



## Teaching history, grounding democracy

(French edition: Enseigner l'histoire,  
ancrer la démocratie)

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# INTRODUCTION

**Over 70 years of history teaching activities at the Council of Europe reflect the desire of its member states to build Europe on the basis of the shared values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.**

However, the debate on the importance of history teaching is not confined to the last 70 years. The first discussions on history teaching and history textbooks began in 1889 at the Universal Peace Congress in Paris. Textbooks were identified as a source of mutual misunderstanding and it was insisted that they should be stripped of wrong ideas about the nature and causes of wars. In 1923, the League of Nations set up a committee charged with studying international history textbooks to consider in particular how they might be revised. This resulted in the Casares Resolution (1926) which contained a long-term recommendation for governments and school authorities to review schoolbooks and supported these measures through national committees.

In 1937, in the Declaration regarding the Teaching of History, 26 states pledged “[to give] prominence,

*in the teaching of world history, to facts calculated to bring about a realisation of the interdependence of nations.”* This is how, on its foundation in 1949, the Council of Europe found itself taking up this work which had never really begun. The action that the League of Nations had hoped to take was ultimately implemented by the Council of Europe from the 1950s onwards, with the support and assistance of civil society organisations such as the International Institute for Textbook Improvement, set up in 1951 by the historian Georg Eckert and named after him since 1975.

Over and above the fundamental values of the Council of Europe, a shared cultural heritage unites Europeans, based on a common history which binds them and helps to shape European identity.

The establishment of initial European co-operation activities in the area of history teaching

1949





The Middle Ages



The Renaissance



The Age of Enlightenment



Humanism



The French Revolution

### This joint history includes not just unifying factors for European civilisation such as the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment, Humanism and the French Revolution.

It also contains darker, more divisive periods such as that of the East-West Schism, the Crusades, the wars of religion, the Thirty Years War or the two World Wars, marked by the confrontation of European powers and peoples, suffering, death and despair. Nor is history objective or unique as, regardless of the facts and depending on the viewpoint adopted, the chronological periods favoured and the parties and personalities chosen, the narrative and memory of European history can differ greatly.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that the **46 member states of the Council of Europe approach this shared history in their own separate ways, adopting differing interpretations.** History teaching reflects this diversity of approaches and viewpoints in Europe, and this is not a drawback because it more comprehensively reflects European cultural diversity.

The Council of Europe's aim for history teaching is not therefore standardisation and the creation of a single

vision of European history but instead convergence towards the main objective on which this teaching is founded, namely preserving peace and defending the humanitarian, humane and humanist values protected by the Council of Europe statutes.

After the Second World War, preserving peace was indeed the main motivation of pro-Europeans who called for the unification of Europe. Following the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army on **27 January 1945** and Germany's surrender on **8 May 1945**, the full scale of the Shoah and the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Nazis began to emerge. At the same time, the first signs of a Cold War between the two superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union were also surfacing.

At the Yalta Conference on **4 to 11 February 1945**, Stalin announced the establishment of a buffer zone in eastern Europe. It was in this context that Winston Churchill gave two speeches divided by just a few months, the first on **5 March 1946**, in Fulton, in the United States, on the Iron Curtain which was about to divide communist Europe from western Europe, and the second, in Zurich, Switzerland, on **19 September 1946**, calling for the creation of a "United States of Europe". This was the starting point for the history of the Council of Europe, beginning on **7 to 11 May 1948** at the Hague Congress, where the European movements discussed the various plans for European unification. The Hague Congress was held in a context of Cold War, embodied by the Prague coup of **17 to 25 February 1948** and the civil war in Greece.



