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Press Release

Experts meet to ensure 'shared histories' taught in schools across Europe

The importance of teaching the national histories of other countries is one of the key issues to be discussed this week at a top-level Council of Europe conference in Vienna.

At a time when many European countries are scaling down or threatening to cut the teaching of European history, around 100 education experts, academics and professionals from the majority of European countries will take part in the Conference: *Shared histories for a Europe without dividing lines*.

They will discuss how to ensure that national curricula and teacher training programmes across the continent cover the national histories of other European countries as well as focusing on aspects of history that have had an impact across Europe – its common heritage.

To be held from 9-10 April 2014 at Vienna University in the framework of the Austrian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the conference will promote and take forward the results of the Organisation's four-year, inter-governmental project: 'Sharing histories for a Europe without dividing lines' (2010-2014).

In particular, participants will discuss the future use of a new, inter-active e-book on shared histories, to be launched on 5 May.

The conference comes at an important moment. 2014 is both the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War and the 60th anniversary of the Council of Europe's European Cultural Convention.

The Director General of Democracy of the Council of Europe, Snežana Samardžić-Marković, said: 'Shared histories can help stop the misuse, appropriation and nationalisation of history, by giving pupils and students both the knowledge and analytical tools they need to see through manipulation. In our multicultural societies, particularly at a time of economic crisis and insecurity, the competences for intercultural dialogue and understanding taught through shared histories are vital. Ultimately, this type of education plays a crucial role in building and maintaining Europe's democratic culture.'

Notes to Editors:

The Council of Europe was set up in 1949 and has 47 Member States. Its contribution to education is unique in that everything it does is based on its core value: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It enables children and young people to learn to live in diverse societies and to participate fully in political and democratic life. It builds the democratic culture that makes democracy possible.

For further information, please see **media briefing** & Conference website:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/Projects/SharedHistories/Shared_stories_en.asp#TopOfPage.

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