

**Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)6  
of the Committee of Ministers to member states  
on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 July 2011  
at the 1118th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

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

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

Recalling that the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18), signed in Paris on 19 December 1954, seeks to further the study of the languages, history and civilisation of the other contracting parties, and of their common civilisation;

Recalling that the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, at the Warsaw Summit (2005), expressed their wish to encourage a European identity and unity based on shared fundamental values, respect for our common heritage and cultural diversity, and their conviction that “dialogue between cultures is also fostered by accurate understanding of history”, and endorsed the Council of Europe’s work regarding history and the related projects;

Reaffirming the general principles set out in the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue – “Living together as equals in dignity” launched by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Council of Europe in May 2008, particularly as regards the need to learn and teach the intercultural skills in which history teaching plays an essential part;

Reaffirming the principles and guidelines laid down in Recommendation [Rec\(2001\)15](#) of the Committee of Ministers on history teaching in 21st-century Europe;

Bearing in mind Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1880 (2009) on history teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas;

Taking into account Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2010\)7](#) of the Committee of Ministers on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education;

Recalling Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2008\)12](#) of the Committee of Ministers on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education and Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2009\)4](#) on the education of Roma and Travellers in Europe;

Taking into account the Final Declaration of the 23rd session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education (Ljubljana, 4-5 June 2010) on “Education for Sustainable Democratic Societies: the Role of Teachers”;

Taking into account the Declaration on cultural diversity adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 December 2000;

Taking into account the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by the UNESCO General Assembly in November 2001;

Recalling the importance of the historical dimension in Council of Europe work on teaching about the Holocaust and the prevention of crimes against humanity, combating hate speech and all forms of discrimination, interfaith dialogue and heritage education;

Reaffirming that history teaching constitutes an integral part of education for democratic citizenship;

Fully aware that cultural diversity and globalisation presuppose far-reaching changes as regards school curriculums and methods generally, and specifically as regards the teaching of history in all its complexity;

Taking into consideration the results of the work carried out in the intergovernmental, bilateral and regional framework of the project “Intercultural Dialogue and the Image of the Other in History Teaching” implemented by the Steering Committee for Education (CDED) from 2006 to 2010 and their particular bearing on the role of history teaching:

- within European societies ever more sensitive to the new forms of cultural diversity;
- in the context of globalisation of cultural and economic exchanges and more extensive movement of ideas and persons;
- in conflict prevention and in processes of reconciliation in conflict or post-conflict situations;

Noting in particular that the project demonstrated the importance of references to history in all intercultural dialogue whatever its context, forms, antecedents or actors, thus assigning special importance to the teaching of history as such;

Having regard to the growing interest in historical questions in political debate generally;

Observing that history teaching underpinned by knowledge of and respect for others is a decisive factor in furthering the state of “living together as equals in dignity” in rapidly and constantly developing societies typified by cultural diversity;

Affirming that, while respecting the distinctive features of specific histories and transcending tensions and conflicts, it is expedient to bring to light the shared histories that stem from historical interactions, exchanges, encounters and convergences,

Recommends that the governments of the member states, with due regard to their national, regional or local structures and respective responsibilities in particular in the field of education:

- take into account the principles stated in the appendix to this recommendation in the current or prospective reforms to history teaching;
- where appropriate and according to national, regional and local procedures, ensure that the interested schools and public and private bodies – including non-governmental organisations – are informed of the principles presented in the appendix to this recommendation;
- encourage and continue the activities of reflecting on and, where appropriate, reforming history teaching in order to create optimum conditions for development of intercultural dialogue founded on tolerance, heedfulness of others, dialogue and training as a responsible citizen capable of personal thought, critical analysis and research;

Asks the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to bring 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 [CM/Rec\(2011\)6](#)*

### **Goals of history teaching in the context of intercultural dialogue**

With a view to strengthening intercultural dialogue, and having regard to the general aims of history teaching as embodied in Recommendation [Rec\(2001\)15](#), history teaching should contribute in particular to:

- raising awareness regarding the great cultural diversity of present-day European societies, and to increasing sensibility to the diverse cultural legacies of those societies;
- better knowledge, in the general context of globalisation, of the cultural history of the world’s other regions and civilisations while maintaining an appropriate focus on local, national and regional history;
- positioning national culture and history in the European context and to positioning European culture and history in the world perspective;
- knowledge about the history of the relationships between cultures, civilisations and peoples, and about the contribution of each to the development, growth and creativity of the others;