**27 January**  
Auschwitz liberated by the Red Army

**1945**

**8 MAY**  
Surrender of Nazi Germany

**4-11 FEBRUARY**  
Yalta Conference

**1946**

**5 MARCH**  
Winston Churchill speech in Fulton (United States), on the Iron Curtain

**1948**

**7-11 MAY**  
The starting point for the history of Europe at the Hague Congress

**17-25 FEBRUARY**  
Coup d'état in Prague: Soviet-backed communist regime comes to power in Czechoslovakia

However, although the Iron Curtain had fallen, it had not yet closed completely, and among the **750 to 800 participants**, there were nationals of central and eastern European countries. The idea of a Council of Europe was debated within the political group of the Congress, which planned to set up a first European organisation. For the plans for cultural co-operation in Europe, it was the working group on culture chaired by Salvador de Madariaga which was the precursor. Made up of key figures such as Denis de Rougemont and Alexandre Marc, this group set ambitious plans in motion, such as the idea of a European school in Bruges or a university institute in Florence.

**The story of history teaching began within this working group, where the participants discussed the possibility of creating a European education based on humanitarian, humane**

**and humanist values, promoting the preservation of peace in Europe. History was a key element in these debates, lying at the heart of the challenges involved in building a joint European cultural and civilisational heritage.**

The Council of Europe's activities in the area of history teaching can be divided into three periods. After the foundation of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on **5 May 1949**,<sup>1</sup> history teaching became a major feature of European cultural co-operation, as reflected in the European Cultural Convention of **1954**<sup>2</sup> and a series of conferences on the revision of history textbooks. Initial co-operation activities began in **1949** and continued up until the creation of the Council for Cultural Co-operation in **1962**.

From this point on and up until the end of the Cold War in **1990**, co-operation became more structured both from an institutional and from a thematic viewpoint, managed and co-ordinated by the Council for Cultural Co-operation through symposiums on secondary education. Lastly, in an enlarged Council of Europe, a new pan-European approach had to be taken to history teaching. The Council broadened the horizons of its work as a result and since **2020**, the Observatory on History Teaching, as an enlarged partial agreement, has offered the signatory states of the European Cultural Convention the opportunity to found debates on history teaching on factual and academic bases, the Observatory's task being to provide a complete overview of the state of history teaching in its member states.

**This brochure allows for a more detailed investigation of the historical context of the three timelines highlighted in the exhibition "Teaching History, Grounding Democracy":**

History education and the Council of Europe

History of the European construction

History of international relations

1. The Treaty of London establishing the Council of Europe: <https://rm.coe.int/1680306052>

2. European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 018): [coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treaty-num=018](https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treaty-num=018)

# 1949-1962

## The establishment of initial European co-operation activities in the area of history teaching



1949

5 MAY  
Signing of the Treaty  
of London creating  
the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe, whose headquarters are in Strasbourg, was founded by a treaty, signed in London on 5 May 1949 by 10 founding states (Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and Sweden). It was the first European organisation whose purpose was to “achieve a greater unity between its members”.

The Council of Europe came into being in the context of the Cold War and the establishment of a bipolar world based on the confrontation between two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR). It was created only one month after the signature, on 4 April 1949, of the Atlantic Alliance binding western Europe militarily with the United States and forming the basis of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) set up in 1950. After the outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 East-West tensions grew and grew.

Western Europe’s defensive capabilities *vis-à-vis* the USSR subsequently became the key concern of the western bloc, particularly in relation to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), which was formed in 1949 and stood directly face to face with the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR), set up on the other side of the Iron Curtain. These East-West tensions calmed down only for a short period after the death of Stalin, in 1953. They began again in 1956, when the Hungarian democratic revolution was quelled by the Soviet military. Between 1958 and 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the second Berlin Crisis widened the gap between the two opposing blocs still further, while at the same time, in western Europe, the Iberian Peninsula lived under totalitarian regimes. For Germany, this situation was particularly serious. **The Iron Curtain took tangible form in the construction, in August 1961, of the wall between West Berlin and the GDR.**



12-13 AUGUST  
Berlin Wall built

1961



The Council of Europe tried to escape the thought patterns of the Cold War by excluding defence from its areas of activity but, in practice, the eastern European countries were ruled out of the European organisation in Strasbourg, as its aim was to incorporate as many democratic states in western Europe as possible. Accordingly, from the outset, it invited Greece and Türkiye to take part in its activities and very soon, new countries were admitted, such as Iceland, the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland.

