievements of the twentieth century, such as the peaceful use of science towards better living conditions and the expansion of democracy and human rights, everything possible should be done in the educational sphere to prevent recurrence or denial of the devastating events that have marked this century, namely the Holocaust, genocides and other crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and the massive violations of human rights and of the fundamental values to which the Council of Europe is particularly committed. This should include:

– helping pupils to develop knowledge and awareness of the events – and their causes – which have cast the darkest shadows on European and world history;

– thinking about the ideologies which led to them and how to prevent any recurrence of them;

– shaping, developing and co-ordinating the relevant in-service training programmes for educational staff in the member states of the Council for Cultural Co-operation;

– facilitating access to the documentation already available on this subject, *inter alia* through the use of new technology, and developing a network of teaching resource centres in this field;

– implementing and monitoring implementation of the education ministers' decision (Cracow, 2000) to designate a day in schools, chosen in the light of each country's history, for Holocaust remembrance and for the prevention of crimes against humanity;

– developing the Council of Europe's specific input in the education field to the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.

7. *Initial and in-service training for history teachers*

Specialised initial and in-service training for history teachers should:

– enable and encourage history teachers to work with complex, process-oriented and reflective methods of history teaching**;**

– inform future history teachers and those already practising the profession about all the latest products, instruments and methods, particularly where the use of information and communication technologies is concerned;

– make teachers aware of the use of teaching techniques which, going beyond, but taking account of factual information, are intended to enable pupils to interpret and analyse historical facts and their influence on the present, in different contexts, for example, social, geographical, economic contexts, etc.;

– help to enable teachers to make use of assessment techniques which take account, not just of the information memorised by pupils, but also of the activities they are capable of carrying out thanks to their knowledge of the information concerned, whether these involve research, discussion or the analysis of controversial issues;

– help to devise and create cross-disciplinary learning situations in their classes, in collaboration with their fellow teachers.

As information and communication technologies are leading to a transformation of history teachers' role, it is important to:

– create opportunities for exchanges, so that teachers may become aware of the great variety of learning situations involving the new roles concerned;

– support the setting up of discussion groups to look at the profession's difficulties, hesitations and doubts about these new methods of teaching;

– develop resource banks which specify, not only the documents and sites available, but also the validity of the information derived from the said documents and sites.

In order to fulfil these objectives and to establish a specific profile for history teachers, it would be appropriate to:

– provide training institutes for history teachers with the support needed to maintain and improve the quality of their training, and develop the professionalism and social status of history teachers in particular;

– accord particular attention to training for trainers of history teachers, based on the principles contained in this recommendation;

– promote comparative research on the objectives, structures and standards specific to initial and in-service training for history teachers and in so doing promote inter-institutional co-operation and the exchange of information needed for the reform of initial and in-service history teacher training and in-service training for trainers;

– seek out and foster partnerships between all of the institutions active in or concerned with history-teacher training (in particular the media), with a view to emphasising their particular mission and specific responsibilities.

8. *Information and communication technologies*

While complying with legislation and respecting freedom of expression, the requisite steps should be taken to combat the dissemination of racist, xenophobic and revisionist material, especially via the Internet.

In the context of the widespread use of information and communication technologies by the young, both during their school and out-of-school lives, it is important that teaching methods and techniques allow for the fact that these technologies:

– are vital resources for history teaching;

– necessitate in-depth consideration of the diversity and reliability of sources;

– allow teachers and pupils access to original sources and to multiple interpretations;

– spectacularly broaden access to historical information and facts;

– increase and facilitate opportunities for exchanges and for dialogue.

Moreover, it would be appropriate to set up the conditions necessary for teachers to:

– in the selection process, help their pupils to assess the reliability of information sources and information for themselves;

– introduce classroom procedures which encourage critical analysis, which acknowledge a multiplicity of standpoints and which adopt a transcultural approach to the interpretation of facts;

– help their pupils to develop skills such as critical analysis and analogical reasoning.