- the development of the knowledge and skills needed to establish open, productive intercultural dialogue by enabling all future citizens to gain a perception and understanding of the history of others, and thereby better to perceive and understand their own;
- the development of a multiple-perspective approach in the analysis of history, especially the history of the relationships between cultures;
- the pinpointing and critical analysis of stereotypes, cut-and-dried images, bias, old-fashioned views and interpretations that are improper or liable to breed real misunderstandings or, more generally, inappropriate images of others;
- the prevention of tension and conflict in sensitive situations and to the furtherance of reconciliation processes in conflict and post-conflict situations, above all where cultural diversity in the broad sense is or has been exploited in conflicts of a political kind;
- in association with other disciplines, fostering the preconditions for productive intercultural dialogue, namely promotion of the common values and references such as the fundamental rights needed for dialogue to be established on a sound basis, as specified in the White Paper;
- enabling future citizens to give their fully informed consent to "live together" in complex, changing contexts whose developments are often unpredictable or unexpected.

### **Orientations of reforms to history teaching with a view to its contribution to intercultural development**

It would be generally advisable to:

- take care to give history teaching its rightful place in curriculums, given its importance for the above-mentioned reasons and also the growing interest in questions of history in the public opinion of most member states;
- conceive history teaching at school not only as an end in itself but also as a means to lay firm foundations for lifelong learning of history;
- provide means of evaluation and monitoring in connection with any reform process of history teaching;
- encourage and increase co-operation by all the stakeholders and institutions that assist in the teaching of history above and beyond actual school instruction, whether during the period of compulsory education or in various other forms of education later throughout life;
- foster the development of joint projects, initiatives, events and reflection between schools, history museums, publishers (books and magazines), audiovisual media (television, radio, etc.), cultural centres, local or regional government cultural departments, non-governmental organisations, libraries, records centres and any other cultural institution concerned.

### **History teaching, dialogue and post-conflict situations**

The principles contained in this appendix all apply to the process of rebuilding confidence and relearning how to "live together" in post-conflict situations.

It should nevertheless be realised that these situations are marked by:

- very powerful and highly polarised emotions;
- special importance attached to mainly short-term, indeed very short-term, remembrance;
- very great influence of sensitisation to remembrance through the family and many other entities, groups or associations in relation to which the school's role is particularly difficult;
- very strong significance of particularly negative stereotypes;

- what is very often a very destructive approach adopted by certain media;
- a political context which is still delicate and sometimes unstable.

In these contexts history teaching should, with due regard to their specificities:

- contribute to the controlled expression of emotions;
- be conducive to the most comprehensive possible perception and analysis of the conflict by placing it in a wider context;
- help discover and identify what the parties to the conflict may have developed in terms of shared histories, particularly by demonstrating the relationships, interactions, convergences and similarities in terms of culture, in everyday life;
- contribute to the necessary processes of empathic responsiveness to others;
- fit into the processes of rebuilding peace and a state of "living together", making it possible to prevent and resolve conflicts in the future;
- make particular use of methods aimed at learning and working together on projects of common concern.

In these singularly difficult contexts, the history teacher has a crucial role to play, especially:

- as a mediator ensuring neutrality and transparency;
- in raising confidence;
- in maintaining continuity in the difficult phases of reconciliation processes by associating parents and community-based non-governmental organisations;
- regarding timely emphasis on the association of out-of-school structures in the process of learning history;
- in encouraging and supporting cross-border or cross-regional co-operation.

### **Methods and educational approach**

Having regard to the extreme diversity and the large number of "histories of others" to be addressed in present-day multicultural contexts, it would be expedient, in connection with future reforms to history teaching, to:

- seek at all times the best possible balance between the acquisition of historical knowledge relating to the local, regional, European and international levels and the acquisition of skills for lifelong discovery and knowledge of the history of other cultures;
- deploy an active and interactive teaching approach, that is, one involving the acquisition of knowledge and skills through activities such as carrying out projects, individual or collective research, classroom debate, field research, précis writing, interviewing key witnesses and, where the technical conditions permit, establishing inter-regional or international contacts with other schools, etc.;
- encourage interdisciplinary co-operation within the school itself between teaching of history, literature, philosophy, languages, science and technology, social sciences and economics, and if necessary religious instruction, and generally with all activities contributing to education for democratic citizenship;
- take care that history teaching, particularly in terms of its implications for intercultural dialogue, is also well integrated with vocational and technical education.

### **History books and teaching material**

With a view to active and interactive education, history textbooks and teaching material in general should have suitable status, function, content and structure.