The history of the Council of Europe was also widely influenced by the development of other European organisations such as **the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) formed in 1948** following **the American Marshall Plan of 1947** and **the Western European Union (WEU)**, an organisation for European security and co-operation which arose from the Brussels Treaty (signed by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) and was enlarged to include Italy and the FRG in **October 1954**. It was especially affected by the foundation of the Europe of the Six (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, FRG).



**1950**

**9 MAY**

Robert Schuman issues a declaration leading to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

**4 NOVEMBER**

European Convention on Human Rights signed

**1951**

**18 APRIL**  
Establishment of ECSC

**1959**

**21 JANUARY**  
European Court of Human Rights established



On **9 May 1950**, a little over a year after the foundation of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Robert Schuman proposed the idea of establishing a common market for coal and steel, which took tangible form on **18 April 1951** with the Paris Treaty setting up the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and ultimately gave rise, after the signatures of the Treaties of Rome on **25 March 1957**, to the European Economic Community (EEC). The EEC's customs union was launched on **1 January 1959** and after the failure of the large free trade area comprising all the countries of the OECE, another European organisation arose, when on **4 January 1960**, the EEC non-member countries signed the Stockholm Convention establishing the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The Council of Europe sought to complement the other European organisations, particularly the EEC. Originally, the EEC's focus was on economic and supranational integration, and it did not include the United Kingdom, because Britain's application to join the EEC was rejected, in part because of Général de Gaulle's veto of **14 January 1963**.

In contrast with the ECSC/EEC, the Council of Europe's activities were very broad from the start. Its aim was to defend human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law. To this end, it concluded Europe-wide agreements to harmonise the member states' social and legal practices and promote awareness of a European identity based on shared values and transcending cultural differences. Human rights are without doubt the Council of Europe's prime field of activity. On **4 November 1950**, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms<sup>3</sup> was signed in Rome. It provides for a mechanism to guarantee their protection, in particular through the establishment of a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), set up in Strasbourg in **1959**. To complement this, the Council of Europe also turned its attention to social rights. In **1961**, it became the first European organisation to adopt a Social Charter<sup>4</sup>, which guarantees fundamental social and economic rights linked to employment, housing, health, education, social protection and social services.

The Council of Europe not only worked to protect human rights but also gave priority to activities in the area of culture, education and European identity. Its role in this respect was strengthened by the transfer, in 1954, of all the culture and education-related activities of the Western European Union (WEU) to the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe's pioneering cultural co-operation work resulted in particular in the adoption, in **December 1954**, of the European Cultural Convention. It was also reflected in the adoption, in **1955**, of the European flag, with its twelve gold stars on a blue background and, in **1971**, of the European anthem, the prelude to the Ode for **Joy from Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony**, both of which became emblems of the EEC and then the European Union (EU).

3. Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights – ECHR) (ETS no. 005): <https://rm.coe.int/1680a2353d>

4. European Social Charter (Revised): <https://rm.coe.int/168007cf93>

1955

8 DECEMBER  
Adoption of the  
European flag



**European co-operation on history teaching formed part of this pioneering work by the Council of Europe on culture, education and European identity, areas which the EEC did not (yet) deal with at this point in European construction.**

In the period after the Second World War and as European construction progressed, the architects of the latter became increasingly interested in history teaching. In their view history teaching was crucial because if it was biased and/or diverted from its goal of knowledge gathering by forms of nationalism, it could have harmful consequences. As a result work began at the Council of Europe on the history of the **19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries** contained in school textbooks.



## A. From the first resolution of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe to the European Cultural Convention

The first session of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe was held between **10 August and 8 September 1949**. On this occasion, the members discussed cultural co-operation, laying the foundations of the Council of Europe's view of culture as something which can cut across dividing lines and prompt Europeans to accept one another and live in peace.

