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**Activities for the Development and Consolidation
of Democratic Stability (ADACS)**

Seminar on

"The reform of history teaching: curriculum, textbooks
and teacher training"

Mavrovo, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia",

19 - 21 October 1999

Report

Strasbourg

Seminar on

**"The reform of history teaching: curriculum,
textbooks and teacher training"**

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Report by

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The opinions expressed in this work are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

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I. PURPOSE

This seminar was organised by the Ministry of Education and the Council of Europe to consider jointly issues in the reform of history teaching. The participants were representatives from the Ministry of Education, experts from the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History of Skopje University, advisers from the Pedagogical Institute of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", teachers from all parts of the country, and speakers from the Council of Europe.

The seminar was opened by the Minister for Education: Mr. Nenad Novkovski. He spoke of his country's cooperation with a number of European agencies, and hopes for improvements in education through this cooperation. He was forthright on history education, saying that history as understood so far was ended: there were new realities for history teaching. Students need to know, not just a lot of facts and dates, but how to use knowledge and materials, which is more interesting as well as more useful. He urged the seminar to look to the future, with education an essential ingredient in building democracy. A new kind of history teaching could help students to be critical and see their own history in the context of the wider world. He noted that, in the modern world, technology helps to overcome barriers between people, and that ideas too can travel.

Ms Alison Cardwell, Council of Europe, described the broad range of the work of the Council and explained that the way history was taught in schools was one of the priorities in the work of the Council. She emphasised that the purpose was to establish a more genuine and critical approach to history. Pupils should learn the history of their own country, but not in a nationalistic way. Working with many different countries the Council of Europe hoped to spread information and experience of good methods of teaching, of developing textbooks and of training teachers.

This was the first Council of Europe seminar on history teaching to be held in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". It was a positive initiative by the Ministry of Education to invite the Council of Europe, and to organise this seminar, even in the current difficult political and economic circumstances of the region. It is a signal that there are people in that country who hope to develop a new kind of history teaching which may help the next generation towards building a more cooperative future, in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", in South Eastern Europe and in the wider world.

II. DISCUSSIONS

During the seminar, there were plenary sessions in which the background and organisation of history teaching in Macedonia were explained, and in which the three participating Council of Europe experts discussed central aspects of history teaching using their experience from a number of other countries.

In three workshops, participants focused on: the history curriculum, creating new textbooks, and developing the training of teachers.

Discussions throughout the meeting were lively and points of view were put forthrightly. Several participants expressed satisfaction with such frank discussion, with all participants encouraged to express their views. Free discussion of this kind is a valuable basis for future work.

III. THE HISTORY CURRICULUM

With the fall of communism, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" moved rapidly to reform the history curriculum and remove ideology. The first reforms for both elementary and high schools were in 1991. *Mr. Vancho Gjorgiev* from the Ministry of Education and *Mr. Mihajlo Minovski* from Skopje University spoke about the reforms in Macedonian education and the changes made to the history curriculum. Changes were first of all to remove ideology, but then to include the histories of minorities not only within the country, but in neighbouring countries too. The reform of the history curriculum has been a continuing process and there were further major reforms in 1996-97, all done with public consultation before final decisions were made.

The new English National Curriculum for history was then outlined by *Ms. Ann Low-Beer*. This was not presented as an "ideal model", but to provide points of contrast with the curriculum in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and encourage discussion. It is interesting that many European countries in the West as well as the East have been changing the history curriculum in the 1990s. The first National Curriculum in England came into the schools in 1991, and it is revised every five years. The new one is not very different from the one now in use, but teachers will have more choice about how they organise the curriculum and history will be linked with some new courses in civics.

It is important to notice that the English history curriculum is not a British one. Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland each have their own history curriculum, all different from each other in significant ways. The course in England is continuous, not concentric. The curriculum is not just an outline of required content, but also includes skills and assessments of what pupils can do. The content is not comprehensive, topics are selected, and some periods of history may not be covered at all.

