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Teaching about the Holocaust

Vilnius, Lithuania, 1-6 April 2000



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Teaching about the Holocaust

European seminar for educational staff
Vilnius, Lithuania, 1-6 April 2000

Report

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The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 to achieve greater unity between European parliamentary democracies. It is the oldest of the European political institutions and has 45 member states¹ including the 15 members of the European Union. It is the widest intergovernmental and interparliamentary organisation in Europe and has its headquarters in Strasbourg, France.

With only questions relating to national defence excluded from the Council of Europe's work, the Organisation has activities in the following areas: democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, media and communication, social and economic affairs, education, culture, heritage and sport, youth, health, environment and regional planning, local democracy and legal co-operation.

The European Cultural Convention was opened for signature in 1954. This international treaty is also open to European countries which are not members of the Council of Europe, and enables them to take part in the Council's programmes on education, culture, sport and youth. So far, 48 states have acceded to the European Cultural Convention: Council of Europe's full member states plus Belarus, the Holy See and Monaco.

Four steering committees – the Steering Committee for Education, the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research, the Steering Committee for Culture and the Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage – carry out tasks pertaining to education and culture under the European Cultural Convention. They also maintain a close working relationship with the conferences of specialised European ministers for education, culture and the cultural heritage.

The programmes of these four committees are an integral part of the Council of Europe's work and, like the programmes in other sectors, they contribute to the Organisation's three main policy objectives:

1. Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

- the protection, reinforcement and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and pluralist democracy;
- the promotion of awareness of European identity;
- the search for common responses to the great challenges facing European society.

The education programme of the Steering Committee for Education and the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research currently covers school, out-of-school and higher education. At present, there are projects on education for democratic citizenship, history, modern languages, school links and exchanges, educational policies, training for the educational staff, the reform of legislation on higher education in Central and Eastern Europe, the recognition of qualifications, lifelong learning for equity and social cohesion, European studies for democratic citizenship, the social sciences and challenge of transition, learning and teaching in the communication society, education for Roma/Gypsy children in Europe and the teaching of the Holocaust.

These multilateral activities are complemented by targeted assistance to the newer member states in bringing their education systems in tune with European norms and best practice. Co-ordinated under a strategy of “partnerships for educational renewal” projects are carried out, in particular on education legislation and structures, citizenship and history teaching. The priority regions are Southeast Europe and countries sprung from the former Soviet Union.

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe nor that of the Secretariat.

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1. Introduction

I believe that a seminar about the Holocaust is nothing less than a profound exercise in self-reflection – we seriously examine ourselves as human beings. Whatever our religious beliefs, our race or nationality, we realise today the seriousness of this phenomenon that humanity had to experience.

We realise that in spite of all the progress that has been achieved in so many spheres of life, human nature is still capable of bringing about “Auschwitz”. We therefore realise the fragility of humanity.

Perhaps we wonder whether the Holocaust was a one off, unfortunate and deplorable event which will never probably be repeated. Or else, on reflection, we realise that it was and still is part and parcel of human nature, whether we like it or not.

The Holocaust left deep wounds which, I believe, have not yet healed. In any case, deep scars definitely remain.

I think it was very courageous on the part of the organisers to hold a seminar on this topic. It is more than a hot issue, some of the people concerned are still alive and many are too emotionally involved to tackle the subject with a satisfactory amount of objectivity.

Everyone has his or her own agenda, and escaping from oneself is a very delicate and difficult matter. Issues of morality, responsibility and a deep sense of guilt still weigh heavily on our hearts. But I think that during this seminar we succeeded in tackling the issues involved with a very positive attitude. Through speeches, discussions in groups and personal encounters, we exchanged ideas about the Holocaust and learned that there are many different ways and perspectives on how to tackle the subject. After all we know that almost everything in life is subject to various interpretations.

During this seminar:

- we discussed the Holocaust in the context of history teaching in European schools
- we analysed historical consciousness vis-à-vis the Holocaust

- we studied in depth the different methods that can be adopted in the teaching and learning of the Holocaust
- we faced the constraints that hinder our teaching of this topic particularly those difficulties that work against the aims and objectives of history education
- we offered some solutions in the form of recommendations which, if implemented, will help our students to become more familiar with the Holocaust and its serious implications for all humanity.

2. The term “Holocaust”

On certain occasions during the seminar we mentioned the question regarding the usage of the term “Holocaust”, which is derived from “holos” meaning “whole” and “kautos” meaning “burnt”. Holocaust means large scale destruction especially by fire.

Usually the term is used to refer to the extermination of Jewish communities by the Nazi regime. Sometimes the Hebrew word “Shoah” is used instead.

There are those, however, who prefer to give a wider meaning to the term “Holocaust”, referring not only to the extermination of six million Jews, but also to many other groups including Gypsies, homosexuals, handicapped persons, Jehovah’s Witnesses as well as others killed by the Nazis.

3. The teaching of the Holocaust in its historical context

After the Nuremberg Trials people wanted to forget the Holocaust. In schools it was hardly mentioned, if at all.

The idea was fostered in Germany that the mass crimes were the responsibility of special troops, and not of the German army or of the population at large.

The Holocaust was not a popular subject. History textbooks in France and England in the 1950s and 1960s did not mention the word at all. The Second World War was commemorated without focusing on concentration camps and the massacre of millions of Jews and other

groups. The focus was on the actual fighting and the heroic deeds of the forces.

After the war, the Germans wanted to start afresh, to look towards a future of recovery, stabilisation and trust. It was not thought to be a good idea to accept responsibility, and therefore people started to deny that the Holocaust happened in their hometown or by people they knew. It was considered a thing of the past, and those responsible had either been already punished, had committed suicide or else were living in far off countries.

So the Holocaust was not taught at all, not even in Israel for the first ten years. The Holocaust was only remembered. It was perhaps thought that students could not cope with the atrocities that had been committed.

A fairly similar situation existed in the USA. History textbooks left out the Holocaust, or mentioned it in a few lines. The crimes that had been committed in the far off countries were too great to comprehend. Moreover, it was thought to be better for the survivors to forget the past and to integrate themselves in the American society.

But as the years passed by things started to change. Students in the 1960s were more interested in the Holocaust than their parents or teachers. More research was carried out, and the Germans started to look at themselves as victims of their own government.

Another change came about in Israel after the Eichman trial in 1961. Teachers and students wanted to find answers. Why did the Holocaust occur? Why were the Jews exterminated to such an extent? In the 1970s it started to become important to remember the victims, and to give them back their lost dignity. The testimonies of individuals assumed much greater importance.

Of great educational interest is the “historians’ debate” which started in Germany in 1986. There were those who wanted to present the Holocaust as yet another event in German and European history, no more special than the crimes of Stalinism. It was a question of whether the Holocaust was unique or not.

This is still very relevant today. Significant questions have to be reflected upon, especially because these have a great impact on the teaching and learning of the Holocaust:

- Is it true that “Auschwitz” was just another event in the history of Europe?
- Is it misuse of history to present the Holocaust as just another unfortunate and dreadful act of genocide?
- Was there or was there not something unique and singular about “Auschwitz”?
- What is the idea behind the attempt to de-demonise the Holocaust? Is it an attempt to purify and redeem the German national conscience?
- Is it enough to be absolved by others? Is self-absolution more important? But doesn't absolution then admit the presence of guilt?
- How correct is it to maintain that guilt is bearable insofar as the Holocaust was not unique? If it is unique, doesn't the Holocaust then leave an indelible mark on the German nation? Will not this present a situation which is difficult if not impossible to accept?