**Victor Larock**, who was a rapporteur at that time on the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, talked of it in these terms:

"The only culture worthy of the name is that which aims at the spiritual enrichment and the moral improvement of the human being. It is not in the service of any one nation or any one class, but of mankind as a whole."<sup>5</sup>

**Léopold Sédar Senghor** added the following:

"The main obstacle to European Union lies less in the divergence of economic interests than in the covert virulence of cultural nationalism."<sup>6</sup>

Addressing the matter of history, the Greek delegate, **Mr Cassimatis** put the following question:

"Now, what should we do to carry out that task which is so essential for the future of Europe and the future of peace – I am referring to the preparation of uniform history textbooks – if we cannot penetrate to the very heart of the culture of the different nations?"<sup>7</sup>

5. 6 August 1949, 1<sup>st</sup> session of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe (Part III of the report : sittings 12-15, pages 693-1052) Page 750 of the report  
6. Idem . Page 754  
7. Idem . Page 774

1951

**21 MARCH**  
Creation of the "Internationales Institut für Schulbuchverbesserung", renamed the "Georg Eckert Institute" in 1975

 **LEIBNIZ INSTITUTE  
FOR EDUCATIONAL MEDIA**  
Georg Eckert Institute

8. Council of Europe, Consultative Assembly, ordinary session of 1949, recommendations to the Committee of Ministers adopted on 7 September 1949 (French only): <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/search?page=1&category=2&before=1949>

1949

**7 SEPTEMBER**  
Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers, adopted at the first session of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe (10 August - 8 September)



The Assembly recommends a co-operation plan including "the preparation of a series of impartial books dealing with the geography and history of European countries which bring out the links between them"

Following these exchanges, the Assembly adopted a first recommendation to the Committee of Ministers on education on **7 September 1949**.<sup>8</sup> The parliamentarians invited the Ministers of Education of the member states to conduct a comparative study of the teaching programmes in their countries so that the best features of each could be available to all. They recommended the organisation of university courses and lectures on European problems and organisations and the collective utilisation to the best advantage of Europe's works of art and particularly its archaeological treasures, which constituted one of the fundamental elements of the common heritage of the European peoples. They also invited the ministers to set up a European Cultural Centre to promote cultural co-operation between states and university academics and the development of European culture.

The recommendation also emphasises the need for co-operation on history teaching. The Assembly recommends:

**“the preparation of a series of impartial books dealing with the geography and the history of European countries which bring out the links between them”.**

Among the Council of Europe’s partners are many civil society organisations, which are important sources of information and advice and help to disseminate the Council of Europe’s work.

The most important is the International Institute for Textbook Improvement founded by Georg Eckert in Brunswick on **21 March 1951** and renamed **the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in 1975.**

**Georg Eckert** (1912-1974) was a German historian, the Chair of the German National Commission for UNESCO and the founder of the International Institute for Textbook Improvement. As a charismatic figure but also someone who was haunted by his membership of the Nazi party and his involvement in the Second World War, he was driven by a powerful commitment to the democratic reconstruction of the education system of the Federal Republic of Germany.



**1912 - 1974**

A considerable amount of preliminary work had already been done at this institute and the Council of Europe was able to draw on this when it launched the first conferences on Europe’s history textbooks.

**Georg Eckert played a major role at these conferences, representing the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), which also gave its moral and financial support to the institute he had set up to improve history teaching in Europe.**

His aim was to promote the comparative analysis and revision of schoolbooks so as to remove biased, conformist and nationalist representations.

In **1964**, the two institutions worked on the publication of an encyclopaedia of 50 key terms used in history and their contribution to a European conception of history (*Grundbegriffe der Geschichte. 50 Beiträge zum europäischen Geschichtsbild*).

