

PANDEMICS AND NATURAL DISASTERS AS REFLECTED IN HISTORY TEACHING

PROVISIONAL VERSION

**Thematic report by the Observatory
on History Teaching in Europe
2022**



**OBSERVATORY
ON HISTORY TEACHING
IN EUROPE**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On 11 March 2020, the Director-General of the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a global pandemic (WHO 2020). The international response to this announcement highlighted how ill prepared the world was for such an event. Two years later, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to have a traumatic impact internationally. A similar case can be made for the tenfold increase in natural disasters experienced across the globe since the 1960s. As the 2020 Ecological Threat Register (ETR) shows, the likelihood of further ecological threats has surged exponentially in recent years (IEP 2020). This is not the first time societies have experienced such threats, and the study of the history of past pandemics and natural disasters can offer insights into how to live through, rebuild and recover from them. Given the likelihood of future pandemics and natural disasters, providing students with the knowledge, understanding and resilience needed to overcome adversity is crucial in allowing them to read the world as global citizens and to think constructively about the future of the planet. To this effect, history can play an important role. However, to date little is known about how these topics are represented in state curricula, and even less about how they are currently taught in classrooms. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the present coverage of pandemics and natural disasters in national curricula, and of the pedagogies employed to teach them in classrooms across the 16 member states of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe.

Background and context

The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTe) is an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe, comprising 16 member states and 2 observer states.¹ It was established in November 2020 at the initiative of the French government, as one of the priorities of its presidency of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2020). The observatory's mission is to promote quality education in order to enhance democratic culture in its member states. It carries out this mission through its reporting activities and through a co-operation platform that engages various stakeholders in the field of history education. The latter is currently implemented through the Transnational History Education and Co-operation Laboratory (HISTOLAB), a joint project between the Council of Europe (Department of Education) and the European Union (European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture). To achieve the objective of providing a clear picture of the state of history teaching in its member states, based on reliable data and facts on how history is taught, the OHTe commissions regular and thematic reports. The regular reports intend to provide a snapshot of how history is taught from a myriad of angles. Over time, the collection of regular reports aims to create a longitudinal overview of the state of history teaching in Europe and how it evolved. The thematic reports, of which the present one on "Pandemics and natural disasters as reflected in history teaching" is the first, are focused on exploring particular themes and issues in depth.

The OHTe consists of its governing board, which is composed of one representative from each member state. It defines and adopts medium-term and annual programmes, selects the topics of the thematic reports, and monitors their implementation and the management of the observatory's resources. The governing board also determines the topic of the thematic report and representatives co-ordinate the responses to the survey as part of the data collection process, however the board has no influence over the final content of the report. In addition to the governing board, the OHTe includes a Scientific Advisory Council (SAC), which is composed of 11 well-respected persons in the field of history education. The SAC ensures the scientific quality of the observatory's work. It is consulted on the observatory's programme, and assists the governing board by delivering opinions on matters concerning the observatory's activities. The third component of the OHTe is the observatory's secretariat. Headed by an executive director, under the responsibility of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, it ensures the smooth daily running of the observatory and provides organisational support to the work of the statutory bodies. For the production of the reports, the OHTe convenes expert groups that operate under the supervision of the Scientific Advisory Council.

1. Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary (Observer), Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia, Portugal, Republic of Moldova (Observer), Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye.

This thematic report on pandemics and natural disasters as reflected in history teaching was produced by an expert group, which consists both of individual experts in the field of history education who are in part also members of the OHTE's Scientific Advisory Council, as well as by experts affiliated with the History Educators International Research Network (HEIRNET) consortium.² The overall aim of this thematic report is to provide empirical evidence on the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters across the 16 OHTE member states. This topic is of particular importance in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the heightened threat to all countries and their societies ensuing from natural disasters.

Pandemics: a historical perspective

The current global Covid-19 outbreak, caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (Sars-CoV-2), which started in 2019, is only the latest in a succession of pandemics that have affected the world since prehistoric times. A pandemic is defined as "an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people" (Last et al. 2001). Pandemics occur when a new virus spreads easily among people who have little or no immunity to it. They are caused by novel pathogens that spread quickly between human hosts, affecting a great number of individuals globally (Kelly 2011).

Although identified as such only in modern times, pandemics have significantly impacted the historical narratives of humans ever since the beginning of recorded human history. They have endangered human lives and led to social upheaval, each time reminding societies of the fragility of human existence and the limitations of human knowledge. They have had a lasting impact on population levels, economies and social structures, and their historical memory has provided lessons for future generations. In this regard, pandemics have been formative episodes in human history and have frequently heralded significant changes in their wake. As Venkatesan et al. (2022: 1) argue: "They have offered opportunities to rethink, reconfigure, and renegotiate our ideas of the individual, the communal, the social, the private and public, and of health, illness, hygiene and safety." Occasionally, and ever more frequently during the modern period, pandemics have provided insights into the knowledge of the human body, led to scientific progress in medicine and prompted the development of public health policies.

The first historically documented record of an epidemic is Thucydides' account of the Athenian Plague (430 BCE, returning in 429 and 427-426 BCE). The historian described the disease's outbreak during the Peloponnesian War, providing essential information regarding the physicians' responses and the spread of the disease among the people. Thucydides' record is particularly significant as he was living in Athens at the time of the outbreak and contracted the plague himself. This made his testimony extremely important in describing its symptomatology. He wrote: "I shall simply set down its nature and explain the symptoms by which perhaps it may be recognized by the student, if it should ever break out again. This I can the better do, as I had the disease myself, and watched its operation in the case of others" (Thucydides 431 BCE: 2.48.3). The intention to document this historical event with the purpose of rendering this information useful for future epidemics is evident from the passage cited.

Thucydides' testimony also provides insights into how the plague impacted on social order in Athens (Thucydides 431 BCE: 2.52.4). As he recounted, the devastation caused by the plague had a significant impact on the outcome of the war between Athens and Sparta. The epidemic, whose pathogenic origins remain uncertain, claimed the lives of many of Athens' soldiers and sailors, including that of the Athenian leader Pericles. The turmoil that ensued as a result of the outbreak, when citizens were no longer afraid of the rule of law or of the consequences of not worshipping the gods upon whom they relied for religious support, further destabilised Athenian society. As we can see from the example above, many of the issues the present thematic report examines (e.g. how histories of past epidemics and pandemics can serve a purpose for the future, how such events have a significant impact on societies, affecting in some cases even the course and, arguably, the outcome of wars) are already prefigured in this first historical text on the subject.

Attempts to prevent one of the deadliest epidemics that was endemic in 18th-century Europe, smallpox, led to the world's first vaccine, an effective one developed by Edward Jenner on the basis of the related but far less harmful cowpox virus (Riedel 2005). Interestingly, and similar in many respects to popular reactions to the Covid-19 vaccine, mass mobilisation and violence ensued against the vaccination campaign in England – the first instance of a nationwide vaccine rollout in history – culminating in the establishment of a National Anti-Vaccination League (King 2020). The vaccine's effectiveness, however, eventually led to smallpox being successfully eradicated in 1980, "the first and still the only example of the intentional eradication of a human disease" (Snowden 2019: 89).

2. For more information on HEIRNET, see www.heirnetonline.com, accessed 14 November 2022.

The global response to Covid-19 has been informed by historical responses to previous pandemics, and societal understandings of pandemics have, to some degree, been shaped by collective memories and accounts of past events.

Natural disasters: a historical perspective

Prasad and Francescutti (2017: 215) define natural disasters as “the overwhelming consequences of a natural hazard”. Natural disasters are frequent and global occurrences that range from earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis to crop failure, famine, drought and floods. Historically, they have had a devastating impact upon humanity by crippling economies, destroying crops and displacing millions of people. The threat of natural disasters is ever present and, as population levels rise, climates shift and economic instability continues, human vulnerability to these hazards increases (Prasad and Francescutti 2017).

The terms “hazards” and “disasters” are often used interchangeably; however, distinct differences can be drawn between the two. A hazard refers to any phenomenon, physical event or human behaviour (floods, hurricanes, droughts, epidemics, nuclear spills, etc.) that has the potential to cause harm to humans, destroy properties, disrupt social order or lead to environmental degradation. A disaster, however, is “the potential consequence of a hazard, where a community or population is unable to handle the effects of the hazard, given the resources at their disposal” (Prasad and Francescutti 2017: 216). While they are distinct from each other, Figure 1.1 illustrates the relationship between hazards and disasters. A hazard may occur regardless of human effort; however, once a community is overwhelmed by a hazard, the likelihood of a disaster is high. Since the 1990s, governments worldwide have become increasingly aware of the rapid worsening of threats from pandemics and natural disasters on humanity’s ecological, economic and social future. While pandemics and natural disasters are separate phenomena, they are both universally recognised as major challenges for the future of humanity.

Figure 1.1. Relationship between hazards and disasters

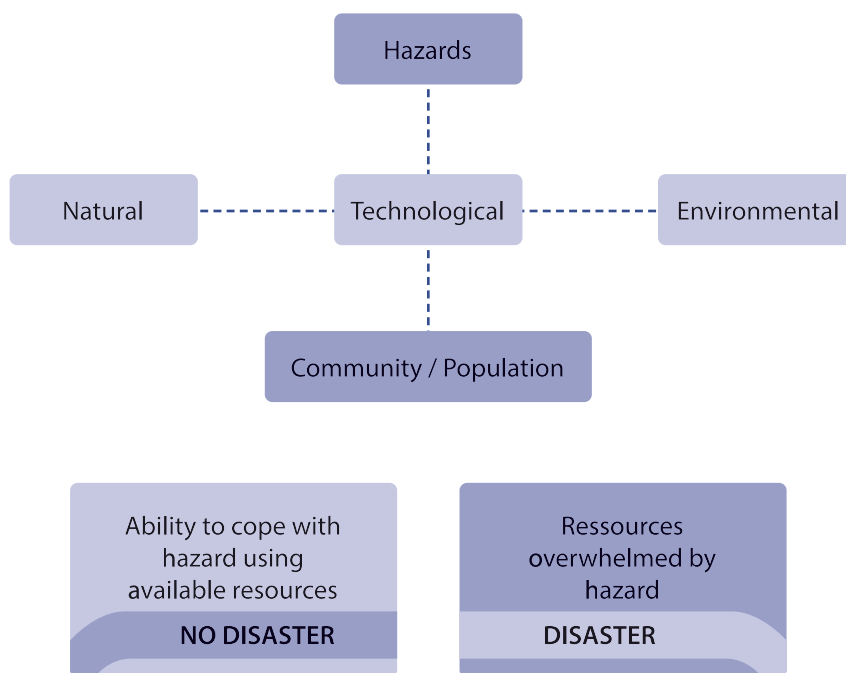


Figure 1 - Adapted from Prasad and Francescutti (2017)

Historically, natural disasters feature strongly in collective national memories. Such memories predominantly relate to national events such as earthquakes, volcano eruptions, landslides, floods, droughts, famines, bushfires and storms. In Greece the impact of the Santorini volcanic eruption, which may have led to the end of the Minoan civilisation in the 1640s BCE is embedded in the national historical canon. In Portugal, the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 CE is deeply ingrained in the national consciousness and collective memory, as is the Great Famine of 1845-52 in Ireland. On a European level, the eruption of Vesuvius that led to the destruction of Pompeii is a common element of European memory. As such, these topics can play a sizeable role in the collective historical consciousness and contribute towards the shaping of a country’s historical canon and sense of national identity, the shared experiences acting like a social glue of sorts.

The teaching of pandemics and natural disasters

Despite the death and devastation they wrought on societies, events such as pandemics and natural disasters are given little attention in history education. This is because, traditionally, history education focused almost exclusively on political and national history and was centred on the construction and transmission of a positive national narrative designed to inculcate feelings of loyalty to one's country and to reinforce notions of group belonging and identity (Carretero and Bermudez 2012; Cârstocea 2022). As the focus was often placed on the political development of the nation, events such as pandemics and natural disasters were, as a consequence, given less attention. A similar lack of attention to these topics can also be seen in academic history, where studies of pandemics and natural disasters have been, until recently, considered specialist rather than mainstream subjects. Military events such as the First World War have hitherto taken precedence over events such as the Great Influenza pandemic of 1918-20, even though the death toll of the latter is comparable and possibly higher than that of the war (Milne 2018). Although pandemics and natural disasters have had a significant impact on societies over time, the study of these events is often limited to specialist subdisciplines or examined in more detail by strands of economic, social, cultural, oral and environmental history, all of which have, until recently, been similarly under-represented in many school curricula. The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged assumptions about the secondary role of epidemics and natural disasters in both academic history and school history, and has opened up fresh questions about the lived experiences of such events and the lessons that can be gained from learning about them. As the world continues to come to grips with the devastation and uncertainty brought about by Covid-19 and the increased threat of natural disasters, educators are already turning towards ways in which they can integrate historical knowledge of these issues into their teaching.

However, the teaching of such topics comes with numerous challenges. One of the most significant of these relates to the teachers' own expertise, orientation and pedagogical content knowledge (Ní Cassaithe and Chapman 2020). Another relates to the curriculum space in which to include these topics and to the relative autonomy given to teachers in delivering the history curriculum. Yet another relates to the affective aspect of dealing with sensitive topics that address large-scale loss of life. There is also the added challenge of how to teach these topics effectively in the classroom.

The thematic report

History education can play an important role in providing students with a comprehensive understanding of pandemics and natural disasters, past and present, by providing a powerful platform through which these topics can be explored and discussed in European classrooms. Through engagement with the process of historical enquiry into past events, students can learn about and evaluate the historical precedents of contemporary pandemics and natural disasters and find ways to connect with the past that resonate with them in today's world. Currently, there is no data available on the inclusion of these topics in school curricula across Europe. Likewise, there is no information on the frequency with which these topics are taught, nor is there existing data on the methods that are employed by teachers in European classrooms to teach about them. This thematic report offers a unique insight into the extent to which pandemics and natural disasters topics are included in national curricula, the topics and themes that are actually taught in classrooms, and the pedagogies and resources that are used to teach them, across the 16 OHTE member states. The report furthermore identifies inspiring practices with regard to the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters in each member state.

Themes addressed in the report

The teaching of pandemics and natural disasters in history is an area that has received scant coverage in history education research to date. This is an increasingly urgent topic that warrants further attention, especially given the increase in the occurrence of natural disasters and the likelihood of future pandemics. It is imperative that students are given meaningful opportunities to engage with historical precedents and with reactions to previous such events in order to prepare them for future ones. The report intends that educators and students alike will be able to apply the findings from the report when adapting and developing history curricula and critical thinking skills in the future. The teaching of these topics should help to understand how pandemics and natural disasters have contributed to the formation of our societies until this point, and how we can better prepare for those that might await us in the future. With these considerations in mind, the first thematic report of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe focuses on "Pandemics and natural disasters as reflected in history teaching", with reference to the following areas of concern.

The inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in history curricula

The thematic report explores the place of pandemics and natural disasters in curricula across different levels of education. It focuses predominantly on the history curricula of the OHTE member states and identifies other curricular areas where these topics may also be explored in the classroom. It addresses the extent to which the content is prescribed in the respective curriculum and the room for manoeuvre that teachers have in approaching such topics. It also addresses the methods of teaching, the resources used, the anticipated learning outcomes and whether or not approaches promoting multiperspectivity are adopted at curricular level. The report also identifies the specific learning outcomes associated with the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters in history and other curricula.

Teachers' pedagogical decisions about teaching pandemics and natural disasters

The thematic report further enquires into the key pedagogies (such as active learning, enquiry approaches, research projects, oral practice, textbook work and interdisciplinary work) used for teaching lessons relating to pandemics and natural disasters.

In addition, the report looks at the impact of the level of autonomy given to teachers on the way(s) they approach preparing for and teaching about these topics. Teachers' opinions on the purpose of teaching about pandemics and natural disasters are also discussed and the extent to which teachers challenge dominant discourses and engage with alternative interpretations is explored.

Scapegoating

Historically, attempts to scapegoat and blame specific groups, often religious, cultural or ethnic minorities and/or groups otherwise considered "marginal" to societies have often accompanied pandemics and natural disasters. During the 14th century, when the bubonic plague (the Black Death) swept across Europe, Jews were blamed for spreading the disease and were accused of poisoning wells and trying to infect others. These accusations led to violent attacks on Jews and entire communities were destroyed (Cohn 2007). Closer to our time, outbreaks of cholera during the 19th century were often blamed on Jews and Roma and linked to their migrant or allegedly itinerant lifestyles (Markel 1997; Crowe 2000). Additionally, cholera itself was regarded as an "Oriental" disease and associated primarily with the imperial borderlands in eastern and south-eastern Europe. The Great Influenza pandemic of 1918-20, still referred to as the "Spanish flu", offers an interesting historical parallel in this respect. The flu was named the "Spanish flu" not because it originated in Spain but because Spain, a neutral country during the First World War and thus free of wartime censorship, was the first country to report the disease publicly (Milne 2018). More recently, the outbreak of Covid-19 witnessed a surge in racist, anti-Asian and anti-Chinese sentiments across the internet and social media. It also saw a rise in antisemitic conspiracy theories (Estrin 2020), Islamophobic associations with the spread of the virus (Slater and Masih 2020) and hate speech and hate crimes targeted at Roma communities across Europe (Cârstocea 2020).

Special attention should consequently be devoted to the processes of othering that occur in the wake of pandemics and natural disasters, and the extremely destructive consequences they can have for minority groups. However, as the historian of pandemics Samuel K. Cohn Jr (2018) argues, such instances of scapegoating, discrimination and violence against minority groups should also be weighed against the increase in compassion and solidarity that has often accompanied epidemics from ancient times until the present day. The thematic report looks at the attention given to these processes of othering in the teaching of historical pandemics and natural disasters in the OHTE member states.

Multiperspectival approaches

The unique role history plays in facilitating meaningful engagement and thinking historically about the past has been recognised by the Council of Europe since its creation in 1949. More specifically, the Council of Europe has recognised the value history has to offer young people regarding not only their own historical and cultural heritage, but also those of other peoples and cultures (Council of Europe 2021). Such a multiperspectival approach to history education allows students to "extend their horizons, develop a tolerant yet critical approach and instil mutual understanding and confidence between the peoples of Europe" (Committee of Ministers 1996). Stradling (2003: 14) defines multiperspectivity as "a way of viewing, and a predisposition to view, historical events, personalities, developments, cultures and societies from different perspectives through drawing on procedures and processes which are fundamental to history as a discipline".

For history educators, the Covid-19 pandemic poses specific questions of a multiperspectival nature as they reflect on how to discuss it with their students. Even as the pandemic is ongoing, questions arise as to how this moment will be remembered in history. Whose stories and perspectives will be shared, and which ones should be shared? What lessons can be learned from past epidemics and public health crises, and how should those lessons be applied in the field of education? The thematic report investigates teacher approaches to engaging multiple perspectives when teaching about pandemics and natural disasters, and whether the inclusion of multiple arguments, different perspectives or interpretations of a historical event are consciously included in teacher planning and teaching.

Summary of main findings

The thematic report is primarily based on data received through two surveys. One survey was completed by the education authorities of each of the 16 OHTE member states, while the other one was answered by history teachers active in the member states. The Education Authorities' Survey (EAS) provides official baseline information about the history curricula of each member state, with particular reference to the inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in the content, aims, objectives and textbooks. The Teachers' and Educators' Survey (TES), which was completed by teachers at all levels across the member states, complements the official data received from governments with information about the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters at classroom level, in order to create a comprehensive snapshot of the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective.³ In total, 918 teachers responded to the survey of which 178 responses were invalid. The analysis of the TES is therefore based on 740 valid responses.

The following findings are the main findings of the thematic report on pandemics and natural disasters as reflected in history teaching.

1. Despite some positive examples to the contrary, within the framework of compulsory state schooling, on average between the ages of 6 and 16, there is minimal or sometimes no coverage of pandemics and natural disasters in national history curricula across the OHTE member states. These topics have a peripheral role in curricula, mirroring a persisting focus on political history and national history.
2. Pandemics and natural disasters are taught more extensively in other subjects across the curricula, but this involves little, if any, historical dimension (historical context, perspective, knowledge and thinking). Pandemics and natural disasters are currently taught primarily in geography, but also in civic and moral education, citizenship education, science and technology, life and earth sciences, biology, language and literature, the arts and classics. The inclusion of a historical dimension in the teaching of these topics in other subjects is rarely prescribed in national curricula.
3. The teaching of pandemics and natural disasters frequently occurs in integrated subjects, incorporating history alongside other disciplines. This presents both advantages and disadvantages: what may be lost in terms of historical disciplinary rigour (the use of primary sources, methods of enquiry specific to the historical profession) could be gained by emphasising the link between historical pandemics and natural disasters, and present-day challenges.
4. Many state schools and history teachers have considerable autonomy at the school and classroom level to be creative, innovative and responsive to contemporary global challenges and their importance for students today.
5. Despite the fact that relatively little attention is given to these topics in national curricula, over 75% of teachers reported that they do teach about pandemics and natural disasters at primary and post-primary level. Based on the TES results, at primary level teachers are more likely to teach about natural disasters than pandemics.
6. Teachers in all 16 OHTE member states believed it is vital that their students are taught about the historical dimension of pandemics and natural disasters, and were keen to see these topics better represented in the national curricula for history and other subjects, to reflect their importance and significance to diverse groups of citizens in different countries.
7. Teachers appear to be moving away from the primacy of textbook-based instruction and are engaging with a range of student-centred and constructivist pedagogical approaches, particularly historical enquiry, to teach about historical pandemics and natural disasters. More traditional forms of history teaching, for example, teacher-led pedagogies focused on the transmission of factual historical information and centred on the use of a textbook, are sparingly used in classrooms to teach about these topics.

3. Full information about surveys can be found in Chapter 2 – Research methodology.

8. Digital technologies (where available) and constructivist activities such as group work and investigation are increasingly being used for the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters. While the potential benefits of digital media are recognised both by governments and by teachers, so too are the pitfalls associated with the proliferation of unreliable information, resulting in the need for striking a balance in the use of such technologies critically in the history classroom.
9. Approximately 82% of teachers believed that teaching about collective experiences of pandemics and natural disasters across Europe can work towards creating a sense of European responsibility and cultural identity.
10. Over 93% of teachers believed that teaching about pandemics and natural disasters can play an important role in deepening students' understanding of the global climate crisis. Furthermore, over 95% of teachers believed that teaching about pandemics and natural disasters highlights common challenges students will face in the future, and that teaching about these topics helps nurture responsible global citizens.
11. Overall, most teachers did not believe that teaching about pandemics and natural disasters was too upsetting for students, although a significant minority (particularly in member states that have experienced natural disasters such as earthquakes and flooding) believed that the emotional dimension of teaching about natural disasters was too upsetting for students.
12. Approximately 87% of teachers believed that, given the complex and potentially sensitive nature of teaching about pandemics and natural disasters, teachers need specific strategies and approaches to teach about them effectively.
13. Educators in a number of the OHTE member states feel they have the professional expertise and knowledge needed to teach about pandemics and natural disasters.
14. Issues such as scapegoating and multiple perspectives are rarely included in the planning and teaching of pandemics and natural disasters in national curricula, but are considered very important by teachers and educators across the OHTE member states.
15. While natural disasters tend to be taught mostly in a national framework, with a focus on those that have affected the respective country in the past, pandemics and epidemics are taught from a transnational, European and even global perspective. The Black Death is the single most frequent example of a pandemic and is taught in almost all OHTE member states. The eruption of the Vesuvius is the closest such event in terms of natural disasters, but its coverage in national curricula is still significantly less widespread than that of the Black Death pandemic.

Structure of the report

This introductory chapter provided the background and context for the present thematic report, as well as a general overview of its overall rationale. Chapter 2 outlines the methodological approaches that were used in compiling the report. Chapter 3 reports on the extent to which pandemics and natural disasters feature in the school curricula of the member states of the OHTE. It also outlines the degree of autonomy teachers are given to explore such issues in the history classroom, and highlights inspiring practices in the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective in each member state. This is followed by Chapter 4, which provides information on the pedagogies selected by teachers and educators to teach about pandemics and natural disasters. This chapter also reports on teachers' perceptions of the importance of teaching about these events from a historical perspective. The report concludes with Chapter 5, which discusses the combined data derived from analysis of the curricula and the Teachers and Educators' Survey in comparative perspective.

Chapter 2

Research methodology

The framework laying out the main aims of the report, as well as the overall structure of its methodology, have been established by the OHTE Scientific Advisory Council. To obtain the requisite data for the present report, the expert consortium developed two surveys, which were validated by the Scientific Advisory Council, one completed by the education authorities of the OHTE member states, and the other by teachers in the OHTE member states. The findings of the report are based on a mixed methods approach, which combines the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.

The rationale for the Education Authorities' Survey was to provide official baseline information about the history curricula and official regulations of each OHTE member state, with particular reference to the inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters. Each curriculum was viewed with regard to the content, aims, objectives and textbooks related to the teaching of these topics from a historical perspective. The survey, which consisted of single-choice, multiple-choice and open-ended questions, enquired into various areas connected to a historically oriented teaching of pandemics and natural disasters, such as:

- ▶ the inclusion of these topics in the history curricula and in the curricula of other subjects or integrated courses, insofar as a historical dimension was considered;
- ▶ prescribed or recommended pedagogies and methods of instruction;
- ▶ the autonomy of teachers to teach about these topics;
- ▶ the inclusion of these topics in student assessments;
- ▶ the resources prescribed or recommended for teaching pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective, and the degree of liberty teachers had to use alternative or additional resources.

The survey also asked the authorities to submit curricula, relevant regulations, exams, and officially recommended or prescribed teaching materials for analysis. The survey was made available to the member states' education authorities in both official languages of the Council of Europe, English and French.

The Teachers' and Educators' Survey was designed to collect detailed, in-depth evidence at school and classroom levels about the teaching and learning of pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective. Official information provided by the education authorities could then be complemented with insights derived from practitioners, to arrive at a more grounded analysis of the state of teaching about pandemics and natural disasters in the OHTE member states.

The survey enquired into teachers' perspectives on the extent to which the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters are included in the curricula they are following in their teaching (e.g. state curricula or alternative curricula in schools that are not bound by state curricula), as well as the ways in which the teaching of such topics is prescribed, if applicable. Furthermore, respondents were asked to describe the teaching practices they employ in their historically oriented teaching of pandemics and natural disasters, as well as to answer questions regarding their and their students' perceptions of the relevance and value of teaching about these topics. In accordance with the overall aims of the report, the survey also asked questions about multiperspectivity, the inclusion of minority perspectives and of considerations related to instances of scapegoating occurring during pandemics and natural disasters, and the consideration of an international, European or global dimension in teaching about such phenomena.

The survey was made available in all languages of the OHTE member states – Albanian, Armenian, English, French, Georgian, Greek, Macedonian, Portuguese, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish and Turkish – in order to increase its accessibility for the respondents. The TES was delivered in online format, and the links to the surveys in the relevant languages were distributed to the teachers in a number of ways: via the member states' education authorities, through the network of the expert consortium working on the thematic report and that of the European Association of History Educators, EuroClio. The teachers' responses were directly submitted to the OHTE. For responses provided in other than the official languages of the Council of Europe, namely English and French, members of the expert consortium with the requisite language skills translated the responses into one of the official languages. The OHTE ensured that no personal information apart from country, teaching level and professional situation of the respondent was collected. Furthermore, the online survey was designed to anonymise responses, ensuring that respondents' IP addresses and location data were not recorded. Each

survey was issued with a code identifier (ID) and responses were accessible to only one authorised member of staff from the OHTE secretariat. In terms of data protection, the Council of Europe is in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and the survey responses were collected using a GDPR-compliant version of the Survey Monkey platform.

Using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, the open-ended responses to the TES were selected, grouped and summarised and cases were created for each country. The responses were categorised using NVivo and then manually evaluated. The NVivo code structure consisted of the categories of responses to the survey questions. Codes were generated for each open-ended question and where applicable, sub-codes representing categories of responses to each evaluative question: positive, negative, uncertain and other comments were generated. The quantitative data from the TES were analysed using the statistics software package SPSS. An initial inspection was performed to identify and exclude invalid responses. Invalid responses refer to those that only had a teacher ID, but no answers were entered. All quantitative responses were then transferred to an SPSS spreadsheet. The values of each variable were labelled based on the original questionnaire. Non-parametric tests were selected for data analysis due to difficulty of finding normal distribution in each state's dataset due to the limited number of respondents.

Cross-country comparative analysis

Hantrais and Mangen describe cross-country comparative analysis as a process where “one or more units in two or more societies, cultures or countries are compared in respect of the same concepts and concerning the systematic analysis of phenomena ... with the intention of explaining them and generalising from them” (1996: 1-2). The data that was collected from both the EAS and TES were reviewed at the level of each individual country, as a necessary step towards the preparation of the overall cross-country comparative analysis. Where appropriate, other sources, such as existing scientific studies, were also included in this step to contextualise the data provided by the respondents and to draw more reliable conclusions from it. In the present report, the micro-level qualitative and quantitative data arising from the TES and relating to teachers' practices and experiences of teaching pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective are nested within the larger macro-level EAS datasets pertaining to state curricula, policies and reports. This allows for a deeper understanding of the current place of these topics both in history curricula and in history teaching practices across the OHTE member states, identifying relevant patterns that are outlined in the main findings of the report.

While maintaining the principle of methodological and conceptual consistency with respect to data collection, the thematic report aims to present the factual information collected, in a synthetic form, providing the basis for subsequent in-depth analysis, interpretation and generalisation that scholars and educational experts could potentially undertake.

Challenges and limitations

There were numerous challenges and methodological limitations involved in crafting the present thematic report. These included issues related to language competences, response rates and completion rates. Perhaps the most significant challenge encountered by the authors of the present report concerns the limited time frame available to design the methodology, collect the data, systematise the findings, undertake preliminary cross-country analysis and deliver the report. While future thematic reports will be issued every two years, the time frame for the first one was limited to one year, for reasons related to both the salience of the topic and the expectations stakeholders have expressed towards the OHTE in this early phase of its operation. The relatively small size of the TES samples for some member states does not allow generalisations about its representativeness for the entire population of teachers who teach history within the respective states, nor – in keeping with the principles of cross-country comparative analysis outlined above – across the 16 OHTE member states. This applies particularly to the quantitative data collected for the purposes of this study. In some cases, very few completed surveys were returned; in other cases, respondents did not provide full answers to the surveys, skipping a number of questions. The timing of the launching of the TES also created additional difficulties, as the survey was launched at a time when, traditionally, teachers and educators are extremely busy with activities related to the end of the school year.

- ▶ The TES data have limited quantitative validity, as the sample sizes not only are too small to be statistically valid, but also vary significantly between OHTE states; they cannot therefore support generalisations. Teacher respondents to the TES frequently gave answers that did not converge with those obtained from the EAS; for example, some stated that pandemics and/or natural disasters are formally assessed when this is not the case. This particular mismatch could perhaps be partly explained by the fact that pandemics

and natural disasters are indeed assessed in some states, but in other subjects – usually geography, natural sciences, environmental studies, biology or medicine – and not in history.

- ▶ Any conclusions drawn are based on what teachers claim about their practice of teaching about pandemics and natural disasters, not on observations of what actually happens in classrooms, as classroom observation did not form part of the research methodology for this thematic report.

With these limitations in mind, teachers' responses, particularly those to open-ended questions, provide a rich source of qualitative data that affords detailed, in-depth insights into the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters in relation to their specific educational contexts. Considered in conjunction with the more general data about the education systems in the OHTE member states derived from the EAS, they can provide the bases for what Gerring (2007) calls "cross-case generalisations", by establishing connections between findings across different systems of education. These qualitative data can consequently also contribute to what Yin (2013) identifies as "analytic generalisations", and Bassey (2000) as "fuzzy generalisations", which provide an insight into the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters across the 16 OHTE member states.

Chapter 3

Inclusion in school curricula and teacher autonomy

Albania

The Albanian school system

In Albania, the Ministry of Education and Sports is responsible for the state school curricula. Other authorities responsible for state school curricula include the Quality Assurance Agency in Pre-University Education, the Educational Services Centre, the General Directorate of Pre-University Education, regional education directorates and local education offices. In Albania, state school begins at the age of 6 and is mandatory until students are 14-15. Most students continue in school for three or four more years, until they are 18-19. There are also privately administered schools that mostly follow state curricula, and a number of international schools that have their own curricula; however, Albanian language and Albanian history are also mandatory subjects in these schools.