The above were some of the questions mentioned during the seminar especially in the working groups. Similar ideas and thoughts are bound to come to the mind of students especially the older ones, so it is necessary to thrash out these questions with them. Reflection will help them put the Holocaust in its historical context. They will learn not to generalise particularly regarding collective responsibility of nations.

Today there is a genuine interest in the teaching and learning of the Holocaust, even in countries which had up to recent times been under Communist domination. This brings us to an important item, that is, the Holocaust within the curriculum.

4. The Holocaust within the curriculum

Curriculum development and design is not only important but also very complicated. Educators have to decide what subjects to include and what to leave out. Sometimes they are constrained by the demands of national curricula. As a general rule history is one of the subjects that form the curriculum. It can be either an optional or a

compulsory subject. Whether to include the Holocaust or not is an even bigger problem, and the situation varies greatly in the different European countries.

Generally the Holocaust is not taught in primary schools, but there are exceptions, the most notable being the case of Israel where the Holocaust is not dealt with merely in the history lesson. An interdisciplinary and spiral approach is adopted starting from the kindergarten. At the 11th grade (when the students are 16 years old) the Holocaust is studied in depth for about thirty hours, giving lots of importance to testimonies and memories of the people.

In most European countries the Holocaust is studied in secondary schools and beyond. In Hungary, for example, it is a compulsory subject and studied within the context of national and international history. In September 1999 the Polish government decided to include the study of the Holocaust in the school curriculum. In Germany, a whole week project is dedicated to the Holocaust, giving importance to history on site and visits to museums. The Holocaust in Germany is taught within the context of totalitarianism. Although not compulsory, the Holocaust is given importance in Sweden and it is taught as part of the Second World War; the publication *Tell ye your children* is being extensively used. It is a compulsory subject in Lithuania, and taught at the secondary and upper secondary levels of education.

Whether to include the Holocaust or not is often a problem. Some countries may not be enthusiastic to include it because they were not directly involved and it has no importance whatsoever for their national history. Educators feel that there are topics which are more relevant to their particular geographical position and historical development. Such may be the case in Malta. In other countries, the situation may be totally different. There may be those who wish to leave out the Holocaust because they were too much involved, they want to forget and are not ready to deal with the guilt that is still embedded deep down in their hearts. Such may be the case in Lithuania where the Holocaust is still an unresolved issue. Perhaps there are still many who are not yet ready to admit that there were collaborators who helped actively in the destruction of the Jewish community. Moreover, the Holocaust in Lithuania was overshadowed by the repression carried out by the Soviets. Many Lithuanians consider that the attention of the world to the tragedy of the Jewish nation is over-emphasised, and too little compassion is shown for the

sorrow of the Lithuanian people. So the Holocaust in this country is not a popular subject. Still, the ministry of education has modified the history syllabus of secondary schools, and the new textbooks of history allot more space to the Holocaust.

Different countries have different attitudes and therefore different approaches. In England and Wales, for example, the teachers of Social Education are taking ownership of the Holocaust more than the teachers of history. The Holocaust forms part of religious education as well, and all teachers of religion cover the Holocaust in some depth at some stage or other in secondary schools.

During the seminar in Vilnius we agreed that this subject should be given importance in our curriculum. We also agreed that to do justice to the Holocaust, the teacher would have to dedicate a number of lessons because this topic has to be put in its proper context. Students have to explore the five whats, namely:

- What brought it about?
- What did really happen?
- What were the consequences of the Holocaust?
- What was the significance of the Final Solution to the Nazis and to their collaborators?
- What is its significance today?

It has been pointed out that it is important to choose the proper information for your students. There are certain things that have to be left out considering the age and the lack of maturity of the student. This also holds true when choosing strategies for the teaching of the Holocaust.

Whether in brief or in more detail, the Holocaust should be covered because it is too significant to be left out. Here are some practical problems that have to be considered:

- How much time should be allotted to the teaching of the Holocaust?
- When are students psychologically prepared to deal with this topic?

- What is to be included and what is to be left out?
- Which are the best pedagogical methods to adopt while teaching the Holocaust?
- Should we share these ideas with our own students? (They may have a great deal to say about these issues).
- Should parents be consulted and actively involved before we take any decisions?

These and other questions would have to be tackled by individual schools for the benefit of their students. Any decision would have to be based on the principle of child centred education. It is the student and not the subject or the topic that has to be given priority.

The Holocaust is a delicate topic and it is not just a thing of the past. It is affecting the present and will affect our future. This leads us to the next item, which is the Holocaust and historical consciousness.

5. The Holocaust and historical consciousness

Historical consciousness is the relationship between the past and the present and its implications on our aspirations for the future.

It was realised during the seminar that we encounter three types of history teachers. There are those who regard history as the study of the past, no more and no less. These are the teachers who deal with the causes, the course and the consequences of the Holocaust. Generally these teachers belong to the old school, they tend to emphasise knowledge and give much less importance if at all to the other objectives of history education.

Then there are those who connect the past with the present. So they deal with the Holocaust as a past event and with how it affects us today. They may very well start with the present and then go back to the Holocaust. For example they might take as their starting point places where synagogues once stood, the concentration camps or the meagre number of Jews in areas which used to be inhabited by thousands. One may very well start with Neo-Nazism or with the issues of fundamentalism, nationalism or discrimination (racial, ethnic, religious, social or sexual). This will lead back to the

Holocaust. These teachers would be the ones who ask their students questions similar to the following:

- What do you think about the Holocaust?
- Why do you think it has come about?
- Are its consequences still felt today?

Teachers who stress the connection of the past with the present realise the importance of the student here and now. So they are not merely interested in the event as a past experience. They realise that its impact on the present day situation and on the student as an individual is also very important. So it is not merely a question of teaching method that is involved here. The teacher is connecting the past with the present not only for the simple reason of making things interesting but because of the philosophical significance of the teaching and learning of the subject.

The third group of teachers would go so far as to connect the past and the present with our aspirations for the future. The teachers realise that the Holocaust, as a past event with consequences that are still felt today, must affect our future. This presents us with a very big challenge.

What we are discussing here involves the rationale of history education. There was an underlying feeling during the seminar that we have to find a suitable answer to the fundamental question:

Why do we teach history?

This question has to be answered, because it will directly involve:

- the target or targets we want to achieve during the history lesson
- the pedagogy that is to be adopted to achieve our objectives.

It has been pointed out that we do not merely teach, but we educate. Hence we have to deal with the issues of attitudes, values, ethics, morality, individuality and socialisation that are necessarily involved in history education.

What are the implications of all this to the teaching and learning of the Holocaust? We cannot answer this question unless we are conscious of our aspirations. During the seminar we have dealt with this issue, and agreed that we are in favour of tolerance, freedom, multi-cultured communities, democracy and peace. These are the values that we cherish. Hence these should form our guidelines.

So, when teaching the Holocaust, we have also to deal with the future, and we have to challenge our students with stimulating questions, such as:

- What can we do so that there will not be another Holocaust?
- Do you in the first place agree with what happened? Why do you agree or disagree?

It has been pointed out that questions like these may be risky, but who said that education is not one of the most risky areas that has to be dealt with? It is risky and delicate, because we have to educate without imposing, we have to teach without conditioning, we have to develop without manipulating.

We have to help the student to become a self-created individual.

We can help to do this in the process of teaching the Holocaust. Hence the educator's approach to the topic is of paramount importance.

6. The educator's attitude and approach to the teaching of the Holocaust

History is the story of mankind, with its ups and downs, its progress and regression. If humanity is at the very centre of all historical activity, how much is it so with regard to the Holocaust!