In "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", the chronological coverage of the curriculum is much more comprehensive. The curriculum is designed on a concentric model, that is covering the same outline material in elementary and in high school. The amount of time given for history varies in different sorts of high schools. As in other countries, the time available for history is in danger of being cut. The strands of Macedonian, Balkan and world history are all built into the curriculum, although the balance of these is clearly still a matter of discussion. The intention is to build positive attitudes in the next generation towards neighbours in the region as well as an understanding of Macedonian history for all citizens. The report of the working group agreed on a need to pay more attention to pupils of differing abilities, and encourage more local history. Many participants in the seminar seemed to be reasonably satisfied with the curriculum.

There are particular problems in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia": whilst the majority of the population are Slavs, there are several minority groups in the country; four different languages are used in schools, and there are some bilingual schools. The largest minority is Albanian by language, religion and culture. Several teachers from Albanian schools were at the seminar, and some from other minority groups, as well as from bilingual schools. There was considerable discussion on how best to include the history of minority groups and whether there should be more flexibility and choice in the curriculum, allowing teachers to select the content most suited to their pupils.

The history of the Balkan region is complex, and selecting and simplifying it in a satisfactory way for school pupils is not easy. The histories of several cultures and religions have influenced the societies here, European and non-European cultures overlap, and it is a borderland between European and other civilizations. Balkan history intrinsically leads to multiperspectivity and a historical perspective on this region cannot be narrowly Eurocentric.

Some individuals suggested that the curriculum remains overloaded with too much factual material. This is especially so in ancient history and in the medieval period, both taught to pupils who are still quite young. Methods of teaching pupils the skills of using sources, or multiperspectivity of views on events, are not integral parts of the curriculum. From looking at the textbooks, it seems that the period since 1945 is very briefly covered, yet it is clear from all the work of the Council of Europe that older pupils are interested in recent history because they feel that it explains their present situation. All of these issues were raised during the seminar and there was a general willingness to engage in discussion about how to move on and improve the curriculum.

IV. HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

There was a unanimous view that the textbooks which teachers must now use are not adequate and that new ones are urgently needed.

The situation in relation to textbooks was outlined by *Mr. Josip Milcheski* from the Pedagogical Institute. Whilst pleased that some textbooks had been changed quickly to remove ideology, it was clear that more needed doing. The present books were better than previous ones, but there was still too much detail in them. Moreover, there was a certain confusion about how to proceed with future changes.

The working group on textbooks gained valuable advice from the Council of Europe specialist and gave clear recommendations in the report about the steps required to create improved textbooks. It is useful to think more widely about textbooks. As well as conveying information to pupils, they can show new teaching approaches by, for example, including exercises for pupils which require them to demonstrate particular methods of thinking about historical material. It is also of value to consider publishing a separate Guide for Teachers which explains the rationale of the textbook and can suggest appropriate teaching strategies for each major topic. In these ways, new methods of teaching and learning in history can be included within the textbook.

Several of the classroom teachers present spoke frankly of the difficulties of stimulating pupils' interest in a subject learnt from out-of-date books containing too many dry facts for young pupils and unattractive visual presentation. Teachers of senior pupils also spoke of the general difficulty of getting a range of up-to-date books for pupils to consult on modern history, so that they might be able to see for themselves different arguments and interpretations put forward by historians. Some teachers thought it might be easier to acquire books in English which older pupils can often read quite well, but this does not solve the problems for the majority of pupils, who are younger.

The creation of improved textbooks would undoubtedly be a major step towards realising in practice the aims of the history curriculum. The Working Group put forward precise views about what should be done, including the following points:

1. The Ministry of Education should invite tenders for textbooks, and appoint an expert team to choose which bids to accept.
2. Ideally, textbooks should be tested in schools before deciding which is best.
3. The textbooks should be the result of teamwork.
4. The authors should have full rights and fees.
5. The publisher should offer a supplementary guidebook for the teacher.