The history curricula in Albania

The state regulates the pedagogical approaches used in the teaching of history. Recommended methodologies include lectures, active pedagogies, enquiry approaches, research projects and interdisciplinary work. In the teaching of history, students are trained in historical research; the use of resources; cause-effect analysis; and historical interpretation, presentation and communication about the past. Learning outcomes in the history curriculum relate to the development of historical competences in the use of resources, historical interpretation, and the reliability and accuracy of the source. As the use of Information and communications technology (ICT) is one of the seven key competencies for lifelong learning, and is a mandatory part of the entire national curriculum, this is also reflected in the history curriculum. History teachers and students use ICT to search for additional information and source material about the past in relation to dates, persons, objects, events and historical processes, as well as to select, classify, organise and present findings. These approaches are used by teachers and students also for teaching and learning about topics related to pandemics and natural disasters.⁴

While the state is involved in the creation, selection and authorisation of textbooks, additional source materials are not determined by the state and the teacher is free to select source materials to meet the requirements of the curriculum. Teachers have complete flexibility and freedom in dealing with topics related to natural disasters, pandemics and/or other topics that complement the curriculum. In the history and geography curriculum, teachers can address these topics during sessions dedicated to hands-on activities or projects.⁵

The national curricula also provide for extracurricular activities (e.g. museum visits or other field trips) in the context of history learning and in cross-curricular topics, some of which include topics relating to pandemics and natural disasters. The history curriculum recommends that the teacher provide opportunities for students to evaluate on their visits, where possible, the role of museums, galleries and historical archives in preserving and presenting the past.⁶

Inclusion of a historical perspective to pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

Pandemics are included in the history curriculum in Albania, with the present curriculum having entered into force in May 2019. The teaching of pandemics is included in the state-prescribed history curricula for students aged 11-12 and 16-18. In the context of pandemics, the Black Death is included in the history curriculum for the 6th grade. It appears in the strand "Features of European political systems in the 12th-15th centuries". This strand of the curriculum includes the topic "Consequences of the plague in the Middle Ages". The aim of this unit is

4. EAS, Albania.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

to allow the students to explore the consequences of the plague across Europe. The Black Death is mentioned once again in the history curriculum for the 12th grade, as a practical project within the topic “Modern history”. The theme of this project is “The impact of the Black Death on religious and political developments in Europe”. These topics also appear in the textbooks *History 6* and *History 12*.

Students are also introduced to climate change through the coverage of prehistoric periods such as the Ice Age. Natural disasters are not specifically mentioned in the history curricula but are included in the geography curricula. Here, students learn about natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcano eruptions, landslides, famines, droughts, floods, bushfires and storms, as well as their causes and consequences. A historical dimension is included in topics related to global perspectives on climate change and global warming.

Historical natural disasters that are (especially) relevant in the context of Albania include a number of earthquakes that still impact on the national consciousness. One of the biggest natural disasters in Albania was the earthquake of 26 November 2019. It reached a magnitude of 6.4 on the Richter scale in the areas of Durrës, Thumanë and Lezhë. Fifty-one people lost their lives and thousands were left homeless as a result of the earthquake. It was described as the deadliest earthquake globally in 2019 due to the number of victims and the extent of urban damage. Another devastating earthquake occurred on April 16, 1976, in Shkodra. This earthquake caused 40 people to lose their lives, and thousands of homes were damaged. Given the frequency of natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods in Albania, the Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education has prepared materials and guidelines to help teachers. This material is found in the publication entitled “Education for Emergency Management and School Safety” (IZHA and UNICEF 2018) and in the manual “LearnIn” for learning during emergencies’ (ASCAP, UN Albania and UNICEF 2020), which relates to the provision of education during an emergency rather than teaching about historic pandemics and disasters.

Highlights

Learning about the causes as well as the consequences that climatic changes and natural disasters had on societies and life on earth in the past is used in Albania to enhance learners’ understanding of today’s challenges, such as the consequences of climate change.

Andorra

The Andorran school system

The Andorran state, through the Ministry of Education and Andorran schools, prescribes the Andorran school curriculum, with the participation of the schools, teachers and students. Three other schooling systems operate in the principality, so Andorra has four education systems in total: Andorran (4 502 students), French (3 430 students), Spanish (2 738 students) and one British private school (165 students). However, only the Andorran, French and Spanish public schools and Spanish concerted schools are considered as public schools, where tuition is free. Schooling in Andorra is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16 for all four co-existing education systems. The organisation of the schooling diverges between the four systems as depicted in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. The Andorran school system (excluding early childhood and tertiary education and Spanish concerted schools)⁷

Compulsory / non-compulsory	Level	Schooling system					
		Andorran		French		Spanish	
		Term	Age group	Term	Age group	Term	Age group
Compulsory	ISCED-1	Primera Ensenyança	6-12	Écoles élémentaires	6-11	Educación primaria	7-13
	ISCED-2	Segona Ensenyança	12-16	Collèges	11-15	Educación secundaria obligatoria	13-17

7. Based on information provided in ENIC-NARIC (n.d.), Govern d’Andorra (n.d.a; n.d.b; n.d.c; n.d.d) and Eurostat (n.d.).

Compulsory / non-compulsory	Level	Schooling system					
		Andorran		French		Spanish	
		Term	Age group	Term	Age group	Term	Age group
Non-compulsory	ISCED-3	Batxillerat	16-18	Lycée	15-18	Bachillerato	17-19
		Formació professional (vocational education)	16-19	Voie générale et technologique (general and technological path)			
		Diploma d'ensenyament professional	16-18	Voie professionnelle (professional path)			
		Títol de batxiller professional	18-19				
ISCED-1: Primary education							
ISCED-2: Lower secondary education							
ISCED-3: Upper secondary education							

In regard to teacher autonomy, teachers in Andorra have the right to decide individually on the content taught and the teaching methodologies used. Teaching methodologies are not regulated by the state and the state does not approve or produce textbooks, teaching materials or other resources.

The history curricula in Andorra

At primary and secondary levels, history is not a separate subject but is instead incorporated into social sciences. From the ages of 6-10 children are usually in mixed-age classes and learn reading, writing, art, music and physical education, in both Catalan and French, with English added from age 8. During the final two years of primary education (ages 10-12), history forms part of social sciences; this continues at lower secondary level. The Andorran education system prescribes generic content that schools and teachers can choose whether or not to select and implement in their planning.

Inclusion of a historical perspective to pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

Natural disasters are included in the social science curriculum in elementary education (pupils aged 6-12) and in the "Science and society" curriculum of the general baccalaureate (ages 16-18). At primary level, natural disasters are taught at ages 10-11 and 11-12. The primary social sciences curriculum for ages 6-12, approved by the government of Andorra on 17 November 2021, includes two mentions of natural disasters. These are found in the sections "Natural hazards: An Andorran problem, a global problem" and "Natural hazards as a social problem: A history of a recent natural disaster."

The teaching of pandemics does not form part of the Andorran primary school curriculum. However, references to pandemics can be found at secondary level in other areas of the curriculum of the general baccalaureate. There are no specific learning outcomes associated with teaching about pandemics or natural disasters in history, nor is such teaching assessed in any examination.⁸

Teaching about natural disasters is present in both the geography and the "Science and society" curricula at ages 16-18. In geography, this is covered under the topic "Natural and environmental disasters, in territories and peoples, and their economic, cultural and forced displacement consequences". More specific references to pandemics can be found in "Science and society", as part of the topic "Knowledge, health and diseases – contemporary pandemics".

8. EAS, Andorra.

Highlights

In Andorra, natural disasters are discussed from multiple perspectives. The approach to examining them as both local and global phenomena with a potentially strong impact on societies provides learners with the opportunity to understand how global events and developments can affect local populations. Emphasising the interconnectedness of the local and global levels may increase learners' capability to react to global challenges at the local level.

Armenia

The Armenian school system

The Armenian national educational framework comprises both public and private schools. The institutions that control school curricula in Armenia include the National Centre for Education Development and Innovation Foundation, the Assessment and Testing Centre, the National Centre for Educational Technologies and the Psychological-Pedagogical Centre. However, some schools in Armenia are not bound by the state curriculum, including international schools, private schools with autonomous curricula, and schools for persons with educational special needs. These schools are free to design their own curriculum, but it is mandatory to base it on the existing national curriculum.⁹

Teachers in public schools have the flexibility and freedom to choose their teaching methods and content within the allotted time for a given topic. Teachers are free to consider or to present certain examples in more depth, and to take different approaches and perspectives in teaching history. The teachers conduct their lessons according to their lesson plans and are free to include pandemics and epidemics, as well as natural disasters in history, by assigning research work to students.¹⁰

The history curricula in Armenia

In Armenia, history falls under the subject area of "Society, social sciences". In primary school, history is covered in the subject area "Nature, natural sciences" and the subject area "Me and the world around" in grades 2-4. In middle school (grades 5-9), the subject area of "Society, social sciences" covers the subjects "Country/fatherland studies" in grade 5, "History of the Armenian church" in grades 5-9, "Armenian history and world history" in grades 6-9, "Geography of Armenia" in grade 9, and "Social studies/sociology" in grades 8-9. In high school (grades 10-12), the subject area of "Society, social sciences" includes the subjects "Armenian history", "World history", and "Social studies/sociology". The humanities stream includes an additional subject, "History of the Armenian church", in grades 10-11 (Alişan et al. 2017). The Armenian educational curricula will undergo educational reform in 2023 and a new proposed standard for a healthy lifestyle course will be developed for grades 5-11 which may include education relating to pandemics and natural disasters. The state is involved in the authorisation process of history textbooks, and fully integrated curricula are not part of the state-prescribed curricula of Armenia.¹¹

Inclusion of a historical perspective to pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

The teaching of pandemics and natural disasters is not included in the state-prescribed history curricula. The history of pandemics and of natural disasters are not separate topics and are not explicitly included in the context of teaching a specific historical period or type of history (world history, European history, national history, etc.). Nor are there any specific learning outcomes mentioned in the curriculum that relate to the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters in history.

While these topics are not included in the national curricula, teachers have the flexibility to deal with examples in more depth or to take historical cases into consideration. Moreover, teachers have the opportunity and freedom to take different approaches or to choose the methods, in-class activities, assignments and subtopics in planning and conducting the lessons in the classroom within the allocated hours. There is, therefore, scope within the curricular documents for the inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in teaching even if these topics are not explicitly prescribed. In grades 2-3, detailed descriptions of past events are provided as part of the unit "The world around me". Pandemics and natural disasters can form part of these. The subject of history also can focus briefly on specific cases, such as the plague in the Middle Ages, while in the study programme of

9. EAS, Armenia.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

Armenian history, students may study the Spitak earthquake of 1988. The teaching of pandemics and natural disasters is not included in the state-prescribed curricula for subjects other than history.¹²

Highlights

Although teaching about pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective is not explicitly included in the curricula, the Armenian school system provides the flexibility for teachers to include it in accordance with their professional judgment. In this way the curriculum allows teachers to respond to students' interests and to address present challenges by offering a historical perspective on them, or to include examples of pandemics and natural disasters that are present in the Armenian collective memory, such as the Spitak earthquake of 1988.

Cyprus

The school system in Cyprus

The vast majority of schools, in both primary and secondary education, in the Republic of Cyprus are public schools operated by the state. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has sole responsibility for the educational curricula. In addition to public/state schools, there are three types of private schools: identical type, similar type and different type. Identical type schools follow the same curriculum as public schools. Similar type schools partly follow the national curriculum, and are free to implement aspects of their own curriculum. Different type schools follow their own curriculum. Some similar and different type schools develop their own curricula, while others implement curricula (or aspects of them) developed by other authorities/bodies, usually the educational authorities of another country (e.g. the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation or the English national curriculum GCSE and A-Level curricula). There are also some public schools for students from the Armenian and Maronite communities of Cyprus. These schools also follow the national curriculum and implement some aspects of their own, developed by the schools (EAS, Cyprus). Education in the Republic of Cyprus is divided into four stages: preschool education (ages 3-6), primary education (ages 6-12), lower secondary education (ages 12-15) and higher secondary education (ages 15-18).¹³

The history curricula in Cyprus

In state schools, the teaching of history is prescribed by a national history curriculum which describes specific learning outcomes in terms of substantive knowledge and a disciplinary understanding of history. In pre-primary education, history is taught as one aspect of an integrated subject, social studies. In terms of content, the curriculum for preschool education focuses on personal and family history (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth 2020). Besides the teaching of topics related to personal and family history, the curriculum includes learning outcomes related to the development of ideas of time, change and continuity, causes and consequences, historical significance and historical empathy (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth 2020). History is also not taught in the first two years of primary education (years 1-2), but is a distinct subject in the last four years of primary education (years 3-6). History is also taught as a distinct subject in lower secondary education (years 7-9) and in upper secondary education (years 10-12).

There are two routes for the subject of history (and also other subjects) in upper secondary education: "Common core history" and "Specialisation history". The amount of time allocated to specialisation history is substantially higher than the time allocated to common core history. History textbooks in Cyprus are published by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (for the teaching of Cypriot history) and the Greek Ministry of Education (for the teaching of Greek history). Both Greek and Greek Cypriot textbooks have the status of official textbooks and are provided to all public schools by the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth.

Inclusion of a historical perspective to pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

Despite pandemics, epidemics and natural disasters having affected Cyprus in the past, references to their teaching in the history curricula are scarce. However, as Table 3.2 illustrates, pandemics or natural disasters appear in the national curricula at both primary and secondary levels.

12. Ibid.

13. EAS, Cyprus.

Table 3.2. References to pandemics and natural disasters in the history curricula in Cyprus

Age group	Pandemics and natural disasters	Notes
Year 5, primary education (ages 10-11)	Bubonic plague in Europe during 14th and 15th centuries	To be studied when teaching the topic “medieval Europe”
Year 7 (lower secondary school: ages 12-13)	Minoan civilisation – Mycenaean civilisation – volcano eruption of Santorini (Thira)	
Year 8, lower secondary school (ages 13-14)	The large number of deaths caused by bubonic plague in Constantinople in 1347 The consequences of natural disasters during the Venetian rule of Cyprus According to written sources (Leontios Maxairas) during the first quarter of the 4th century AD (+ 325), the habitants of Cyprus were starving and dying because of a great drought. Earthquake at Salamina (333 AD) Earthquake at Kourion (Cyprus) 21 July 365 AD – middle 4th century AD	Merely a reminder to teachers to inform students about this fact To be studied as an aspect of social and economic life during that period.
Year 9 (lower secondary school: ages 14-15)	Famine during the Nazi occupation of Greece	To be taught as one of the consequences of the Nazi occupation of Greece during the Second World War II.
Year 10 (upper secondary school: ages 15-16)	Minoan civilisation – Mycenaean civilisation – volcano eruption of Santorini (Thira)	
Year 11, upper secondary school (ages 16-17)	The large number of deaths caused by bubonic plague in Constantinople in 1347. The consequences of natural disasters during the Venetian rule of Cyprus According to written sources (Leontios Maxairas) during the first quarter of the 4th century AD (+ 325), the habitants of Cyprus were starving and dying because of a great drought. Earthquake at Salamina (333 AD) Earthquake at Kourion (Cyprus) 21 July 365 AD – middle 4th century AD	In this case, it is merely a reminder to teachers to inform students about this fact. To be studied as an aspect of social and economic life during that period
Year 12, upper secondary school: school: ages 17-18)	Famine during the Nazi occupation of Greece	To be taught as one of the consequences of the Nazi occupation of Greece during the Second World War

Pandemics and natural disasters are also covered in the geography and biology, but in those cases historical perspectives are absent or play only a marginal role. However, in the Biology Teaching in the third year of upper secondary education (Lýkeio), reference is made to knowledge that societies in history possessed regarding infectious diseases, such as about immunity after recovery, as described by Thucydides, early forms of vaccination against smallpox in 11th century China and scientific discoveries in the field of immunology from the 18th century onwards. The only exception is the religious education curriculum, which contains an indirect reference to pandemics and natural disasters in the past. According to this topic, students in year 1 (ages 6-7) should be able to provide evidence for St Helen’s presence in Cyprus. According to religious tradition, which is not supported

by historical evidence, St Helen, the mother of the Roman emperor Constantine I, visited Cyprus in 326 ce and saved the island from drought, famine and snakes.

Highlights

The history curricula of Cyprus explicitly include the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters. The approach to teach the bubonic plague as a European experience may enhance students' understanding of the commonalities in the histories of European countries and societies.

France

The French school system

France has a centrally controlled curriculum. Some local variation is permitted, although this is limited. State schools are free, co-educational and secular. Education is compulsory between the ages of 3 and 16, and is organised into four cycles. At age 15 pupils must take the national school-leaving diploma, the *brevet* (DNB). They can then continue to upper secondary level (*lycée*) or to professional or technological education, and then take the respective baccalaureate. The state also partially funds most private schools, which are attended by around 20% of pupils. The funded private schools are under contract with the state, and follow the state curriculum. Home schooling is permitted under strict conditions. Private publishers rely on authors (mostly teachers) to design, publish and distribute textbooks. The French state has no control over these schools (Bruillard 2011).

The history curricula in France

History at junior primary level (ages 6-8) is not a separate subject but forms part of the topic "Questioning the world". It is always banded with geography at secondary level; textbooks are published as history/geography, frequently with moral and civic education (EMC). History first appears formally in the school curriculum for pupils aged 9 and continues to be a compulsory subject in lower secondary school (ages 11-15). The *lycée* comprises the final three years of school, for students aged 15-18. During this stage, pupils choose several routes with core curriculum subjects towards the baccalaureate. In their final two years, pupils can choose from a range of specialisations, while the number of hours dedicated to core subjects such as history are reduced. The curriculum allows for teacher autonomy within the national curricular structure. Teachers can take advantage of this curricular flexibility to teach about pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective; this can take place within the history curriculum, in the geography curriculum or in other subjects where lessons could include an historical element. Teacher autonomy in France is particularly developed in regard to teaching methods, which can be chosen by the teachers. The state does, however, provide pedagogical advice.

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

While they appear explicitly in the geography curriculum, pandemics and natural disasters are specified only three times in the curriculum, despite the latter being content heavy. At ages 12-13, in the topic "Transformation of Europe and the opening out of the world", the effect of European expansion (including diseases) on the populations of the New World is briefly mentioned. However, the New World epidemics are fully specified in the curriculum for ages 15-16, in the topic "The opening of the Atlantic: consequences of the discovery of the 'New World'". Here, the epidemiological impact on conquered populations is explicitly written into the programme. In the final year (ages 17-18) the topic "The AIDS epidemic in France: research, prevention, and political struggles" is covered.

In other subjects, the coverage of pandemics and natural disasters does not include a historical perspective.¹⁴ In experimental sciences, the study of earthquakes and volcanoes is progressively revisited throughout the primary years. In geography, pandemics and natural disasters are explicitly taught at ages 12-13, where pupils cover a case study of a pandemic and its diffusion across the world, and also look at health inequalities globally. They also cover case studies of natural catastrophes: one in a more developed country, one in a less developed one. However, there is no official obligation to include a historical perspective in the coverage of any of these topics.

Natural disasters are also a theme in the "Life and earth sciences" course. As regards integrated curricula, which are organised around a theme combining different disciplines, past pandemics and natural disasters are treated

14. EAS, France.

during cycles 3 and 4 (ages 9-15). In the final two years of *lycée* (ages 16-18), pupils can choose to specialise in HGGSP, which integrates history, geography, geopolitics and political science. HGGSP includes a specialist theme on the environment.

Highlights

The teaching of the epidemiological impact on conquered populations in the context of colonialism supports learners' understanding of the unanticipated and unintended but severe impact that pandemics have on historical processes and societies. Furthermore, the teaching of political movements in the light of the Aids epidemic in France demonstrates both the danger of stigmatisation associated with disease outbreaks and the political struggle to counter such stigmatisation and discrimination, providing learners with a positive example of active citizenship. By comparing the impact of natural disasters on more developed countries with the impact such phenomena have on less developed countries, learners understand that the severity of the effects of natural disasters depends also on the resources available in a society to respond to them. Such approaches strengthen learners' consideration of the social, economic and political components inherent in pandemics and natural disasters, as well as their ability to think globally.

Georgia

The Georgian school system

There are three levels in Georgian education: elementary school covers classes 1-6, basic school covers classes 7-9, and secondary school covers classes 10-12. Both primary and basic education are compulsory. The third-generation national curriculum is an objective-based document. Each subject standard is based on general objectives and concrete objectives (outcomes and concepts) specific to the subject area at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary stages, mandatory topics and objectives within the topics. Based on the New School Model introduced in 2018, modern approaches aimed at the holistic development of the student are promoted, which encourage teachers to use active pedagogies to strengthen students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, while developing their creativity. In Georgia, there is a range of non-state-operated schools, which include international schools, private schools with autonomous curricula, and religious and faith schools. Religious and faith schools, as well as some international schools, are not bound by the state curricula. Some private schools and international schools try to adjust their curricula to the state curricula, or at least to align with its major principles.¹⁵ Those need to receive official permission from the Ministry of Education to use additional materials and textbooks.

The history curricula in Georgia

The basic history standard consists of the following elements: 1. objectives of teaching the subject; 2. results and content of the standard; 3. methodological guidelines; and 4. evaluation. At the basic level, the subject of history refers to the integrated teaching of Georgian and world history. Students are acquainted with the main episodes of the history of Georgia from ancient times to the present, and connect these with key events of world history. They study the social history of different epochs (religion, culture, economy) and explore how modernity and the past are closely related.

Textbook teaching is the predominant form of teaching in Georgia, and textbooks must be approved by the Ministry of Education. Other resources used in history classes, such as historical sources, films and mass media, are selected by the teachers. Teachers have some flexibility in delivering the curriculum and can choose the most appropriate and relevant issue(s) for their students and the methodologies most appropriate to teach them. The only requirement is that the teaching and learning process must be based on curriculum objectives and constructivist principles.¹⁶

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

Earthquakes and floods are frequent occurrences in Georgia, and the teaching of natural disasters is included in the curriculum for ages 12-13, 13-14 and 15-16. The teaching of pandemics is not prescribed in the history curricula, but this topic is prescribed in other curricular areas.

15. EAS, Georgia.

16. Ibid.

Learning material about pandemics past and present is included in the basic official school textbooks for the 8th and 9th grades (published in 2020 and 2021 by Diogene or Logos) as optional content that may be used to explore a compulsory topic prescribed in the curriculum. The 8th grade textbook addresses the Middle Ages and the early modern period with respect to both world history and Georgian history. The 9th grade textbook deals with the modern period and includes information about pandemics in this period. Sources, films and other mass media that are used in history classes are selected by the teachers. These include images, documents, and sources about topics such as the Black Death and the Great Influenza pandemic of 1918. Pandemics and natural disasters do not appear in state exams or assessments. Citizenship, which covers history, civic education and social geography, has mandatory content including the thematic block “Global social challenges and changes”. Within this block, the topic “Pandemics – contemporary and past” makes use of historical cases, which are approached from the perspective of all three disciplines. Natural disasters, their mitigation and ways to prevent them are included in other subject areas, and are one of the mandatory outcomes of the secondary-level geography curriculum.

Highlights

In addition to the history curriculum, in Georgia, pandemics are also taught in citizenship education, which is an integrated course combining history, civic education and social geography. Teaching about pandemics in a distinct history course supports the development of historical thinking skills, while the additional discussion of pandemics in the framework of an integrated subject creates the opportunity for learners to understand pandemics as social phenomena in all their complexity.

Greece

The Greek school system

Education in Greece is compulsory for students aged 4-15. Compulsory schooling is divided into four stages: preschool education (*nipiagogeio*), ages 4-5; primary education (*dimotikó*), ages 6-12 (grades 1-6); lower secondary education (*gymnásio*), ages 13-15 (grades 1-3); and upper secondary education (*lykeio*), ages 16-18 (grades 1-3). In primary education there are different schools including those for children with learning difficulties. In secondary education there many different types of schools, including those for children with learning difficulties. Textbooks are approved by the Ministry of Education.

The history curricula in Greece

All general education schools follow the national curriculum. The teaching of history officially starts in the third grade (*dimotikó*) and continues throughout *gymnásio*. In general *lykeio*, history is also taught throughout all three years, with varying numbers of hours depending on students’ choice of subject options. There are variations in the teaching between schools with different orientations (e.g. vocational high schools, ecclesiastical schools, minority high schools) as they have different textbooks and different teaching approaches. In the vocational *lykeio* for example, history is only taught during the first year. In terms of teaching methodologies, every year the Ministry of Education issues a directive setting out the context and the ways in which history should be taught in all Greek schools, which are to be followed by teachers.

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

There are numerous references to historical pandemics and natural disasters in the Greek history curricula and in history textbooks. One of the objectives of history education, for all the grades of primary school (*dimotikó*), is that students explore, with the use of additional educational materials, the “Story of Myrtida, a girl who died from the plague in Athens” (IEP 2021a: 38-9). In lower secondary (*gymnásio*) history education, some of the special objectives of history lessons include references to pandemics and natural disasters. Students revisit the story of Myrtida, the 11-year-old girl who died from the plague in 429 BCE and whose skull was found in a mass grave in Keramikos (IEP 2021b: 21). They also identify events, such as the Black Death, that contributed to the economic development of the western states (IEP 2021b: 44). Students are also meant to use their knowledge of the Black Death pandemic to identify and document its consequences in all aspects of medieval civilisation (IEP 2021b: 45). In the higher secondary (*lykeio*) history curriculum, some of the special aims of history lessons are that pupils be taught to discuss the importance of social issues such as contemporary social inequalities and the Covid-19 health crisis in order to perceive the historicity of many of these events, in an effort to comprehend

them and to explore ways of solving them (IEP 2021c: 94). The topic of pandemics and natural disasters is also included in school textbooks at various levels and in diverse teaching contexts (see Appendix 2).

Pandemics and natural disasters have a strong presence in other curricular areas in Greece, as well. With regard to primary education, pandemics and natural disasters are taught mostly in the context of environmental education and physics (6th grade, ages 11-12) and in the context of the thematic sections of the cross-curricular “skills lab”. However, the focus here is on risk management and mitigation issues, through targeted experiential learning and practical exercises. A historical perspective plays a marginal role in these classes. At secondary level, pandemics and natural disasters are included frequently in curricular areas such as biology (pandemics-epidemics) and geology-geography (natural disasters), and also, but to a lesser extent, in the context of subjects such as religious education, language and literature. Here, the focus is on scientific processes, religious practices (in Japanese and African religions) that relate to natural disasters, informational-science perspectives (for example: how news of an earthquake is distributed by the media) and civil protection issues. On rare occasions, historical perspectives are included in the teaching of other subjects, but this is more often related to pandemics than to natural disasters. The most notable reference can be found in the context of the 6th grade physics course (ages 11-12), where the effects of epidemics on the indigenous population of the Americas is taught and is included in the textbook. Historical concepts such as cause and effect and continuity and change are used to discuss issues such as international travel and the impact this has on the spread of diseases. Historical significance is noted in the reference to the contribution of science to the treatment of diseases in relation to past practices.

Highlights

The Greek history curricula feature topics related to pandemics and natural disasters to a great extent. The inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in teaching about a variety of historical topics allows learners to develop an understanding of the complex, diverse and fundamental effects that pandemics and natural disasters have on societies' political, economic and social systems, military campaigns and cultures. The appearance of these phenomena in the teaching of a multitude of historical topics also adequately reflects the central and ubiquitous role that pandemics and natural disasters have played in human life throughout history. The inclusion of diverse sources provides students with first-hand accounts of the lived experiences of persons affected by historical pandemics and natural disasters, contributing to their development of historical thinking skills and historical empathy.

Ireland

The Irish school system

The education system in Ireland consists of three levels: early years, primary and post-primary education. Education is compulsory for children in Ireland from the ages of 6 to 16 or until students have completed three years of post-primary education. In Ireland, the majority of primary and secondary schools are publicly funded but are generally privately organised and usually with Church (mostly Catholic) involvement in governance. A minority of students are educated in private schools or through home tuition. Primary education consists of an eight-year cycle and students follow a national curriculum. There are three types of secondary schools (voluntary secondary, Education and Training Board (ETB), and community and comprehensive) and all schools follow the same curriculum and qualifications framework. Secondary education consists of the three-year junior cycle, followed by either two or three years of senior cycle, depending on whether a student participates in an optional transition year between the junior and the senior cycles (NCCA 2021). There are 3 107 primary schools, 134 special schools that cater for students aged 5-18, and 730 post-primary schools, all of which follow the state curricula (EAS, Ireland). In Ireland, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), which is a statutory body of the Department of Education advises the Minister for Education on curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and assessment procedures used in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum. This advice is developed through research, deliberation, consultation and networks (NCCA 2022).

The history curricula in Ireland

Students study history as a discrete subject at primary and secondary levels. History is a compulsory subject until the third year of the junior cycle (ages 15-16) and is optional in the senior cycle (ages 17-18). There is a great degree of flexibility for teachers in how the history curriculum is delivered. A variety of teaching materials are used in the teaching of these subjects, including textbooks, worksheets, video and audio clips, digital material,

documents, images, digital archives and other types of primary sources. The decision on which particular resources are used is a decision for individual schools. There are no requirements placed on a school by the Department of Education to use any specific textbooks. However, the department does provide advice and support through the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the department's teacher support services. It also issues guidelines for teachers and provides support materials to help and guide their work with students.

Across all levels, the history curricula aim to develop an awareness of the discipline of history in students. Both the primary and junior cycle curricula pay attention to the development of the skills and dispositions needed to engage in historical research and to work with historical documents ("Working as a historian" at primary level and "The nature of history" at junior cycle level). This allows for progression to more detailed interrogation of the past at senior level. Historical enquiry is the recommended teaching pedagogy at all levels.

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

The teaching of pandemics and natural disasters is included in the state-prescribed history curricula.

The primary history curriculum is divided into strands (which are the overarching topics or themes, e.g. "Local studies") and strand units (which refer to a more detailed sub-themes, e.g. "My locality through the ages"). One of the most prominent natural disasters relevant to Ireland is the Great Famine. In third and fourth class (ages 9-10), children can explore events in their locality associated with the Great Famine under the "Local studies" strand unit "My locality through the ages". The Great Famine also appears in the fifth and sixth class (ages 10-12) curriculum and is often studied in a cross-curricular manner by integrating it with other subjects (e.g. English, geography, science, art and drama). Here, teachers may select the strand "Eras of change and conflict" and the strand unit "The Great Famine". These are the only specific references to natural disasters in the primary history curriculum and are provided as choices within an optional strand unit. In the strand unit "Life in mediaeval towns and countryside in Ireland and Europe" the fear of plague in medieval times and how this fear affected people are explicitly mentioned. This is the only specific reference to pandemics in the primary history curriculum and is provided as a choice within an optional strand unit (NCCA 1999).

In the junior cycle history curriculum (ages 13-16), teachers have autonomy in deciding the depth to which each outcome is covered with students. Pandemics are not specifically mentioned in any of the learning outcomes but the topic can be integrated into the range of learning outcomes specified. As it regards the teaching of natural disasters there is a learning outcome specifically on the Great Famine that all students have to engage with at junior cycle level (NCCA, 2017). Besides that, teachers have the freedom to include these topics in their teaching related to other learning outcomes with no specific reference to pandemics or natural disasters.

In the senior cycle (ages 16-18), which prepares the students for the Leaving Certificate examinations, there are two programmes that teachers can choose to deliver: the early modern field of study (1492-1815) or the later modern field of study (1815-1993). Natural disasters (famines) are specifically referred to in both programmes, and disease is referred to in the later modern field of study (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. References to pandemics and natural disasters in the Irish history curricula

Inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in the primary history curriculum	
Strands	Strand units
3rd and 4th classes	
Local studies	My locality through the ages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Become familiar with important events in the history of the locality, referring to the wider national context where relevant. Possible events might include events in locality associated with the Great Famine.
5th and 6th classes	
Life, society, work and culture in the past	Life in medieval towns and the countryside in Ireland and Europe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Become familiar with aspects of the lives of these people (homes of people, settlement patterns and urban development, clothes, foods and farming, technologies that people developed and their influence on the lives of people, people at work, culture, art and music, language(s) and literature, leisure and pastimes, faith, beliefs and religious practices, migration and emigration,

Inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in the primary history curriculum	
Strands	Strand units
	<p>relationships of different groups of people to one another (e.g. landlords and tenants in the 19th century), simple treatment of some of the social, economic, political or religious issues of the time (e.g. fear of the plague in medieval towns, penal laws, decline in use of Irish in the 19th century, life of workers in 19th-century industrial towns, long-term contribution of people and events at this time to the development of modern Ireland).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Examine and become familiar with evidence that informs us about the lives of people in the periods studied, their thoughts and concerns.
Eras of change and conflict	<p><i>The Great Famine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Become familiar with aspects of these periods (ways in which the everyday lives of people changed; changes and conflicts in people's thoughts and beliefs, and the reasons for them; people, organisations and events involved in bringing about change or adapting to change; local evidence of changes and conflicts; the reactions of people to the changes and issues they experienced; the long-term effect of changes and conflicts). ▶ Examine and become familiar with evidence that informs us about the lives of people in the periods studied, their thoughts and concerns, especially evidence that may be found locally. ▶ Record the place of peoples and events on appropriate timelines.
Inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in the junior cycle curriculum	
Strand 2: The history of Ireland	
Exploring people, culture and ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Investigate the causes, course and consequences, nationally and internationally, of the Great Famine, and examine the significance of the Irish diaspora.
Inclusion of Pandemics and Natural Disasters in the Senior cycle curriculum: Early modern field of study (1492-1815)	
Topic 5: Colony versus kingdom: tensions in mid-18th-century Ireland, 1715-1770	
Society and economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Population change; subdivision of holdings; forms of tenure; the potato; poverty, famine, disease.
Inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in the senior cycle curriculum: later modern field of study (1815-1993)	
Topic 1: Ireland and the Union, 1815-70	
Society and economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Irish countryside, 1815; economic crisis, 1815-50; the Great Famine; the post-Famine economy; emigration; education; impact of the railways; industrial development in Belfast. ▶ Case studies: private responses to the Great Famine, 1845-9
Politics and administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Government responses to famine: electoral reform; sectarianism in politics; Fenianism; Liberal reforms.
Topic 5: Establishing empires, 1715-75	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Poverty, disease and population growth.</i>
Topic 4: The Irish diaspora, 1840-1966	
Economy and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The main trends in Irish emigration by origin, destination and type of emigrant; their occupations and where they settled in the country of immigration: pre-1845; the Famine decade, 1845-55; 1855-1914; 1920-66. ▶ Case studies: Grosse Isle.
Topic 5: European retreat from empire and the aftermath, 1945-90	
Society and economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Economic consequences of the process of decolonisation; the Lomé Conventions; trade, aid and famine in postcolonial Africa

The teaching of past pandemics and natural disasters is included in the state-prescribed curricula for subjects other than history. At primary level the subject areas include primary science, primary geography, primary social, personal and health education (SPHE) and the primary language curriculum (2019). At junior cycle level the subject areas include junior cycle geography, junior cycle science and junior cycle classics. At Leaving Certificate level the subject areas include geography and Leaving Certificate classical studies .