As an educator I have to be effective in my teaching. But as has so often been stressed during the seminar, I have to know what I want to achieve. This is a problem with which the participants of the seminar struggled all along during the meetings. The answer depends on many factors, one of which is the individual as an educator:

- The teacher's personal context (a Jewish teacher, the son or daughter of a survivor / victim, a teacher with no attachment at

all to the Holocaust, a teacher who entertains feelings of anti-Semitism). Where do I stand personally?

- The national context (teaching the Holocaust in a country where Jews had been murdered, or in a country with no historical ties neither to the Jewish culture nor to the Holocaust). Where do I stand in relation to the national context?
- The historical context (the different schools of thought regarding history, its interpretation and teaching). What are my aims, objectives and targets of history education?
- The present context (what do I want to achieve now?) Will my objectives be the same in twenty years' time?

I have to analyse myself and my situation:

- What is the significance of the Holocaust to me personally?
- Do I assume ownership to what I say during the lessons?
- What methods do I choose and why?
- How do I introduce the topic? Why do I choose that method and not another?
- Do I view the Jews as heroes or as victims of the Holocaust?
- Who is at the centre of the lesson? Myself as the teacher? The students as learners? The Holocaust itself?
- Do I approach the Holocaust in the same way that I approach other items in the syllabus? Do I make a difference between teaching, for example, the 1848 revolutions, and teaching the Holocaust?

It has been pointed out during the seminar that the Holocaust cannot be dealt with as just another academic topic. The Holocaust is an educational tool. But first of all the teacher has to be motivated. Moreover, he or she has to approach the subject with great humility, because, as it has been said, we do not teach about the Holocaust, but

we try to relate to something tragic that happened in the past and which can or can not have direct relevance to the present.

Anti-semitism existed in the past and it still exists today. Where do I stand as an educator? If I were to go back to Nazi times, would I be a collaborator, a bystander or perhaps a defender of the oppressed?

So whose problem is the Holocaust? It has been said that it is not a Jewish problem. It is a personal problem, or a situation with which I have to struggle. Perhaps I am a Christian, a Muslim or an unbeliever. Does this affect my attitude towards the Holocaust and its teaching?

We are all different and therefore our objectives can vary from one another's when dealing with the Holocaust. Perhaps we are not even aware of our own hidden agendas; thus the necessity of self-reflection. We need to listen to ourselves, and to be honest when we approach this topic.

We have to realise our limitations. Our objectivity is always relative. Even if we stick to facts we have to make a choice about what to include and what to leave out.

We also have to realise that we are conditioned by the use of language. We try to express certain feelings, emotions and experiences that cannot be described using words because they can hardly be understood.

So the importance of the analysis of oneself and of the whole environment. This will help us to be wiser when choosing the topics to be included in the teaching and learning of the Holocaust.

7. Topics to be included in the teaching and learning of the Holocaust

One of the practical aims of the seminar held in Vilnius was to discuss the production of a teaching pack which is to be ready by November 2000. So it was appropriate to spend some time discussing the topics that are to be included in the pack.

The participants were presented with a number of items that had been prepared by the authors themselves. One immediately realises the great number of items that can be included, starting with a definition of the word "Holocaust", and then dealing with genocide, Judaism,

anti-Semitism, the birth of Nazism and the formation of the Nazi party, anti-Jewish discrimination from 1933 to 1939, emigration of Jews, reaction of the German population, establishment of Ghettos, Jewish resistance, persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses, Gypsies and homosexuals, collaborators, concentration camps, gas chambers and crematoria, Sonderkommandes, international reactions, the political situation, the Jews in different European countries, the Righteous, rescuers (prominent individuals and ordinary people), military strategies, the end of the camps, the death toll, survivors' return, silence on both sides, war crimes' trials, the pain of giving evidence, denial and revisionism.

The participants proposed the specific inclusion of "bystanders".

The pack will include a list of films and websites as well as maps, documents and eyewitness accounts.

It is quite obvious that this work will not be purely knowledge based, but will also give importance to the other objectives of history education.

Participants were informed (a) that the word "Holocaust" applies to the attempted destruction of European Jewry and (b) that it *must* be taught in the broader context of the Nazi discrimination, incarceration and murder of other groups.

There were participants who had their reservations with regard to the proposed schemes. The main objections were the following:

- The pack may be based too much on chronology.

[**Solution:** consider adopting a more thematic approach, for example "Children during the Holocaust" or "Everyday life in a Ghetto". Such examples will offer our students great challenging situations].

- The proposed units are too many in number while the time available to teach the Holocaust is relatively short (three/four hours).

[**Solution:** concentrate on ten units only].

- The pack will not be suitable for all age groups.

[**Solution:** choose one age group, perhaps fourteen/fifteen year olds, and write the pack with that group in mind].

- The pack will not be suitable to students of all abilities.

[**Solution:** each topic can be graded. There can be easy information, documents, sources, questions and activities. Within the same topic, there can be more complicated information, questions, maps and documents].

- Teaching strategies for the more able may be unsuitable for the less able student.

[**Solution:** variety is the spice of life; adopt different teaching methods].

This last point will bring us to the next section, which is, how to teach the Holocaust, what are the most effective methods to adopt, and what are the targets we want to attain.

8. How to teach the Holocaust, and targets to be attained

There are some rather subtle issues that have to be considered. We often speak of traditional and modern methods of teaching.

When we say traditional we generally mean lecture type lessons where the teacher is the giver of information and the student is considered to be an empty bottle ready to be filled up to the brim.

The traditional method (or methods) would perhaps involve the use of pictures probably found in the textbook that is being used.

On the other hand there are innovative methods that often involve the new technology: CD ROMS, the Internet, films and documentaries, and interviews with survivors. This results in the use of different and various sources that may sometimes present contradictory information.

During this seminar we tended to agree that:

- i. We need not and should not stick to one method.

- ii. Children learn in different ways, hence the necessity to employ various methods of teaching.
- iii. Teaching has to be transformed into learning. Hence students have to be motivated. Therefore the necessity to employ challenging and stimulating methods of teaching.
- iv. If we stick to one method, lessons will become boring.
- v. Traditional methods (such as the narrative method) still have an important place in history education. Students can be captivated and motivated by such methods.
- vi. Teaching aids, whatever they are, can never replace the teacher. But the teacher has to be a professional. Apart from knowing the content, he or she has to be well trained in certain teaching skills:
 - the ability to be clear with regard to objectives
 - the ability to choose the most appropriate and effective method of teaching, considering the situation
 - good use of voice
 - the importance of dramatisation
 - the ability to put feeling into what is being said and presented
 - the importance of eye contact
 - body language
 - a questioning technique.

Let us be very careful and refrain from saying that new methods of teaching are automatically superior to or more effective than traditional methods. Let us propagate good practice whether it is the result of traditional or innovative methods.

In view of all this we can go back to the Holocaust and ask the question:

How do we teach the Holocaust?

The answer to that question leads us to the methodology that is to be employed. But the answer to that question is also intimately connected to the more general question (already asked) Why do we teach history?

I think the answer is quite simple, although, as has appeared to be the case, we do not entirely agree with regard to the aims and objectives of history education. But we do agree that we want our students to learn what has happened, the truth and nothing but the truth, to acquire skills, form the right opinions and become self-created individuals and active members of the community.

We believe that the teaching and learning of the Holocaust can help us achieve all these objectives of history education.

The teaching of the topics discussed in the previous section will help the students acquire the basic knowledge about the Holocaust. The methods of teaching that are to be adopted depend very much on the targets we want to achieve.

If we want to develop the students' skill of observation we have to make use of some visual material (photographs, pictures, posters, etc.). A visit to a museum or to a historical site should not be missed.

If our objective is to train our students in carrying out research work (finding information, extracting information from sources, comparing testimonies and choosing what is substantial from what is trivial), we have to make use of several sources of information – written and visual material, documentaries, computer software and the like.

