

Tackling today's challenges together: Biased history teaching

” FACTS AND FIGURES

History is not a single set of facts; it is not one truth. History is a multifaceted mirror of the past; there is never one true version of complex historical processes.

BIAS IN HISTORY TEACHING

- History can be taught in a way which promotes prejudice, stereotypes, biased thinking, xenophobia, nationalism and racism. It can ultimately fuel conflict and violence.
- An exclusive diet of national history can be used as a tool to manipulate or indoctrinate pupils and students.
- History teaching which defines other nationalities and cultures as “the enemy” helps perpetuate divisions and conflicts.
- History teaching which focuses only on the political or military exploits of “great men” implies that nothing else and no-one else was or is important. It warps pupils’ understanding of the role, contribution and importance of women, children and less privileged and minority groups, among others, as well as civil society as a whole. This, in turn, reinforces existing inequalities.



WHAT CAN WE DO?

Teach European and world history

- Pupils should learn European history, including the histories of other continents and Europe’s shared histories.
- History lessons should put events in an international context and include cultural, philosophical and economic issues.

Use primary sources

- History lessons should be evidence-based and use primary sources.

Teach multiple perspectives

- History must include the viewpoints of different nations, cultures, genders, ages and individuals.
- This approach contributes to reconciliation and peace building, by enabling communities divided by conflict or war to understand the point of view of the other side.

Multiperspectivity helps pupils to:

- understand that people see the world differently, encouraging open-mindedness, tolerance, empathy and respect for diversity;
- analyse and interpret evidence critically and responsibly, especially when dealing with controversial and sensitive issues;
- understand that historical accounts contain contradictions, ambiguities and bias;
- gain a more complex, complete and richer understanding of the past;
- identify prejudice and stereotypes;
- resist manipulation;
- learn to live in societies characterised by ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE TEACHING MATERIALS

Interactive and multimedia tools



■ **Shared histories for a Europe without dividing lines** – interactive e-book containing teaching materials, strategies, source and background materials on historic events and movements in Europe and beyond. Takes a multiple-perspective approach and focuses on the acquisition of key skills and attitudes.

■ **A look at our past** – teaching materials on cultural diversity in Cyprus for history

teachers in English, Greek and Turkish.

■ **Crossroads of European histories** – book and CD-ROM looking at five key moments in European history from multiple perspectives, containing some 2 500 historical sources, in English and French.

General manuals/core texts

■ **Multiperspectivity in history teaching: a guide for teachers** – in 18 languages.

■ **Teaching 20th-century European history** – handbook to encourage history teachers to cover European and world history – in 10 languages.

Country-specific teaching manuals

■ **Manual for history teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina** – guide using a multiple-perspective approach.

■ **Multiperspectivity in teaching and learning history** – practical guide for teachers in Cyprus.

■ **The use of sources in teaching and learning history (Volumes 1 & 2)** – publications for teachers produced following the Council of Europe's work in Cyprus with the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, available in English, Greek and Turkish.

■ **The Black Sea – A history of interactions** – teaching pack based on multiperspectivity.

■ **History education in Europe – Ten years of co-operation between the Russian Federation and the Council of Europe (1996-2006)** – available in English and Russian.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE STANDARDS

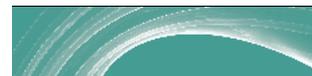
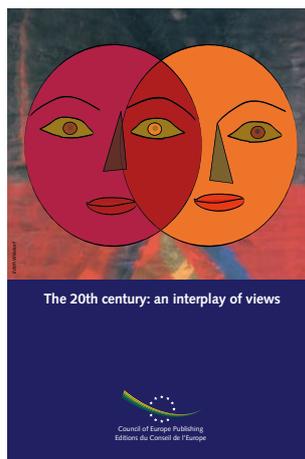
■ The European Cultural Convention (1954) (ETS No. 18) – ratified by 50 states, including the Council of Europe's 47 member states – advocates the study of the languages, history and civilisation of others and of the civilisation which is common to them all.

Committee of Ministers recommendations:

- ▶ CM/Rec(2011)6 on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching
- ▶ CM/Rec(2001)15 on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe

Parliamentary Assembly recommendations

- ▶ Recommendation 1880 (2009) on history teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas, which states that "history teaching can be a tool to support peace and reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict areas as well as tolerance and understanding when dealing with such phenomena as migration".
- ▶ Recommendation 1283 (1996) on history and the learning of history in Europe.



USEFUL COUNCIL OF EUROPE WEBSITES

■ History Teaching:
www.coe.int/historyteaching
<http://shared-histories.coe.int>

■ Education:
www.coe.int/education