Highlights

Discussing the complex causes of the Great Famine in Ireland, different government responses and their multilayered consequences provides learners with an understanding of the social aspect of natural disasters, including the influence that political strategies and decisions have on the severity of their consequences. The inclusion of micro-level perspectives and family histories may furthermore increase empathy with persons who lived in the past.

Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The Luxembourgish school system

The National Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth controls the curricula of state schools in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It is a trilingual country with Luxembourgish, French and German as the principal languages, and all three are taught in state schools.

Primary education is divided into 15 education directorates that manage, co-ordinate and supervise teaching in the schools. The curriculum has developed over time, resulting in a diversified curriculum designed to meet the needs and wishes of families of different backgrounds, particularly expatriates. In addition to the regular Luxembourgish school system, the international public and private schools allow access to a recognised diploma. Private elementary schools provide the same curriculum as state schools, although nine private elementary schools (e.g. Montessori schools) are guided by a different curriculum while being subsidised by the state. Five international state primary schools operate according to the curricula, promotion criteria and schedules of the European school system. They are free and open to all pupils. They offer five years of European primary education in one of French-, English- or German-speaking sections. Students can then pursue secondary education leading to the European Baccalaureate. There is a syllabus commission for each subject area. Their role is to propose curricula as well as textbooks, which are then submitted to the ministry for approval (Eurydice 2010).

Secondary education is provided by state schools, private schools teaching the official curriculum of the ministry, private schools teaching a different curriculum, and European schools (www.men.lu). State high schools start at the age of 12, and attendance is mandatory until the age of 16. A full high school cycle (up to the age of 18) lasts seven years. State-run education is subdivided into:

- ▶ classic secondary education (ESC)
- ▶ general secondary education (ESG)
- ▶ European education (leading to the European Baccalaureate)
- ▶ international education
- ▶ British education
- ▶ German-Luxembourgish education.

The classic route (ESC) is, in principle, reserved for pupils with a very good level of mathematics, French and German. The general route (ESG) is typically more vocational. The learning is organised in two main stages: lower classes (years 7, 6 and 5: ages 12-14) and higher classes (years 4, 3, 2 and 1: ages 15-18). Years are counted downwards.

The history curricula in Luxembourg

The national history committees define the main lines of the curriculum. While the history curriculum broadly outlines what is to be taught, it allows for a flexible approach to teaching. Primary education is based on core competences and skills rather than subjects. Cycle 1 (ages 3-5) has a very broadly defined curriculum: "Discovering the world using all the senses" is the closest it comes to history. In cycles 2-4 (ages 6-11) there is again no history, although development and learning fields include "Discovering sciences as well as human and natural sciences". Specific curricular content is sometimes generated by a school, or consortium of schools, and then validated by the national, regional or other competent authorities. Teachers have the freedom to choose areas of the broad curriculum to emphasise aspects they consider appropriate.

In secondary schools, history forms part of humanities and social sciences in the ESC and ESG routes. In the case of the ESC route, history as a subject is taught from ages 12-18 for two hours per week, with an hour of civic education per week in the second last year known as *2ème* (ages 16-17). The ESG route offers social sciences, comprising history, geography and economics, which in orientation education are taught for three hours per week. In international programmes, if history is an International Baccalaureate choice, it is accorded three hours per week in *2ème* and five hours per week in *1ère*.

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

No history teaching about pandemics and natural disasters is specified in the state curriculum. However, the curriculum allows a flexible approach to historical content, which gives teachers the freedom to focus on what they feel is appropriate. For example, teachers can include the eruption of Vesuvius and the subsequent destruction of Pompeii when they teach the history of republican and imperial Rome.¹⁷

The teaching of past pandemics is not specified in the curricula for any other subject either, although natural disasters (volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, tornadoes and rockslides) are included in the geography curriculum at ages 12-13, 13-14 and 14-15.¹⁸ At ages 14-15, the mandatory content of the course also deals with environmental challenges and major risks, and how to manage them. Natural disasters in the Caribbean or Bangladesh, as well as the natural consequences of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, can be introduced and developed as themes in teaching practice.¹⁹ The geography curriculum document for ages 13-14, under the heading “Methods”, states that teachers can determine their pedagogical approaches and, after considering the three themes in the programme, decide on the choice of significant examples that constitute better support for geographical reasoning. However, there is no historical dimension when analysing any of these topics.²⁰

Highlights

Although the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective is not explicitly included in the curricula, the school system in Luxembourg provides the flexibility for teachers to include it in accordance with their professional judgment. This flexibility allows teachers to respond to students’ interests or to address present challenges by offering a historical perspective.

Malta

The Maltese school system

In Malta there are three categories of schools: state schools, church schools and independent schools. All of them offer pre-primary to upper secondary education, and they are all regulated by the Ministry of Education. There are also a number of independent schools and international schools. In addition to these schools, there are four special needs resource centres in Malta. These have specialist teachers, as well as equipment and other resources for children with learning difficulties. The educational system is structured in three stages: pre-primary (ages 3-5), primary (ages 5-11), secondary (ages 11-18). Attending school is compulsory up to the age of 16.

The history curricula in Malta

In primary school, the teaching of history, together with geography and social studies, falls under one umbrella subject called “social studies”. The compulsory subject environmental studies, which consists of geography, history and social studies, is introduced from year 9 (secondary education). In the context of environmental studies, its components are called geography general, history general and social studies general. Besides that, students can also, from year 9 onwards, choose history as an optional subject. All types of schooling are bound by state regulations, which includes the selection of teaching content and approaches. There is, however, a degree of autonomy in regard to the choice of teaching foci that can be selected from a number of defined options, lesson planning and in the selection of resources and teaching materials.

17. EAS, Luxembourg.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

The history curriculum does not include any other specific references to pandemics or natural disasters apart from the Black Death, but there are themes that indirectly involve these topics in classroom teaching. A number of learning outcomes (L) anticipate the students' knowledge and understanding derived from studying the Black Death (see Text box 3.1).

Text box 3.1. Learning outcomes associated with studying the Black Death in Malta

- ▶ (L3) The teacher will help students understand what the Black Death was, which swept through Europe in the 14th century. Recall 1: *I can recall some basic facts about the Black Death.*
- ▶ (L6) C7.8 Chronology Sequence 2: *I can use arrows or different colours on a map to show the regions hit by the Black Death in 1347, 1348, 1349 and 1350.*
- ▶ (L6) C7.5 Terminology 3: *I can explain the meaning of words and phrases associated with the Black Death (e.g. "epidemic", "contagion", "quarantine", "lazarettos", "Flagellants", "Jewish pogroms", "blood-letting").*
- ▶ (L6/7) B7.5 Change and continuity 6: *I can identify (L6) or list (L7) some continuity and/or changes in the social, political and economic set-up of medieval Europe after the Black Death.*
- ▶ (L7) E7.4 Cause and effect 4: *I can list some effects that the Black Death had on the daily life of people in the towns and villages.*
- ▶ (L7) 5: *I can place causes and effects of the plague under two separate column headings.*
- ▶ (L7).4 Empathy interpretation source analysis 7: *I can explain why most of the measures taken to combat the plague proved largely unsuccessful.*
- ▶ (L7) 8: *I can write a brief eyewitness account based on a primary source (e.g. Boccaccio's account of the plague in Florence).*
- ▶ (L7) 10: *I can produce structured research about the complex reasons for the plague and its consequences in the form of a chart, illustrated essay or PowerPoint presentation.*
- ▶ (L8) C7.7 D7.1 Communicating history 9: *I can answer open-ended questions at some length about the Black Death.*

Apart from the Black Death, the national curriculum includes no other pandemic or natural disaster as a separate topic, but these can be addressed when teaching other topics in the curriculum. Certain topics in the history curriculum of the special option group do involve health and the efforts of the Maltese and colonial governments to control illnesses that affected the island, some of which could be classified as epidemics or pandemics (see Text box 3.2 below). The following topics are included in the substantive content of the special option syllabus:

Text box 3.2. Topics in the special option history curricula related to health and disease control in Malta

- ▶ The French in Malta and the first years of British rule: Discussion of Sir Thomas Maitland's administration includes, as one of its main features, how he dealt with the plague outbreak in Malta in 1813.
- ▶ World War I (1915-18)
 - How Malta became known as the "Nurse of the Mediterranean" in the First World War because of the many wounded and ill soldiers it hosted.
 - Hospital accommodation in Malta (February 1915): Hospitals sprang up in barracks and schools, and existing ones were expanded – over 25 000 beds were equipped to receive wounded soldiers.
 - Convoys of wounded soldiers started arriving in March 1915 and, by September 1915, 10 000 of them were being treated in Malta.
 - The contribution of the entire population to caring for the wounded.
 - Malaria cases were sent to Malta from the Salonika campaign.

Brief references to pandemics may be found in the popular history textbook *From the Coming of the knights to EU membership*, which also mentions how wounded and sick soldiers were evacuated to Malta during the First World War. Students can study diseases like malaria and diphtheria, and the textbook uses eyewitness accounts and other primary sources to allow them to understand the impact of the diseases. There is a mention of natural disasters in the syllabus of year 10 geography. Geography as a subject deals with natural disasters, although they are not specifically mentioned in the curriculum.

Highlights

The Maltese history curricula include specific learning outcomes related to the teaching of pandemics. These explicitly include teaching about anti-Jewish pogroms in the context of the Black Death, which familiarises learners with the dangers of scapegoating, marginalisation and persecution of minority populations that have been regularly associated with disease outbreaks in history. It may sensitise learners to this issue, which has also been observed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, by showing them the historical experiences of different groups in society, which may in turn strengthen their appreciation of diversity in society and contribute to the development of intercultural skills.

North Macedonia

The school system of North Macedonia

The education system of the Republic of North Macedonia consists of preschool, primary (ages 6-14) and secondary (ages 15-17/18) education. Primary and secondary education are compulsory and free for all students. Secondary education is divided into four types: high school, secondary vocational education, art education and education for students with special educational needs. Vocational education can be of three or four years' duration. At the end of a three-year vocational education, students take a final exam and are not eligible to enrol in university. Students who complete a four-year vocational education can choose between an exam and a state *matura*, depending on whether they want to continue their education or not, while gymnasium students are required to take a state or school *matura*.

Primary and secondary schools are public, and are run by the state and local governments, but there are also a small number of private primary and secondary schools that are mainly based on existing international schools. Of the current 124 high schools, 108 are public and the remaining 16 are private. Of the public high schools, 23 are high schools, 43 are vocational, 33 offer both high school and vocational education, 4 are for students with special educational needs, and 5 are art schools.

The educational work in primary and secondary school is organised according to a programme determined by the Minister of Education and Science, following the proposal of the Bureau for Development of Education. The curriculum for primary and secondary education contains compulsory and elective subjects, and the state is involved in the process of selection and authorisation of textbooks, as well as other learning materials. However, international schools, private schools, and religious or faith schools are relatively independent from state control and have their own autonomous curricula.²¹

Despite the involvement of the state, teachers have autonomy in relation to the teaching methods they choose to use. They are encouraged to use active teaching, critical thinking and approaches that place students at the centre of the teaching process and that allow them to work both independently and in groups. However, teaching content is strictly prescribed by a centralised teaching curriculum, which does not leave teachers with much room for manoeuvre. The space that allows for more flexibility is in the so-called free student activities, which are additional classes provided by each teacher's annual plan. In these classes (on average one class per week), topics chosen by teachers and students can be covered.

The history curricula in North Macedonia

The curriculum specifies national standards corresponding to the competences that students are meant to acquire. These are divided into eight areas: 1. language literacy; 2. using other languages; 3. mathematics, science and technology; 4. digital literacy; 5. personal and social development; 6. society and democratic culture; 7. entrepreneurship and artistic expression; and 8. culture and multiculturalism. "Society and democratic culture" includes competences

21. EAS, North Macedonia.

related to knowing and understanding oneself, society, its history and organisation, economic and political concepts, structures and movements, as well as the skills and attitudes that enable students to behave democratically and responsibly and, in the future, to be accountable citizens and to participate actively in social and civil life.

The subject of history is one of the compulsory subjects in primary and secondary schools. In primary schools, it is taught from year 6 to year 9, with two classes per week. In secondary schools, history is taught in one to two classes a week, depending on the type of school. History curricula follow mostly a chronological approach rather than a thematic one. The focus is mainly on political and military history, with economic and cultural history, and the history of everyday life, less prominently represented. Unlike other teaching subjects that have undergone several curriculum changes in the recent past, the subject of history is still studied, according to the 2005 curriculum. At the same time, all history curricula allow teachers to skip 10% to 20% (depending on the class/year) of the prescribed teaching content.

With the aim of nurturing their critical thinking and awakening their historical consciousness, history teaching at high school level allows students to acquire essential, systematised and scientifically confirmed knowledge about the past and the present. It is hoped that students will develop a respectful and responsible attitude towards the people and the state, as well as towards other nations and states through history teaching. It also aims to spark students' interest in further, more in-depth, study of historical events and processes.

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

Pandemics and natural disasters are not represented at all in the state-prescribed curriculum for teaching history, and consequently there are no recommendations for teaching activities relating to these topics. The curricula of other subjects, such as biology and geography, include content related to pandemics and natural disasters, but not primarily from a historical perspective. However, the elective subject "Life skills" in secondary schools (grades 1-4) provides the opportunity to study the historical context of natural disasters. One of the proposed topics for this subject is "Global processes and impact", which includes the following subtopics: wildfires, earthquakes and other natural disasters. As the outline of this subject provides teachers with flexibility in teaching it, it offers an opportunity to study the historical context of these phenomena, to enhance the understanding of today's global natural disasters.

Highlights

The flexibility provided to teachers and the possibility of skipping content prescribed in the curricula may provide teachers with the opportunity to explore pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective, even if not directly prescribed in the curricula. Teaching natural disasters from a global perspective enhances learners' understanding of the repercussions of such phenomena between the local and global level, while their discussion in a thematic cross-curricular course provides the opportunity to understand natural disasters in their full complexity as both natural and social phenomena.

Portugal

The Portuguese school system

Since the Portuguese Education Act of 1986, the education system has been governed by laws promulgated by the Ministry of Education. Primary and secondary education (ages 3-18) are compulsory, universal and free to all students. In 2009 compulsory schooling, covering elementary education (ages 6-14) and secondary education (ages 15-18), was extended to the age of 18 (Martins 2017: 6). The educational system in Portugal is centralised, with the exceptions of the archipelagos of Madeira and the Azores, which are autonomous regions and can therefore adapt their curricula, although they essentially follow the national curriculum. International schools are considered independent schools and are linked to the curricula and education organisation of the country of reference.²²

The history curricula in Portugal

History is not a separate subject before the third cycle of basic education. In the first cycle it is included in the area of environment study (year 4). In the second cycle of basic education, history is associated with geography in

²². EAS, Portugal.

the subject “History and geography of Portugal”. After the third cycle, in secondary education (*ensino secundário*), history is compulsory only for students who follow languages and humanities courses, with “History A” as a triennial subject (years 10-12). For students following socio-economic sciences and visual arts courses, history is optional and biannual (years 10 and 11), as “History B” and “History of culture and arts”, respectively. Recently, in 2019, the subject of “History, cultures and democracy” has been established as an option available in secondary schools to year 12 students. The last reform of the national curriculum, in 2017-18, tried to reinforce autonomy and flexibility within schools’ curricula organisation. With that aim, different documents were approved: “Students’ profile by the end of compulsory schooling” (2017), “National strategy for citizenship education” (2017) and “Essential learnings” (2018) for each subject and year of schooling.²³ The curriculum guidance documents for each subject, “Essential learnings” are based on the planning, implementation and evaluation of teaching and learning, and aim to promote the development of the areas of competences included in the “Students’ profile by the end of compulsory schooling”. Schools and teachers have autonomy and flexibility: Decree-Law 55/2018 provided schools with up to 25% of curriculum autonomy so as to meet their specific needs by fostering pedagogical differentiation in the classroom, developing interdisciplinary project-based methodologies, creating new subjects and allowing upper secondary students to choose their own course format. In this context, themes related to regional and local history can be addressed.

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

In Portugal, the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters is included in the state-prescribed history curricula for students aged 10-14 (second and third cycle of elementary education). These topics are also introduced to students who study “History A” in the languages and humanities course, and “History B” of the socio-economics course at secondary education (ages 15-18). There is no specific mention of teaching about pandemics in the “Essential learnings” document, although they can be introduced within the framework of the different related themes specified in the respective document. These themes are compiled in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4. References to pandemics and natural disasters in the Portuguese history curricula (EAS, Portugal)

Age group	Pandemics and natural disasters	Notes
Year 4, elementary education (ages 8-10)	Brief reference to the Black Death in Portugal in the 14th century.	To be introduced in the domain entitled “Society”, when the causes of maritime expansion are addressed within the framework of an “essential learning” identified as “Building a chronological frieze with the relevant facts and dates of the History of Portugal, highlighting the formation of Portugal, the time of maritime expansion, the Philippine period and the Restoration, the establishment of the Republic and the 25th April”.
Year 5, elementary education (ages 10-11)	Reference to the Black Death.	In the context of the 14th-century crisis in Portugal. The “essential learning” where this topic is included refers “to the political and social causes that triggered the crisis of 1383-5”.
Year 7, elementary education (ages 12-13)	Students should identify and apply the concept of the Black Death in the context of the Hundred Years War.	The topic is “Crises and revolution in the fourteenth century” and the essential learning is to “analyse the economic, social and political crisis of the fourteenth century in Portugal, integrating the Ferdinand wars in the context of the Hundred Years War”.
Year 8, elementary education (ages 13-14)	Brief reference to the Black Death in relation to the shortage of labour in Europe before the maritime expansion.	The topic that frames this mention is “Expansion and change in the 15th and 16th centuries – opening to the world”, and the essential learning proposes that students “identify the main conditions and motivations for Portuguese expansion”.

23. Ibid.

Age group	Pandemics and natural disasters	Notes
Year 8, elementary education (ages 13-14)	Lisbon earthquake of 1 November 1755, in the context of the Marquis of Pombal's actions towards the reconstruction of Lisbon.	One of the essential learnings proposes that students "refer elements of political, social and economic changes in Pombal's project"; "highlight the statement of absolute power in Pombal's urbanism".
Year 9, elementary education (ages 14-15)	Address "Spanish flu" in relation to the effects of the First World War and the participation of Portugal.	When addressing the theme of the First World War and the essential learning about the social, economic and political changes it brought about, teachers can analyse with students the various resources available online (from textbooks publishers and Ministry of Education partnerships as RTP Ensina) about the "Spanish flu" and draw comparisons with the Covid-19 pandemic.
Year 10, secondary education (ages 15-16)	Effects of the "Black Death" and motivations for Portuguese expansion.	Introduced within the framework of the topic "The European opening to the world – changes in knowledge, sensibilities and values in the 15th and 16th centuries".
Year 11, secondary education (ages 16-17)	Characterisation of the European population in the 17th and 18th centuries; reference is made to famines, the bubonic plague and other epidemics.	When studying the theme "Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries – society, power and cultural dynamics", students are to accomplish an essential learning that calls for them to understand "the foundations of the political and social organisation of the Ancien Regime and the expressions it assumed".
Year 11, secondary education (ages 16-17)	Earthquake of 1755.	Part of the sub-theme "The construction of European modernity"; one of the essential learnings proposes that students "appreciate the contribution of knowledge advances and the affirmation of Enlightenment philosophy to the construction of European modernity", by linking the rationalistic character of urban projects to the influence of the Enlightenment.
Year 12, secondary education (ages 17-18)	Possibility of addressing the issue of pandemics.	Within the optional subject "History, cultures and democracy", in the theme "History and present time", since one of the anchor ideas in the essential learning is to "analyse significant events and processes for the understanding of contemporaneity".

As Table 3.4 shows, the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters is not entirely prescribed by the curricula; however, the flexible methodology allowed by the Portuguese education law leaves space for teachers to deal with examples of them in greater depth and using different approaches. For example, in year 9, history teachers may decide to approach the topic of the "Spanish flu" and to address Covid-19.

Pandemics and natural disasters are included in other curricular areas in addition to history. In years 7 and 8, in the subject natural sciences, the main aspects of volcanic activity, as well as the identification of the advantages and disadvantages of volcanism for local populations, are part of the focus of the course. These essential learnings involve the study of events that occurred in the recent past and teachers have autonomy to address other events that have occurred in a more distant time. Textbooks often include references to the earthquake of 1755 as an example.²⁴ In year 8 students address the theme "Sustainability on earth", whose aims are that students learn to "distinguish disasters of natural origin from those of anthropic origin, identifying the causes of the main anthropic catastrophes" and to "explain how pollution, deforestation, fires and biological invasions can affect ecosystems" (EAS, Portugal). The subject of geography also includes some contents related to natural disasters. For example, in year 9, students deal with the sub-theme "Risks and natural disasters", where they need to identify and apply the concepts of danger, risk and damage; catastrophe (natural and human-made); and natural risks (heat waves, cold waves, droughts, floods, storms, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions). This topic is approached through the analysis of images, maps, graphs and news of disasters that have occurred in the recent past (EAS, Portugal).

24. Ibid.

Highlights

By discussing the impact of the Black Death, as well as the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, on Portuguese society from multiple viewpoints, learners develop a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between pandemics and natural disasters and social, political and technological developments in history. Furthermore, pandemics and natural disasters are included both in separate history classes and in other subjects. Teaching about pandemics and natural disasters in a distinct history course supports the development of historical thinking skills, while the additional teaching of these topics from a historical perspective in the framework of other subjects creates the opportunity for learners to understand pandemics as social phenomena in all their complexity.

Serbia

The Serbian school system

The Serbian education system is outlined by the Law on Education (2017) and is divided into two levels: primary and secondary education. The former is compulsory but the latter is not. The first cycle of primary education covers grades 1-4 (ages 6–10); the 2nd cycle of primary education includes grades 5-8 (ages 10–15); and a third cycle is equivalent to secondary education (ages 15-19). The state is responsible for the approval of history textbooks, and only partly for creating them. In the second stage of this process, the Institute for the Improvement of Education has expert groups who evaluate textbooks, which are finally approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.²⁵

The history curricula in Serbia

Each subject's curriculum, including history, is designed to be outcome-oriented and is meant to ensure that every teacher has the freedom to create and design additional teaching materials on any topic, regardless of whether or not they are present in textbooks. It is important that these materials contribute to a better understanding of the content.²⁶

History as a separate school subject starts at the age of 11 and is taught until the age of 18. Prior to that, some historical topics are included within the framework of other subjects (e.g. "The world around us" (ages 7-8); "Nature and society" (ages 9-10)). According to the Serbian curriculum, the teacher's role in education is to contextualise the curricula and its content according to the needs of the specific class, having in mind different agents and resources, textbooks, technical equipment, verified sources and so on.²⁷ Consequently, teachers have a certain degree of flexibility, and can choose content that they consider appropriate and be creative in their teaching process, which is only vaguely outlined by the semi-instructive curricula.²⁸ The possibility of creating their own teaching framework suggests that teachers can teach about pandemics and natural disasters if they consider these to be suitable topics for their classes. The only state-imposed limitations on teaching are the aims and objectives of history teaching, some major general themes, some key first-order and second-order concepts, and the learning outcomes defined by curricula. The wider framework for learning about "environmental" topics (which includes current climate changes and natural disasters like floods, fires or epidemics) is also defined by the Law on Education (Article 12), which addresses general outcomes of education and specific cross-curricular competences (e.g. responsible attitude towards health or towards the environment).

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

The history curricula in Serbia do not include specific aims, objectives and outcomes explicitly related to pandemics and natural disasters. The content related to pandemics, epidemics and natural disasters is included in the wider themes and generally defined outcomes, covering events, phenomena and processes that should be contextualised within a specific historical period, geo-political region or wider cultural milieu.²⁹

Pandemics and their consequences are covered in history classes but within the framework of broader historical events and processes rather than being taught as separate topics. It is possible for students to learn about pandemics in different school subjects within different educational contexts from the first grade of elementary school (ages 6-7) to the

25. EAS, Serbia.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

last year of secondary education (ages 18-19). References to pandemics are also found in the curricula for specific optional subject topics in medical high schools. For example, 12-year-old students are introduced to everyday life in Europe and learn about plagues as well within the theme “Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Serbian lands in the late Middle Ages”; 13-year-old students learn about the Great Influenza pandemic; 14-15-year-old students, in the last year of compulsory education, learn about the prevention and treatment of diseases and epidemics in the historical context of the discovery of penicillin, and so on.³⁰ History curricula for medical high schools have “Selected topics” as an optional school subject, where teachers can freely select different topics, including pandemics, viruses and infectious diseases. In the 2nd grade of high school (ages 16-17), the theme “Culture and everyday life” includes information about diseases and their treatment, mostly with reference to the Black Death. In the 3rd grade of medical high school, one of the possible optional topics is “Care of the body and health through history”, which covers the period from antiquity up to the present day, with reference to diseases, hygiene conditions, epidemics, the development of medicine and medical institutions, and so on. Secondary schools’ history curriculum for the 3rd grade includes the topic “Health care” and the one for the fourth grade (ages 17-18) includes the topic “Health care and environment”, both within the broader theme “Culture and everyday life”.³¹

Outside the history curricula, pandemics and natural disasters can also be taught as part of the subjects “The world around us” and “Nature and society”, as part of the biology and geography curricula, and in the teaching of foreign languages. In these cases, however, historical perspectives are not part of the focus of teaching.

Highlights

The inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in the teaching of a variety of broader historical topics, as in Serbia, allows learners to develop an understanding of the complex, diverse and fundamental effects that pandemics and natural disasters have on societies and political developments. Teaching about the effects of advancements in medicine, such as the invention of penicillin, allows learners to understand the impact of cultural factors and scientific achievements on the way infectious diseases affect societies.

Slovenia

The Slovenian School system

The Slovenian education system is organised into several levels of education. Preschool education (*predšolska vzgoja*) is optional, and children can be enrolled as early as the age of 11 months and attend it until they start basic school. Compulsory basic education (*obvezno osnovnošolsko izobraževanje*) is organised as a single-structure nine-year basic school attended by pupils aged 6-15 years. Upper secondary education (*srednješolsko izobraževanje*) takes two to five years (typical age of students is 15-19 years). Educational programmes include vocational, professional and general (*gimnazija*) programmes. There are six private basic (elementary) schools in Slovenia. All of them follow a programme confirmed by the Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education. There are also six private general (grammar) upper secondary schools. The teaching of history in these schools follows the official history curricula.

The history curricula in Slovenia

In Slovenia, history is a compulsory subject in the final four years of basic (elementary) school, in general (grammar) upper secondary schools and in vocational-technical upper secondary schools. The history curriculum at the elementary level is designed in such a way that the teacher selects, extends and deepens the “broader” topics according to the students’ interests. In principle, about 75% of the topics are compulsory, and up to 25% are optional topics that the teacher chooses together with the students according to their interests and the teacher’s professional judgment. The curriculum also allows for a wide range of activities that can be integrated into the various forms of learning, which may take place both inside and outside the classroom.

In general upper secondary education, in principle, about 60-70% of the topics are compulsory, and up to 30-40% of the topics are optional. The order in which the compulsory topics are covered is up to the teachers’ professional judgment. The curriculum suggests that optional topics are appropriate for various interdisciplinary projects, field trips, fieldwork and museum work. In the history curricula for vocational-technical upper secondary schools, 66% of the topics are compulsory and 34% of the topics are optional.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

Analysis of the history curricula (ages 11-19) shows that quite a number of compulsory and optional topics contain content related to pandemics, as shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5. Compulsory topics related to the teaching of pandemics as prescribed in the history curricula in Slovenia

Students' age (school form)	Topic
12-13 (BS) 15-16 (GUSS)	The development of medicine (diseases, characteristics, treatments and cures) in ancient civilisations and ancient Greece and Rome
12-13 (BS) 16-17 (GUSS)	Hygiene, diseases and epidemics in the Middle Ages, life in medieval and early modern towns and the countryside in Slovenian territory (hygiene, diseases, treatment)
13-14 (BS) 16-17 (GUSS)	The consequences of geographical discoveries (aspects related to disease transmission)
13-14 (BS) 17-18 (GUSS)	The negative consequences of industrialisation (poverty, diseases)
13-15 (BS) 17-19 (GUSS)	The development of science in the 19th century and its impact on people's lives in the 20th century (development of medicine and diseases, e.g. "Spanish flu")
BS: Basic/elementary school (<i>osnovna šola</i>) GUSS: General upper secondary school (<i>gimnazija</i>)	

Analysis of all history curricula (ages 11-19) shows that some of the compulsory and optional topics contain content relating to natural disasters. It further shows that quite a number of compulsory and optional topics contain content relating to natural disasters, as depicted in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6. Compulsory topics related to the teaching of natural disasters as prescribed in the history curricula in Slovenia

Students' age (school form)	Topic
12-13 (BS) 15-16 (GUSS)	Prehistoric humans (the changing periods of glaciation and thaw that influenced the evolution of the human species)
12-13 (BS) 15-16 (GUSS)	The first civilisation (the floods of the great rivers leading to the emergence of civilisations)
12-13 (BS) 15-16 (GUSS)	The Cretan-Mycenaean period (the eruption of the Thera volcano, followed by earthquakes and tsunamis)
12-13 (BS) 16-17 (GUSS)	The Middle Ages (natural disasters and their effects)
13-14 (BS) 17-18 (GUSS)	Industrialisation (environmental pollution)
BS: Basic/elementary school (<i>osnovna šola</i>) GUSS: General upper secondary school (<i>gimnazija</i>)	

None of the topics listed in the table are included in the history teaching in vocational-technical upper secondary schools.

The optional topic "Peasant revolts, epidemics and natural disasters", for students aged 13-14, is the only topic that has both epidemics and natural disasters in its title. It deals with epidemics in the Middle Ages in Slovenia and in Europe. The learning outcome is that students should be able to use examples to understand the characteristics and consequences of epidemics in Slovenia in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The teaching of pandemics and natural disasters is also included in other subject areas.

In the geography curricula, there are a small number of topics related to pandemics (ages 15-19). Here, students learn about common diseases in Africa (e.g. Aids, malaria) and other diseases in the world today. As regards natural disasters (ages 12-15, 15-19), the teaching points especially to environmental issues and sustainable development in today's world. It highlights the interconnectedness of people and the environment, the impact of natural disasters, the importance of sustainable development, and the protection and preservation of the environmental global level. It also highlights problems related to natural disasters in Slovenia today (e.g. natural disasters, fires, floods). In addition to recent cases, historic examples and materials are also discussed in this context.

In the context of integrated subjects that also have a historical component, the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters is prescribed and included in the social sciences (ages 9-10, 15-17), and in patriotic and civic culture and ethics (ages 12-14). While examples from the past are discussed in the context of the named integrated curricula, the teaching focus on the present by discussing contemporary diseases, as well as ways to care for the environment, how to be humanitarian when natural disasters occur and how to solve the problem of environmental pollution.

Highlights

History curricula in Slovenia include specific learning outcomes related to historical pandemics and natural disasters. Showing how environmental factors have shaped the development of civilisations and societies, as in Slovenia, may increase learners' understanding of the risks associated with the environmental challenges of today, such as the consequences of climate change. Teaching about the epidemiological impact on populations in the context of European discoveries and colonialisms supports learners' understanding of the unanticipated and unintended, but severe, impact that pandemics have on societies and historical processes. At the same time, teaching about the effects of advancements in medicine, such as the invention of penicillin, allows learners to understand the impact of cultural factors and scientific achievements on the way infectious diseases affect societies.