Such methods are also to be used if we want to develop in our students the skill of detecting bias and propaganda. Different sites on the Internet will surely help in this regard.

How do we teach the skill of empathising? One of the methods is to teach history on site. It will also help if the student identifies with a historical character that experienced the Holocaust. In this way it is easier to put oneself in someone else's shoes. This skill will not be acquired simply by reading from a textbook or by listening to a lecture-like lesson.

So we have to find the most appropriate method according to the target we want to reach. We have to find methods that will help the student to develop a critical mind, to come to conclusions, and to

appreciate the rights of other people, the dignity of the human person, the necessity of tolerance and diversity, the advantages of harmony in society, and our freedom to choose and to say YES or NO in a given situation.

The Holocaust can be taught not only as a special and very significant topic, that is, just for its own sake, but also as a means of teaching various accepted aims and objectives of history education.

The following is an exhaustive compilation of targets and suggested methods of teaching that will prove to be very effective. It was presented by one of the working groups during the seminar.

- **Target** Understanding personal feelings/situations.
Method Role plays, interviews, testimonies of survivors.
- **Target** Encouraging identity and sharing experiences.
Method Stories of individuals and use of diaries.
- **Target** Proactive involvement.
Method Singing / rap.
- **Target** Decision-making (e.g. deciding what to include and what to leave out in a film about the Holocaust. Who will be the hero).
Method Be Stephen Spielberg.
- **Target** Team building.
Method Group poster work.
- **Target** Empathising.
Method Present dilemma situation/s (you want to run away from the ghetto but you do not want to leave your father and mother behind you).
- **Target** Imagination and involvement.

- Method** Follow me down the street (close eyes, tell story or present a situation).
- **Target** Connecting the past with the present.
- Method** Media approach – look for TV / news stories about genocide etc.
- **Target** Opening up feelings, motivate.
- Method** Start with a film (e.g. “Schindler’s List”).
- **Target** Empathising with children.
- Method** Start with a film (e.g. “Au revoir les enfants”).
- **Target** Self-reflection.
- Method** Present very challenging questions (Will you risk your life for another person?).
- **Target** Skill of observation and imagination.
- Methods** Discuss with students pictures about the Holocaust.
- **Target** Skill of comparing and contrasting, finding similarities and differences.
- Methods** Present different sources.
- **Target** Skill of carrying out research work.
- Method** Ask students to choose relevant information from books, articles, etc. Make wise use of the index.
- **Target** Skill of detecting bias and propaganda.
- Method** Use Internet, different sites, compare and contrast sources.

- **Target** Attitudes, values, taking a stand against evil.
- Method** Present heroes of Holocaust, those who resisted, the righteous, the rescuers.

9. Presentations:

9.1. “Sunset in Lithuania”

Very often, documentaries and films are not suitable for children because they may find them too difficult or too frightening. But this is not the case with “Sunset in Lithuania”, a video specifically produced for teaching purposes by the Centre for School Improvement. The film was the fruit of co-operation and team work by all concerned.

It deals with the life of the Jewish community in Lithuania, including its religion and culture. The Holocaust is therefore presented within a context. The student will get the feeling that something beautiful was being destroyed by people who should have known better.

The film was locally produced; the faces and the buildings are therefore familiar. The mother tongue was adopted and this makes it easier for the Lithuanian student to identify with this production. Beautiful and well chosen background music adds to its interesting features.

The film helps the student to remember those who met an untimely death, and to analyse his or her feelings towards them.

Some of the scenes are really moving – Jewish people visiting graves and sites where their ancestors perished in 1941. Lighting a candle and putting a stone will help the student understand “the great wound” and “the greatest loss”.

The film is sentimental yet objective. It gives importance to primary sources focusing on eyewitnesses’ accounts that describe the humiliation, the fear and the pain of those days.

The film is after what is historically true. There were priests who told the Lithuanians to treat the Jews well, other priests did not and they let things happen.

“It was so terrible” said a woman eyewitness. “It was so painful to watch your neighbours being taken away.” Thousands were killed; the feeling of responsibility is still present in Lithuania. So it is

important for the student to know what happened, but without being burdened with guilt.

Teachers of different subjects can make use of the film which is intended to be accompanied by a booklet which serves as a guide.

The film will surely have an impact on students. It is good food for thought:

- Students will be helped to think of the rights of others, even the rights of those who may be in a minority.
- Students will be helped to realise that every group has its own culture which is beautiful and should be preserved.
- They will understand that no one should ever be turned into a scapegoat.
- They will also realise the importance of harmony in society and that this will never be achieved unless we accept diversity.

9.2. “Everyday life in the Warsaw Ghetto”

This was a presentation by members of the Yad Vashem who explained to the participants their educational approach and pedagogy when dealing with the Holocaust.

“Everyday life in the Warsaw Ghetto” is one in a series of units prepared by the organisation. The series is tailored to various age groups, developed by a team of educators, psychologists and historians. These units have been successfully tested in schools, and are available in different languages. For example, “Everyday life in the Warsaw Ghetto” is available in Hebrew, English, Spanish and German. This unit is based on photographs taken by a German soldier in the Warsaw Ghetto in September 1941. It includes 27 slides, a Teacher’s Manual and a Student Workbook. This unit is recommended for junior high and senior high school students.

The units combine the traditional methods of teaching with modern technology. Each unit has objectives to be reached. This is very important because objectives can only be attained if they are first of all identified. “Everyday life in the Warsaw Ghetto” does not attempt to provide knowledge through systematic study, but its purpose is to

enable students to gain a sense of life in the ghetto as it was experienced by the ghetto residents themselves.

The Teacher's Guide makes it clear that the importance of the unit does not lie in providing clear-cut answers, but in getting students to ask relevant and challenging questions.

To achieve this objective, a four-step process is used. Students are asked to inspect the photographs, read carefully and closely the passages from diaries in the Student Workbook, voice their views and questions during discussions, and finally focus on questions chosen from the key topics that appear in the Student Workbook.

It is necessary for the teacher to be well prepared. The Teacher's Guide is intended to provide not only historical material but also pedagogical tips and suggestions.

Educational productions are only a tool to be used wisely by the teacher. Most of the photographs are accompanied by questions and other educational material. The teacher is expected to use his or her own judgment in selecting the photographs and activities most suited to his or her group of students.

The student has to be given importance if we truly believe in child centred education. So we have to put aside that educational material which may harm the child in one way or another.

“Everyday life in the Warsaw Ghetto” is not just a history lesson. The emphasis is on the interdisciplinary approach.

The photos will surely motivate the students, increase their curiosity and their imagination. The students will learn to observe, try to solve problems and reach conclusions.

Slide 18, for example, represents an old woman.

There is no need to tell the obvious to the students. Let them observe her face and her looks. Is she happy or sad? Why?

What is she doing? What is she selling? Is this her way of making a living? What is the significance of the arm-bands? Is it a mark of humiliation? Why? Is it to dehumanise the Jews?

Eliciting knowledge from students is of great educational value. It is therefore necessary to ask challenging and stimulating questions.

Ask students how they feel. Help them to empathise with the old lady. What is she thinking, if she is thinking at all? Use moments of silence. Give the students time to think.

Teach them about people. This is a human experience more than anything else.

If the students are up to it, go a step further. Ask them to observe the posters on the wall. Why are there posters in the ghetto? What do these posters say?

They are, in fact, notices to announce a cultural event in the ghetto. So what went on in the ghetto? Was society divided into social classes within the boundaries of the ghetto? Were these activities a form of resistance, a sign of hope and a determination never to give up?

Students will be fascinated with this type of teaching. Listen to what they have to say. It will make them feel good about themselves. Let them play the part of detectives investigating a case. Real learning will be taking place.