6. There should be a source book and a book of exercises for pupils.

There were some lively questions following the initial talk on textbooks, on everything from the comparative costs of schoolbooks to the philosophy and psychology of dealing with sensitive issues in modern history. The issue of textbooks is clearly a topic which keenly interests many of the experts who were present as well as the classroom teachers.

At the end of the seminar, *Mr. Andrzej Chrzanowski*, the Council of Europe speaker said that the real test of good textbooks was not compliance with a set of abstract "standards", but whether teachers and pupils were happy with them. He also noted that the creation of good textbooks involved many people: publishers, academics, teachers, pupils and reviewers. The main task of the Ministry of Education was to create a framework which allowed all to be involved and encouraged them to listen to each other. The whole process of creating satisfactory textbooks was also, in some measure, a way of defining the shape of education in the future.

V. TEACHER TRAINING

This topic was introduced in an interesting way by the Council of Europe speaker, Ms Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, by comparing perceptions of history lessons by teachers and students from a number of European countries. Teachers and students often have different views about, for example, how much students listen in lessons; how often they work with historical sources such as documents, maps or pictures; or how varied are activities in lessons. Teachers want students to enjoy history. Pupils report that they do not enjoy it as often as teachers hope.

Across Europe, the methods of teaching history have been changing. There is a general trend to put much more emphasis on how pupils learn. Pupils are required to do history instead of reading it. Teachers have to be able to design interesting questions and exercises for pupils. Pupils must be involved in tasks which develop their skills in understanding historical material.

Teachers need training in how to organise a class to learn in this new way, using a range of educational materials and historical sources and artefacts. They need to learn how to choose and use different historical sources, including textbooks and information technology. Eventually, teachers must learn new assessment strategies too.

These changes in teaching and learning styles are a basic part of new approaches to school history. A new curriculum by itself may change very little, for, without training, teachers will tend to teach a new curriculum in the old way. Fundamental change requires new textbooks and training of the teachers in the new methods. New approaches can also move pupils away from just memorising historical information towards understanding the

varied meanings of historical events. Grasping the concept of a variety of perspectives on historical events is not easy for teachers trained to deliver one authoritative view. Both teachers and pupils need to develop new ways of thinking about history.

It was clear from all the seminar presentations that training of teachers in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" is in need of more attention. *Ms Darinka Petreska* from Skopje University described the situation over the last 10 years. Whilst there has been some initial training for future teachers at Skopje University, it is very short. A proportion of teachers in the schools graduated from other universities and may have had no teacher training at all. This makes in-service training more necessary for implementing the new curriculum. There have been a few seminars on the recent innovations, but little help for teachers on teaching controversial issues in recent history, or teaching about religion historically, or more generally on the history of the Balkans – all topics, which were entirely omitted in the pre-1991 curriculum. One or two seminars with outside bodies have not been entirely successful because they did not address the real problems for teachers in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". There are some hopes that a new unit for teacher appraisal may also help with training. In-service education needs support from the Ministry of Education to succeed.

The Working Group at this seminar produced a valuable report with concrete recommendations on what needs doing. The **initial training** of teachers needs more serious attention. They should have courses which last longer, allow for practical experience, and take place over more than one semester. More attention has been paid to the acquisition of academic knowledge in their subject than to developing in new teachers the skills of teaching. More time spent acquiring teaching skills could improve all of their teaching.

In-service training of existing teachers has been especially neglected. It is, in some ways, more difficult for teachers experienced in one approach to change to another. Many formerly communist countries have found that the most challenging task of all in developing a new kind of history teaching is to persuade and encourage experienced teachers to try new methods and adapt their thinking.

The report of the working group makes some useful and inexpensive suggestions for in-service training. Essentially they recommend disseminating advice through networks of teacher-tutors, using information technology, magazines especially for history teachers, and other inexpensive publications. Much more information needs to circulate on new methodologies and teaching techniques, with real examples of what they mean in practice and how they work out in classrooms. Teachers need to be able to exchange their experience of how new approaches work. Books about new ways of teaching history could help if they were available in schools.