Spain

The Spanish school system

The authorities that determine and control school curricula in Spain are the Spanish government, through the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, and the regional education administration (departments of education) of each of the 17 autonomous communities. That means that the Spanish government is responsible for the design and establishment of the basic aims, framework and content to be integrated into the curriculum (*Real Decreto*). Once this general guideline is approved, the departments of education of each autonomous community define the final curriculum aspects for their respective territory (area of competence) (*Decretos or Órdenes*). The resultant 17 regional curricula can be defined as state-prescribed, as the state establishes the principles and contents meant to be taught in the schools of each territory.

Schools have flexibility in the way they organise the learning process within the framework established by regional authorities. Private schools must respect the national curricula framework. Only international schools are considered independent schools, and are linked to the curricula and education organisation of their own countries.³²

The Spanish pre-university educational system is divided into three stages: early childhood education (ages 0-5); primary education (ages 6-11); and secondary education (ages 12-16). Schooling in Spain is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16. Once compulsory education is completed, students can continue their training via two post-compulsory secondary education pathways: baccalaureate (*Bachillerato*) and Intermediate Vocational Education and Training (ages 16-18).

The history curricula in Spain

Within the framework of the legislative texts, there is flexibility in the way schools and teachers develop the basic contents. The supervision of textbooks and other curricular materials is the responsibility of the regional

³². EAS, Spain.

educational administrations as a part of the ordinary inspection process carried out on all the elements related to the teaching and learning process, which must ensure that the constitutional principles and values, as well as the provisions of organic law are respected. The regional administrations are also competent to establish the methodological guidelines and evaluate. There is also space for teachers to deal with certain examples in more depth, take different approaches and so on. However, there has been a transition from LOMCE curricula based on learning standards (in force 2015-22), which left little room for the independence of teachers, to guidelines for the new orientation curricula that allow teachers a more flexible approach (LOMLOE, in force since January 2021). While the former LOMCE curricula were still rather linked to the encyclopedic mode, (De Ketele 2008; López-Goñi and Goñi 2015) the LOMLOE calls for a deeper competence-based focus of the curricula. At the moment, schools are undergoing a process of adaptation to this new educational law.³³ In 2022-2023, new curricula have been implemented in even grades of the different levels of education, that is, 1st, 3rd and 5th grades in primary education; 1st and 3rd in compulsory secondary education and 1st in *Bachillerato*. New curricula will be fully implemented by 2023-2024.

Although LOMLOE proposes a new competence-oriented curricula, both LOMCE and LOMLOE follow a similar structure. In primary education the new curriculum (LOMLOE, Real Decreto 157/2022) includes history within a subject called "Knowledge of the natural, social and cultural environment", which follows an interdisciplinary approach combining content from the natural and social sciences. In secondary education, history is taught in every year of compulsory secondary education, in a subject called "geography and history". The new curricula have implied no changes in the organisation of the teaching of history in *Bachillerato* either: "History of the contemporary world" is one of the two specific subjects to be chosen by students in the first year of *Bachillerato* of Humanities and Social Sciences, while "History of Spain" remains a compulsory subject for every student in the second year of *Bachillerato* of all modalities (Arts, General, Humanities and Social Sciences, and science and technology).

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

Pandemics and epidemics do not have an explicit presence in the curriculum established within the framework of LOMCE for primary schools (Real Decreto 126/2014), and there is only one mention of the Black Death in the subject of geography and history in secondary education, which is not developed in evaluation criteria or learning standards (Real Decreto 1105/2014). In the case of *Bachillerato*, the subject "History of Spain" (second year of *Bachillerato*) mentions the agrarian and demographic crises of the Christian kingdoms in the late Middle Ages (14th and 15th centuries) (Real Decreto 1105/2014). In the new educational curriculum, there is no mention of pandemics and/or epidemics in any social science or history courses for primary education (Real Decreto 157/2022) and *Bachillerato* (Real Decreto 243/2022). However, these topics are covered in the subject of geography and history in the first and second years of secondary education, in an interdisciplinary and diachronic approach, and allows the development of different connections with other disciplines, such as the natural sciences (Real Decreto 217/2022).

In the case of natural disasters, LOMCE incorporated in block 2 of social science ("The world we live in") subject-specific curricular content associated with the problems of pollution and climate change, as well as their consequences (Real Decreto 126/2014). Even so, its definition through evaluation criteria and learning standards shows a greater concern with human action on the environment and with the development of measures associated with sustainable development than with analysis of the consequences this type of phenomenon can have (and that would be more directly linked to natural disasters). The classes included in Real Decreto 1105/2014 for secondary education and *Bachillerato* show a greater presence of this type of content. Natural disasters are taught within the subject of geography and history, but are always linked to the content blocks of geography, as they are linked to the footprint and impact of economic activities. In both cases, although they are included in the curriculum as teaching content, they are not developed further in evaluation criteria or learning standards. Later, in the fourth year of compulsory secondary education (age 15), a specific mention of the effect that the passage of time and human action on the environment has on the evolution of spaces was incorporated into the subject of geography and history.

In the new educational curriculum, the programme for primary education, compulsory secondary education and *Bachillerato* integrates the temporal variable in the analysis of geographical content, which allows the latter to be intertwined with historical phenomena.

33. The questionnaire and observations made in this report regarding curricular materials (e.g. textbooks) are guided and orientated by LOMCE, which is more restrictive in terms of free selection of contents to be assessed.

Table 3.7. References to pandemics and natural disasters in the Spanish history curriculum (LOMCE)

Age group	Pandemics and natural disasters	Notes
Secondary school (1st cycle), ages 12-14	The crisis of the late Middle Ages: the Black Death and its consequences	To be studied as part of the topic "The late Middle Ages in Europe"
	Consequences of our actions on climate and climate change; causes and consequences of climate change and responsible actions to stop it	Integrated in block 2 ("The world we live in") of social science
	Spain, Europe and the world: relief; hydrography; climate (elements and landscape diversity); bioclimatic zones; natural environment (areas and environmental problems)	Incorporated in block 1 ("The physical environment")
	Use and future of natural resources; sustainable development; geographic spaces according to economic activity; the three sectors; environmental impact and use of resources	Included in block 2 ("The human space"), linked to the impact on economic activities
Secondary school (2nd cycle), ages 15-16	Benefits and disadvantages for human societies and for the natural environment of some consequences of global warming, such as the melting of the Arctic	Included in an additional block 10, "The relationship between the past, the present and the future through history and geography"
<i>Bachillerato</i> , ages 16-18	Agrarian and demographic crises of the Christian kingdoms	To be studied as part of the topic "The late Middle Ages in Spain"

Table 3.8. References to pandemics and natural disasters in the Spanish history curriculum (LOMLOE)

Age group	Pandemics and natural disasters	Notes
Primary school (ages 6-12)	The earth and natural disasters; elements, movements and dynamics that occur in the universe and their relationship with physical phenomena that affect the earth and have an impact on daily life and the environment; climate change; introduction to the causes and consequences of climate change, and its impact on the earth's landscapes; mitigation and adaptation measures; climate change from local to global (causes and consequences); mitigation and adaptation measures	Linked with geographical content and approaches
Secondary school (1st cycle), ages 12-14	Science, medicine and technological advances; the fight against epidemics and pandemics; rationalism and empiricism versus superstition in the explanation of reality	Diachronic and interdisciplinary approach
Secondary school (1st and 2nd cycles), ages 12-16	Climatic emergency (elements and factors that condition the climate and the impact of human activities); methods of collecting meteorological data and interpretation of graphs; climate hazards and disasters in the present, past and future; vulnerability, prevention and resilience of the population to natural disasters and the effects of climate change; sustainable development goals; climate emergency and sustainability; relationship between the impact of natural and anthropic factors on earth; globalisation, migration and interculturality; technological advances and eco-social awareness; ideological and ethno-cultural conflicts	Interdisciplinary approach with spatial and temporal dimensions of analysis
<i>Bachillerato</i> , ages 16-18	Climate emergency and its challenges now and in the future; eco-social behaviour (commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals)	Covered in the subjects "History of Spain" and "History of the contemporary world"

In addition to the general criteria and the content set out in state and regional legislation, it is possible to develop these topics further. Within the legislative framework, each teacher has some freedom to delve deeper into certain situations or processes related to the topics of pandemics, epidemics and natural disasters.

Some natural disasters are mentioned as cross-curricular content that can be considered in all subjects (LOMCE, Article 10):

The Primary Education curricula will incorporate curricular elements related to sustainable development and the environment, the risks of exploitation and sexual abuse, risk situations arising from the use of information and communication technologies, as well as protection in emergencies and catastrophes.

Moreover, the subject "Education in civic and ethical values" (primary education, 6th year: ages 10-11) includes the topic "The limits of the planet and climate change".

In a more general way, both pandemics and natural disasters are present in the content and learning standards listed in LOMCE for the subject "Ethical values" for the 4th year of secondary education, as possible themes to be discussed in class by means of a presentation and case study developed by the students (Real Decreto 1105/2014). Topics such as terrorism, environmental disasters, natural disasters, international organised crime, pandemics, cyber-attacks, trafficking in weapons of mass destruction, and so on, are presented to the students. Pandemics are also mentioned in 2nd-year *Bachillerato* biology, with specific reference to Aids. The topic "Aids and its effects on the immune system" is integrated in learning standard 7.2, which asks the student to describe the development cycle of HIV.

The subject "Sciences applied to professional activity" (optional, fourth year compulsory secondary education) introduces students to pollution and its types, expressly alluding to soil, water and air pollution, as well as the different environmental effects it has, such as acid rain, the greenhouse effect, destruction of the ozone layer and climate change. Finally, the subject "Scientific culture" (optional, fourth year compulsory secondary education) combines content related to technological advances and their environmental impact. Climate change is also mentioned in the content of the 2nd-year *Bachillerato* geography, in which the consequences of torrential rains and drought are evaluated. Climate change is also included in 2nd-year *Bachillerato* geology (block 6, "Geological time and historical geology"), with a similar focus.

With regard to LOMLOE, "Education in civic and ethical values" is also taught in compulsory secondary education, and it integrates the topic of climate change by discussing the limits of the planet and resource depletion, the ecological footprint of human actions and the climate emergency (Real Decreto 217/2022). In *Bachillerato*, these topics are covered in geography and in "Biology, geology, environmental science and geography" when introducing climatic diversity and biodiversity (Real Decreto 243/2022).

Highlights

An approach that combines a historical and geographical perspective in the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters, as in the LOMLOE curriculum in Spain, provides the opportunity for learners to understand pandemics and natural disasters as both natural and social phenomena in all their complexity. The increased flexibility in the new LOMLOE curriculum provides possibilities for teachers also to include pandemics and natural disasters in the teaching of other, broader topics, in accordance with their professional judgment and students' interests.

Türkiye

The Turkish school system

Formal education in Türkiye is composed of preschool, elementary (primary), lower secondary, upper secondary and tertiary education levels. Preschool education welcomes children from 36 to 68 months old and it is not compulsory. Since 2012, compulsory education in Türkiye lasts 12 years and is divided into three stages (primary education, lower secondary education and upper secondary education). Primary education involves the education and training of children in the age group 6-10. It lasts four years (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th grades). Lower secondary education (middle school) involves the education and training of children in the age group 10-14. It lasts four years (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades). There are two types of lower secondary schools, which are regular schools and schools with an additional religious education curriculum called Imam-Hatip lower secondary schools.

Upper secondary education general and vocational education to the age group 14-17 (9th, 10th, 11th, 12th grades). There are various types of schools at upper secondary education level, which are; Anatolian, science, social sciences, art, sports, Imam-Hatip, vocational schools and vocational and technical schools. And there are also schools for students who need special education at each level. Curricula are prepared at national level from primary to upper secondary education, which is under responsibility of the Ministry of National Education.

The history curricula in Türkiye

There is no history curriculum at the primary and lower secondary levels. However, historical topics are taught at a lower secondary level within the scope of the social studies course. At the upper secondary level, history is taught as a separate subject. The 2018 upper secondary history curriculum (USHC) is designed for students to learn from the simple to the complex, from the general to the specific, and from the concrete to the abstract, taking into account the developmental stages of the students and the orientations of the relevant age level. In addition, the curriculum is structured according to individual differences, interests and needs arising from hereditary, environmental and cultural factors (USHC 2018: 9). The curriculum combines a chronological and thematic approach. Concept teaching is seen as an important part of the programme. Learners are expected to understand the relationship between the basic concepts, facts and generalisations related to each event (USHC 2018: 11). Furthermore, the curriculum expects learners to develop specific historical thinking skills in terms of chronological thinking and historical comprehension, as well as the ability to establish cause and effect relationships, the ability to perceive change and continuity, historical analysis and interpretation skills, historical problem analysis and decision-making skills, and historical empathy. It is hoped that students will play an active role in the construction of historical knowledge. Historical thinking skills such as evaluating evidence, critical thinking and problem-solving are emphasised rather than knowledge. By developing skills based on the working methods of the historian, students should be able to analyse and comprehend past events, facts, developments, people, places and relationships within their own contexts. In addition to the emphasis on historical thinking skills, the history curriculum also aims to develop a sense of national identity and belonging among the learners (USHC 2018: 12).

Inclusion of a historical perspective on pandemics and natural disasters in the national curricula

The history education curriculum includes the topic “The plague pandemic in Europe that happened between 1347-1351” in years 9, 10 and 11. This topic is addressed under the section on “The world in the Middle Ages”, which explains the general political and social situation in the world.³⁴ There are no specific mentions of natural disasters in the history curriculum.³⁵

Social studies course curriculum (4th-7th grades)

Social sciences such as history, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political science and law, as well as human rights, citizenship and democracy, are discussed in an integrated manner. It is suggested that the subjects not be studied separately as history, geography, human rights and citizenship but, rather, through an interdisciplinary approach. The specific objectives related to natural disasters and pandemics in the social studies curriculum are listed in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9. Social studies curriculum

Age	Unit	Objective	Notes
9-10	People, places and environments	SB.4.3.6 Makes necessary preparations for natural disasters	Natural disasters that are likely to be encountered in the student’s environment are given priority. There is mention of earthquake kit preparation.
10-11	People, places and environments	SB.5.3.4 Interrogates the causes of disasters and environmental problems in the students’ environment	
10-11	People, places and environments	SB.5.3.5 Explains the effects of natural disasters on social life, with examples	
12-13	Global connections	SB.7.7.4 Develops ideas for the solution of global problems with their friends	Global climate change, natural disasters, hunger, terrorism, and migration are discussed.

34. EAS, Türkiye.

35. Ibid.

Upper secondary school curricula

There are 47 curricula at the upper secondary school level, both optional and compulsory. The “History” and “Revolution history of the Republic of Türkiye and Atatürk’s Principles” courses are directly related to history. One of the topics that directly addresses pandemics in the history curriculum is “The Black Death in Europe” which is part of the unit “The world in the Middle Ages” (ages 14-15). The specific objective for that unit (9.3.1) is that students be able to “recognise the political and social structures established in various parts of the world in the Middle Ages”. Consequently, the Black Death pandemic is also discussed with a view to its social and political impact.

The “Revolution history of the Republic of Türkiye and Atatürk’s Principles” course includes the topic “Historical understanding and historical empathy: pandemics during World War I” (ages 17-18). The related specific objective is stated as follows:

The Ottoman Empire and the world in the early 20th century: analyses the situation of the Ottoman Empire from political, military, and social perspectives during the First World War. It focuses on the situation of the people in Anatolia during the war, the troubles, famine, and diseases, and the dramas of families.³⁶

“Our city” course curriculum (5th-8th grades)

Outside the history curriculum, the elective course entitled “Our city” aims to provide students with basic skills as well as theoretical knowledge about the city in which they live, and to link this knowledge to their way of life and culture. Specific objectives related to natural disasters and pandemics in the curriculum of this course include description number 3.4: “He/she researches the natural disasters that may be encountered in the city he/she lives in.” Possible natural disasters in the city where they live and the measures to be taken against them are included.

Highlights

Research tasks about past natural disasters that may have happened in the students’ local environment provide learners with tangible examples about how natural disasters impact societies, as they study their effects in their own home environment. This may, in addition, strengthen learners’ capacities to link historical information with knowledge from other fields and thus to develop a complex understanding of natural disasters as both natural and social phenomena.

Cross-country comparison

Analysis of the curricula across the 16 member states of the OHE revealed a wide variety of national school systems and curricula across, and even within, the member states. While the traditional role of history as a school subject aimed at developing a sense of historical consciousness and national identity, including patriotism, loyalty, understanding of and adherence to national values and principles is still visible, the diversity of societies and an increasing awareness of this diversity are now reflected in two or more types of curricula co-existing in some member states, such as in Andorra, Luxembourg, Malta, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain. Where a country has diverse educational communities with their own identities and jurisdictions, several parallel curricula and educational systems run alongside or in place of the national curricula. Alternatively, a country may have varied provisions for two or more different cohorts of students and sub-cohorts, for example those with special educational needs.

Despite the variation, a general overview of the 16 national history curricula found a number of common elements in the aims and objectives that relate to students’ development of historical knowledge and understanding within the broader context of the school curriculum; and an understanding of what thinking historically, as a historian, means and involves. This is in line with the Committee of Ministers recommendation on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe (Committee of Ministers 2001), which emphasises, in terms of syllabus content, the “development of students’ critical faculties, ability to think for themselves, objectivity and resistance to being manipulated”. The aim of the inclusion of such content in the curriculum, as stated in the same document, is to “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

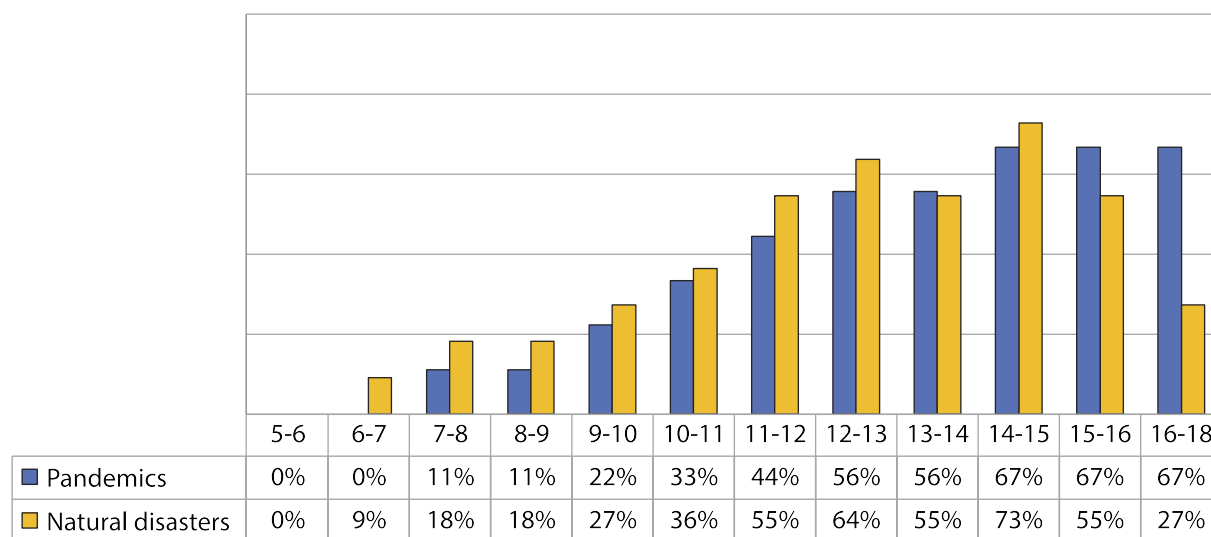
³⁶. Ibid.

on multiperspectivity, especially on controversial and sensitive issues”, an approach fitting the topics of past pandemics and natural disasters.

Additionally, the review found that in all member states of the OHTE teachers have some degree of flexibility in terms of the content and the methodologies they select for teaching history. In some cases, this flexibility provides the means by which teachers engage students in the study of past pandemics and natural disasters, particularly where the content is not prescribed in the framework of the national curricula, as Chapter 4 will show in more detail. Although dealing with a different topic, the Committee of Ministers’ recent Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 (Committee of Ministers 2020) also endorses an approach seeking to “develop flexible curricula and interactive pedagogies which acknowledge cultural differences, promote diversity and include a multi-perspective approach to showing the full complexity of history and to ensuring a shared history approach”. As can be noted from the results of the analysis above, such flexibility of curricula can be especially beneficial for the inclusion of topics that have been previously marginalised in school curricula.

The teaching of pandemics from a historical perspective is explicitly included in the history curricula of 13 OHTE member states (Albania, Andorra, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye), while it is not visible in the curricula of three states (Armenia, Luxembourg and North Macedonia). A historically oriented teaching of natural disasters is less prevalent in the OHTE member states, as this is included in nine member states’ history curricula (Andorra, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye), while seven member states’ national curricula (Albania, Armenia, France, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia and Serbia) do not include such a historical perspective on natural disasters. This, however, includes cases where history is not a separate subject and is taught in an integrated manner as part of broader, interdisciplinary subjects. As can be seen in Figure 3.1, across the member states of the OHTE teaching about pandemics can begin as early as the age of 7, while the average age in which education about pandemics begins is between the ages of 11 and 13. This teaching increases significantly in the older age groups and peaks at ages 16-18. Teaching about natural disasters can begin as early as the age of 6, peaking twice: in the senior classes of primary education and again at the lower secondary level, between the ages of 14 and 15 (73% of all students). Unlike teaching about pandemics, teaching about natural disasters declines at the ages of 16-18, with an average of 27% of students studying such events at the end of upper secondary education.

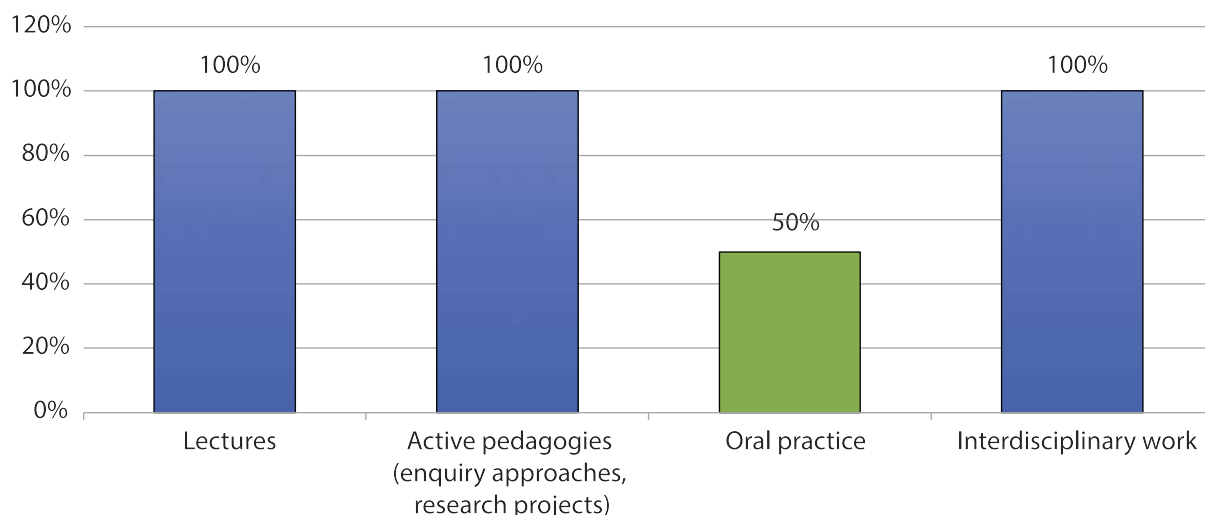
Figure 3.1. Age groups of students learning about pandemics and natural disasters in state curricula across OHTE member states



The pedagogical approaches recommended by the member states for teaching about pandemics and natural disasters include lectures, active pedagogies (including historical enquiries and research projects), oral practice and interdisciplinary work (Q23, EAS). The variety of methods and approaches used to teach about historical pandemics and natural disasters is thus aligned with the Committee of Ministers recommendation that emphasises the deployment of:

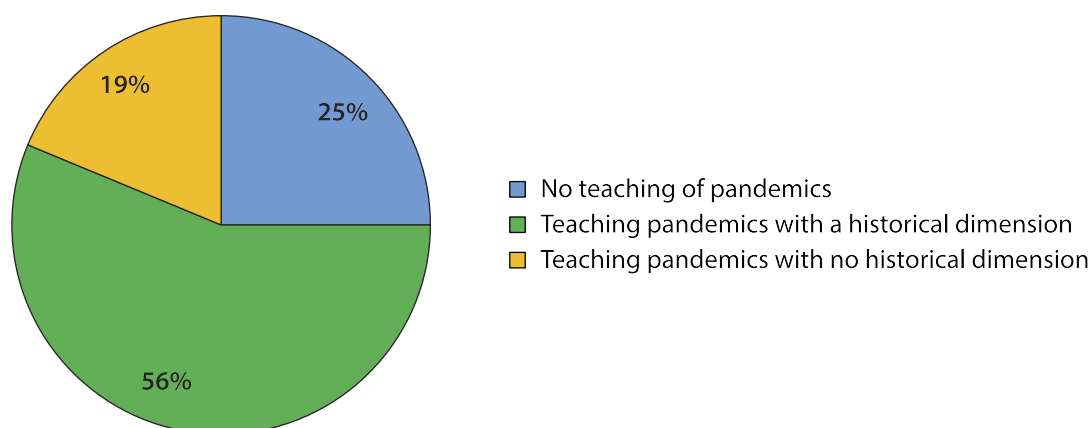
an active and interactive teaching approach, that is, one involving the acquisition of knowledge and skills through activities such as carrying out projects, individual or collective research, classroom debate, field research, précis writing, interviewing key witnesses and, where the technical conditions permit, establishing inter-regional or international contacts with other schools. (Committee of Ministers 2011)

Figure 3.2. Pedagogical approaches for teaching about pandemics in state curricula



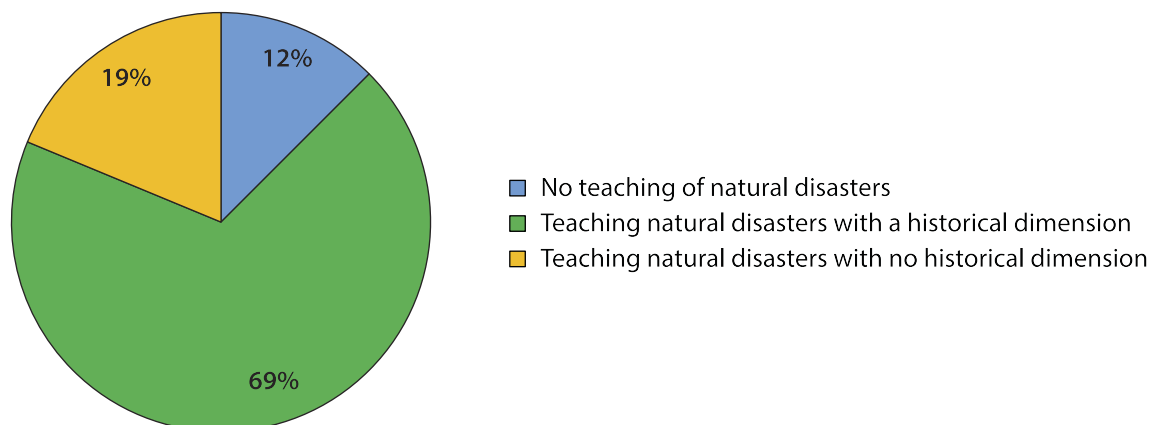
In addition to the history curricula, pandemics are taught in other curricular areas (Q31, EAS) in 12 member states (Andorra, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovenia, Serbia, Spain and Türkiye). However, in three of these (Cyprus, France and Serbia), the teaching of pandemics in other curricular areas does not include a historical dimension.

Figure 3.3. The teaching of pandemics in state-prescribed curricula for subjects other than history



Natural disasters are taught in other curricular areas in 14 OHTE member states (Albania, Andorra, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Serbia, Spain and Türkiye). However, in three of these (Cyprus, France and Serbia), the teaching of natural disasters in other curricular areas does not include a historical dimension.

Figure 3.4. The teaching of natural disasters in state-prescribed curricula for subjects other than history



To sum up, pandemics and natural disasters are included in almost all curricula (history or other subjects) of the OHTE member states, with few exceptions. There is, however, a need to treat with some caution the information relating to the extent of the presence of these topics in history curricula. As a result of curriculum overload, content-heavy curricula and varying degrees of teacher autonomy across the OHTE member states, pandemics and natural disasters may receive only one or two mentions a year, or even less, irrespective of whether they are explicitly mentioned in the history curricula specifications. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that, in some cases, the current history and other school curricula reflect their having been created at a time when pandemics and natural disasters were seen to be of little educational significance. At the same time, the data shows that, in a number of countries, the flexible nature of the curricula and the autonomy teachers are given offers the potential of teaching effectively about pandemics and natural disasters, an aspect which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

History is taught as a separate subject in 15 of the OHTE member states at least at one level of schooling, especially at secondary level, and is fully integrated with other subjects across all levels of education only in Andorra. However, in many countries the teaching of history as a separate subject begins at secondary level and is integrated with other subjects at primary level. Among the 16 member states, textbooks are designed or approved by the respective education authorities in 11 countries.

The presence of pandemics and natural disasters in national curricula, in history and in other subjects where a historical perspective is adopted, seems to correlate to some extent with the place pandemics and natural disasters have in the countries' collective memories. For example, in Ireland, the Great Famine is taught in the context of a mandatory learning outcome at lower secondary level and appears as an optional topic in several places throughout education, while in countries that have experienced devastating earthquakes and flooding events (e.g. Albania, Armenia and Portugal), the national curriculum includes the teaching of these events.

While the teaching of natural disasters seems in part to be more aligned with national experiences, a concern with climate change and its causes, impact and consequences, is visible across member states, and is typically included in national curricula as part of subjects or topics addressing global challenges, even if these often lack a historical dimension. An even more pronounced transnational, European and even global perspective is visible in the teaching of pandemics and epidemics in history, where the Black Death is disproportionately represented across national curricula. While this is understandable given its devastating impact on medieval Europe in terms of its sheer death toll, the relative absence of more recent – and more national – cases (e.g. the cholera outbreaks that affected most of the countries covered by this report in the 19th century) is striking. The inclusion of references to the Black Death is followed by those to the Great Influenza pandemic at the end of the First World War in terms of frequency, and, albeit in considerably fewer cases, the impact of smallpox on the indigenous populations of the Americas and the Aids pandemic. In all these cases, an international perspective is more prominent than the respective national narratives. A partial exception is the plague of Athens, the first historically recorded instance of an epidemic, whose coverage in curricula seems to correspond closely with its geographical spread.

This finding corresponds with the emphasis on “the European dimension in history teaching” in the Committee of Ministers recommendation on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe (Committee of Ministers 2001) and particularly with the appeal to study “every dimension of European history, not just political, but also economic, social and cultural”. Furthermore, the global treatment of some pandemics and the perception of both topics as representing significant present-day global challenges answers the call for “positioning national culture and history in the European context and to positioning European culture and history in the world perspective”. The prevalence of the European dimension in teaching about pandemics and natural disasters in history in national curricula can be seen in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10. Overview of the representation of pandemics and natural disasters in OHTE member states' history curricula

Member State	Absent	Minimal	Frequent	National narrative	European dimension	Global dimension	Other curricula	Contemporary significance
Albania		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Andorra		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Armenia	✓							
Cyprus		✓		✓	✓		✓	

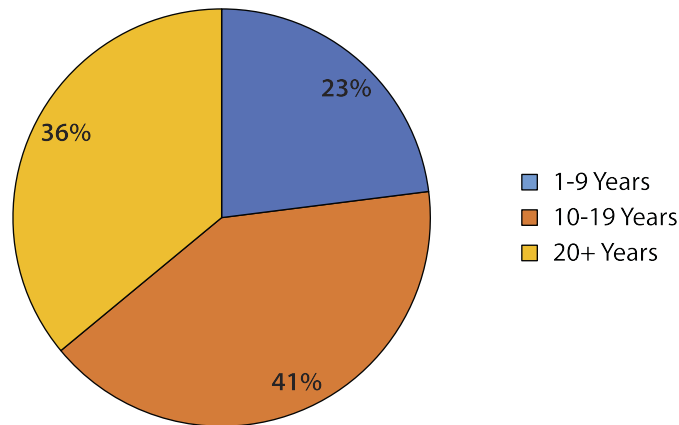
Member State	Absent	Minimal	Frequent	National narrative	European dimension	Global dimension	Other curricula	Contemporary significance
France		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Georgia		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greece			✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓
Ireland			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Luxembourg	✓						✓	✓
Malta			✓	✓	✓		✓	
North Macedonia	✓						✓	✓
Portugal			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Serbia		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Slovenia			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spain			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Türkiye		✓		✓	✓		✓	

Chapter 4

Teaching practices and teachers' perceptions

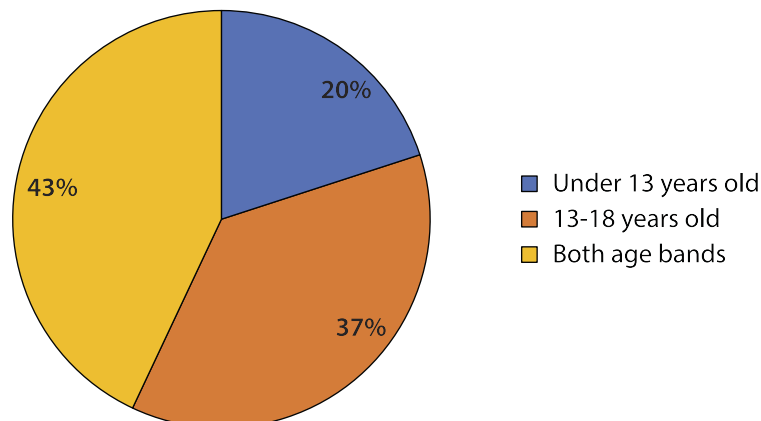
This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the Teachers' and Educators' Survey in order to provide an insight into the extent and nature of the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters across the 16 OHTE member states. The teachers' survey consisted of both qualitative and quantitative questions. The qualitative responses were analysed using NVIVO data analysis software and the quantitative data were analysed using the statistical analysis software platform SPSS. In total, 918 teachers responded to the survey. Some 178 invalid responses were identified and deleted. Invalid responses refer to those that only had a teacher ID but no answers were entered. The following analysis is therefore based on 740 surveys that were completed by primary- and secondary-level teachers across the 16 OHTE member states.