It took the form of a glossary of terms used frequently in European history teaching such as feudalism, the Middle Ages, humanism, the Renaissance and nationalism. The idea for the work stemmed from the terminological problems encountered by the participants in the first rounds of conferences held by the Council of Europe. For example, the definition of the Middle Ages varied from one country to another, with their dates often differing by several centuries. The glossary was published only in German.

In **1965**, the Council of Europe invited the Georg Eckert Institute to serve as a clearing house for the exchange of information on history and geography textbooks. In **1969**, the Institute co-operated with the Council of Europe on a symposium on history teaching in lower secondary schools.

A significant new stage in the promotion of the Council of Europe's work on history teaching was the adoption of the European Cultural Convention in Paris on **19 December 1954** and its entry into force on **5 May 1955**. It was opened for signature by the member states and for accession by non-member states and the European Community, which enabled the Holy See to accede in **1962**. It has diverse objectives ranging from promoting the members states' culture and languages to developing mutual understanding between Europe's peoples. However, the Convention also refers to history as a key means of developing and enriching European culture and civilisation. This meant that co-operation on history teaching became one of the tools for the implementation of the aims set out in the Council of Europe's European Cultural Convention.



**1957**

**12 JANUARY**  
First session of the  
European Conference  
of Local Authorities

**1954**

**19 DECEMBER**  
European Cultural  
Convention signed



At the Council of Europe, work on history was built on several foundations, in the field both of formal education and of culture, and this process began in **1954**. For instance, for 60 years, the Council of Europe art exhibitions reflected historical periods through the mirror of art. Their aim was to increase knowledge and appreciation of European art as one of the highest expressions of Europe's culture and common values. Over almost half a century the series ... succeeded in illustrating most of the great epochs or the contributions of great personalities who left an indelible mark on their time.

Year	Place	Title
1954	Brussels	Humanist Europe
1955	Vienna	The triumph of mannerism from Michelangelo to El Greco
1964	Athens	Byzantine art
1983	Lisbon	Portuguese discoveries and Renaissance Europe
1983	Istanbul	Anatolian civilisations
1989	Paris	The French Revolution and Europe
1992-1993	Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen	From Viking to Crusader – Scandinavia and Europe 800 – 1200
1995-1996	London, Barcelona, Berlin	Art and power, Europe under the dictators 1930 – 45
1998-1999	Münster and Osnabrück	War and peace in Europe
2021-2014	Berlin, Tallinn, Milan, Cracow	30 <sup>th</sup> exhibition – The Desire for Freedom. Art in Europe since 1945

This was also reflected by the Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes set up in **1987**.

This Agreement “*seeks to reinforce the potential of Cultural Routes for cultural co-operation, sustainable territorial development and social cohesion, with a particular focus on themes of symbolic importance for European unity, history, culture and values and the discovery of less well-known destinations*”.

Since **1987**, the 47 routes have addressed entire chapters of our joint history ranging from the Vikings, Jewish heritage and megalithic culture through the Iron Curtain to the architecture of totalitarian regimes.

## B. Conferences on history textbooks

**Between 1953 and 1958, the study group on history teaching of the Committee on General and Technical Education of the Council of Europe held a series of six conferences to launch the initial cooperation activities in relation to history teaching.**

The conferences were hosted in turn by each of the Council of Europe member states and focused on the revision of history textbooks.

They formed part of a worldwide process because already in **1950**, UNESCO had published an initial booklet on the joint revision of history textbooks in the Nordic countries. The Council of Europe and UNESCO drew on the pioneering work of

the League of Nations in this area. The Council was also able to refer to the work of the Nordic Cultural Affairs Committee founded in **1947**, which proposed a new perspective on history, stressing among other things, the importance of context, objective facts and countries’ joint history. The European School of Luxembourg, set up in **1953-54** for the children of the staff of the

**1950**

UNESCO published an initial booklet on the joint revision of history textbooks in the Nordic countries

**1953**

**4-12 AUGUST**  
Conference on “*The European Idea in History Teaching*” in Calw (Germany)

**3 SEPTEMBER**  
European Convention on Human Rights enters into force

European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), was also a source of inspiration for the Council of Europe. This school was required to provide an education for children of 6 different nationalities and, to this end, it sought to limit itself to the facts – particularly concerning civilisation –, highlight the mutual impact of countries on one another’s history and familiarise pupils with the textbooks of the six member states.