At the same time more organisation and structure is needed, led by experts from the university and Pedagogical Council, on many aspects of the new history courses, for example: ancient Macedonian history, 20th Century history, the histories of other Balkan nations, and European institutions.

The teacher-trainers and the training institutions need support in developing new approaches. Lack of modern educational literature and information, readily available, hinders attempts to foster and develop a new kind of history teaching. The appraisal of teachers, to improve standards of teaching, should be developed through instruction and advice, rather than through examinations.

Finally, all efforts to improve the training of teachers and the general standard of history teaching need to be sustained over a considerable period of time, until the new approaches are no longer seen as new, but become the normal methods, embedded in teaching styles.

VI. EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS

The report of the working group on teacher training ended by stating that continued contact with the Council of Europe and other European organisations was a valuable way of encouraging and supporting the continuing reforms which teachers needed to make.

Members of the seminar had already been introduced to *Mr. Vladimir Ristovski* who is in charge of the **Information and Documentation Centre on the Council of Europe in Skopje**. *Ms. Alison Cardwell*, in her closing words, explained that the Council of Europe would be happy to cooperate further on work with textbooks. There were also possibilities of developing other initiatives, putting schools in touch with each other and perhaps producing a documentation pack for teachers, which might help with developing new methods of teaching.

Ms Joke van der Leeuw-Roord explained the origins of **EUROCLIO**, the European Standing Conference of History Teachers' Associations, started in 1991 and now with 60 affiliated organisations. It holds annual conferences attended by teachers from all over Europe, providing a major forum for the exchange of information and ideas. The meeting in 2000 will take place in March in Lisbon, Portugal. The topic for this meeting will be on "Remembering and Commemorating History", discussing the many commemorations of important historical events held in every country and their significance in historical and social terms. If one or two teachers representing "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" were able to attend they would be able to disseminate to other teachers what they learnt there. It was an important way of using the experience of others rather than each country working in isolation. Many countries found membership of EUROCLIO a valuable source of information and learning about modern approaches in history teaching.

It was essential to establish an independent association of history teachers in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", to gain membership of EUROCLIO. Many countries have done this in the last few years, which is why the membership of EUROCLIO has grown. It should be run by and for classroom teachers, and organise its own internal meetings, where teachers might exchange information, and it might produce its own publications. Creating such an organisation in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" was essential if they wanted to be part of EUROCLIO. Many other countries had managed to do this to support teachers through the changes in history teaching.

There was warm support in the seminar for any means of continuing European contacts, and some questions about it. Teachers would like the opportunity to see how history is taught in other countries, asking whether there was a possibility of teacher exchanges. It was clear from the questions and the lively discussions in workshops that the participants at this seminar were all keen to stay in touch. Moreover, they appeared eager to pick up any of those "ideas which travel", mentioned by the Minister of Education at the start of the seminar, which might be useful to them.

They made a final important point: that contact across Europe was a two-way process which could spread information and make the rest of Europe more aware of the present situation in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

APPENDIX I

PROGRAMME OF THE SEMINAR

Monday 18 October 1999

Arrival of the participants

Tuesday 19 October 1999

09.30 – 11.00 **Plenary Session**

Chair: Mr Vanco GJORJIEV MA

Opening of the Seminar by:

- i. Dr Nenad NOVKOVSKI PhD, Minister ;
- ii. Ms Alison CARDWELL, Co-operation and Assistance
Section, Council of Europe;

Presentation on the situation of history teaching by Mr Vanco
GJORJIEV

11.00 - 11.30 Break

11.30 - 13.00 **Plenary Session**

Chair: Mr Vanco GJORJIEV

- i. Presentation on: "The secondary school history
curriculum: aims implementation in schools" by
Professor Dr Mihajlo MINOVSKI.
- ii. Presentation on: "The revised English national
curriculum for history" by Ms Ann LOW-BEER.

Discussion with all the participants

13.00 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 16.00

Plenary Session

Chair: Mr Vanco GJORGJIEV

- i. Presentation on: "History textbooks for secondary schools" by Mr Josif MILCHOVSKI;
- ii. Presentation on: "The preparation and publication of history textbooks and their classroom use" by Mr Andrzej CHRZANOWSKI.