Figure 4.1. Years of teaching experience



The level of teaching experience varied among respondents, with 23% of teachers having taught 1-9 years, 41% 10-19 years and 36% more than 20 years (see Figure 4.1). In total, 20% of teachers taught classes at primary level (under 13 years), 37% at secondary level (13-18), and 43% across both age bands (see Figure 4.2).

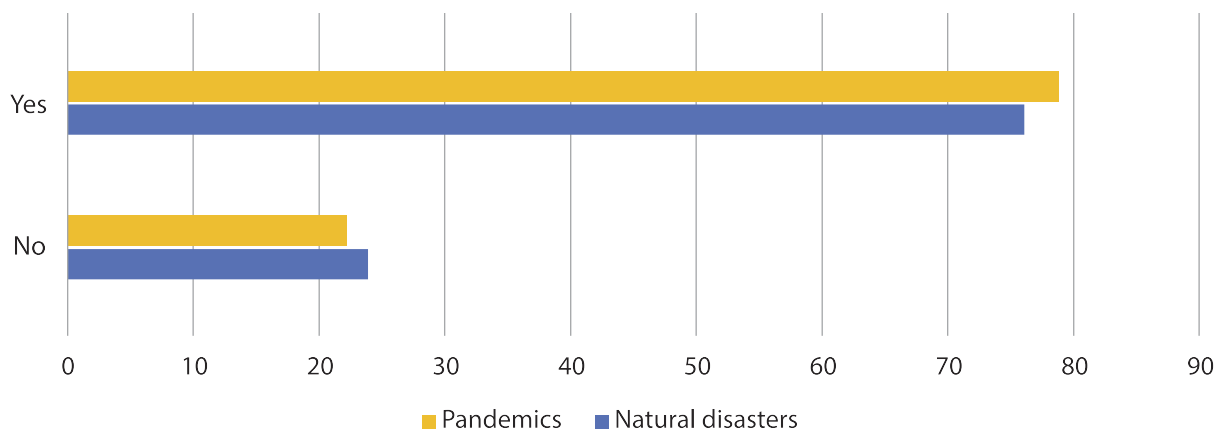
Figure 4.2. Class level of teachers



Teaching pandemics and natural disasters: ages and stages

When asked if they teach pandemics and natural disasters in the history classroom, the majority of teachers indicated that they did. In terms of pandemics: 78.8% of teachers reported that they taught about pandemics, while 21.2% indicated that they did not; 76.1% of teachers indicated that they taught about natural disasters and 23.9% said that they did not (see Figure 4.3).

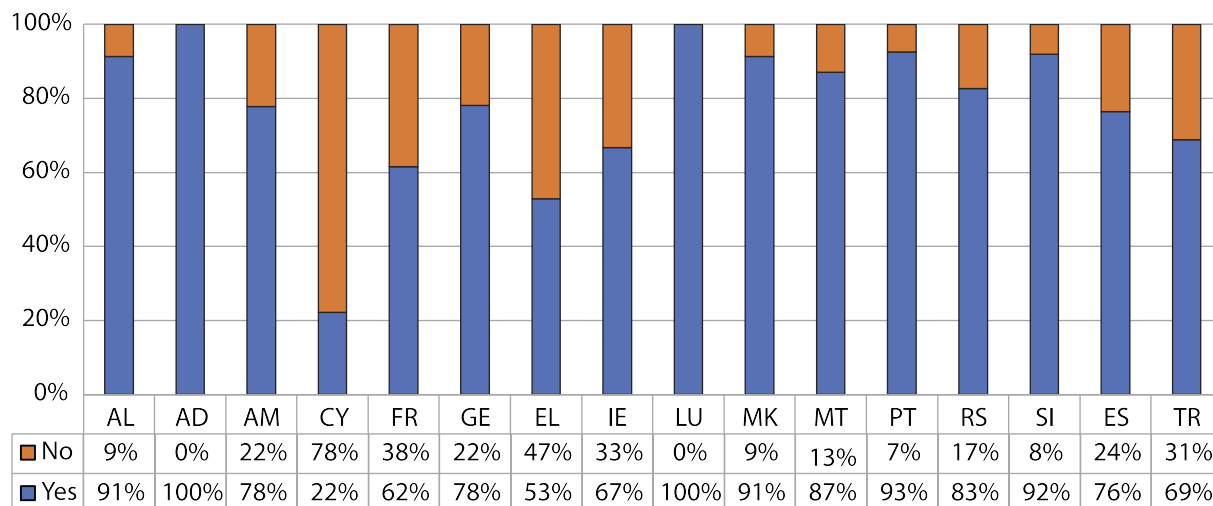
Figure 4.3. Teaching about pandemics and natural disasters



Taking the student age groups into account, 81.2% of teachers teaching students aged 13-18 claimed to teach about pandemics, 67.1% of teachers teaching students under the age of 13 stated that they teach this topic. Of the teachers who teach across the two age bands, 81.1% claimed to teach about pandemics. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between student age group and the teaching of pandemics. The association between these two variables was statistically significant: $\chi^2 (2, N = 444) = 7.174, p < .05$. In other words, teachers who teach students under the age of 13 are less likely to teach about pandemics. At the same time, 72.7% of teachers of students aged 13-18 teach about natural disasters, while just 70.7% of teachers of students under 13 teach about this topic. Of the teachers who teach across the levels of education, 82.0% teach about natural disasters. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between student age group and the teaching of natural disasters. The association between these two variables was not statistically significant: $\chi^2 (2, N = 404) = 5.378, p = .068$. That is, topics relating to natural disasters are more equally taught at different levels, compared to the topics relating to pandemics that are mainly taught to students above the age of 13.

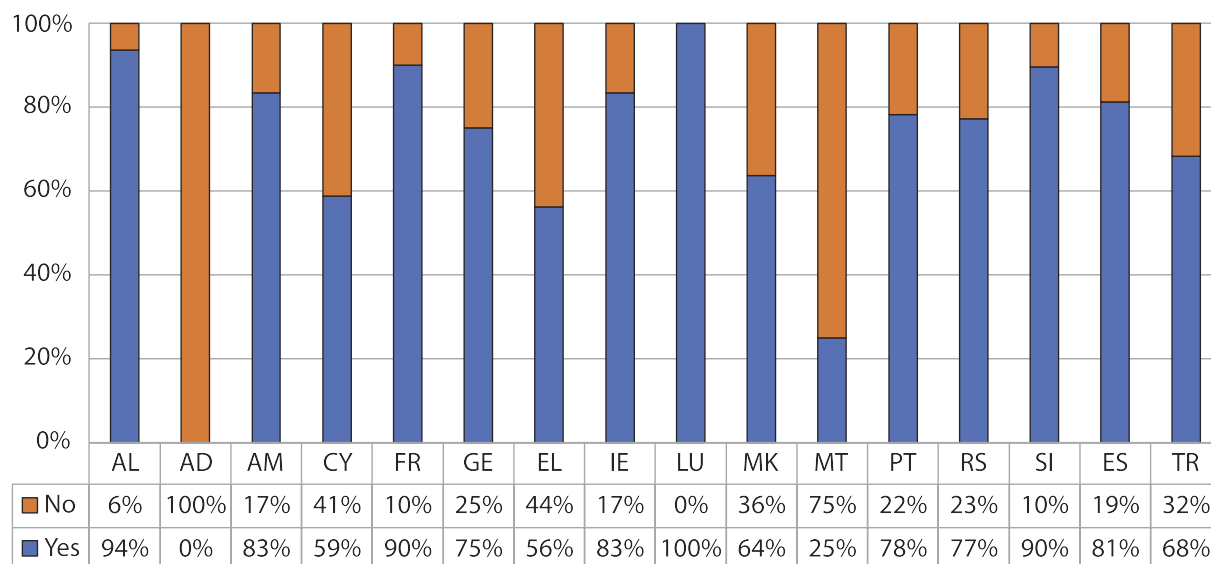
To investigate the impact of the teaching experience on the teaching of pandemics, a chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between the number of years a respondent had been teaching for and the teaching of pandemics. The association between these two variables was not statistically significant: $\chi^2 (4, N = 445) = 5.166, p = .271$. There is the same likelihood of teachers teaching about pandemics regardless of their teaching experience. To explore the impact of teaching experience on the teaching of natural disasters, a chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between teaching experience and the teaching of natural disasters. The association between these two variables was not statistically significant: $\chi^2 (4, N = 443) = 9.243, p = .055$. There is the same likelihood of teachers teaching about natural disasters regardless of their teaching experience. In sum, teaching experience has no significant impact on the teaching of pandemics or natural disasters.

Figure 4.4. Teaching about pandemics and epidemics across OHTE member states



As can be seen in Figure 4.4, there is some variation in the teaching about pandemics across the OHTE member states. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between countries and the teaching of pandemics and epidemics. The association between these two variables was statistically significant: $\chi^2(15, N = 452) = 101.642, p < .001$. That is, the likelihood of teaching pandemics and epidemics is not equal across the OHTE member states.

Figure 4.5. Teaching about natural disasters across OHTE member states



Similarly, in Figure 4.5, there is some variation in the teaching of natural disasters across the OHTE member states. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between country and the teaching of natural disasters. The association between these two variables was statistically significant: $\chi^2(4, N = 449) = 71.056, p < .001$. That is, the likelihood of teaching of natural disasters is not equal across the OHTE member states.³⁷

While the majority of teachers stated that they do teach their students about pandemics and natural disasters, the findings also indicate that the amount of time dedicated to teaching about them increases with the age range of the students. For example, approximately 70% of teachers who indicated that they did teach about pandemics and natural disasters stated that they spend up to two hours teaching these topics with students aged up to 17 each year, while over 45% stated that they spend two to four hours teaching these topics with students aged 17-18 per year. Across the 16 member states, 76.9% of teachers spend up to two hours teaching these topics per year, 7.7% spend between two to four hours per year and 15.4% spend upwards of 10 hours teaching about pandemics and natural disasters per year.

The varying times afforded to the teaching of pandemics and epidemics may be indicative of the diverse nature of history curricula across the member states, the curriculum time dedicated to history teaching and/or the autonomy given to teachers as to what they teach and when.

Teachers' understanding of pandemics and natural disasters

Teachers were asked to outline their own understandings of the terms "pandemic", "epidemic" and "natural disasters". The majority of teachers shared similar definitions of "pandemic" and "epidemic", which they defined as the outbreak of a contagious disease. The majority differentiated between the global aspects of a pandemic and the more localised nature of an epidemic. Many also made reference to the social, demographic, political and economic impacts of pandemics and to their own experiences of Covid-19 and the preventive measures that were put in place to contain the spread of the virus. Historical examples mentioned in the definitions teachers supplied included Covid-19, Sars, Ebola, Aids, foot and mouth disease, cholera and influenza.

37. The results for Andorra and Luxembourg are skewed in Tables 4.4, 4.5, 4.12, 4.13, 4.15, 4.16, 4.17, 4.17, 4.22, 4.23 and 4.24 because of the limited number of replies to these questions.

In defining natural disasters, most teachers listed events such as earthquakes (166 references), flooding (135 references), droughts (34 references), storms (31 references) and similar events that can cause great damage, devastation and loss of life. There were 27 references to natural disasters as hazards that impact on human life. In analysing the responses, it is evident that, for several teachers, human behaviour plays a contributory factor in causing some natural disasters. A number of participants made reference to global warming (37) and climate change (12) when defining natural disasters. As one teacher highlighted, “lines are becoming blurred for certain disasters” and they questioned whether the Australian wildfires of 2020 should be considered a “natural occurrence or caused because of man-made global warming”.³⁸ Similar arguments were made by others, highlighting common concerns about the relationship between climate change, human activity and natural disasters. In their definition of natural disasters, one Greek teacher argued that “nowadays natural disasters are the result of human influence, in the Anthropocene era, where overexploitation has the consequence of destroying the environment, accelerating climate change and changing the Earth’s geomorphology”.³⁹

Factors influencing the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters

There are a variety of factors, both personal and professional, that shape teachers’ choices regarding content, focus and methodologies when teaching about pandemics and natural disasters. These factors are based on the cultural, social and experiential contexts within which teachers operate. Research into teachers’ perceptions, attitudes and prior experiences of education suggests that these factors exert an influence on teaching practice that can remain relatively undisturbed unless challenged (Waldron et al. 2007). In the following section, some of these factors are explored with specific reference to their impact on how teachers teach about pandemics and natural disasters.

The influence of experiences of pandemics and natural disasters on teaching

For many teachers, personal experiences of pandemics and natural disasters have shaped their teaching of these topics. The Covid-19 pandemic, weather phenomena and flooding events were among the common experiences mentioned by the respondents. Several teachers stated that living through a recent pandemic and personally experiencing the impact of natural disasters have allowed them to make connections with, and to develop a better understanding of, similar historical events. One teacher pointed out how these direct experiences contribute to teaching. “If you have experienced an earthquake ... you can tell and explain more”.⁴⁰ Another described how they use personal memories of a flooding event when teaching about natural disasters:

When I was 5 years old, I experienced the Floods of 1967 in the Lisbon region which marked me (we lived near a river and the water flooded our house, rising to 85 cm high and ruining everything and we were saved by a neighbour), especially while growing up, and these experiences I share, sometimes with the students.⁴¹

Personal experiences of the earthquake in Albania on 26 November 2019, in which 51 people were killed and 3 000 injured, were mentioned by 56% of Albanian educators as being influential in their teaching of natural disasters. As one teacher highlighted: “The earthquake event of November 26, 2019. It made me see the explanation of past phenomena and events from another perspective”.⁴² Similarly, 20% of Armenian educators mentioned personal experiences of the Spitak earthquake in 1988, in which more than 25 000 people lost their lives and up to 130 000 others were injured.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has also shaped teachers’ responses to teaching these topics. As one teacher observed, their own experiences of a pandemic have made them “more empathetic” to the lives of people in the past.⁴³ Another recalled that they “used the personal experiences of what we all went through during the coronavirus pandemic to teach the Black Plague in a better way, enabling students to empathise with people who passed through that in the past”.⁴⁴ Another respondent highlighted how experiencing quarantine and the steps taken during the recent Covid-19 pandemic allowed them and their students to develop a greater understanding for how things were in “times of disease and famine in Ireland’s past”.⁴⁵

38. ID 14005693374, TES, Ireland.

39. ID 14005716222, TES, Greece.

40. ID 14005512216, TES, Slovenia.

41. ID 14005801639, TES, Portugal.

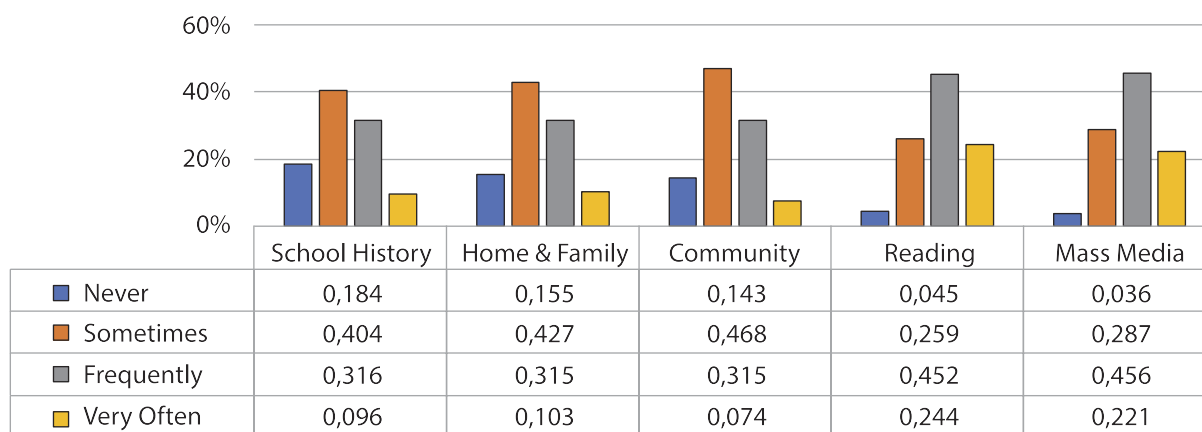
42. ID 14005777733, TES, Albania.

43. ID 14005697023, TES, Ireland.

44. ID 14005813024, TES, Malta.

45. ID 14005698875, TES, Ireland.

Figure 4.6. Factors influencing teaching about pandemics and natural disasters



The influence of school history on the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters

When asked if experiences at school had shaped their teaching of pandemics and natural disasters, 40.4% of respondents said sometimes and 18.4% said never (see Figure 4.6). For 41.2% of teachers, their experiences of history education at primary and secondary levels and during initial teacher education have contributed very often or frequently to how they teach these topics. As one teacher explained, “Project work, research, listening to news reports, looking at photos and newspaper clippings were some of the methods my teachers used when teaching about pandemics and epidemics. I also have employed the same techniques in my teaching”.⁴⁶ Another teacher also echoed the influence of primary school experiences. “The experiences of learning history in elementary school have most influenced the way I teach history and they are the foundation for upgrading my professional work as a history teacher”.⁴⁷

The influence of initial teacher education (ITE) was also cited as being of importance. As one teacher explained, they were introduced to the idea of historical enquiry during ITE and “this impacts on my teaching as I use an enquiry approach in my teaching of topics such as this”.⁴⁸ Another recalled how their experiences in ITE also impacted on their teaching of these topics:

I vividly remember how we approached the Black Death and its aftermath at the University. These classes were important for me to realise the importance that events such as epidemics and pandemics can have in social, economic and political terms. I remember reviewing the *Decameron* and how that review struck a chord with me. In my teaching practice I used, several times, excerpts from this work, as well as from *Livro da Noa* [Book of Noah].⁴⁹

In contrast, 40.4% of teachers noted that how they were taught history at school and in higher education only sometimes contributed to how they teach about pandemics, epidemics and natural disasters. While some did recall learning about these topics in school, 18.4% indicated that school experiences never contributed to how they taught about pandemics, epidemics or natural disasters. As one teacher observed, “We were introduced to the history of the Black Death only briefly at school. I learned more about it at university level. It gave me knowledge on the Black Death but it did not affect how I teach it”.⁵⁰

The influence of information sources, community, friends and family

A range of experiences from outside of school and higher education have also impacted on how teachers teach about pandemics, epidemics and natural disasters. Reading (books, novels, magazines and/or journals) and mass media (including radio, television, internet and/or social media) were identified as the two biggest outside influences, with 69.6% of teachers noting that reading very often or frequently impacted their teaching and 67.8% of teachers stating that mass media very often or frequently affected their teaching of these topics. Other outside experiences were identified as being less influential, with 41.8% identifying home and family

46. ID 14005933857, TES, Ireland.

47. ID 14005557135, TES, Serbia.

48. ID 14005640217, TES, Ireland.

49. ID 14005775424, TES, Portugal.

50. ID 14005824617, TES, Malta.

and 39% identifying community as very often or frequently affecting their teaching of pandemics and natural disasters (see Figure 4.6).

The influence of both mass media and reading was evident in the comments provided by the teachers. As one teacher noted, “listening to history podcasts or history shows on the radio and TV shows with original footage is very useful to ensure I am well informed on a topic and know the facts” (ID 14005933857, TES, Ireland). Similarly, another teacher noted that they “follow numerous historical Twitter and YouTube accounts and watch videos very often regarding these issues”.⁵¹ Another outlined that they “draw a lot from the media – National Geo., History, RTV Slo.”;⁵² and yet another stated that they make extensive use of YouTube and Wikipedia.⁵³

The use of family and local history was also evident in the comments of several teachers, including this:⁵⁴

Family history research has made some of these events quite personal. For example, when teaching about the famine I use research from my own family records on family members who lived through the event to bring home how most Irish people are descendants of famine survivors. Likewise, I use the story of my great great grandparents who died of “Spanish flu” in 1919 within weeks of each other to teach about “Spanish flu”. Experiences of local floods have shaped how I teach about natural disasters as I had a personal perspective on how they impacted my community. This encouraged me to collect local stories and artefacts that I use in teaching about these events.

Teachers’ perceptions of history curricula relating to pandemics and natural disasters

This section is based on teachers’ perceptions in relation to the extent and nature of the treatment of pandemics and natural disasters in their national curricula (see Table 4.1 for an overview of how teachers perceive the inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in their respective curricula).

The inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in national curricula

With regard to teaching about pandemics, 60.8% of the teachers believed that this topic was included in the history curriculum at either primary or secondary level and 59.2% believed that natural disasters were included. Comments relating to the extent to which these topics are included in national curricula provided a variety of responses. In some cases, teachers within the same country expressed different opinions when asked about their inclusion in the formal curriculum. For example, one teacher in Albania stated: “There are no teaching topics that deal with these topics”,⁵⁵ while another stated the opposite: “In the history curriculum of the 12th grade, the ‘Black Plague’ is treated as a practical activity/project within the topic ‘Modern history’ with the theme ‘The influence of the Black Plague on religious and political developments in Europe’”.⁵⁶ Variation in responses to this question was found within some of the member states and may be attributed to a number of factors: the presence of multiple curricula in the state, the class level the teacher is teaching at (different levels have different curricula), familiarity with the curriculum itself and the years of teaching experience a teacher has.

Table 4.1. The treatment of pandemics and natural disasters in the curriculum

Pandemics	Yes	No	Natural disasters	Yes	No
In history curriculum	60.8%	39.2%	In history curriculum	59.2%	40.8%
Specific topics	49%	51%	Specific topics	53.4%	46.6%
Global events	62.5%	37.5%	Global events	54.6%	45.4%
National events	62.9%	37.1%	National events	59.9%	40.1%
Examination	32.4%	67.6%	Examination	37.4%	62.6%
Compulsory	30.9%	69.1%	Compulsory	36.3%	63.7%
Autonomy	60%	40%	Autonomy	63.4%	36.6%
Learning outcomes	38.8%	61.2%	Learning outcomes	39.7%	60.3%

51. ID 14005907911, TES, Ireland.

52. ID 14005801265, TES, Slovenia.

53. ID 14005757990, TES, Cyprus.

54. ID 14005640217, TES, Ireland.

55. ID 14005827986, TES, Albania.

56. ID 14005762191, TES, Albania.

The inclusion of specific topics in national curricula

Regarding the inclusion of specific topics in curricula, 49% of teachers believed that specific pandemics were included and 53.4% believed that specific natural disasters were included, while 62.5% believed that both global events and more localised national events featured in their curricula. For example, teachers in Malta referred to the Black Death as a topic specifically mentioned in the history curriculum for years 8, 10 and 12 students. This topic was treated as both a local and a European event.⁵⁷

For Year 8 the learning outcomes are discussing the effects of the Black Death. For Year 10 there are only brief references to Maltese Fever and Cholera – students need only to mention and explain what was the Maltese fever and how the British tried to reduce the outbreaks of epidemics in Malta.

In Ireland, teachers referred to specific mentions of the Great Famine in both the primary and the post-primary curricula.⁵⁸ In Spain, teachers mentioned the Black Death, the Great Influenza pandemic, tuberculosis, cholera and Aids as part of the curriculum,⁵⁹ and in Greece one teacher recalled that “a few pandemics are covered, such as the plagues of the Middle Ages and the plague in Pericles’ Athens”.⁶⁰

Pandemics and natural disasters taught by teachers across OHTE member states

Teachers were asked what pandemics and natural disasters were taught in their classrooms. Analysis of the open-ended responses revealed that the Black Death was taught in all the OHTE member states that responded to this question (14). While Malta was the only country where a local perspective on this particular topic was mentioned in the curriculum, the open comments submitted by teachers in other member states reference teaching it from both a European / global perspective and a more localised one. As one teacher stated: “I will discuss the Black Plague, famine and other important issues within the framework of ancient times, the Middle Ages, Georgia and the world”.⁶¹

The Great Influenza pandemic of 1918 was mentioned in all member states except Malta and, interestingly, was referred to by all respondents as “Spanish flu”, except for the Spanish, who just called it “flu”. The impact of the recent pandemic is apparent in the choices of topics covered by teachers. Covid-19 was mentioned in 11 out of 14 member states as a topic studied. This was followed by cholera, which appeared in 10 member states. Smallpox was mentioned by respondents in six member states, with those in three of these countries referring also to the spread of the disease in the Americas. Tuberculosis was mentioned in six member states, and HIV/ Aids was mentioned five times. Localised epidemics were mentioned in six member states, including leprosy at Spinalonga hospital and cholera outbreaks in Dublin and Malta (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Pandemics taught by teachers across OHTE member states and terminology used

Pandemics and epidemics mentioned in the TES								
Albania	Black Death	Cholera	Covid-19	Spanish flu				
Anodrra								
Armenia	Black Death		Covid-19	Spanish flu				Plague of Justinian
Cyprus	Black Death		Covid-19	Spanish flu				
France	Black Death	Cholera	Covid-19	Spanish flu			HIV	Ebola, Sars
Georgia	Black Death	Cholera	Covid-19	Spanish flu	Smallpox	TB		
Greece	Black Death	Cholera		Spanish flu		TB		Epidemics (Nafplio and Tyrnavos), leprosy at Spinalonga, plague of Athens
Ireland	Black Death	Cholera (London, Dublin)	Covid-19	Spanish flu				Famine, diseases

57. ID 14005824617, TES, Malta.
 58. ID 14005907911, TES, Ireland.
 59. ID 14005666601, TES, Spain.
 60. ID 14005700458, TES, Greece.
 61. ID 1400566182, TES, Georgia.

Pandemics and epidemics mentioned in the TES								
Luxembourg								
North Macedonia	Black Death			Spanish flu	Smallpox	TB		
Malta	Black Death (Malta and Europe)	Cholera (Malta and Europe)						Undulant fever (Maltese)
Portugal	Black Death		Covid-19	Spanish flu		TB	HIV	Leprosy
Serbia	Black Death	Cholera	Covid-19	Spanish flu	Smallpox		HIV	Justinian Plague, Sars, typhus in Serbia
Slovenia	Black Death	Cholera	Covid-19	Spanish flu	Smallpox	TB	HIV	Bird flu, diphtheria, Ebola, leprosy, malaria, scarlet fever, syphilis, typhus, whooping cough
Spain	Black Death	Cholera	Covid-19	Flu	Smallpox	TB		Dysentery, typhus
Türkiye	Black Death	Cholera	Covid-19	Spanish flu	Smallpox		HIV	SARS

In relation to natural disasters, teachers mentioned a range of events in general (e.g. volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes, landslides) but Table 4.3 includes only the specific events that were explicitly mentioned by teachers. As we can see, a number of natural disasters are taught across the member states. The Minoan volcanic eruption (around 1600 BCE) that destroyed the island of Thera (Santorini) was mentioned in six of the member states where teachers responded to these questions (14 in total). This was followed by the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE that led to the destruction of Pompeii, which was mentioned in five member states. The tsunami of 2004 was mentioned four times. A number of global events were also mentioned and included events such as the dust storms in the United States (1930s) and the volcanic eruptions of Krakatoa and Tambora. Localised events such as the earthquakes that occurred in Albania, Cyprus, Georgia, Portugal, Serbia and Slovenia were mentioned as topics covered in history classes in the respective countries. One teacher explained some of the topics they taught and how they approached certain natural disasters in their classroom.⁶²

Big History – ice ages, global warming, floods (Noah’s Ark), Pompeii, climate change – famine of 1315 across Europe, the Great Famine, local floods, tsunami in Asia 2004, is Titanic considered a natural disaster? is the Great Fire of London? (human influence/manipulation of natural events). Natural disasters in myths and legends (to explain floods, volcanoes, storms etc). Using the Dúchas collection to look at local events - landslides, weather, drought, wind.

Of interest, in terms of both natural disasters and pandemics, is the inclusion of two relatively recent events, Covid-19 and the 2004 tsunami.

Table 4.3. Natural disasters taught by teachers across OHTE member states

Natural disasters mentioned in the TES					
				Global events	Localised events
Albania	Tsunami (2004)				Albanian earthquake (2019)
Andorra					
Armenia		Pompeii	Minoan eruption (1600 BCE)	Galveston hurricane (USA) San Francisco earthquake (1906)	Spitak earthquake (1998)
Cyprus			Minoan eruption (1600 BCE)	Hurricane Katrina	Cyprus earthquake (4th century)

62. ID 14005640217, TES, Ireland.

Natural disasters mentioned in the TES					
				Global events	Localised events
France	Tsunami (2004)			Fukushima nuclear disaster	Coastal submersion (France) Hurricane Irma (Saint Martin)
Georgia		Pompeii			Svaneti earthquake in Georgia (1088) Landslide in Adjara Floods in Tbilisi
Greece			Minoan eruption (1600 BCE)		
Ireland	Tsunami (2004)	Pompeii		Noah's ark Great Fire of London Famine of 1315	Great Irish Famine
Luxembourg	Tsunami (2004)				Mullerthal floods (2016, 2018 and 2021)
North Macedonia					Earthquake in Skopje (1963)
Malta				Dust storms in the USA (1930s)	
Portugal		Pompeii		Ice Age	Lisbon earthquake (1755) La Palma eruption Capelinhos eruption 1957 Floods of 1967 Tsunami (1755)
Serbia			Minoan eruption (1600 BCE)		Earthquake in Montenegro (1979) Earthquake in Skopje (1963) Dubrovnik (17th century) Earthquake in the Kingdom of Serbia and Montenegro (1922)
Slovenia	Tsunami (2004)	Pompeii	Minoan eruption (1600 BCE)	Dust storms in the USA (1930s) Tambora eruption (1815) Krakatoa eruption (1883) Hurricane Katrina Great Irish Famine' (1845)	Earthquake in Ljubljana (1895) Earthquake in Idrija (1511) Famine in Slovenia Earthquakes in Slovenia Floods in Železniki (2007)
Spain					
Türkiye			Minoan eruption (1600 BCE)		

The inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in other curricular areas

Teachers were asked if pandemics and natural disasters were taught in other subject areas (see Table 4.4). Based on their responses, teachers believed that these topics were taught primarily in geography, science (and science-related subjects), citizenship (and civics-related subjects) and, to a lesser extent, language-related subjects.

Table 4.4. Pandemics and natural disasters in other subject areas

Albania	Natural sciences, biology, geography, citizenship, biology, foreign languages
Armenia	Geography
France	Geography, life and earth sciences
Georgia	Natural science, "Our Georgia", civil defence and security, foreign languages, biology, geography
Greece	Biology, ecology, physics, ancient Greek, geography, science, health education, literature, ancient Greek
Ireland	Literacy (recount writing), social, personal and health education, geography
Luxembourg	Tourism
Malta	Geography, social studies, European studies, biology and religion/ethics
North Macedonia	Civic education, natural sciences, geography, biology
Portugal	Physical-chemical geography, citizenship, "Today's world and development"
Serbia	Biology, geography, chemistry, visual arts, civics education, physical education, elective programmes
Slovenia	DKE (Patriotic and civic culture and ethics) geography, biology, sociology, English
Spain	Biology, physics, natural sciences, chemistry
Türkiye	Social studies

Teacher autonomy in the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters

Just under 60% of teachers believed that the nature of their history curriculum afforded them the curricular space to deal in depth with certain examples of pandemics and natural disasters. As one Irish teacher highlighted, because of the relative autonomy provided by the Irish history curriculum, teachers are free to "elaborate on a curricular area within the perimeters of the title".⁶³ In Slovenia, teachers can opt to teach about certain topics: "Peasant revolts, epidemics and pandemics are considered as optional subjects in the 8th grade of elementary school".⁶⁴ In other member states, however, 31% of teachers were of the opinion that the teaching of these topics was compulsory. Of those who responded to the question of whether topics pertaining to pandemics and natural disasters feature in national, jurisdictional or external examinations, only 32% indicated their belief that this was the case and only 39% indicated that the curricula contained specific learning outcomes relating to pandemics and natural disasters.