9.3 Breendonk

Breendonk is a memorial site, the focus of an interesting experience of a number of Belgian students and their teachers coming from different communities in Belgium. This experience can serve as a model for other students and teachers of other European countries.

Breendonk is a fort which was taken over by the Germans in 1940. Jews and other groups were detained in this unique concentration camp in Belgium.

The students and their teachers decided to plan a project in connection with Breendonk. They carried out research work about the place which they visited on several occasions. They took photographs and prepared an exhibition. Many students were involved; they were taken round the camp by fellow students who acted as guides. For both students and teachers, this was a “beautiful” experience:

- First of all the students learned a great deal about the daily life of the prisoners. They realised how much they had suffered: lack of hygiene, hunger and thirst, cold, physical and mental pain, humiliation and isolation. “They were treated worse than all the animals like pigs or horses living in Breendonk”, said one of the students during the presentation. The students could see the actual place with their own eyes and this helped them to empathise with the prisoners in the camp.
- The students learned about how Breendonk is today, how some rooms have been converted into a museum, which is quite special because it is where people actually lived, suffered and died.
- The students had the opportunity of meeting eye witnesses and survivors. They were therefore in a better position to understand what human beings can do to each other.
- This experience gave the students the chance to work as a group, it was an exercise in team building. Students from different schools and speaking different languages worked together and learned to appreciate the different approaches of individuals and groups.
- The students came to realise not to take liberty and democracy for granted. They learned what Breendonk stands for today, a warning that what happened there can happen again.
- This whole project sparked off the students’ curiosity and imagination; they wanted to find out what had happened; they wanted to investigate and to solve the problems that arose. Moreover, they wanted to understand a situation that was so different from their everyday experience. So it was a really big challenge for the students and their teachers:
- The opinion of the teachers is that this experience made their students more responsible citizens and better human beings. Breendonk became for the students not only the symbol of terror, but also a constant memento of what happens when democracy fails and is replaced by totalitarianism.
- The students felt great pity for the 272 prisoners that had been executed in Breendonk, and for the 98 who died of illness and

exhaustion, but in their hearts they carry no vengeance or vendetta. One of the survivors of Breendonk reminded the students: “never forget, those who were our tormentors and even killers are human beings like us....”

- This experience helped the students to start to appreciate historical sites, take care of them and work towards their preservation. The students realised that these sites are still of relevance today.
- The students acted as guides to their peers. In spite of the language difficulty, they made an effort to explain without relying too much on their written notes. This helped them in the art of public speaking and it increased their self-confidence and their self-expression.
- At the end of the trip, the students were invited to express their feelings; they had the chance to analyse themselves, to listen to one another and develop friendships based on a common experience. All this helped the students in their social development.
- It also helped them to work closely with their teachers and to improve, as well as to strengthen their relationships.

Not everything was plain sailing. There were difficulties and constraints which, however, were faced, tackled and finally solved. For the teachers, for example, it was a trial in perseverance. They had to overcome the strong temptation to abandon the project, and to choose classroom teaching which is far less demanding. So it was important for the teachers to motivate themselves and one another.

There was yet another serious problem that had to be dealt with. This was how to link the past of Breendonk with the present. One of the teachers asked: “What kind of values were we to emphasise? Is it the function of the history teacher to deal with political and moral issues? Should these remain outside the school?” Some teachers said YES, others said NO.

All in all the experience was valuable to both students and teachers. The latter realised that success necessitates great preparation. Students were given the responsibility of working on their own but they were guided all along. Moreover, teachers realised that

involvement helps students learn more. They also realised how important it is to have objectives and targets that you want to achieve. This was an interdisciplinary exercise involving others apart from the history teachers. And this is exactly how it should be, because the Holocaust is a human experience and not a mere past historical reality.

The Breendonk experiment can serve as a stimulus to other teachers. A forgotten site can be chosen and the area cleaned up. Research work can be carried out, and the students can prepare a small publication or work-sheets. They themselves can become guides to the site. It will be an experience as memorable as it has been for the students of Breendonk.

As has been suggested during the seminar, a topic like Breendonk can develop into a Comenius project.

9.4. The denial of the Holocaust online

This was another interesting presentation that had been prepared by a teacher-trainer from Groningen University together with two of her student-teachers. The student-teachers wanted to combat Neo-Nazi propaganda on line, and hence they produced this home page which can be found on: <http://www.uclorug.nl/project/holocaust/boven.htm>

The home page is very well presented. The pupils are introduced to the topic using simple and very clear language. They are told that there is a group of people who deny the organised mass murder of millions of Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War. The pupils are also told that these people claim that the Holocaust never took place and that the proof there is, exaggerates what had happened. In spite of eyewitnesses, photos and first person accounts they refuse to recognise the Holocaust as a fact. These people call themselves revisionists for they want to rewrite history. Others prefer to call them negationists. The pupils are then told that the site will help them to research the denial of the Holocaust and then they will be in a position to tackle the following question:

How far and in which way are we able to meet and refute the assertions of the revisionists that the Holocaust never took place?

The pupils are helped with very relevant suggestions and guidelines to answer the question.

The site is divided in four stages or steps. In the first stage the pupils find information about those who deny the Holocaust, who they are and what they say. This is more or less factual knowledge.

In the second stage the pupil is challenged to find out the proofs that these people bring forward to substantiate their point of view. This will train the pupils to read carefully, analyse arguments and present them in a simple way.

In the third stage the pupil is asked to find arguments against the revisionists. The pupil is led to other sites which have to be carefully studied. The students have to evaluate the arguments of both sides and come to their own conclusions.

In the fourth stage the pupil is asked to write an assignment about the revisionists and how they can be refuted.

The idea of a home page is very stimulating and provides various advantages:

- Pupils can work at school (provided there are computer labs connected to the Internet) and also at home.
- Pupils enjoy working on the web.
- The whole project helps the student in carrying out research work particularly on the Internet.
- Pupils can work in groups, and this enhances team building.
- Pupils can work at their own pace and independently of the teacher. It is a start in educating the student in self-directed learning.
- Working on the web, suits the less as well as the more capable students. They will all find suitable material according to their capabilities.
- The whole project will help the pupils not only in the acquisition of knowledge and skills but it will also contribute to the development of moral reasoning and moral responsibilities.

10. The importance of motivation

Unfortunately, sometimes we find ourselves in a situation when we ourselves or maybe those around us lack the enthusiasm or the energy to get things done. We lack motivation.

- A colleague or maybe a superior may not be interested in including the Holocaust within the history syllabus.
- Parents or students may feel apathetic about the topic. They feel it is not relevant today. Who cares what happened to the Jews so many years ago!

In situations like these it is important to dwell on the relevance of the topic for present day society. Moreover it is necessary to instil in the people concerned a certain dynamism about the topic. Developing the skills to work well is not enough. We have also to develop the will.

We have to motivate students. You can take a horse to the water but you cannot force it to drink, unless it is thirsty. And so it is with people. So the first rule is to make the lessons about the Holocaust as interesting as possible using traditional and modern methods of teaching.

You cannot motivate others unless you are motivated yourself. So plan and set goals to keep yourself in the right direction and to persevere in what you want to achieve.

The staff has to be motivated too. The best method would be to involve them in the decision-making process. Do not impose on them the teaching of the Holocaust. Ask their opinion about the best methods of teaching, what to teach about the Holocaust and what to leave out. Give them responsibility. Satisfy their needs.