Discussion with all the participants

Introduction to the group work: Ms Alison CARDWELL

16.00 - 16.30

Break

16.30 – 19.00

Three Parallel Working Group Sessions

- i. Working Group No. 1 on the secondary school history curriculum:

Chair: Professor Mihajlo MINOSKI

Rapporteur: Mr Ljube Trajkovski

Resource person: Ms Ann LOW-BEER

- ii. Working Group No. 2 on history textbooks:

Chair: Mr Josif Milcheski

Rapporteur: Mr Vanche Stojchev

Resource person: Mr Andrzej CHRZANOWSKI

- iii. Working Group No. 3 on the training of history teachers:

Chair: Ms Darinka PETRESKA

Rapporteur: Ms Violeta Achkovska

Resource person: Ms Joke VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD

20.00

Dinner

Wednesday 20 October 1999

9.30 - 11.00 **Plenary Session**

Chair: Mr. Vanco GJORJIEV

- i. Presentation on: "The initial and in-service training of history teachers" by Professor Dr Darinka PETRESKA;
- ii. Presentation on: "The initial and in-service training of history teachers from the point of view of EUROCLIO and the setting up of history teachers' associations" by Ms Joke VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD;

Discussion with all the participants

11.00 - 11.30 Break

11.30 - 13.00 **Continuation of the parallel working groups sessions**

13.00 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 16.00 **Continuation of the parallel working groups sessions**

16.00 – 16.30 Break and end of the parallel working groups sessions

16.30 – 17.30 **The rapporteurs should report to the General Rapporteur and the Secretariat on the conclusions and recommendations of their working group. They should prepare their texts in writing and submit a copy to the Secretariat. These texts will be included in the final report of the Seminar.**

20.00 Official dinner

Thursday 21 October 1999

9.30 – 11.00 **Plenary Session**

Chair: Mr Vanco GJORJIEV

- i. Presentation of the conclusions and recommendations of the rapporteurs of the working groups

Discussion with all the participants

- ii. Comments by the three experts invited by the Council of Europe on the discussions held in the working groups in which they took part
- iii. Presentation by the General Rapporteur of the overall conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar

Comments by the participants

11.00 – 11.30 Break

11.30 – 12.30 **Closing speeches of the Seminar by:**

- i. Ms Alison CARDWELL, Technical Cooperation and Assistance Section, Council of Europe;
- ii. Mr Vanco GJORJIEV; Undersecretary in the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Macedonia

Lunch

Afternoon Departure of the participants

APPENDIX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Dr Josif MILCHESKI, Adviser, Pedagogical Institute, Gostivar

Dr Darinka PETRESKA, PhD, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History, Skopje

OTHER PARTICIPANTS:

- Violeta ACHKOVSKA, Methodologist, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History, Skopje
- Aleksandar ATANASOVSKI, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History, Skopje
- Dalibor JOVANOVSKI, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of history, Skopje
- Vanche STOJCHEV, Military Academy, Skopje
- Enis BEDZETI, Adviser, Pedagogical Institute of Macedonia (PIM), Tetovo
- Milan STOJKOSKI, Adviser, PIM, Prilep
- Dimitar GALEV, Adviser, PIM, Strumica
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- Ljube TRAJKOVSKI, Adviser, PIM, Veles
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- Gjorgji ISAJLOVSKI, Teacher, “Vasil Antevski-Dren” High School, Skopje
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- Jordan PECOV, Teacher, “Kosta Susinov” High School, Radovish
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- Muzafer Salihu, Teacher, “Panche Popovski” High School, Gostivar
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- Blagoj BOJCHEV, Teacher, “Jane Sandanski” High School, Shtip
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- Ilo TRAJKOVSKI, Teacher, “Josip Broz Tito” High School, Bitola
- Cvetan STANKOVSKI, Teacher, “Nino Nestor” High School, Struga

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