A growing awareness of the importance of teaching about pandemics and natural disasters was evident in some responses, and a number of teachers called for greater inclusion of these topics. As one teacher observed, "There are no specific learning outcomes related to pandemic and epidemic teaching in the curriculum, but awareness in this regard has increased among students and parents".⁶⁵ This growing awareness was echoed by other teachers, and there were calls for its specific inclusion in national curricula. As one educator argued, "consideration of natural disasters in national plans and guidelines needs to be presented in more detail".⁶⁶ A number of teachers felt that it was very important to include the topics of pandemics and natural disasters

63. ID 14005907911, TES, Ireland.

64. ID 14005689999, TES Slovenia.

65. ID 14005187225, TES, Georgia.

66. ID 14005189822, TES, Georgia.

specifically in national curricula to ensure they are covered in classrooms: “It is definitely very important ... It is very difficult for the teacher himself to realise this without a concrete plan because there is not enough space within the teaching process itself to deal with these topics in more detail”.⁶⁷

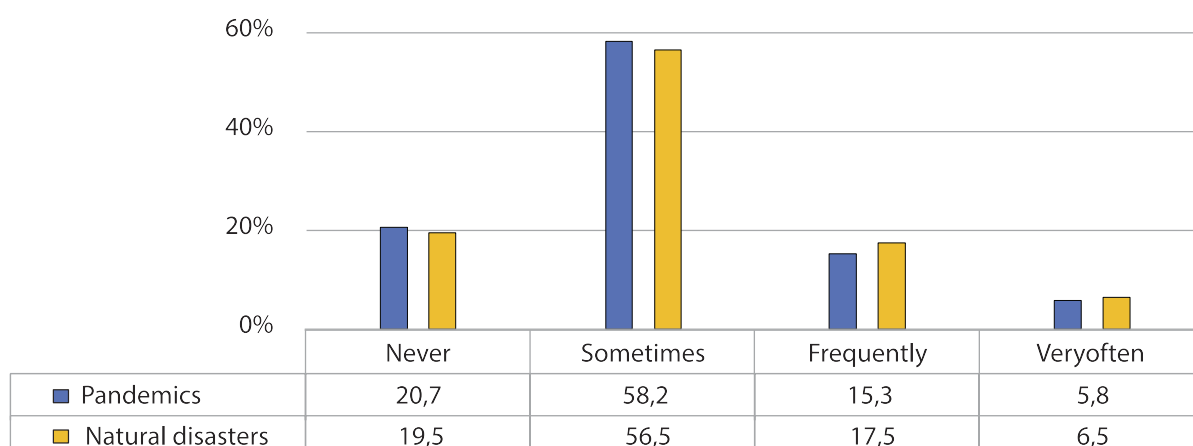
The international dimension of pandemics and natural disasters in the curriculum

For the majority of teachers (approx. 57%), an international perspective about pandemics and natural disasters was perceived as being sometimes included in their history curriculum. A further one fifth of teachers (approx. 20%) indicated that their curriculum did not include any international perspective about pandemics and natural disasters (see Figure 4.7 for exact numbers). Less than 6% of teachers believed that an international perspective was very often evident in the curricula. As one teacher noted:⁶⁸

It depends on the topic. For example, when teaching about the Irish Famine an international perspective is brought in. Other famines are explored and the impact of the famine is also explored (impact on America, Australia, UK, Canada). Even when teaching about ancient natural disasters and pandemics e.g. Pompeii and the Black Death, the wider impact is also covered.

A similar case is found in Spain, where “these themes appear transversally in the programs”,⁶⁹ and in Serbia, where “In each grade [between] 5-8, in certain teaching units there are these possibilities”.⁷⁰ However, in Portugal one teacher noted that “the perspective of global history is lacking”.⁷¹

Figure 4.7. International perspectives on pandemics and natural disasters in curricula



These diverging opinions of how often an international perspective about pandemics and natural disasters is included in history curricula perhaps reflects the fact that the history curricula in many of the member states is based on a menu approach where topics are selected by the teacher, and that teachers have autonomy as to the specific content taught. While the topics of pandemics and natural disasters are not outlined specifically as mandatory aspects of the curriculum in most countries, teachers appear to have the scope to include these topics and to teach about pandemics and natural disasters from an international perspective at any stage of the curriculum if they so choose. As one Georgian teacher noted: “It depends only on the teacher to what extent he will analyse these events during the teaching of history”.⁷²

Teachers’ perceptions of the purpose of teaching about pandemics and natural disasters

In order to ascertain the meaning and value they placed on teaching about pandemics and natural disasters in history, teachers were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements regarding the purpose of teaching these topics. The results for both topics were remarkably similar.

67. ID 14006023679, TES, Serbia.

68. ID 14005640217, TES, Ireland.

69. ID 14005541830, TES, Spain.

70. ID 14005611418, TES, Serbia.

71. ID 14005768489, TES, Portugal.

72. ID 14005665340, TES, Georgia.

Table 4.5. Beliefs about the purpose of teaching pandemics and natural disasters

Teaching about historic pandemics and natural disasters:	Pandemics		Natural disasters	
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Is meaningful to students' lives	95.5	4.5	95.9	4.1
Helps them understand the present	98.9	1.1	96.1	3.9
Teaches lessons from the past	97	3	97	3
Creates a sense of European collectiveness	82.5	17.5	82.4	17.6
Helps nurture responsible global citizens	95.4	4.6	96.7	3.3
Deepens an understanding of climate crisis	93.4	6.6	96.7	3.3
Highlights challenges students will face in the future	98.1	1.9	98.1	1.9
Should focus on human experience	92.1	7.9	91.2	8.8
Is too upsetting for students	29	71	32.5	67.5
Needs specific strategies and approaches	87.5	12.5	86.8	13.2

As seen in Table 4.5, over 95% of teachers believed that the teaching of these topics is meaningful to students' lives and were of the opinion that students need to know about past events such as these in order to understand events in the present. As one teacher pointed out: "Analysing past events is directly related to today's global problems".⁷³ They also agreed that valuable lessons can be learned by teaching these topics in the history classroom. As one teacher stated: "The world is facing crises, it is necessary to learn from the past to look to the future".⁷⁴

Teachers' perceptions of the role of teaching pandemics and natural disasters in developing a European identity

The Council of Europe acknowledges the vital contribution that subjects such as history and social studies can make to the promotion of an awareness of Europe, as well as an awareness of the cultural identity of Europe. Although predominantly focused on secondary education, the Committee of Ministers recommendation concerning the promotion of an awareness of Europe in secondary schools (Committee of Ministers 1983) encourages those drawing up educational programmes to promote an awareness of Europe in secondary schools. One important aspect of the development of a shared cultural identity is the existence of communal histories or common memories. The idea of shared crossroads of European history, developed by the Council of Europe (Stradling 2006), called for the development of shared European themes for history teaching through multiperspectival approaches. This was followed by the Council of Europe intergovernmental project "Shared histories for a Europe without dividing lines" (2010-14) which aimed to raise awareness of the common historical heritage of member states. As the teacher responses indicate, the recent Covid-19 pandemic experienced across Europe has created the conditions for a shared experience to foster the idea of a European collectiveness. In terms of developing a European identity, on average 82% of teachers (see Table 4.5) believed that teaching about collective experiences of pandemics and natural disasters across Europe can work towards creating a sense of European responsibility because, as one teacher in Georgia outlined, they make visible the fact that "the events of different countries are related to each other".⁷⁵ As another teacher reported, the shared experience of the most recent pandemic also worked towards the development of a cultural identity, and they "think European collectiveness evident in Covid 19 and how it was reported." Furthermore, they pointed out that "children could see how it was impacting on every country and not just Ireland".⁷⁶ Another claimed that "pandemic learning promotes diversity, sharing human experiences, and empathy".⁷⁷ Only 17% of teachers disagreed with this statement.

73. ID 14005204442, TES, Georgia.

74. ID 14005777115, TES, Albania.

75. ID 14005665340, TES, Georgia.

76. ID 14005633716, TES, Ireland.

77. ID 14005268565, TES, Georgia.

For example, one teacher said: “I do not think that this teaching generates a feeling of belonging to a European community, this feeling is much more complex”.⁷⁸

Teachers’ perceptions of the role of teaching pandemics and natural disasters in understanding the global climate crisis

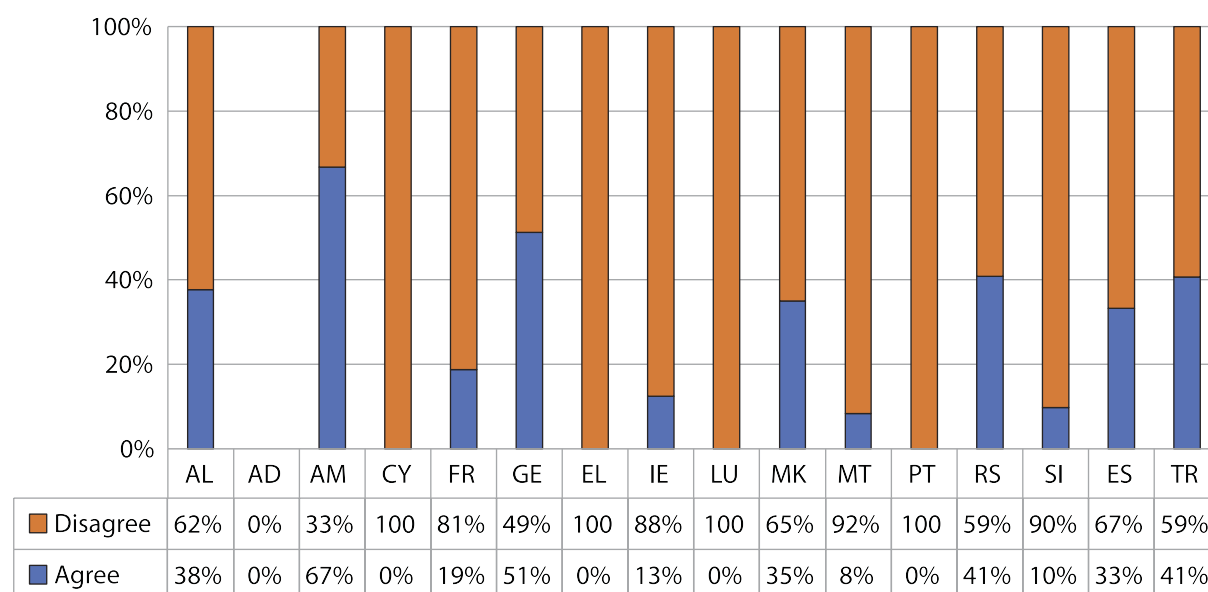
Over 93% of teachers agreed that teaching about pandemics and natural disasters can play an important role in deepening students’ understanding of the global climate crisis. Furthermore, 98% of the respondents believed that teaching about pandemics and natural disasters highlights the common challenges students will face in the future. Over 95% believed that teaching about these topics helps nurture responsible global citizens. As one teacher pointed out, “Pandemic teaching is important when teaching history, because the student should have an accurate idea in order to draw parallels with the pandemics of the modern era and to think about protecting oneself from it and also for civic responsibility”.⁷⁹

Teachers’ perceptions of the challenges of teaching pandemics and natural disasters

While the majority of teachers (90%) believed that teaching about pandemics and disasters should focus on human experiences (and, given the topics concerned, these may include tragedies, loss of life and sad stories), over 68% stated that they believed teaching pandemics and disasters in the history classroom was not too upsetting for students.

In Cyprus, Portugal and Greece, the idea that teaching about pandemics could be upsetting for students was dismissed by all teachers. However, as Figure 4.8 demonstrates, disagreement with this statement in relation to pandemics was not universal: 67% of Armenian teachers, 51% of Georgian teachers and 41% of Turkish and Serbian teachers believed that teaching about pandemics was too upsetting for students.

Figure 4.8. Teachers’ beliefs about the sensitivity of teaching about pandemics



Most teachers also disagreed with the statement that teaching about natural disasters is too disturbing for students, although a significant minority agreed with the statement (see Figure 4.9). For example, 63% of Turkish teachers, 59% of Armenian teachers and 56% of Georgian teachers believed that the emotional dimension of teaching about natural disasters was too upsetting for students. Some believed that teaching these topics could be “suffocating ... and scare students”,⁸⁰ and one teacher argued that they should just focus on “cause and effect and that’s it”.⁸¹

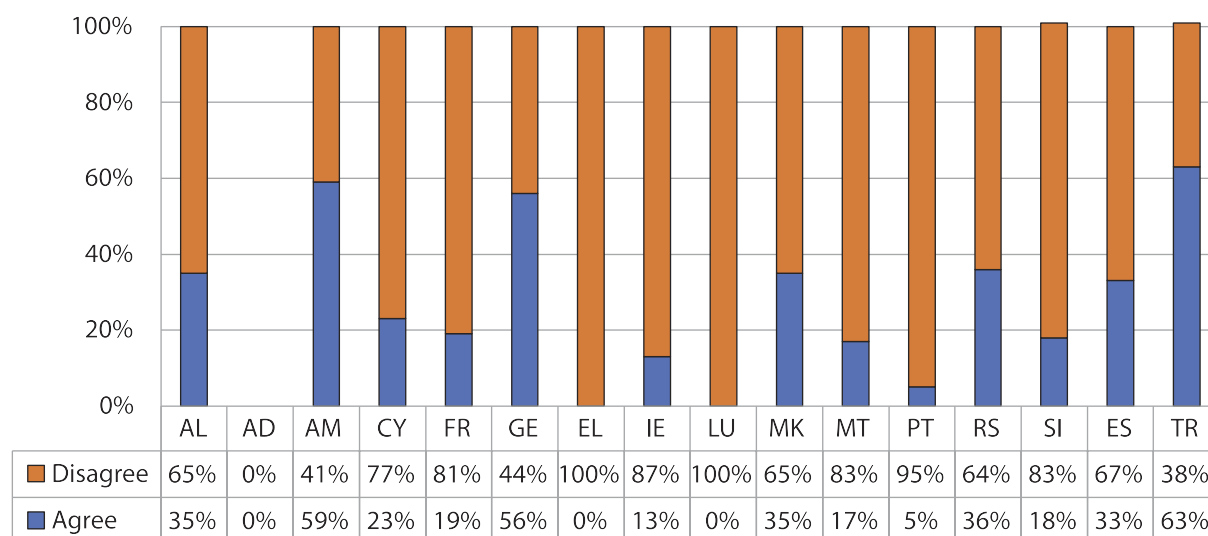
78. ID 14005958661, TES, France.

79. ID 14005516860, TES, Georgia.

80. ID 14005611418, TES, Serbia.

81. ID 14005611418, TES, Serbia.

Figure 4.9. Teachers' beliefs about the sensitivity of teaching about natural disasters



Although they acknowledged that pandemics and natural disasters can be difficult subjects to teach – as highlighted in this excerpt: “it is possible that learning about it causes various emotions in students, as well as being a kind of challenge”,⁸² for the majority of teachers, the importance of the topic justified its inclusion in class teaching. As one Irish teacher pointed out, historical distance can remove some of the challenges but, nevertheless, they argued that teachers need to be aware of the emotional aspect of these topics.⁸³

Teaching about recent events e.g., Covid and recent famines can be more upsetting than teaching about times and places far removed from their own. Particularly with natural disasters as often these are sudden and unavoidable e.g., flooding events, earthquakes. Teachers need to be sensitive to children’s fears.

Approximately 87% of teachers believed that, because of the challenging and potentially sensitive nature of the topics, teachers need specific strategies and approaches to teach about them effectively. As one teacher stated, “it would be great if additional resources were created in history and lessons given, because they will help explain social, economic and political events as well as culture”.⁸⁴

The teaching of pandemics and natural disasters in the classroom

When asked about the pedagogical strategies used to plan and teach about pandemics and natural disasters, the responses provided indicate a shift in teaching approaches from traditional transmission-centred, textbook approaches towards more enquiry-based pedagogies (see Figure 4.10). This aligns with the Committee of Ministers recommendation (Committee of Ministers 1983) that active learning methodologies – investigational, discovery-based approaches to teaching – should be encouraged). Analysis of the open responses teachers gave when asked about their teaching of pandemics and natural disasters confirmed that they favoured such practices. As one teacher put it, they focus on “didactics that privilege the construction of knowledge”.⁸⁵ Findings indicate that 66.8% of teachers choose approaches to teaching these topics that are grounded in enquiry-based practices and investigation, where the teacher supports and guides students as historical investigators “doing history”. Doing history involves asking questions, interrogating primary and secondary historical sources, hypothesising, discussing, debating and reaching conclusions based on the analysis of evidence. This form of history teaching was common in the teacher responses. This finding builds on the Committee of Ministers recommendation (Committee of Ministers 2001) that teachers become aware of and use teaching techniques that move students beyond factual information to enable them to interpret and analyse historical facts and their influence on the present.

As one teacher described it, “In each lesson, different primary and secondary sources are used which help the student for historical interpretation, reflection and drawing conclusions”.⁸⁶ Likewise, another teacher stated:

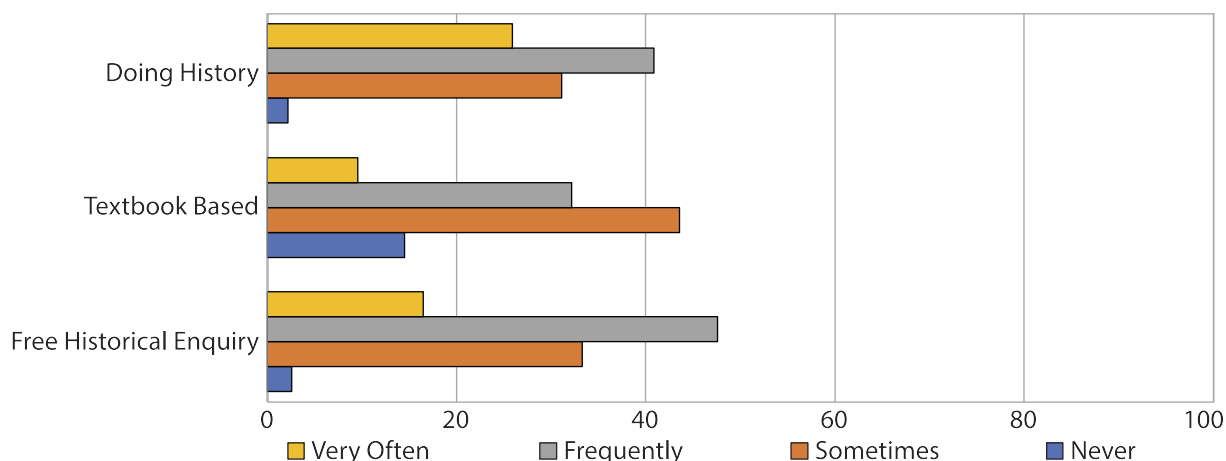
82. ID14006023679, TES, Serbia.
 83. ID 14005640217, TES, Ireland.
 84. ID 14005665340, TES, Georgia.
 85. ID 14005861462, TES, Portugal.
 86. ID 14005775086, TES, Albania.

“When teaching history, I often use different sources, different information that the students get acquainted with, justify their opinions”⁸⁷ Yet another described their history teaching as follows.⁸⁸

Very often various project activities, cooperative classes, where the students are the bearers of the activities, the teacher is someone who directs and the student is the focus, work is being done to make the students develop critical thinking, and they can only do that if they are those who implement the activities with the teacher as a mentor. It goes without saying that using sources, going to institutions, using various websites ... students develop and improve their competences

These types of pedagogical approaches were only sometimes used by 31.1% of teachers, while only a very small percentage (2.2%) said that they never used them in their teaching about pandemics and natural disasters.

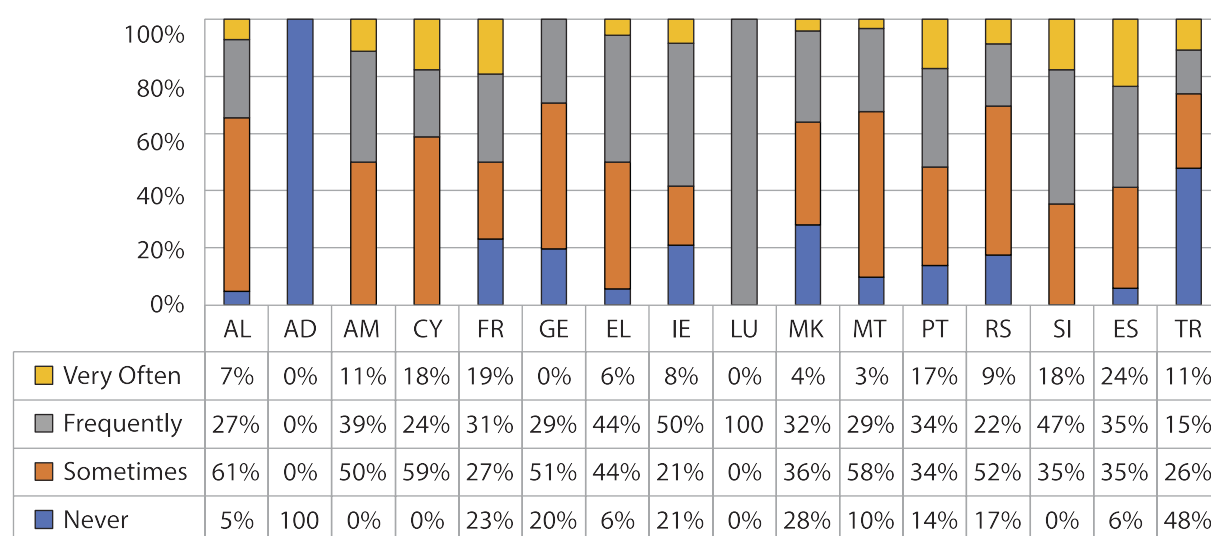
Figure 4.10. Approaches used to teach about pandemics and natural disasters



More traditional forms of history teaching, for example teacher-led pedagogies, focused on the transmission of factual historical information and centred on the use of a textbook, were sparingly used in classrooms, with a sizeable 14.5% of teachers never using this approach and 43.6% only sometimes using this approach. However, 32.2% of teachers did indicate that they use this approach frequently in their teaching about pandemics and natural disasters, and 9.6% indicated that they use it very often.

A series of Kruskal–Wallis tests were carried out to explore the association between the respondents’ teaching experience and their preferred pedagogy. The results indicated that the number of years a teacher has been teaching for has no statistically significant effect on their preference for using certain pedagogies.

Figure 4.11. Teacher-led textbook teaching about pandemics and natural disasters across OHTE member states

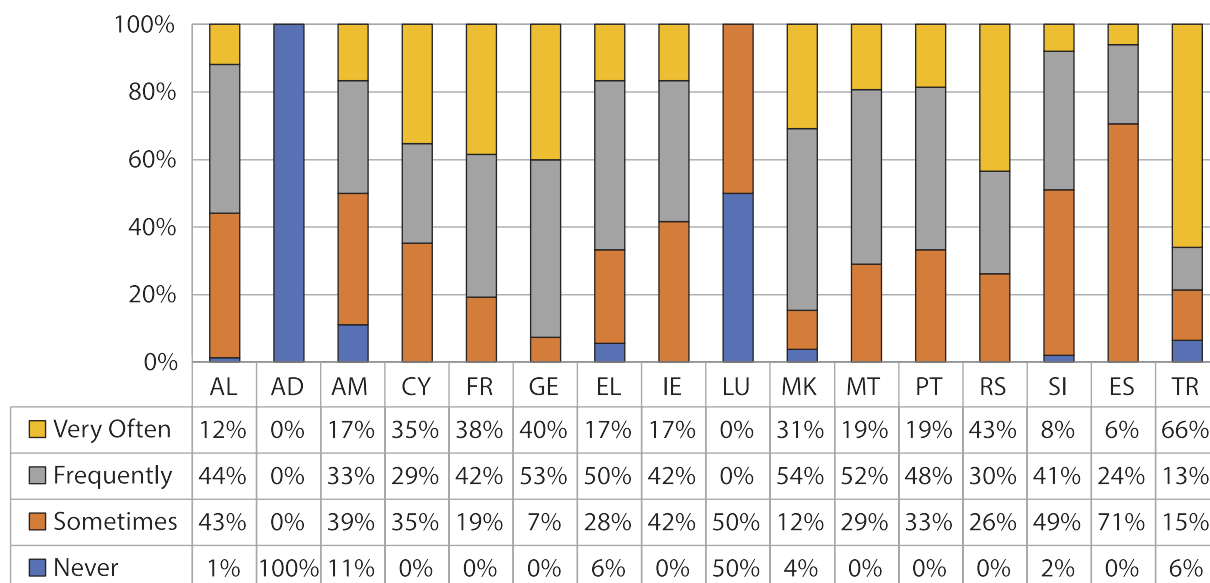


87. ID 14005689259, TES, Georgia.

88. ID 14006023679, TES, Serbia.

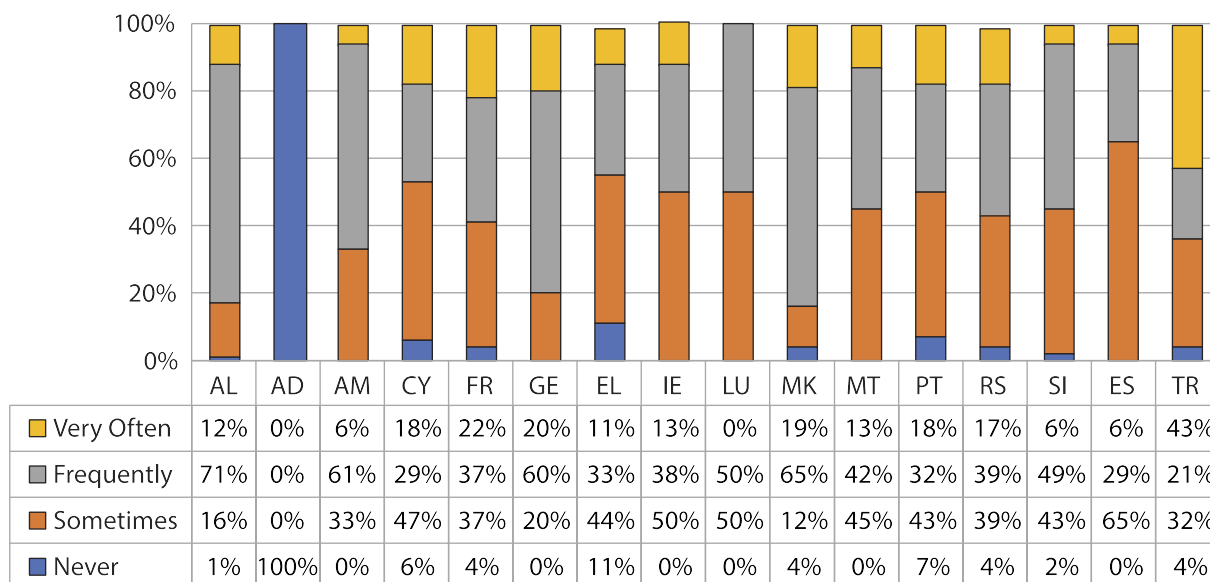
The breakdown for each country with regard to the use of teacher-led textbook approaches can be seen in Figure 4.11. There is some variation across the OHTE member states, with teachers in Slovenia (65%), Spain (59%), Ireland (58%) and Portugal (52%) using textbook-led approaches frequently or very often.

Figure 4.12. Teacher-guided enquiries where students are “doing history” across OHTE member states



The breakdown for each country with regard to the use of teacher-guided historical enquiries can be seen in Figure 4.12. Again, there is some variation across the OHTE member states, with teachers in Georgia (93%), North Macedonia (85%), France (80%) and Türkiye (79%) indicating that they frequently or very often use guided enquiry approaches.

Figure 4.13. Free historical enquiry where students work independently or in groups



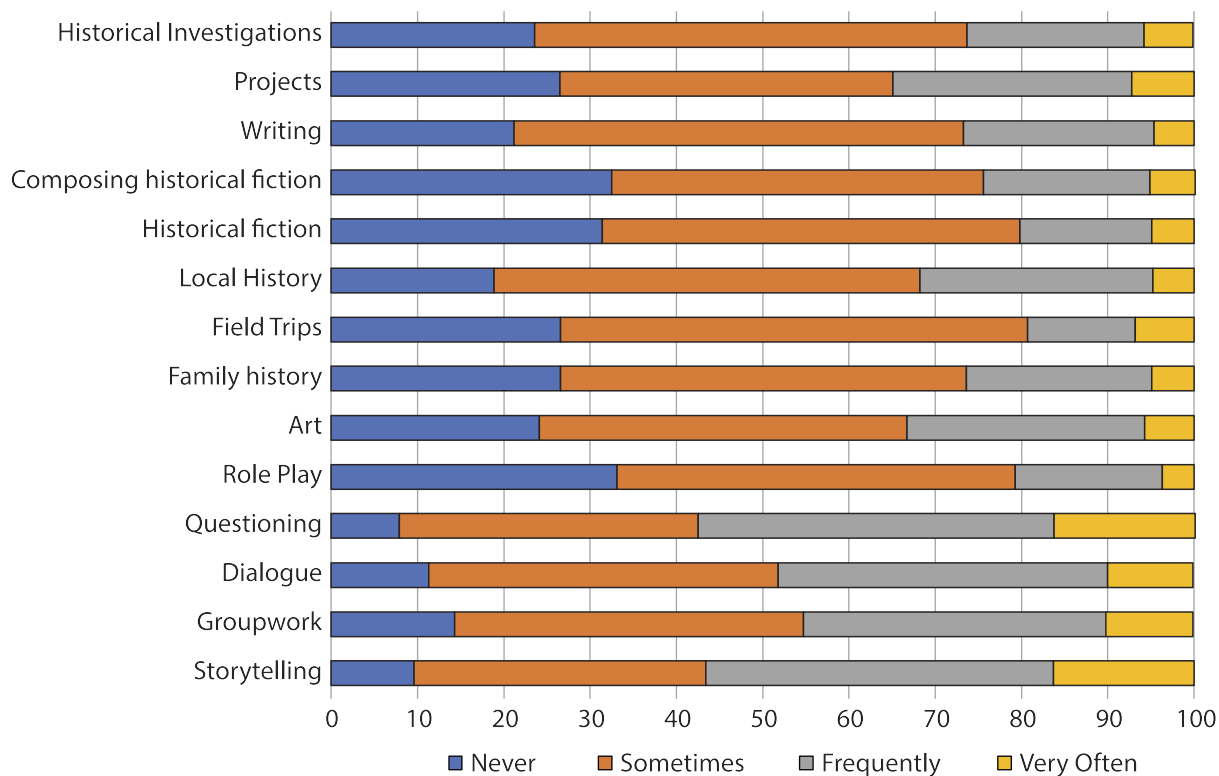
The breakdown for each country with regard to the use of independent historical enquiry can be seen in Figure 4.13. Again, there is some variation across the OHTE member states, with teachers in North Macedonia (84%), Albania (83%), Georgia (80%) and Armenia (67%) indicating that they frequently or very often favour using guided enquiry approaches.

Methodological approaches to teaching about pandemics and natural disasters

When asked about the various methodologies used to teach about pandemics and natural disasters, active learning approaches such as storytelling emerged as the most popular ones, with 16.3% of teachers indicating

that they use this particular approach very often in the classroom and 75.9% indicating they use it frequently or sometimes. Group work, a strategy also recommended by the Council of Europe (Committee of Ministers 2001), emerged as a popular methodology, with 45.2% of respondents using it very often or frequently, and only 14.3% stating that they never use it. Other active learning methodologies such as dialogue and questioning (Committee of Ministers 2001) were referred to by teachers as effective methodologies for teaching about these topics (see Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14. Methodologies used to teach about pandemics and natural disasters



Expressive methodologies such as role play (63.2%) and art (70.2%) were used either sometimes or frequently by teachers, with 33.1% of respondents stating that they never use role play in the classroom. One teacher explained how dramatisation and simulations are used in their school: "The school has a drama-history section ... students make films, design, direct, dramatize, edit, present, post on social networks, make commercials, do interviews".⁸⁹ Excursions such as field trips are used occasionally by the majority of teachers (54.1%) but are never used by 26.6%. Drawing on local history and family history as lenses to teach about pandemics and natural disasters is used by approximately 48% of teachers, and historical investigations into the past are used occasionally by 50.1% of teachers, against only 23.6% who never use them. Literacy activities such as reading and writing historical fiction, reading in general and project work are all used sometimes by teachers.