In particular, the provision of history textbooks and teaching material generally should be as diverse and pluralistic as possible.

History textbooks or teaching aids should:

- take account of the recent development of historical research;
- be a data source in itself, in a framework of multiperspectivity;
- facilitate access to sources of various origins;
- stimulate and facilitate debates and queries;
- be designed by teams closely attuned to cultural diversity and be the subject of careful consultation with authors from different cultural backgrounds.

### **Media education**

As part of the implementation of this active and interactive methodology, history teaching should be associated with media education to develop in particular:

- critical analysis of the origin and content of images, reports, audiovisual archives, special-interest television broadcasts, etc.;
- the acquisition of capabilities for finding and critically analysing Internet sources;
- capabilities for using new technologies to carry out projects in which various players or partners outside the classroom are associated;
- the necessary skills for using new media forms to present synopses, research findings, etc.;
- dialogue involving history teachers, curriculum planners, designers of teaching material and media professionals.

### **Skills more specifically linked with the learning of the history of others**

An effort should be made, through suitable teaching practice, to foster the acquisition and development of the following skills, abilities and attitudes:

- interest in and curiosity about history;
- overall awareness of the interdependence of cultures;
- receptiveness to the cultures and convictions of others;
- ability to perceive cultural diversity as a shared asset;
- ability to position one's own culture in a broader context;
- ability to identify stereotypes and prejudices;
- ability to hear and respect other viewpoints and be amenable to dialogue;
- ability to control one's emotions and accept when other people express theirs;
- ability to distinguish what pertains to the facts of history from judgments or interpretations of it and as a result to come to their own conclusions;
- ability to construct reasoned critical judgments;
- ability to comprehend, compare and analyse sources of different kinds and origins.

## **Roles, competencies and training of history teachers**

The reforms to history teaching necessitated by the evolution of the contexts in which they take place are largely founded on an in-depth transformation of the role of future history teachers' competencies, hence of their training.

It would be advisable to:

- associate teachers at all levels as far as possible in all phases of preparing reform projects;
- continue and intensify the efforts often already begun in the academic training of future history teachers to incorporate sound and thorough educational training including practical experience;
- design history teachers' training with cohesion between the initial phase and their in-service training;
- be equipped with means of monitoring, evaluation and experimentation whereby history teaching and teacher training can keep in step with contextual developments and transformations;
- ensure that future history teachers have sufficient personal command of the intercultural attitudes and skills which the pupils are expected to acquire;
- enable teachers, through proper training, to acquire the competencies needed for imparting these in the classroom context, namely to:
  - have command of the comparative and multiperspective approach to history, the ability to organise debates and to moderate the interplay of viewpoints;
  - have command of the essentials of training to analyse images in every form;
  - be able to apply active and interactive methods in class;
  - be alert to the value and the conditions of developing partnerships within the school and with other agents in the learning of history outside the actual school community;
  - be able to evaluate the history learning processes, particularly against the criteria of intercultural proficiency;
  - be motivated for ongoing self-education;
  - be adequately proficient in new information technologies and know how to make critical use of their full potential for exploring and assessing sources and of the means which they provide for establishing co-operation networks;
  - be able to use cross-curricula approaches.

## **Opening up schools and partnerships**

In a complex, ever-changing social and cultural context, and in order to mobilise all institutions contributing to the lifelong teaching and learning of history, it would be expedient to:

- encourage collaboration between schools and other stakeholders of history teaching in the community, such as museums, cultural centres and services, local media, libraries, records centres, memorial sites and local associations active in history-related fields;
- encourage other stakeholders to develop educational services, particularly in history museums;
- arrange joint training courses for teachers and the organisers of these educational services in order to ensure coherence as regards objectives and methods and familiarisation with the potential, but also with the difficulties of implementing partnerships.

## **The international dimension**

In order to give definite effect to the approaches based on multiperspectivity and to the identification and dismantling of stereotypes and other inadequate images of the other, and to take account of the implications of globalisation in history teaching, it would be expedient to:

- support the development of new teaching methods with a view to strengthening intercultural communication through education;
- support, by the appropriate means, teacher exchanges and the development of international and especially European networks of teachers' associations, history museums, associations or other bodies with a historical focus;
- encourage schools to conduct international projects between schools or between classes in connection with history teaching, turning to account in particular the possibilities offered by new communication technologies;
- support in each member state the organisation of European or international "intercultural" history seminars intended for history teachers;
- encourage and assist history teachers to attend and contribute to European or international courses.