We have also to motivate parents. Let us recognise their rights and their duties. They are very important stakeholders. Discuss the teaching of the Holocaust with the parents. Let them air their fears and their doubts. Recognise their lack of interest in history as a subject and in the Holocaust as a particular topic. Involving parents, letting them know what is being done at school and the reasons behind it, asking them to participate, and keeping them informed of their children's progress may work wonders. Parents' aspirations and visions for their children's future should not only be listened to, but

also included in the School Development Programme. So study the situation and find the best method how to integrate the teaching and learning of the Holocaust.

11. Teaching the Holocaust within a specific context or environment

In the previous section there was an emphasis on motivation. But motivation necessitates the study of the situation, the context and the environment. This will help us, for example, to be more realistic when we take decisions involving the teaching of the Holocaust.

Performing the S.W.O.T. analysis will help us to understand better the situation.

Strengths (the presence of a drama teacher in the school – he or she may be involved in the teaching of the Holocaust; the school is connected to the Internet – use the web in the teaching and learning process).

Weaknesses (poor finances; lack of motivation; ill-equipped library).

Opportunities (a Holocaust survivor is in town; you get hold of a film about the Holocaust).

Threats (parents are very much against the teaching of the Holocaust; there is an anti-Semitic feeling in your community).

We have to recognise our strengths and weaknesses and turn the threats into opportunities. This is one of the ways how to get things done. We have to increase our performance as educators through the teaching of the Holocaust.

Performance depends on motivation, abilities and opportunities. It is obviously hindered by constraining factors.

12. Constraints in teaching the Holocaust

It became quite clear from the contributions of the participants and particularly from what was said during the workshops that a number

of constraints exist in the teaching and learning of the Holocaust. The following are the ones mainly stressed.

12.1. Luckily there are countries, regions and provinces in Europe where the Holocaust did not take place. Due to lack of such remains or due to long distances, there are cases when it is impossible to teach about the Holocaust on site.

12.2. Holocaust museums, centres or foundations do not exist in every European country. Moreover, where they exist, certain museums are not always student friendly.

12.3. Many general European history textbooks either leave out the Holocaust completely or else they just mention it in passing.

12.4. Documentaries about the Holocaust are often too frightening and have to be very carefully edited if used in teaching.

12.4. Some teachers fear that they will damage the students psychologically if they teach about the Holocaust.

12.6. Computer labs and the Internet are not available in all European schools. Hence it is not easy to adopt innovative methods in the teaching and learning process.

12.7. Bias and propaganda in the sources are a great hindrance. These are sometimes so subtle that they cannot be easily deducted. Hence it could be quite dangerous for students to carry out research work by themselves.

12.8. The Holocaust is relatively recent history. Some of the persons involved are still alive. Feelings and emotions can get beyond control and there is therefore the great problem of objectivity not only on the part of the students and of their parents but also on the part of the teachers.

12.9. There are those who believe that the teaching and learning of the Holocaust can cause friction between groups. This may result in hatred and a strong feeling of vendetta.

12.10. A great sense of guilt still exists, some parents and grandparents want to forget. They definitely do not like their children or grandchildren to come home asking questions and digging into the past.

12.11. In areas directly involved in the Holocaust children come to school with pre-conceived ideas, because long time hatreds and sympathies change very slowly. Difficulties may arise in the classroom especially when students or their parents belong to extreme groups.

12.12. Teachers themselves may belong to such groups and they may not act professionally. If they try to manipulate students it will be a case of serious misuse of history.

12.13. Helping students to acquire the skill of empathising while teaching the Holocaust may present serious difficulties. Empathising with the victim is not that difficult. But how will the teacher help the student to empathise with an aggressor who, in one's opinion, was responsible for acts as brutal as those committed during the Holocaust?

12.14. While teaching the Holocaust, the teacher is all the time on slippery ground. She or he has to guide without imposing, has to direct but without judging. The students have to come to their own conclusions. It is a very challenging situation for the teacher. There may be those who cannot or who do not want to handle such a situation.

12.15. The proposed teaching pack on the Holocaust can be a great help, but it is difficult if not impossible to reach all age groups and students of different abilities, using the same pack. Moreover there may be difficulties of language. So it is necessary to have good translations of the pack.

12.16. Copyright laws will surely be encountered if individuals decide to produce their own teaching and learning pack, suitable for students in their particular countries.

12.17. In some countries everything taught has to be assessed. Sometimes, it is very difficult to assess the teaching and learning of the Holocaust. How will you assess the skill of empathising, for example?

12.18. There is always the time constraint. So many topics have to be included in the curriculum. If the Holocaust is not done properly, this might have negative results.

12.19. In some countries, parents and students may refuse to have anything to do with the Holocaust. This can happen because of lack of interest. It can also happen because the Holocaust is still a political problem dividing societies.

12.20. In some countries it is interpreted that giving importance to the Holocaust would steal from the attention that should be given to the grief, pain and repression suffered by the local population (for example the sufferings of the Lithuanians under the Soviet regime).

12.21. It is not known how far Holocaust education affects students' awareness of the danger of racism. Some teachers may therefore feel discouraged.

12.22. The use of the word "Holocaust" offers some difficulties because not everyone understands the same thing. It is necessary to know what we are talking about and to be consistent in its usage.

13. Recommendations

13.1. As a general rule we recommend that the Holocaust should feature in the history syllabuses.

13.2. The whole of humanity, but most especially educators, should resist the temptation to forget the Holocaust. We should seriously reflect on the statement that those who neglect to learn from past mistakes are condemned to repeat them.

13.3. Students should learn about the Jews, the Gypsies, the handicapped, the homosexuals and all the other groups who became victims of the Nazi regime.

13.4. One of the best methods to teach about the Holocaust is to teach about individuals. We should not limit ourselves to statistics. If we do so it would mean treating people as mere numbers, stripping them of their identities just as the Nazis did.

13.5. Whenever possible, we should arrange for survivors to talk to our students about their wartime experiences. These talks should be followed by a discussion with the students. Everything should be videotaped for future use, for the times when the last remaining survivors are no longer with us.

13.6. Great care should be taken to ensure that students are not damaged psychologically as a result of the teaching and learning of the Holocaust.

13.7. Teachers and parents should have a say in what to teach and how to teach it. They are the ones closest to the children, and they are the ones who know them best.

13.8. Students themselves should be consulted regarding what to include and what to leave out when teaching the Holocaust.

13.9. We should not stop at emphasising the negative aspects of the Holocaust. We have also to highlight the courage, the strength of character and the heroic acts of those, who in spite of everything, said NO to the Holocaust.

13.10. Educators should make sure that the Internet generation does not fall victim to those who deny the Holocaust.

13.11. Educators themselves should be prohibited from teaching that the Holocaust did not exist.

13.12. In-service courses focusing on Holocaust education should be organised.

13.13. Research about the Holocaust should be encouraged.

13.14. All archives about the Holocaust should be open and made accessible.

13.15. We recommend that schools from different parts of Europe co-operate and work together on initiatives regarding the Holocaust.

13.16. We recommend co-operation between schools and NGOs in the promotion of Holocaust education.

13.17. The Holocaust cannot be forgotten or ignored. An open wound will not heal unless it is treated. Honesty, trust, understanding and forgiveness are the necessary medicine or medicament. We recommend that these will feature prominently among our targets when we teach about the Holocaust.

13.18. It has been shown that bringing together (“confronting”) the descendants of the victims with those of the aggressors might work in a positive way. But such a situation would have to be carefully planned because it can create adverse consequences.

13.19. We need more books about the Holocaust – books that help us achieve the aims and objectives of history education. We have to give importance not only to knowledge but also to skills, attitudes, values and experiences.

13.20. The production of CD ROMS and other computer material is always welcome. But to be of effective use, this presupposes the existence of computer labs in our schools. Unfortunately, there are countries in Europe where these labs are non-existent. We therefore recommend assistance where this is needed.