Teaching resources used for teaching about pandemics and natural disasters

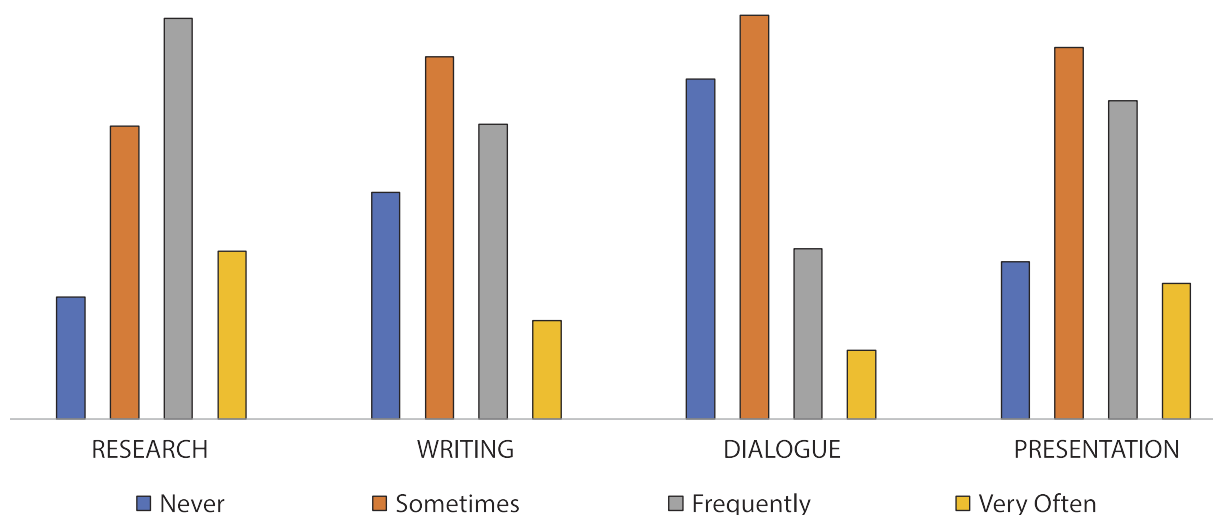
While whiteboards and blackboards are frequently used across the member states, the results of the survey indicate that digital technologies (where available) and constructivist activities such as group work and investigation are increasingly being used in teaching about pandemics and natural disasters. This correlates with the finding that teachers are moving towards more enquiry-based practices in their teaching of these topics.

The survey results indicate that computers or tablets are predominantly used in classrooms to research historical information and explore primary and secondary sources, with 57.9% of teachers using them frequently or very often for this purpose. The next most popular use for these resources was in the presentation of the students' work, where 42.6% of respondents indicated that they are used either frequently or very often. This was followed by the use of computers and tablets to write or compose, with 40% of teachers indicating that they use the

89. ID 14006023679, TES, Serbia.

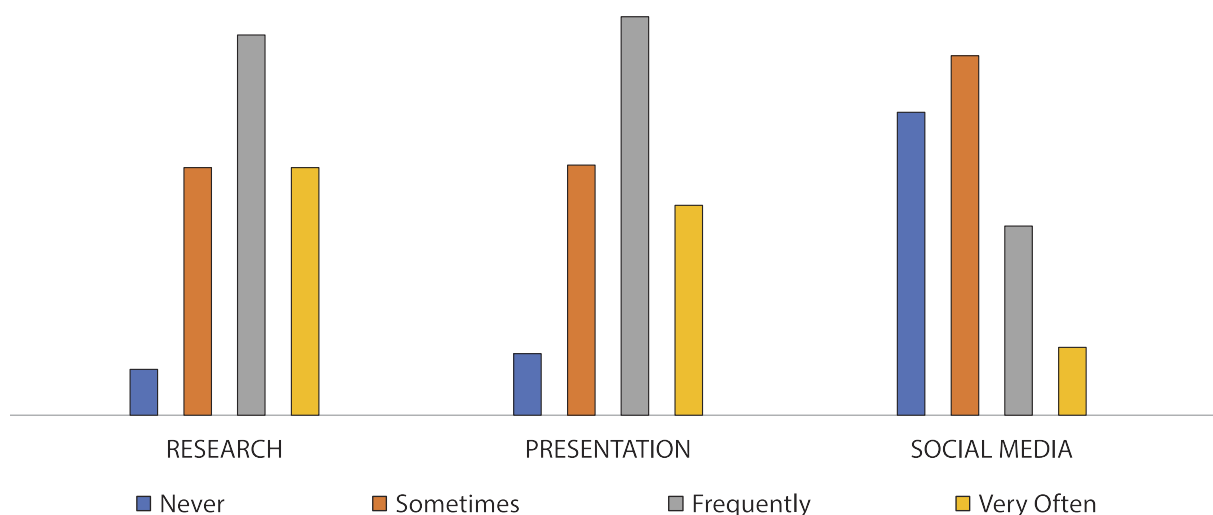
resources in this manner. Less popular was the use of computers/tablets to facilitate dialogue (e.g. via Zoom), with just 18% of teachers indicating use for this purpose (see Figure 4.15). The critical use of ICTs in the teaching of history is another recommendation (Committee of Ministers 2001) by the Council of Europe because, when it is used for more than information retrieval, they facilitate opportunities for exchange and dialogue, encourage critical analysis and the multiplicity of standpoints, enable a transcultural approach to the interpretation of facts and help develop skills such as critical analysis and analogical reasoning.

Figure 4.15. Use of computers or tablets to teach about pandemics and natural disasters



According to the survey results (see Figure 4.16), online media such as the internet are very often or frequently used for teaching about these topics, both as a research tool in searching for historical information (68.2% indicated frequent or very often use along these lines) and as a presentation tool for film, video YouTube, virtual reality and online presentations (66.1% responded that they use it frequently or very often for these purposes). As one Irish teacher stated: “We use online resources mainly, iPads widely used in the teaching of SESE. Every student has a scrapbook for SESE project work and an e-portfolio”.⁹⁰ The use of social media to teach about these topics, however, was not popular, with 32.9% of teachers indicating they never used this and 39.3% indicating occasional use.

Figure 4.16. Use of online media to teach about pandemics and natural disasters



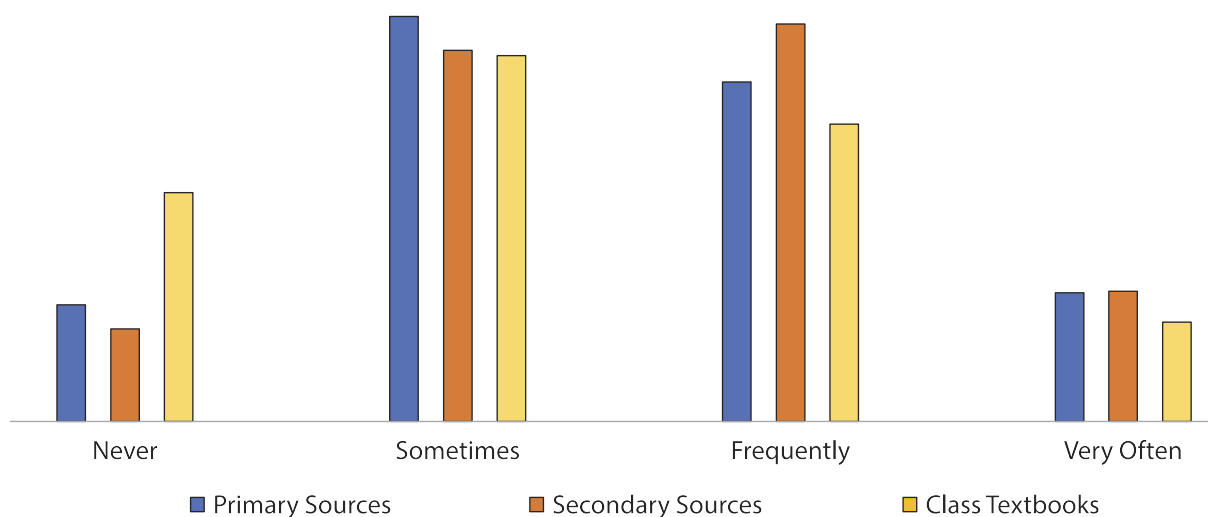
Of the teachers surveyed, 23.1% never used a class textbook when teaching about pandemics and natural disasters and 36.9% only used it sometimes. The combined figures indicate that textbooks are not often used in 60% of the classes when dealing with these topics. This figure correlates with the numbers of teachers teaching

90. ID 14005750501, TES, Ireland.

about pandemics and natural disasters through enquiry-based practices, as highlighted in Figures 4.12 and 4.13. As seen in Figure 4.17, approximately 40% of teachers used the class textbook frequently or very often. Primary and secondary sources were used by approximately 76% of teachers, suggesting that, even when the class textbook is frequently used, it is supplemented by the addition of primary and secondary sources. This is in keeping with the 1965 Committee of Ministers resolution that textbooks in history be supplemented with additional teaching material (Committee of Ministers 1965).

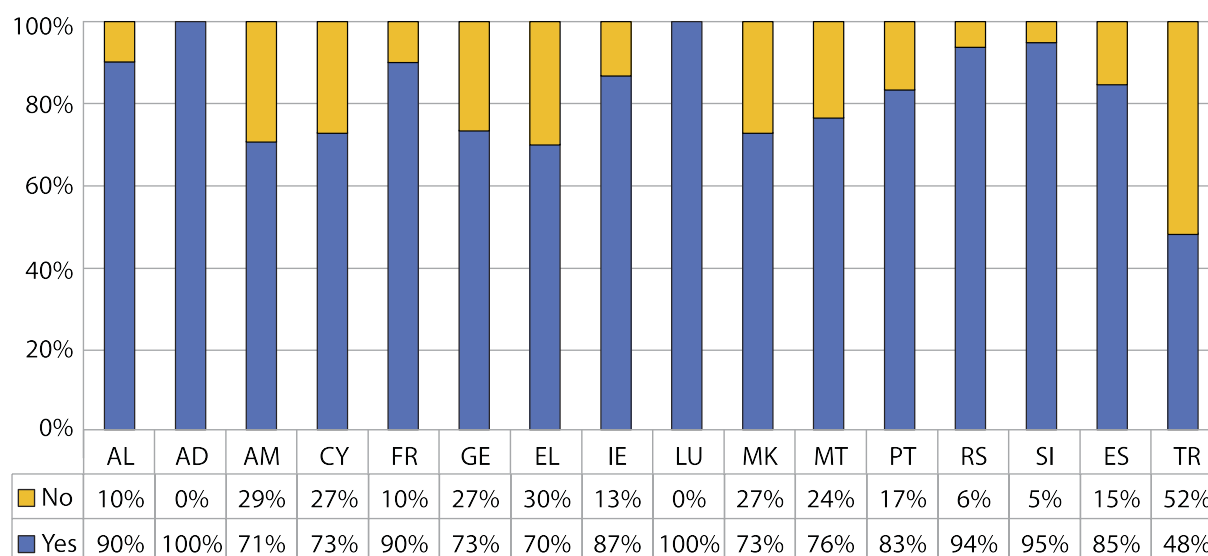
Finally, Kruskal–Wallis tests were performed to explore the relationship between the choice of teaching resources and the classroom experience of the teachers. The results indicated that the number of years a person has been teaching has no statistically significant effect on teachers’ selection of certain teaching resources when addressing pandemics and natural disasters.

Figure 4.17. Sources used to teach about pandemics and natural disasters



When asked if they had the freedom to choose their own resources for the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters, 78.6% of teachers indicated that they had the professional autonomy and flexibility to choose the most appropriate resources to suit the needs of their students; however, 21.4% of teachers stated that they did not have such choices in the materials they used (see Figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18. Teacher choice regarding the selection of teaching resources across OHTE member states



When asked about the impact of family, local and oral history on students’ historical learning of pandemics and natural disasters in school, approximately 20% of teachers believed family history had a major impact on student learning and 45% believed this impact to be moderate. Additionally, 14.5% of respondents considered local history’s impact to be significant, while approximately 53% believed it to have a moderate impact on learning.

Approximately 17% of teachers considered oral history as having a significant impact on student learning, with 46% viewing this as moderate. Interestingly, 17% of teachers believed museum visits had no impact on student learning about pandemics and natural disasters. When asked about the impact of reading on learning, 14.2% believed this to have a major impact and 47.9% estimated the impact to be moderate. In contrast, 49% of teachers believed that the internet had a major impact on student learning about pandemics, and 41.5% felt it had a major impact on learning about natural disasters.

Teaching about pandemics and natural disasters in the classroom

As can be seen in the vignette below on teaching about the Black Death, teachers are using a range of resources and enquiry-based practices when teaching about pandemics and natural disasters. This teacher details the activities they use to engage students and develop their historical thinking skills while also increasing their content knowledge.⁹¹

Showing when it spread across Europe using a map. The meaning of terminology such as: epidemic, contagion, quarantine, lazarettos, Flagellants, Jewish pogroms and blood-letting. Some effects it had on the daily life of people in the towns and villages. Placing its causes and effects of the plague under two separate column headings. Identifying or listing some continuity and/or changes in the social, political and economic set-up of Medieval Europe after the Black Death. Explain why most of the measures taken to combat the plague proved largely unsuccessful. They write a brief eye-witness account based on a primary source (e.g., Boccaccio's account of the plague in Florence).

From an analysis of the survey responses, it is evident that teachers draw upon a diverse range of content and pedagogical approaches to teach about pandemics and natural disasters. The results indicate that they are moving away from the primacy of textbook-based instruction and are engaging with a range of student-centred and constructivist pedagogical approaches to teach history within their classrooms. In many of these cases, the teachers view themselves as facilitators, scaffolding and supporting student learning. As one teacher stated: "For years now, the student has been at the centre of the lesson. The teacher guides, supports, mentors, and encourages the students in their work."⁹² Another highlighted the importance of students engaging with evidence and constructing evidence-based interpretations: "Students must know how to work on various sources, think critically, to be able to be free individuals, citizens."⁹³

Barriers to teaching about pandemics and natural disasters in the classroom

A number of obstacles were also mentioned to explain why more constructivist forms of history teaching were not used in some classrooms when teaching about these topics. These included pressures from national exams;⁹⁴ reduced curriculum time and student behaviour;⁹⁵ overloaded curricula;⁹⁶ availability of resources; large class sizes;⁹⁷ and high-stakes examinations.⁹⁸ As one teacher reported: "The volume of the curriculum, the large number of students in the classes, the final exam are all factors that affect the lack of time for more individual work of the students."⁹⁹

Teacher perspectives on the importance of including marginalised and minority voices in the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters

When asked about the importance of including topics concerning the impact pandemics have had on minorities or groups marginal to society, who throughout history have been frequently scapegoated or "othered", 20.2% of teachers across the 16 OHTE member states believed this to be very important, while 49% considered it important. As can be seen in Figure 4.19, teachers in Spain (93%), Portugal (83%), Albania (83%), Greece (80%) and Ireland (79%) overwhelmingly considered the inclusion of minority voices to be important or very important in their teaching of these topics. The results for Andorra and Luxembourg are skewed owing to the low level of replies to that survey question.

91. ID 14005820016, TES, Malta.

92. ID 14005777864, TES, Albania.

93. ID 14005268565, TES, Georgia.

94. ID 14005798611, TES, Portugal.

95. ID 14005802892, TES, Portugal.

96. ID 14005839897, TES, Slovenia.

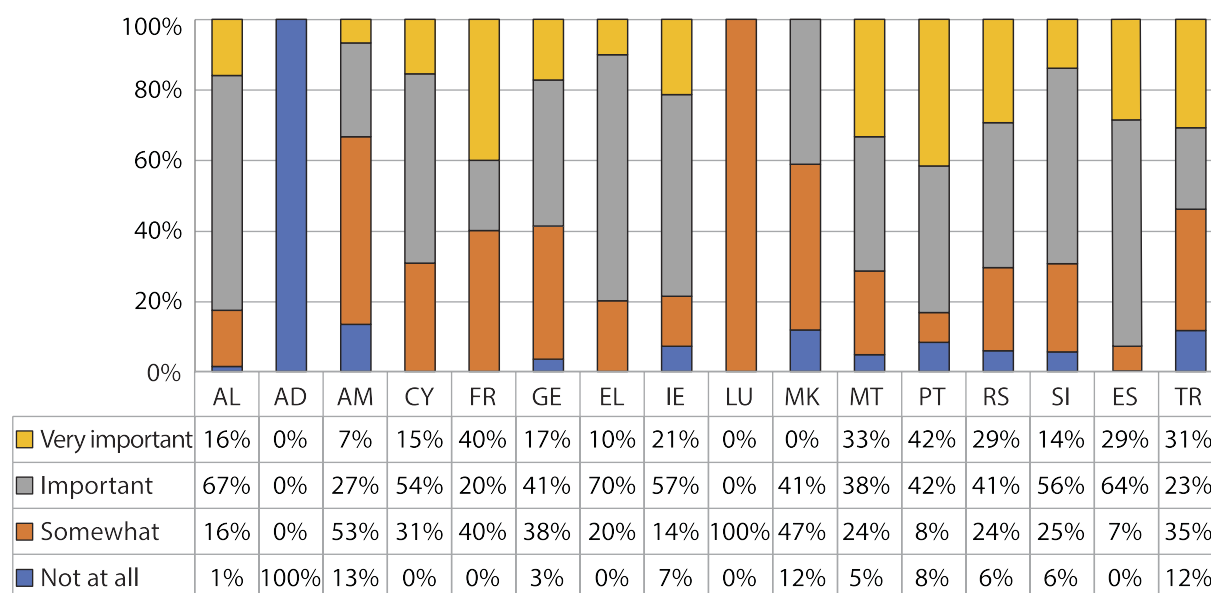
97. ID 14005918876, TES, Türkiye.

98. ID 14005567197, TES, North Macedonia.

99. ID 14005567197, TES, North Macedonia.

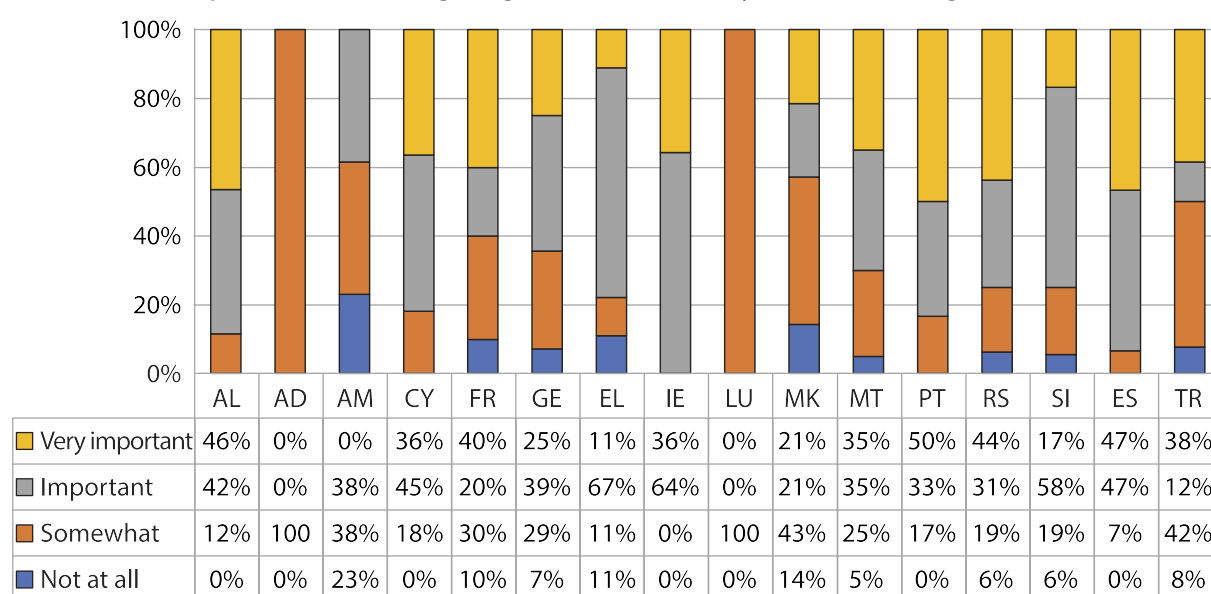
A further 26.3% believed the inclusion of the treatment of minority groups during past pandemics to be somewhat important, and one teacher argued that, while the discussion of these issues is important, such issues are more “relevant for students of the upper age group”.¹⁰⁰ Only 5% of teachers believed that such perspectives were not important at all.

Table 4.19. The importance of including marginalised and minority voices in the teaching of pandemics



When asked about the importance of including minority voices and experiences in their teaching of natural disasters, a higher number of teachers (33.9%) indicated that inclusion of minority voices was very important; furthermore, 39.4% of respondents felt it was important to include the impact of natural disasters on minority groups in their teaching. As one teacher put it, these issues are “really important and contribute to the formation of a young person’s awareness of these phenomena”.¹⁰¹ A further 21.6% felt this was somewhat important and only 5.1% believed it to be not at all important. As can be seen in Figure 4.20, teachers who responded to this question in Ireland (100%), Spain (93%), Albania (88%), Portugal (83%) and Cyprus (82%) overwhelmingly considered the inclusion of these topics as either very important or important.

Table 4.20. The importance of including marginalised and minority voices in teaching about natural disasters



100. ID 14005189822, TES, Georgia.

101. ID 14006023679, TES, Serbia.

Two Kruskal–Wallis tests were performed to determine if there is a statistically significant correlation between teaching experience and teachers' awareness of the importance of listening to minorities when teaching about pandemics and natural disasters. The findings indicate no statistical significance was found for the teaching of either. In other words, the respondents to the survey across the 16 OHTE member states emphasised the value of listening to the voices of minorities irrespective of the length of their teaching experience. Moreover, there is no statistically significant effect either concerning the education level (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary) and teachers' awareness of the importance of teaching about the impact of pandemics and natural disasters on minorities. That is, teachers believe in the importance of addressing the impact of pandemics and natural disasters on groups marginal to society irrespective of student age.

Teachers' open-ended responses highlighted their awareness of the importance of addressing such issues in history lessons in relation to pandemics and natural disasters. While one teacher remarked that "it is important to analyse these events and understand their perspectives",¹⁰² another pointed out that curricula are often created and taught through a specific lens that omits the perspectives of the "other" and focuses on the dominant narrative of the nation, "because an ethnocentric-Eurocentric model (narrative-norm) dominates in the selection of contents".¹⁰³ Building upon this idea of moving away from dominant narratives towards more inclusive histories, one teacher remarked:¹⁰⁴

Approaching History not as black or white and highlighting different perspectives on the same event, different and conflicting sources pushed me to look for more, different sources and to argue based on evidence. A fact that I use in my teaching, letting the students search freely in the sources without guiding them and reproducing a certain narrative / idea, which is the accepted one.

One common aspect across historical and recent pandemics and natural disasters is the widespread panic such events create. As was experienced also during Covid-19, panic and fear of the unknown resulted in a range of anxieties that were pitched at groups and minorities because, for one reason or another, they are classified and categorised as not belonging to the in-group in society. Historically, phenomena of othering have played a role in the development of prejudices against certain groups and in the persecution of minority and marginalised groups. As the results of the TES show, teachers believe strongly in the importance of including marginalised and minority voices in teaching about pandemics and natural disasters and are aware of the role history education can play in offsetting the tendency to "other" by introducing students to the concept of multiple perspectives and other ways of viewing the world and the people in it. As one teacher commented: "Perspective is a point of view, how someone sees a situation, and I personally try to 'dig' their opinion about a situation, I very often emphasise that there are always two sides, which is why people 'go to court'".¹⁰⁵

One teacher in Greece commented on the potential of history to address the issue of othering and explained how they look back to the scapegoating of Jewish people in medieval times to illustrate how dangerous this process can be.¹⁰⁶

I interpret events through history. For example, in High School, I helped the kids to discover the reason why Jews were targeted during the Black Death, because as they followed basic hygiene rules (hand washing), they weren't affected by the plague to the same degree as everyone else. And how this cooperated in the construction of the ideology around the evil Jew, through the engravings and the sculptures of the time, giving birth to the monster of intolerance and racial racism that found its expression in the propaganda of Nazi Germany.

Conclusion

Analysis of the TES responses revealed a number of important findings with regard to the teaching of pandemics, epidemics, and natural disasters across the 16 OHTE member states. From this analysis, it is clear that the majority of history teachers across the 16 member states ascribe a purpose to history education that is much broader than the traditional one of developing a national identity or of knowing facts about the past. The overwhelming majority indicate a belief that history has a role to play in the understanding of current crises (such as natural disasters caused by climate change or global pandemics) by addressing their root causes and by providing students with examples of the causal effects of humanity's actions in the past as well as exemplars to draw on for actions in the future.

102. ID 14005213700, TES, Georgia.

103. ID 14005700458, TES, Greece.

104. ID 14005580926, TES, Cyprus.

105. ID 14006023679, TES, Serbia.

106. ID 14005716222, TES, Greece.

This shift in perceptions of the purpose of history is also reflected in the teaching approaches used by teachers across the 16 OHTE member states. Analysis of the survey results shows that, while teachers are still using textbook-based teaching that is content-focused, they are supplementing this with a diverse and wide variety of additional materials such as videos and online resources. Additionally, enquiry-based practices (teacher-guided historical enquiries and independent historical enquiries) and active learning methodologies, as recommended by the Committee of Ministers recommendation on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe (Committee of Ministers 2001) are being used frequently when teaching about pandemics and natural disasters in history classrooms.

Despite relatively little attention being given to these topics in national curricula, over 75% of teachers report that they do teach about pandemics and natural disasters at primary and post-primary level. On average, across the 16 OHTE member states, the time devoted to these topics ranges from approximately two hours to over 10 hours depending on the class level, with older students receiving more teaching time on these topics. The survey responses show that the majority of teachers would like to see these topics specifically included in their national curricula which, a number have indicated, makes it more likely that these topics will be covered in classrooms.

Building on this, the survey responses show that teachers across the 16 OHTE member states value the importance of teaching about pandemics and natural disasters. Furthermore, while they acknowledge that such topics can be complex and require sensitive teaching approaches, especially given students' recent experiences of a pandemic, and in some cases of natural disaster events, approximately 87% of teachers believe that teachers need specific strategies and approaches to teach about them effectively.

A potential starting point for developing specific strategies and approaches might be the finding that there are shared topics and themes related to pandemics and natural disasters already being taught across the 16 OHTE member states. In terms of pandemics, such common themes include the Black Death, cholera, Covid-19, the Great Influenza pandemic, smallpox, tuberculosis and HIV. Common themes for natural disasters include the tsunami of 2004, the destruction of Pompeii and the Minoan eruption. These shared themes build upon the themes identified in the *Shared histories for a Europe without dividing lines*, an interactive ebook which was the end product of a Council of Europe project aimed at uncovering the main synergies and convergences that have shaped the development of Europe as a spatial entity, and at highlighting strategies and methods for developing student awareness and knowledge of dimensions of shared European history. The themes identified in the "Shared histories" project include the impact of the Industrial Revolution; the development of education; and human rights as reflected in the history of art and the theme of Europe and the world. The identification of shared topics relating to pandemics and natural disasters that are currently being taught across the OHTE member states contribute towards the body of work and may provide a shared platform for educators and students to collaborate, compare differing perspectives and discuss. This aim is also reflected in Committee of Ministers 2011, in which European identity and unity, based on shared values, respect for a common heritage and cultural diversity, and dialogue between cultures is fostered by an accurate understanding of history. Furthermore, this aligns with the Committee of Ministers recommendation (Committee of Ministers 2001) that educators implement international, transfrontier projects between schools in different countries, based around common historical themes, approaches or tasks.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, inspiring practices and perspectives

The present report finds that pandemics and natural disasters play a minimal role in many school history curricula, which, despite a turn towards the development of historical thinking skills, still mirror the national narratives meant to shape individual historical consciousness and national belonging in the OHTE member states. National history curricula, in general, mention pandemics and natural disasters only in passing, as the histories therein roll chronologically forwards with their focus on the important, significant and often iconic aspects of still dominant, nationally acknowledged historical canons. The perception of such events as being of peripheral significance is understandable in light of the enduring focus of curricula on political history and on human actions more generally. Events such as pandemics and natural disasters may point instead towards the limits of human agency, revealing humanity to be less in control of the natural environment than traditional narratives focused on political history would have it. As a result, they are often taught as topics in their own right when they play a major part in the countries' collective memories, as the 1755 Lisbon earthquake in Portugal and the Great Famine of 1845-52 in Ireland.

With this overall pattern in mind, there are, however, a number of inspiring practices that it is important to highlight. In many cases (Andorra, Armenia, France, Georgia, North Macedonia, Spain and Türkiye), integrated curricula that include a history component allow for the exploration of past pandemics and natural disasters, often with a direct and explicit link to the present. Even when there are no dedicated classes dealing with the history of pandemics and natural disasters, history curricula often include such cases as part of broader topics dealing, for example, with everyday life in medieval Europe (e.g. Serbia) or industrialisation (e.g. Slovenia). There are both advantages and disadvantages to such an approach. On the one hand, it could be interpreted as indicative of a lack of focus on pandemics and natural disasters as discrete topics in their own right. There is no substitute for the teaching of such topics in separate history classes, with the specific, primary-source-oriented methodologies specific to the discipline, to develop "historical thinking", which in turn plays a major role in the development of competences for democratic culture (Council of Europe 2018). However, thematic cross-curricular approaches (encountered in Albania, Cyprus, France, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye) sometimes offer more room to explore their contexts, causes and consequences, as well as their overall impact on societies, economies, political systems and so on, which is beneficial for seeing such catastrophic events not as niche topics of limited interest, but as profoundly linked to and impactful on history as such. Several Council of Europe recommendations point to the benefits of thematic cross-curricular approaches to historical events, from the most recent one on passing on remembrance of the Holocaust and preventing crimes against humanity (Committee of Ministers 2022) through the one on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials (Committee of Ministers 2020) and that on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching (Committee of Ministers 2011) to the framework recommendation on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe (Committee of Ministers 2001) which stipulates that:

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.

Against common perceptions that history curricula are often disconnected from the lifeworld of students, several cases show evidence of attempts to bring history closer to students by adopting approaches from social history, local history, family history or the history of everyday life. Examples of such approaches range from the story of Myrtida, a girl who died of the plague of Athens in Greece, through the many strands in Ireland's curriculum that emphasise the life stories of people in the past or delve into local histories of pandemics and natural disasters, and Serbia's focus on everyday life in the Middle Ages, to the "Our city" course in Türkiye, which specifically asks students to look at past natural disasters in the city they live in. Topics such as pandemics and natural disasters, while marginal to the mainstream curriculum and only succinctly covered in textbooks, if at all, often provide opportunities to explore a wider diversity of sources in teaching about them, as appears to be the case in Georgia. In this respect, the emphasis of the national curricula in Albania on the use of information and communication technologies in the classroom also correlates well with the finding of the survey addressed to teachers in all OHTE member states that such methodologies are widely seen as beneficial by teachers and are

highly appreciated by students. This is once again aligned with the Council of Europe recommendations, which highlight the importance of ICTs (Committee of Ministers 2001, 2020), or the promotion of “the introduction of media (including social media) education in schools and universities, with a particular focus on debunking conspiracy theories” (Committee of Ministers 2022). The latter aspect is a particularly relevant one for the teaching of pandemics as well, as the case of Covid-19 has amply demonstrated. Finally, at the limits of national curricula, that many OHTE member states (Albania, Andorra, Armenia, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain) provide for considerable teacher autonomy bodes well for the teaching of past pandemics and natural disasters, considering that such autonomous spaces are often where teachers indicated they can teach such topics, of great interest both to themselves and to students. Of interest is the finding from the EAS data that, despite the fact that relatively little attention is given to these topics in national curricula, over 75% of teachers reported that they do teach about pandemics and natural disasters at primary and post-primary levels (EAS data) and, furthermore, living through a recent pandemic and personally experiencing the impact of natural disasters have allowed teachers to make connections with similar historic events and to develop a better empathetic understanding of the experiences of people in the past. Given the impact of personal experiences on the teaching of these topics, this finding has implications, particularly for areas such as initial teacher education, where future generations of educators will teach future generations of children while drawing on their own experiences.

Despite the general trend that pandemics and natural disasters were found to be rather marginal topics in the national curricula across the OHTE member states, some countries already include extensive coverage of one or both in their history curricula or in integrated ones with a historical component. This is especially visible in Greece, Ireland, Malta, Portugal and Spain, in the case of the latter with such content looking set to expand even further following the recent curricular reform of 2022. The cases of Malta and Slovenia stand out as the only ones where explicit learning outcomes pertaining to past pandemics and natural disasters are formulated in the national curricula. Moreover, given the finding that issues such as the scapegoating of minority groups in the wake of pandemics and natural disasters are rarely considered in teaching about such events, the curriculum in Malta deserves to be singled out as covering this topic by not only exploring the anti-Jewish pogroms that accompanied the Black Death across Europe, but also having an explicit learning outcome associated with this topic. This is especially important “at a time when anti-Semitism is regaining momentum and attacks against Jews and Holocaust remembrance are once again a concern in and outside Europe” (Committee of Ministers 2022) all the more so as the Covid-19 pandemic brought to the fore both a resurgence of antisemitic conspiracy theories and incidents where opponents of vaccination engaged in trivialisation of the Holocaust (Estrin 2020; Stone 2021). In this context, teaching about anti-Jewish pogroms that have accompanied outbreaks of pandemics and epidemics in history is key to uncovering the “long history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism in Europe, so as to stimulate reflection on all forms of anti-Semitism, including contemporary manifestations” (Committee of Ministers 2022).