The Council of Europe took the history teaching programme in two directions. Firstly, and in particular in the **1950s**, it sought to eliminate stereotypes and prejudice in history textbooks and encourage higher levels of reliability and impartiality. Secondly, it examined history’s place in secondary school curricula and

made recommendations on how to make it an interesting, stimulating and relevant contribution to young people’s education. It should be said that the Council’s experts specified that it was not the aim of the conferences on history textbooks to use history as propaganda for European unity.

From the outset, the role of history teaching in shaping young people’s attitudes towards other countries, races and religions was addressed in the work of the Council of Europe’s education programme.

**The first Council of Europe conference on history textbooks, held in Calw, in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1953, focused on “*The European Idea in history teaching*”.**





Each member state was represented by a leading person in the education field such as a school teacher, a university professor or an expert from the ministry. The conference began with presentations on historical subjects but also made room for discussion and critical exchanges between the participants. The atmosphere was highly conducive to new ideas and made it possible to define the substance, form and role of a history textbook. Firstly, a textbook must be factual. It must not be a propaganda tool for European unity, serve a particular state's interests or undermine friendly relations between peoples. Secondly, the facts set out in textbooks should not just be political but address cultural, economic, social, ideas-related and religious matters. It should be attempted to describe these matters from differing viewpoints and using varied sources. Third, textbooks must start with local or regional history, then address national history, while highlighting the European aspects of each country's history (international and European relations, shared features and trends). They must also show that *"nationalism is not the general principle of modern history but simply a phase in the historical development of Europe"*. Lastly, history should deal with modern times, as *"it is possible to*

*make the pupil aware of both his rights and his duties as a member of the European community"*.

### The second conference was held in Oslo in 1954 and focused on "the Middle Ages".

As at the preceding conference, textbooks were discussed between member states, such as Greece and Türkiye, and lectures were given on various subjects such as Scandinavian civilisation, common European features and Islamic civilisation. However, this time, recommendations were also made on ways of improving teaching on the Middle Ages. According to the participants, there was a need to focus more on medieval universities, the *"unifying role of the movement of the Crusades"*, Byzantium and the formation of the European East *vis-à-vis* Islam, and to improve understanding of Islam, the heritage of Rome and the Greco-Roman world and the origin of the term *"Europe"*.

### Following the same model, three other conferences were held subsequently, each on a specific period and in chronological order:

1954

The Conference on "the Middle Ages", in Oslo (Norway)

1955

The Conference on "the Sixteenth Century", in Rome (Italy)

1956

The Conference on "the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in Royaumont (France)



1958

The Conference on the modern period from 1870 to 1950, in Ankara (Türkiye)

1957

The Conference on "the Period from c. 1789 to c. 1871", in Scheveningen (Netherlands)

### the Conference on "the Sixteenth Century" (Rome, 1955), the Conference on "the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" (Royaumont, 1956) and the Conference on "the Period from c. 1789 to c. 1871" (Scheveningen, 1957).

In this context, four centuries of history were reviewed in the textbooks of thirteen different countries.

### The last conference, held in Istanbul and Ankara in 1958, related to the modern period from 1870 to 1950.

On this occasion Spain was added to the participants and its history textbooks were among the 107 sent in by the member states for analysis. On **4 July 1957**, Spain had joined the European Cultural Convention and, on the same occasion, had joined the textbook review process.

The report on Spain highlighted a number of shortcomings. For example, the viewpoint of colonised peoples was not represented, women's emancipation was never mentioned and the rights of minorities after the treaties of **1918** were not taken into account.