13.21. We are in favour of the publication of a list of books, CD ROMS, other computer software as well as Internet sites that deal specifically with the Holocaust or with its teaching and learning.

13.22. We recommend assistance to those countries that would like to set up a Holocaust Centre, Institute or Museum. Copies of photographs, documents, replicas and other teaching material can be produced and made available.

13.23. In view of the ever expanding media, it is of paramount importance to educate students how to choose reliable sources. Students have to be trained in the skill of detecting bias and propaganda. This is relevant in relation to the Holocaust as well as to the teaching and learning of other topics.

13.24. Countries who feel like commemorating the victims of the Holocaust should be encouraged to do so. Other countries might want to commemorate all victims of genocide. Countries should feel free to take their own decisions.

13.25. Countries should also feel free to choose how to teach the Holocaust; whether as part of their national or regional history or in a wider European context.

13.26. The learning of the Holocaust should help our students realise that being different is beautiful and enriching. This will positively affect their attitude and approach towards minorities.

13.27. We recommend that some Holocaust sites (amongst them Auschwitz) be declared part of the heritage of all humanity.

13.28. Finally we recommend full co-operation with the “International Group on the Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research” which has been created on the initiative of Sweden.

14. Conclusion

At the end of the seminar I had the opportunity to listen to the comments of some of the participants regarding the plenary sessions and workshops as well as their stay in Vilnius. The following are some comments of the participants:

- It was a very fruitful experience; meeting people from different countries is always worthwhile and presents challenging situations.
- The hotel and the conference room were comfortable and pleasant. There are great advantages when the seminar is held in the same hotel accommodating the participants.
- The interpreters produced fluent translations. The volume, however, was occasionally too low and the production was sometimes not clear enough. One had to strain to follow.
- It would have been greatly beneficial had the participants received the “papers” prior to the seminar. The participants would have had the chance to study the contributions before the seminar. This would have increased the time allocated for discussion and exchange of ideas.
- Some contributions were very interesting but not quite relevant to the topic under study which was “Teaching about the Holocaust”.

- Classroom teachers wanted a more pragmatic and less philosophical approach. They were expecting that more time would be devoted to aspects of pedagogy.
- Some contributions were presented in a very dry manner. Varied presentation techniques could have been used.
- There was not enough time for the workshops, and participants were not always sure of what was expected of them.
- Some participants feel that the teaching pack was not discussed enough. It would have been very fruitful to discuss in far greater detail (a) the content of the pack and (b) the most effective methods of teaching.
- The issue of assessing student progress by studying the Holocaust was marginalised.
- Some issues of the greatest relevance to teachers were not tackled in depth: (a) how to ensure that teaching about the Holocaust will not inadvertently lead to an increase in anti-Semitism, (b) how to teach the Holocaust to children whose main view of the Jews is that they were the killers of Christ, (c) how to tackle misconceptions as, for example, that the Jews themselves were responsible for bringing about the Holocaust, (d) how to keep your mind at rest that lessons about the Holocaust will not turn to be of sadistic satisfaction to certain individuals, (e) how to be sensitive enough to realise in good time that children are being traumatised as a result of the teaching of the Holocaust.
- Some participants felt that the objectives of the seminar were not clear enough.
- There was a feeling that a few of the participants were not deeply committed during the seminar.

All in all, the general feeling was that the seminar was a great success. I believe that the aims of the seminar were reached. Now it is important to go on working and find the best possible solutions to the constraints facing the teaching of the Holocaust. It is necessary to implement the recommendations that have been proposed and to find others that are, perhaps, more appropriate to individual circumstances.

“Auschwitz”– the unthinkable has occurred. Perhaps our best answer is silence when faced with a catastrophe of this magnitude. However, as has been expressed during this seminar, we have to make sure that no Holocaust in any form whatsoever will ever happen again. Indeed we know that this seminar is not just about the past, but also about the present and the future.

If the Holocaust was unprecedented, now it is not, because it has happened. And genocide can happen again as it has actually happened in Rwanda, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo and East Timor. (Incidentally, for these reasons, we are in favour of the formation of International Genocide Prevention Institutes whose duties would be to detect as early as possible indicators that genocide is being planned).

Our students have to learn about the past so as never to repeat it. They have to know also the present situation, which for some people presents a very bleak picture. Yet, during the seminar we did not feel pessimistic. After all the Holocaust itself had its own great heroes: those who resisted the evil doings of the Nazis. They represented the beautiful face of humanity shining in the midst of all evil.

So we have hope in our hearts because we strongly believe that education can make a difference. As has been pointed out during this seminar, let us consider the Holocaust as an opportunity to help our students reflect on human nature, on the fact that choices have to be made and that we are free to make them. We have to empower our students to face reality and act decisively even in circumstances as difficult as those brought about by the Holocaust. Our students have to develop into responsible, critical, integrated, liberated and self-created individuals. But this is not enough. They have to learn to face evil with courage and defiance. They have to learn not to be bystanders just as they have to learn not to be fanatics. They have to realise that the individual can make a difference and that no circumstances can ever exist when it is legitimate to give up one’s moral obligations. Our students have to be alert. They have to be well informed of what is happening around them.

We have our options regarding the future of Europe. We want to eliminate extreme nationalism that suppresses difference just as the Nazis did.

We want to create a democratic, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural European Community. We cannot accept Nazism as a necessary evil within a

democracy. It is too risky and too frightening. We want to celebrate diversity while stressing our common humanity.

This is our ideal.

This is our mission.

This is our dream.

We want to keep our dreams alive and hold fast to our ideals.

These will be realised if we are able to envision and to create our own future. But we have to remember that envisioning necessarily involves the willingness, the enthusiasm and the determination to test the paradigm and to risk moving away from our usual assumptions. It is necessary to learn how to look at things from new, unexpected and unconventional angles.

We want to be real agents of change and a guarantee that the Holocaust will not repeat itself in one form or another.

We do not have to be scared of change. We believe in ourselves and in the future of Europe.

We believe in our dreams and we know that the future belongs to those who still believe in the beauty of their dreams.

APPENDIX

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

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

Directorate General IV
Directorate of School and Higher Education

Document available at: (restricted access)
<http://cmlne.dctnet.coe.int/site2/ref/interface/english.html>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bearing in mind Recommendation No. R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on “hate speech”, in which hate speech is defined as all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or

justify racial hatred, xenophobia or antisemitism, and in which it is pointed out that the impact of hate speech is more damaging when disseminated by the media;

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

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

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

- to make appreciable progress in developing a pluralist and tolerant concept of history teaching, *inter alia*, through the development of individual research and analysis capabilities;
- to highlight educational innovations, using both information technologies and new sources of teaching material;
- to draw up examples of open approaches to the central issues of twentieth-century European history,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix to Recommendation Rec(2001) 15

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

History teaching in a democratic Europe should:

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

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

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

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

- be part of an education policy that plays a direct role in young people’s development and progress, with a view to their active participation in the building of Europe, as well as the peaceful development of human societies in a global perspective, in a spirit of mutual understanding and trust;
- make it possible to develop in pupils the intellectual ability to analyse and interpret information critically and responsibly, through dialogue, through the search for historical evidence and through open debate based on multiperspectivity, especially on controversial and sensitive issues;
- enable European citizens to enhance their own individual and collective identity through knowledge of their common historical heritage in its local, regional, national, European and global dimensions;
- be an instrument for the prevention of crimes against humanity.

2. *The misuse of history*

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

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

- falsification or creation of false evidence, doctored statistics, faked images, etc.;
- fixation on one event to justify or conceal another;
- distortion of the past for the purposes of propaganda;
- an excessively nationalistic version of the past which may create the “us” and “them” dichotomy;
- abuse of the historical record;

- denial of historical fact;
- omission of historical fact.