When unpacking the data to compare the coverage of pandemics against that of natural disasters, an interesting discrepancy comes to the fore. While the latter are often treated in national contexts (e.g. earthquakes in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Portugal and Türkiye), with the partial exception of the eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii, which appears to have become a European *lieu de mémoire*, epidemics and pandemics are addressed from a much more transnational, European or even global perspective. The Black Death is by far the best represented case of a pandemic across national curricula, featuring in all cases where pandemics are explicitly mentioned in the curricula, meaning in almost all OHTE member states. The focus is almost exclusively on the devastating 14th-century outbreak rather than more recent ones, and the approach to it is invariably European, even when national instantiations are also covered. As shown in Chapter 3, a European dimension in teaching about pandemics and natural disasters in history is visible across curricula in all but three OHTE member states, rendering this the single most frequent feature regarding the presence of such topics in national curricula. A final finding is that historical coverage of pandemics and natural disasters is very frequently linked to contemporary issues and to ideas of developing a sense of democratic citizenship in students, as in Georgia, where the topic “Pandemics – contemporary and past” is included in the integrated “Citizenship” curriculum (combining history, social geography and civic education) as part of the “Global social challenges and changes” thematic block.

Despite these inspiring practices, which help nuance the finding that pandemics and natural disasters are often minimally represented in national curricula or even absent, the survey of teachers’ views about the importance of such topics for them and their students reveals a significant gap. From its analysis, it becomes evident that interest in pandemics and natural disasters has increased sharply among students, parents and teachers as a result of the universal impact of Covid-19 and of natural disasters that global warming and climate change have accelerated. At the same time, the vast majority of teachers reported the emotional readiness of their students to engage with topics related to pandemics and natural disasters. This discovery stands in contrast to research

findings that suggest that the emotional and affective aspects related to the teaching about such topics can pose pedagogical challenges for educators (Bryan 2020). Instead, it appears that the teaching about pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective may support students' feeling of readiness to face a future in which pandemics and natural disasters will have a significant impact on their lives. This corresponds with the emergence of recent youth activism movements (e.g. Fridays for Future), which demonstrate students' interest in and engagement with these issues. Educators in the OHTE member states are both willing and feel ready to contribute to the development of their students' preparedness and resilience for potential future pandemics and natural disasters by including these topics in their teaching. The perceived need for adjusting history teaching to these new realities shaped by climate change and the experience of the Covid-19, as visible in the teachers' views, can be seen accordingly as the logical consequence of the relatively limited coverage of these topics in the history curricula of the OHTE member states at the present moment.

The only case of an OHTE member state that has undergone curricular reform since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic is that of Spain, and it is promising in terms of the apparent increase in attention to pandemics and natural disasters. If such topics are to have a more prominent, as opposed to a peripheral curricular place in the future, history as a school subject could provide students with the historical perspective, knowledge, understanding and explanatory power to ensure its impact and contemporary relevance across the school curriculum. As mentioned above, there are specific advantages to historical thinking, all of which are likely to foster notions of responsible citizenship: an appreciation for historical distance and how things we often take for granted in the present were very different in the past; historical empathy with the people and societies of the past in view of their different living conditions; an appreciation of the co-existence of multiple perspectives on historical events and processes, leading to plural rather than monolithic historical narratives. Following the Committee of Ministers recommendation on intercultural dialogue and the image of "the other" in history teaching (Committee of Ministers 2011), it would be advisable:

to give history teaching its rightful place in curriculums, given ... the growing interest in questions of history in the public opinion of most member states, [and to] conceive history teaching at school not only as an end in itself but also as a means to lay firm foundations for lifelong learning of history.

Main findings

The thematic report's main findings are the following:

1. Despite some positive examples to the contrary, within the framework of compulsory state schooling, on average between ages 6 and 16, there is minimal or sometimes no coverage of pandemics and natural disasters in national history curricula across the OHTE member states. These topics have a peripheral role in curricula, mirroring a persisting focus on political history and national history.
2. Pandemics and natural disasters are taught more extensively in other subjects across the curricula, but this involves little, if any, historical dimension (historical context, perspective and knowledge; historical thinking). Pandemics and natural disasters are currently taught primarily in geography, but also in civic and moral education, citizenship education, science and technology, life and earth sciences, biology, language and literature, the arts and classics. The inclusion of a historical dimension in the teaching of these topics in other subjects is rarely prescribed in national curricula.
3. Teaching about pandemics and natural disasters frequently occurs in integrated subjects, incorporating history alongside other disciplines. This presents both advantages and disadvantages: what may be lost in terms of historical disciplinary rigour (the use of primary sources, methods of enquiry specific to the historical profession) could be gained by emphasising the link between historical pandemics and natural disasters and present-day challenges.
4. Many state schools and history teachers have considerable autonomy at the school and classroom level to be creative, innovative and responsive to contemporary global challenges and their importance for students today.
5. Despite the fact that relatively little attention is given to these topics in national curricula, over 75% of teachers reported that they do teach about pandemics and natural disasters at primary and post-primary levels. Based on the TES results, at primary level teachers are more likely to teach about natural disasters than pandemics.
6. Teachers in all 16 OHTE member states believe it is vital that their students are taught about the historical dimension of pandemics and natural disasters and were keen on seeing these topics better represented in the national curricula for history and other subjects, to reflect their importance and significance to diverse groups of citizens in different countries.

7. Teachers appear to be moving away from the primacy of textbook-based instruction and are engaging with a range of student-centred and constructivist pedagogical approaches, particularly historical enquiry, to teach about historical pandemics and natural disasters. More traditional forms of history teaching, for example, teacher-led pedagogies focused on the transmission of factual historical information and centred on the use of a textbook, are sparingly used in classrooms to teach about these topics.
8. Digital technologies (where available) and constructivist activities such as group work and investigation are increasingly being used for teaching about pandemics and natural disasters. While the potential benefits of digital media are recognised both by governments and by teachers, so too are the pitfalls associated with the proliferation of unreliable information, resulting in the need for striking a balance in the use of such technologies critically in the history classroom.
9. Approximately 82% of teachers believed that teaching about collective experiences of pandemics and natural disasters across Europe can work towards creating a sense of European responsibility and cultural identity.
10. Over 93% of teachers believed that teaching about pandemics and natural disasters can play an important role in deepening students' understanding of the global climate crisis. Furthermore, over 95% of teachers believed that teaching about pandemics and natural disasters highlights common challenges students will face in the future, and that teaching about these topics helps nurture responsible global citizens.
11. Overall, most teachers did not believe that teaching about pandemics and natural disasters was too upsetting for students, although a significant minority (particularly in member states that have experienced natural disasters such as earthquakes and flooding) believed that the emotional dimension of teaching about natural disasters was too upsetting for students.
12. Approximately 87% of teachers believed that, because of the complex and potentially sensitive nature of teaching about pandemics and natural disasters, teachers need specific strategies and approaches to teach about them effectively.
13. Educators in a number of the OHTE member states feel they have the professional expertise and knowledge needed to teach about pandemics and natural disasters.
14. Issues such as scapegoating and multiple perspectives are rarely included in the planning and teaching about pandemics and natural disasters in national curricula but are considered very important by teachers and educators across the OHTE member states.
15. While natural disasters tend to be taught mostly in a national framework, with a focus on those that have affected the respective country in the past, pandemics and epidemics are taught from a transnational, European and even global perspective. The Black Death is the single most frequent example of a pandemic and is taught in almost all OHTE member states. The eruption of the Vesuvius is the closest such event in terms of natural disasters, but its coverage in national curricula is still significantly less widespread than that of the Black Death pandemic.

Implications

Over 80% of the respondents to the Education Authorities' Survey across the 16 OHTE member states asserted that the content and approaches to teaching pandemics and natural disasters in their states' history curricula is flexible and not strictly regulated.¹⁰⁷ From the data of the survey directed at teachers and educators, it appears that they share this assertion. However, the responses indicate that this freedom can be largely illusory in some cases, due to curricular overload and/or insufficient time for the coverage of optional topics. The results of the EAS and, particularly, the TES thus open up new vistas for education policymakers in terms of possible developments in the future. These possibilities fall into two broad categories.

Incorporation into curricula

First, in response to current and potential future pandemics and natural disasters, the challenge is to incorporate them into the content and objectives of school curricula, both in history and in other subjects, specifying the inclusion of a past perspective in the case of the latter. Where past pandemics and natural disasters are to be taught with serious intent, they need to be explicitly included in the aims, objectives and outcomes in history and other curricula and, for classes sitting examinations, they should form part of the syllabi to be examined.

¹⁰⁷. For a discussion of the limitations regarding the results from the TES see Chapter 2.

Yet, as the EAS makes clear, the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters is not formally examined in history. Pandemics and natural disasters are also rarely found in learning objectives.

Many OHTE member states' curricula prescribe in detail what schools must teach, particularly at secondary school (on average, ages 11-18), through a transmission model of history that teachers mediate dialogically with their students. In most OHTE member states, the prescribed history curriculum is built upon a canon that, at present, eschews topics such as pandemics and natural disasters, focusing instead on political history, designed to foster patriotism or identification with the national community. The responses of many teachers to the TES point out that there is insufficient time to teach about pandemics and natural disasters in depth.

Some states, such as France, Luxembourg and Spain, are already developing a new curriculum approach, one that gives more space to teachers when selecting the specific content to be taught. With these recent curricular changes, official moves by OHTE member states to address the challenges of teaching pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective have already been launched: some governments, notably the French and Luxembourgish governments, have introduced initiatives to address the challenges of global warming and climate change in schools, across the curriculum. In states with a flexible, outline curriculum (Andorra, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain), teachers already have more scope to introduce topics related to pandemics and natural disasters and discuss them in some depth, often in response to perceived student interest, as the responses to the TES show. However, even in these states, the only guarantee of consistent teaching of these topics would be, as already mentioned above, their explicit inclusion in the aims, objectives and learning outcomes laid out in history and other curricula.

If pandemics and natural disasters are to be taught with the thoroughness needed to meet present and future global challenges, Ministries of Education in OHTE member states may consider conducting an examination of their curricula in order to refocus and restructure them to take sufficient account of these challenges. They could do so by including the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters in history and/or in other subject areas, in the latter case incorporating a historical perspective, as substantive curriculum elements.

Specific teaching strategies

The potential for a more solid incorporation of pandemics and natural disasters in national curricula could be further enhanced by the elaboration of teaching strategies designed to ensure that history is taught through the lens of multiperspectivity in a way that fosters empathy and critical thinking skills, and that reinforces democracies. There are several areas in which such a reconsideration of teaching practices could be implemented.

- ▶ **Pedagogical approaches:** In the face of potential future pandemics and natural disaster events, as well as students' anxieties about the future, teachers might need to extend their range of pedagogical approaches. To study history is to examine the human condition in all its messy multi-dimensionality, which inescapably implies paying attention to the human dimension of historical events and processes. This was addressed in the TES, where a majority of teachers stated that teaching about pandemics and natural disasters needs to focus on human experiences and on how these impact dissimilarly people according to their socio-economic situations and ethnic, religious, cultural affiliation.
- ▶ **Pedagogical strategies:** Given the general rise in young people's anxieties and their fears for the future of the planet, which teachers responding to the survey have identified as of concern, a further challenge is for teachers to develop pedagogical strategies to help students develop a deeper understanding, as well as philosophical and emotional resources that will enable them to cope with pandemics and natural disasters in their lifetimes with resilience. The majority of teachers responding to the survey expressed the need for specific strategies in order to teach pandemics and natural disasters to their students.
- ▶ **A focus on historical empathy:** Understanding how people in the past were affected by and responded to pandemics and natural disasters can provide students with resilience based upon insight, as well as with models of how to plan for and cope with adversity. It is crucial that such pedagogical strategies introduce students to an empathetic understanding of the perspectives of people and their situations in the past and today. As analysis of the TES results indicate, a number of teachers are already utilising such strategies in their teaching through first-hand accounts; through the internet and new media; through fiction relating to pandemics and natural disasters, such as drama, role play, simulation, film, video, virtual reality, plays and fictional stories; through local history, family history and independent documentary research; and, crucially, through considering multiple perspectives in open discussion and debate.

Critical thinking involving questioning, investigation, the rigorous examination and analysis of sources and other evidence, hypothesising, argument and debate is central to the teaching of such potentially sensitive topics as pandemics and natural disasters in history. Critical engagement with ICT appears particularly important, given its

pervasiveness and its current (and ever increasing) use by both teachers and students. Highlighted in all Council of Europe recommendations relevant to history teaching since the 1990s, the informed and responsible use of digital resources seems to be a priority. This is particularly important given that this report found that these are the most popular methods used by teachers and students to support teaching about pandemics and natural disasters. Responding to this salient challenge and priority in history education, HISTOLAB, the joint project between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, which is implemented by the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe, emphasises the importance of digital resources in history teaching today. The HISTOLAB digital hub, which is currently being developed, aims to create a pool of knowledge to facilitate knowledge exchange and development in the field of history education, including tools that respond to the challenge of online disinformation and misinformation concerning history. In the context of HISTOLAB, professionals active in the field of history education, will in addition have the chance to learn about inspiring practices, including the teaching of pandemics and natural disasters from a historical perspective, through a series of webinars, workshops and the European innovation days in history education.¹⁰⁸ Without the deployment of skills specific to the historical discipline (critical interrogation of primary and secondary sources, critical enquiry, comparing different accounts, construction and testing of hypotheses, discussion and debate), students cannot develop the informed historical aptitudes necessary to understand complex and disputed topics, including past pandemics and natural disasters and their impact upon communities, societies, nations, Europe and the world.

The Committee of Ministers recommendation on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe (Committee of Ministers 2001) sees the discipline as occupying “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”. Moreover, it calls for a focus on the continent’s “common historical and cultural heritage, enriched through diversity, even with its conflictual and sometimes dramatic aspects”. As the present report shows, the bubonic plague pandemic of the 15th century, commonly referred to as the Black Death, represents such a common experience, a catastrophic event that is still relevant to all Europeans more than 600 years after its occurrence. Yet the European dimension in history teaching is often obscured at the expense of more particularistic events and processes that make up Europe’s cultural heritage, whether they be Greek philosophy, Roman law or the Judeo-Christian tradition, none of which are characteristic of the continent as a whole. In response to the recommendation’s call to “encourage teaching about periods and developments with the most obvious European dimension”, the bubonic plague pandemic could thus be seen as precisely that, although the authors of the recommendation probably had in mind events of a more political nature, such as European integration. But, while integration remains a work in progress on our continent, perhaps it is the shared experience of dramatic events such as the Black Death that points to our common vulnerability in the face of natural catastrophes that show the limits of human agency, in Europe and globally, as well as to the need for common responses to events such as pandemics and natural disasters.

108. See <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/histolab>, accessed 14 November 2022.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 –

Response rates for the Teachers' and Educators' Survey

Country	Total no. of responses
Albania	110 (69 complete, 41 incomplete)
Andorra	1 (1 incomplete)
Armenia	20 (17 complete / 3 incomplete)
Cyprus	39 (15 complete / 24 incomplete)
France	50 (10 complete / 40 incomplete)
Georgia	107 (30 complete / 77 incomplete)
Greece	46 (9 complete / 37 incomplete)
Ireland	61 (16 complete / 45 incomplete)
Luxembourg	8 (1 complete / 7 incomplete)
Malta	52 (20 complete / 32 incomplete)
North Macedonia	32 (18 complete / 14 incomplete)
Portugal	109 (11 complete / 98 incomplete)
Serbia	44 (18 complete / 26 incomplete)
Slovenia	69 (37 complete / 32 incomplete)
Spain	35 (15 complete / 20 incomplete)
Türkiye	139 (26 complete / 113 incomplete)

Appendix 2 –

Examples of inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in history textbooks in Greece

	Class/age	Topic	Quotation	Source
PRIMARY/ DIMOTIKÓ	C/8-9	Creation of the world	At the time of the Gigantomachy, Athena chased the giant Enceladus over the Mediterranean. She threw a large island, Sicily, at him and buried him underneath. Enceladus roared and breathed fire from his mouth. Then the earth shook, there was an earthquake, and Sicily's largest volcano, Mount Etna, trembled and spewed lava and smoke that covered the sun. And even today, when there's a big earthquake, we say 'Enceladus has struck' (Apollodoros, <i>Vivliothiki A,6,2</i>).	Maistrellis, Kalivi and Michail (2013: 10)
		The Minoan civilisation	"The happy civilization of the Minoans lasted for over 1500 years. The volcanic eruption of Thira and the tsunami reached the Cretan shores, destroying the rich Anactores. So, the Cretan power was diminished and the Mycenaeans were able to occupy Crete."	Maistrellis, Kalivi and Michail (2013: 127)
		The Mycenaean civilisation	"The Mycenaeans or Achaeans, having the Minoans as an example, also became traders. With their ships they travelled throughout the Mediterranean and reached as far as Egypt, Palestine and Cyprus. They also occupied Crete, which, after the eruption of the volcano of Thera and the destruction of its cities, had lost its great power."	Maistrellis, Kalivi and Michail (2013: 131)
	D/9-10	Peloponnesian War	In the second year a great disease (plague) struck Athens. Many died. Among them was Pericles. Athens lost its leader at a very difficult time."	Katsoulakos et al. (2010: 81)
		The danger from Persia	"The Persians subjugated Macedonia, but their fleet was badly damaged in a thunderstorm that broke out near the shores of Mount Athos."	Katsoulakos et al. (2010: 51)
	E/10-11	Byzantine Cyprus	"Constantine the Great highly valued the strategic position of Cyprus and took care of its utilisation. He built the earthquake-damaged ancient capital of Salamis and named it Constantia."	Glentis and Maragkoudakis (2015: 115)
LOWER SECONDARY/ GYMNÁSIO	A/12-13	The Cycladic civilisation	"Around 1600 BC, when large Cycladic settlements were destroyed by an earthquake, the Cyclades passed into the sphere of influence of Minoan Crete, which then experienced its greatest prosperity."	Katsoulakos, Kokkorou-Alevra and Skoulatos (2012: 21)
		The Minoan civilisation	The first palaces are destroyed around 1700 BC, by an "earthquake, but they are rebuilt more imposing."	Katsoulakos, Kokkorou-Alevra and Skoulatos (2012: 23)
			"Around 1450 BC the Minoan palaces were destroyed, probably by an earthquake, except for that of Knossos."	Katsoulakos, Kokkorou-Alevra and Skoulatos (2012: 25)

LOWER SECONDARY / GYMNÁSIO		The Peloponnesian War	The year 430 BC, an infectious disease decimates the population of Athens, Pericles himself (429 BC) falls victim to it."	Katsoulakos, Kokkorou-Alevra and Skoulatos (2012: 84)
	B/13-14	Heraclius and his dynasty (610-717)	"α. Byzantium in crisis: In the second half of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century. Byzantium was shaken by a multifaceted crisis. Plagues, bad harvests, earthquakes and invasions of the empire. The result was the abandonment or decline of cities, a decrease in population and a decline in trade and monetary circulation. The expansion of the crisis in the led to the neglect of the public economy of the army."	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 19)
		The formation of Western Europe at the end of the Middle Ages	"The situation is aggravated by adverse weather conditions during the 14th century, when food shortages quickly lead to a prolonged famine. As a result of these conditions, in 1345 the Black Plague found breeding ground and spread in Europe. By 1400 it had annihilated a large part of its population."	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 97)
		Byzantium's period of decline	"The occupation of cities, massacres and the flight of Christians to neighbouring countries, combined with the effects of famine and plague, led to the Islamisation (i.e. conversion to Islam) of the provinces of Asia Minor."	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 55)
		Byzantine culture	"Byzantine does not have many dietary options available, since he has to face hostile influences, arbitrariness of the powerful officials as well as epidemics and natural disasters."	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 71-2)
			"The Byzantines, too, devoted themselves to historiography and chronography. The Byzantine historians were modelled on the ancient Greek historians. Chronography is a popular historical narrative with no attempt to search for the truth, with an emphasis on miracles or natural disasters."	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 76)
		Medieval Europe	"Inventions in agriculture, such as the wheeled plough, the metal horn and the collar for the underbills, began to be applied. These innovations, as well as the introduction of three-zone farming, increased agricultural production. These advances in agriculture, milder climatic conditions, the decline in epidemics and the prevalence of a period of relative calm in Europe led to a rapid increase in population."	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 94)
			"The first symptoms of the decline of feudalism began to appear in the early 13th century, and by the beginning of the 14th century it had taken the form of a profound crisis. Europe was now entering a period of transition (mid-13th century to mid-15th century) from the medieval world to the dawn of the new age. Arable land is no longer sufficient to feed a population that is growing at a rate higher than its production potential. The situation was exacerbated by adverse weather conditions in the 14th century, when the food shortage quickly took the form of a prolonged famine. It was under these conditions that the Black Plague found a fertile breeding ground, invading Europe in 1345 and wiping out a large part of its population by 1400."	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 97)

LOWER SECONDARY / GYMNÁSIO	B/13-14	Europe in early modern times	<p>“Christians are alarmed by the constant wars, epidemics and prophecies of the end of the world. Without spiritual guidance, they are confused and dominated by the idea of death and anxiety about the salvation of their souls. The Church not only fails to respond to the believers’ concerns but also exploits their posthumous fear of hell by selling documents of absolution, so-called indulgences. Humanists condemn these practices of the Church and the superstitions of the people and propose a sincere faith based on the true message of Christ. They argue that this will be understood by the faithful through direct contact with the divine word through translations of the Bible into the vernacular and without the mediation of the Church’s official interpretation of the sacred texts.”</p>	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 120)
			<p>“In the 17th century, Europe with 100 million inhabitants was the most densely populated region on earth after the Indian peninsula and China. The population is more or less static, but from the first decades of the 18th century it grows regularly. This increase is due to a reduction in mortality due to improved crop yields, fewer epidemics and less deadly wars. Demographic change in turn leads to an increase in demand and creates new needs which producers must meet.”</p>	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 125-6)
		Chronological charts	<p>“The Black Death” (1345-1400)</p>	Dimitroukas and Ioannou (2012: 147)
	C/14-15	Consequences of the Second World War and the establishment of the United Nations	<p>“The worst situation prevailed in Germany and Austria, which were plagued by hunger, the black market and the risk of epidemics.”</p>	Louvi and Xifaras (2012: 135)
GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY/GENIKOLÝKEO	A/15-16	Peloponnesian War	<p>“Summary report of the disasters of ‘Peloponnesian War’”. The original source mentions the following. “Never before have there been so many exiles and so many people killed people, whether in war or in civil strife. Except much of what is reported in old stories, but which were rarely verified, became believable. For there were many and destructive earthquakes and eclipses of the sun far more frequent than could be mentioned for the old times. Great droughts occurred in many places and caused famines and finally the terrible epidemic, which caused great damage and destruction. All this happened during the war.”</p>	Mastrapas (2012: 103-4)
		The Aegean civilisations	<p>“Around 1500 BC, the eruption of the volcano buried under the lava a large of the island - in the present-day village of Akrotiri, which had been flourishing since the beginning of the late Bronze Age. The inhabitants of Thera fled the island, probably warned by seismic tremors before the total destruction of the island. For the other island settlements there is no clear evidence of abandonment or total destruction.</p>	Mastrapas (2012: 59-60)

A/15-16	The Aegean civilisations	However, it is clear that since then the situation has gradually changed in the Aegean with the consequent progressive but complete domination of the Mycenaeans in the 14th century BC."	Mastrapas (2012: 59-60)
		"The Cretan expansion also in the Aegean Sea is a fact that is not open to question. But the prosperity was interrupted, around 1500 BC, by the second in a row destruction of the palaces. A possible version of this destruction is considered the eruption of the volcano of Thera. Only Knossos of the palace centres survived the test of the disaster and continued its independent course for another century. However, the disaster did not mark the end of civilization in Crete."	Mastrapas (2012: 63)
	Chronological chart	"per. 1500 BC. Eruption of Thera volcano and new destruction of palaces in Crete."	Mastrapas (2012: 288)
B/16-17	From antiquity to the Middle Ages	"These developments were attributed to natural disasters (earthquakes and epidemics) and foreign invasions, such as the Slavs and the Avars."	Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 7)
	The Iconoclastic controversy	"The initiation of the Iconoclastic combat was due to a catastrophic earthquake with an epicentre in the sea area between Thira and Thirasia. The earthquake was interpreted as a manifestation of divine wrath, because the worship of icons was a manifestation of idolatry in the Church. In 726 Leo III launched his first attack on the icons."	Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 20)
	Society and economy (6th-9th centuries)	"Epidemics and natural disasters which shook the empire in the second half of the 6th century, in combination with the losses from wars and hostile invasions, caused a great reduction in its population."	Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 21)
	Preamble to the heyday of the Byzantine state (843-867)	"From the beginning of the 9th century an increase in agricultural production and demographic recovery, mainly in cities, was observed, where, due to more employment possibilities, a part of the rural population began to migrate. This trend strengthened during the 10th century; that is when the large land property expanded and agricultural taxation increased. At the same time, epidemics subsided. So the unhindered natural growth of the urban population and internal migration contributed to the demographic recovery."	Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 34)
	The first three crusades	"The armies of the First Crusade came mainly from areas such as Flanders, Provence, Southern Italy, etc., where in the second half of the 11th century there was a large increase of the population and manifested themselves, with great tensions, famine and epidemics."	Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 67)
	Latinocracy and the Paleologian era (1204-1453), late medieval centuries in the West	"In the West the feudal system was fully developed during the 13th century and its decline was already beginning, due to a deep and multifaceted crisis that was intensified by natural disasters."	Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 71)

B/16-17

<p>The Ottoman advance in the Balkans, Byzantium subjugated</p>	<p>“The last hundred years of Byzantium’s life were marked by anxiety in the face of the Ottoman advance. ... The state treasury was completely empty, the administrative system in complete disarray. The currency had been devalued and all sources of revenue had been exhausted. Orhan was the first to lead his people to conquests in Europe. The Turks, in 1354, taking advantage of a great earthquake, captured the fortress of Gallipoli. In Constantinople, the people were seized with panic, believing they were in imminent danger.”</p>	<p>Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 84)</p>
	<p>“A series, moreover, of natural disasters, such as floods, caused great damage both to the agricultural economy and commerce, while births also decreased significantly. The biggest blow to the European society in the 14th century was the Black Death, an epidemic of bubonic plague that from the 14th century from 1347 to the end of the century spread to across Europe and wiped out about half of the European population. The demographic and economic deterioration that was caused by famine and epidemics was aggravated by the disastrous and long Hundred Years’ War (1339-1453) between France and England.”</p>	<p>Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 88-89)</p>
<p>Western Europe during the late Middle Ages; the feudal crisis</p>	<div data-bbox="663 1014 1166 1541" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>“Procession of self-flagellants in the year 1348. Miniature from a 14th-century manuscript. According to the text, the pilgrims were carrying crosses and flags in their hands, trying to exorcise the plague.”</p>	<p>Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 89)</p>
	<p>“Notes of a monk on the Black Death in Pomerania”</p> <p>The plague struck the whole earth for almost 20 years, causing great precision and famine. When we came to the monastery, a kilo of rye cost 10 shillings (a subdivision of the gilda), that is, half a gilda (a kind of currency), In our parts today a kilo costs a gilda, but in the Strait and on the frontier a gilda and a half; that is why many laymen died of plague and hunger.</p>	<p>Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 89)</p>

B/16-17		<p>God then sent his plague upon the world and desolated the land.</p> <p>Source: H. Busley et al. <i>Geschichtliche Weltkunde, Ausgabe für Gymnasien in Bayern, Vol. 2, Frankfurt. 1981, 157."</i></p>	
	Byzantine culture	<p>The Chronography-Historiography.</p> <p>Chronography is a genre developed by Byzantine writers with the intention of showing the contribution of Byzantium to the history of human salvation. Chronicles are written in plain language, as a rule, they describe curious phenomena, earthquakes, storms, eclipses, etc, in strict chronological order, usually from The chronicles, which are usually from the creation of the world, are usually written in chronological order.</p>	Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 92)
	The decline of the Ottoman Empire, the beginnings of the Eastern Question	<p>Source: The land of misery</p> <p>From Constantinople to the most extreme point from the Bosphorus to the Adriatic, its cities are dunghill, its villages are nests of desolation. Everywhere there is only talk of plague or fires or epidemics or famine" (F. Pouqueville, <i>Voyage de la Grèce</i>, vol. 2, Paris, 1826, p. 231)</p>	Dimitroukas, Ioannou and Baroutas (2014: 188)
C/17-18	First World War and its immediate consequences	"For the first time in the history of the old continent, the most victims in wartime were caused not by epidemics and hardships, but by the deadly weapons of war."	Koliopoulos et al. (2011: 79)
	From the 19th to the 20th centuries	"In many colonies western man dismantled traditional social structures without creating in their place viable western social structures institutions, but nevertheless managed to eliminate deadly epidemics, slavery and other endemic scourges."	Koliopoulos et al. (2011: 56)
	Intellectual and artistic movements from early Romanticism to the beginning of the 21st century	<p>"What is happening to the leisure time of modern man? The phenomena of hurry, nervousness, fickle life, which have been observed since the development of the great cities, are now spreading as epidemically as once the plague and cholera. In fact, forces are appearing on the scene which could not even be imagined by the hasty of the 19th century."</p> <p>"The phenomena of haste, nervousness, unsettled life that have been observed since the time of the development of big cities, are now spreading as epidemical as once did plague and cholera."</p>	Koliopoulos et al. (2011: 186)
C/17-18	The refugees in Greece (1821-1930)	<p>"The refugees from Psara</p> <p>The government took care of their housing, stipulated that they receive a portion of the taxes of the region and drew up a list of the Psarians captives for their redemption. Nevertheless, the Psarians of Monemvasia felt that their situation was not being satisfactorily addressed, and it worsened dramatically with the outbreak of a deadly epidemic. Most of the Psarians later left Monemvasia and scattered again in the Cyclades."</p>	Margaritis et al. (2014: 121)

GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY / ΓΕΝΙΚΟΛΥΚΕΟ	C/17-18	The refugees in Greece (1821-1930)	<p>“Refugees and Irredentist movements in the 19th century Thessaly, Epirus and Macedonia</p> <p>But the Crimean war also affected the refugees in Athens. The cholera epidemic, brought by the French occupation troops, spread quickly in the capital. The epidemic particularly affected the southern part of the city, where refugees from the Turkish occupied parts of Greece, who had arrived in Athens after the end of the war, were living in miserable conditions.”</p>	Margaritis et al. (2014: 134)
			<p>The Asia Minor disaster</p> <p>The first censuses of refugees who fled to Greece did not reflect the reality. The number must have been much higher, if we take into account the high mortality rate in the early years due to the high number of refugees conditions and epidemics, the reduced number of children born in the early years, and the migration of many refugees to other countries. The 1928 census recorded 1,220,000 refugees. Diseases overwhelmed the refugees who were suffering, crudely housed and malnourished. Typhus, influenza, tuberculosis (mainly in the cities) and malaria (mainly in the countryside) were ravaging them. According to data from the Society of the Society of Nations, a significant number of refugees died within a year of their arrival in Greece.”</p>	Margaritis et al. (2014: 146-7)

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Appendix 3 –

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The scientific rigour of the drafting process of the first thematic report of the Ohte about pandemics and natural disasters as reflected in history teaching was ensured by the Ohte Scientific Advisory Council (SAC), which is composed of 11 renowned persons in the field of history teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the members of the Ohte governing board contributed greatly to the creation of the report by co-ordinating and facilitating the process of data collection in the context of the Education Authorities' Questionnaire and follow-up questions regarding official information, which arose during the drafting process. The governing board is composed of one representative from each member state and is Ohte's decision-making body.

The process of the creation and publication of the first thematic report was co-ordinated by the secretariat.

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Since the beginning of recorded human history, pandemics and natural disasters have highly impacted the historical narratives of mankind. Each time, they remind humans how fragile they are and how limited their knowledge is. Despite their impact, these events are given little attention in history education.

The first thematic report of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTe) analyses how pandemics and natural disasters are taught across different levels of education.

The observatory's mission is to provide a clear picture of the state of history teaching in Europe. Within the countries that are party to the observatory, this is done through OHTe reports on the state of history teaching and thematic reports, which explore particular areas of interest and how they are handled in history lessons.

The observatory's vision is embodied by its motto: "Teaching history, grounding democracy". In practice, this means that it promotes quality history education in order to improve the understanding of democratic culture among young people. The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe is a Council of Europe enlarged partial agreement.

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