These findings were reflected in the conference recommendations, which highlighted the need to talk more about demographic, social, economic, cultural, religious and institutional questions in the **19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries** and about the causes of different aspects of colonisation, and no longer to neglect the emancipation of women. Lastly, this conference, which was the last to deal with modern history and wished to avoid any revanchism, also recommended talking about

## C. Impact and outcome of the conferences

The conferences on history textbooks had major repercussions in intellectual and academic circles. They made it possible to draw conclusions to manage the revision of textbooks as well as possible, for example by addressing not just the history of one's country of origin but also that of other European countries, particularly that of East and South-East Europe. They also had a knock-on effect, fostering **inter-state co-operation on the revision of history textbooks**.

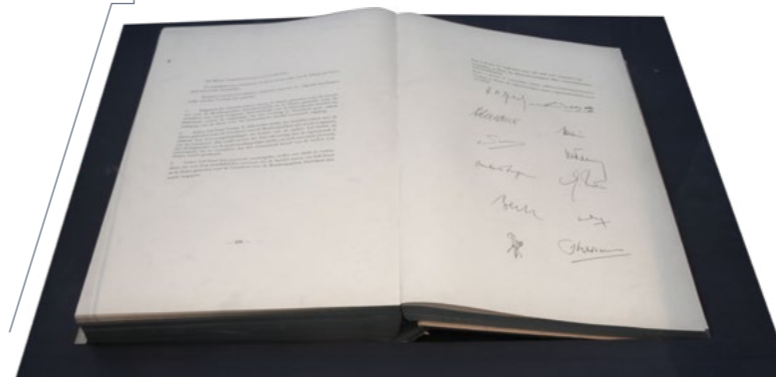
the causes of the two World Wars rather than the responsibilities for them: ***“the suggestion of collective guilt of a people should be avoided”***.

During the round of conferences held by the Council of Europe between **1953** and **1958** nearly 1 000 history textbooks in use in the members states' schools were reviewed with the principles of honesty and impartiality in mind so as to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices.<sup>9</sup>

For example, between the first two conferences (**1953** and **1954**), German historians co-operated bilaterally with Norwegian, Belgian, Danish, French and English historians. They discussed accounts of bilateral relations with each of these countries through meetings, discussions, exchanges and reviews of textbooks and meetings between pupils.

9. Against bias and prejudice: <https://rm.coe.int/1680493c33>

1957



25 MARCH

Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom Treaty signed

In addition, in **1954** Belgian and German historians held a conference on history textbooks in Brunswick to discuss historical controversies between the two countries. At the same time, the Union of French Teachers planned to launch an international educational review with a print run of 100 000 copies containing articles on *“fraught”* historical issues between France and Germany. Lastly, unexpected contacts were established. For instance, in **May 1954**, Belgium and the USSR exchanged textbooks for critical review and between **1956** and **1957**, Indonesia and the FRG did the same. The United Kingdom even established informal ties with India to discuss textbooks which it subsequently forwarded to the Institute in Brunswick.

After these six conferences, a new period opened, following up on these activities and reviewing them. In **1960**, Édouard Bruley, the President of the Society of History and Geography Teachers of France, and André Puttemans, the Belgian schools inspector and President of its national federation of history teachers, co-operated on a work entitled ***“A History of Europe?”***, summarising the results of the six conferences. Other personalities from the academic and education world were involved in the implementation of the recommendations and projects launched by the conferences.