3. *The European dimension in history teaching*

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

- show continuing historical relationships between local, regional, national and European levels;
- encourage teaching about periods and developments with the most obvious European dimension, especially the historical or cultural events and tendencies that underpin European awareness;
- use every available means, particularly information technology, to promote co-operation and exchange projects between schools on themes connected with the history of Europe;
- develop pupils' interest in the history of other European countries;
- introduce or develop teaching about the history of the building of Europe itself.

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

- take account of the results of the work done during the project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century” conducted by the Council for Cultural Co-operation, in terms of both content and methodological approach;
- draw on Council of Europe programmes on the reform of history teaching and on the preparation of new textbooks and methodological guides during activities to develop and consolidate democratic stability;
- draw on Council of Europe programmes for raising awareness of and teaching about heritage;

- disseminate as widely as possible the teaching materials produced by the project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century” by making appropriate use of information and communication technologies;
- increase assistance in the preparation of new syllabuses and standards in history teaching, including production of new textbooks, in particular in the Russian Federation, the Caucasus countries, South-east Europe and the Black Sea region;
- take advantage of the Council of Europe’s In-Service Training Programme for Educational Staff to help teachers acquire this new knowledge in a European context enabling them to compare views and experience.

4. *Syllabus content*

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

- awareness-raising about the European dimension, taken into account when syllabuses are drawn up, so as to instill in pupils a “European awareness” open to the rest of the world;
- development of students’ critical faculties, ability to think for themselves, objectivity and resistance to being manipulated;
- the events and moments that have left their mark on the history of Europe as such, studied at local, national, European and global levels, approached through particularly significant periods and facts;
- the study of every dimension of European history, not just political, but also economic, social and cultural;
- development of curiosity and the spirit of enquiry, in particular through the use of discovery methods in the study of the heritage, an area which brings out intercultural influences;
- the elimination of prejudice and stereotypes, through the highlighting in history syllabuses of positive mutual influences between different countries, religions and schools of thought over the period of Europe’s historical development;

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

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

5. Learning methods

Use of sources

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

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

– documentary and fictional films and audiovisual products;

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

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

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

Personal research

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

Group research

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

The cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary approach

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

The international, transfrontier approach

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

6. Teaching and remembrance

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

- helping pupils to develop knowledge and awareness of the events – and their causes – which have cast the darkest shadows on European and world history;
- thinking about the ideologies which led to them and how to prevent any recurrence of them;

- shaping, developing and co-ordinating the relevant in-service training programmes for educational staff in the member states of the Council for Cultural Co-operation;
- facilitating access to the documentation already available on this subject, inter alia through the use of new technology, and developing a network of teaching resource centres in this field;
- implementing and monitoring implementation of the education ministers' decision (Cracow, 2000) to designate a day in schools, chosen in the light of each country's history, for Holocaust remembrance and for the prevention of crimes against humanity;
- developing the Council of Europe's specific input in the education field to the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.

7. Initial and in-service training for history teachers

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

- enable and encourage history teachers to work with complex, process-oriented and reflective methods of history teaching;
- inform future history teachers and those already practising the profession about all the latest products, instruments and methods, particularly where the use of information and communication technologies is concerned;
- make teachers aware of the use of teaching techniques which, going beyond, but taking account of factual information, are intended to enable pupils to interpret and analyse historical facts and their influence on the present, in different contexts, for example, social, geographical, economic contexts, etc.;
- help to enable teachers to make use of assessment techniques which take account, not just of the information memorised by pupils, but also of the activities they are capable of carrying out thanks to their knowledge of the information concerned, whether these involve research, discussion or the analysis of controversial issues;
- help to devise and create cross-disciplinary learning situations in their classes, in collaboration with their fellow teachers.

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

- create opportunities for exchanges, so that teachers may become aware of the great variety of learning situations involving the new roles concerned;
- support the setting up of discussion groups to look at the profession's difficulties, hesitations and doubts about these new methods of teaching;
- develop resource banks which specify, not only the documents and sites available, but also the validity of the information derived from the said documents and sites.

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

- provide training institutes for history teachers with the support needed to maintain and improve the quality of their training, and develop the professionalism and social status of history teachers in particular;
- accord particular attention to training for trainers of history teachers, based on the principles contained in this recommendation;
- promote comparative research on the objectives, structures and standards specific to initial and in-service training for history teachers and in so doing promote inter-institutional co-operation and the exchange of information needed for the reform of initial and in-service history teacher training and in-service training for trainers;
- seek out and foster partnerships between all of the institutions active in or concerned with history-teacher training (in particular the media), with a view to emphasising their particular mission and specific responsibilities.

8. Information and communication technologies

While complying with legislation and respecting freedom of expression, the requisite steps should be taken to combat the

dissemination of racist, xenophobic and revisionist material, especially via the Internet.

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

- are vital resources for history teaching;
- necessitate in-depth consideration of the diversity and reliability of sources;
- allow teachers and pupils access to original sources and to multiple interpretations;
- spectacularly broaden access to historical information and facts;
- increase and facilitate opportunities for exchanges and for dialogue.

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

- in the selection process, help their pupils to assess the reliability of information sources and information for themselves;
- introduce classroom procedures which encourage critical analysis, which acknowledge a multiplicity of standpoints and which adopt a transcultural approach to the interpretation of facts;
- help their pupils to develop skills such as critical analysis and analogical reasoning.

Declaration by the European ministers of education

We, European Ministers of Education, meeting in Strasbourg at the Council of Europe on Friday 18 October 2002, at the invitation of the French authorities in the framework of the French chairmanship of the International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance.

Adopt the following Declaration :

1. Bearing in mind the declarations made at the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in January 2000, particularly the proposal made there by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, to organise a “Day of Remembrance” in schools ;
2. Reaffirming our undertaking given at the 20th session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education in Cracow (Poland) in October 2000, to set aside a “Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust and for the prevention of crimes against humanity”, on a date to be chosen with regard to the history of each member state ;
3. Referring to the Summits of Vienna (1993) and Strasbourg (1997), at which the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states expressed the need to strengthen mutual understanding and trust between peoples;
4. Being mindful of the European Cultural Convention, signed in Paris on 19 December 1954, which calls upon the signatories to encourage study of the history and civilisation of the other Contracting Parties;
5. Having regard to Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2001) 15 to member states on history teaching in 21st-century Europe;
6. Having regard to the conclusions and proposals of the European teacher-training seminars on Teaching about the holocaust, organised by the Council of Europe in Vilnius(Lithuania) and Donaueschingen (Germany) ;
7. Having read the conclusions of the Colloquy on “Holocaust teaching and artistic creation”, organised jointly by the

International Task Force, the Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah and the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg on 17 October 2002;

Welcome the co-operation established in the field of education with International Task Force and the Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah, which we wish to continue and develop;

Are determined that our common action shall, through teaching about the holocaust and crime against humanity, seek to prevent repetition or denial of the devastating events that marked the last century;

Agree :

- to establish in close co-operation with the Council of Europe a “Day of Remembrance” in member states’ schools, as from 2003, according to national practice and priority ;
- to host on a voluntary basis European events in connection with the “Remembrance Day”;

Request the Council of Europe:

- to follow up and implement the proposals detailed in Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2001) ;
- to contribute to compiling teaching materials for teachers in the member states;
- to organise regularly, possibly in co-operation with the institutions, foundations and other bodies concerned, European inter-disciplinary seminars for teachers, if appropriate under the Council of Europe’s in-service training programme for teaching staff ;
- to set up a European network of places of remembrance, foundations and other relevant bodies, for the purpose of jointly organising seminars and scholarly events.

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