For example, the German professor and director of the International Textbook Improvement Institute in Brunswick, Georg Eckert, published five yearbooks on history teaching given over to different periods and in **1958**, was awarded the Europe Prize for his work. With Edouard Bruley, he also prepared recommendations to improve the teaching of German history in France and French history in Germany. Émile Lousse, Chair of the committee on lexical matters of the Committee on General and Technical Education and Belgian professor and author of history textbooks, wrote several documents summarising the work of the conferences including his **“Histoire de la liberté civile et politique”** (“History of civil and political liberty”) (**1958**, finalised in **1963**), which deals with the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD up to 1957 and **“Thèmes Européens dans l’Histoire de l’Europe”** (“European Themes in the History of Europe”) (**1964**), in which he set out the main lines of European history. At an initial progress meeting at the Council of Europe in **1964**, four works were mentioned, namely a book on the revision of history textbooks, a comparative study on history teaching in Europe, the book “European History” and Professor Lousse’s “Thèmes européens dans l’histoire de l’Europe”.

**1956**

**23 OCTOBER -  
10 NOVEMBER**

Hungarian  
Uprising



**1964**

Publication of the book  
“Thèmes Européens dans  
l’Histoire de l’Europe” about  
the European history

The main point to retain is probably that the Council of Europe’s initial activities in history teaching were not confined to ideas, discussions and recommendations on improved co-operation at European level but were already resulting in tangible achievements such as studies, analytical documents and books on the revision of history textbooks in Europe and European history in general.

**Emile Lousse** (1905-1986) was a Belgian historian, specialising in the history of institutions in modern times, who taught in particular at the Catholic University of Louvain. The professor made a major contribution to the Council’s work, representing Belgium at the conferences on textbooks (from 1953) and chairing the committee on lexical matters (1956). In the 1960s, after the history teaching conferences, Lousse wrote a series of works for the Council, summarising this work and relating to European history.



**1905 - 1986**

# 1962-1990

## Increasingly structured co-operation on history teaching



The period from the 1960s to the end of the Cold War were both a productive and a turbulent time for cultural co-operation and history teaching at the Council of Europe.

On the one hand, after **the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962**, from **1963** onwards, the international climate changed and presented an opportunity for East-West dialogue. *Détente* began between the two superpowers, who decided to engage in dialogue, and East-West relations improved up until **1968** and the repression of the **Prague Spring** in Czechoslovakia. However, this did not prevent other conflicts from breaking out in the world. The United States were engaged in the Vietnam war, and in the Middle East, the **Third Arab-Israeli War** (the Six-Day War) broke out on **5 June 1967**.

1968

The repression of the Prague Spring

In addition, the Cold War set in again after the conclusion of the Helsinki Accords as part of the process of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (**CSCE**) in **1975**. From **1977** onwards, the Soviet Union began deploying its SS-20 missiles, threatening western Europe and, in **December 1979**, NATO took the dual decision of deploying American missiles in western Europe and initiating negotiations with the USSR to get it to withdraw its SS-20s.

Following the introduction of martial law in Poland in **December 1981**, Europeans were caught up in the spiral of the “new” Cold War and had to apply this decision from **1983** onwards. It was only after **the accession to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union in 1985** and the announcement in **1987** of his policies of *Glasnost* – openness – and *Perestroika*, that a new period of détente could begin. Gradually, a new role began to emerge for the Council of Europe. It could now open up progressively to the eastern bloc countries through increased co-operation and contact with them.



**A real turning point for the Council of Europe occurred on 6 July 1989, when Mikhail Gorbachev chose to talk of the creation of a “Common European Home” in a speech at the Council of Europe.**

After the fall of the Berlin Wall on **9 November 1989**, the Council of Europe fulfilled this role of openness, becoming the setting for the reunification of Europe on the basis of its fundamental values, namely human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Competition increasingly grew between the Council of Europe and the EEC, which was moving forward in its integration process and beginning to encroach on its activities. At the EEC’s Hague Summit on **1 and 2 December 1969**, an agreement in principle was reached on its enlargement. After the accession of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark in **1973**, the EEC expanded still further to take in Greece (**1981**) and Spain and Portugal (**1986**). The difference between the “*Small Europe*” of the EEC and the “*Large Europe*” of the Council of Europe was beginning to fade. In addition, the EEC set up the European Political Co-operation (EPC) to tackle

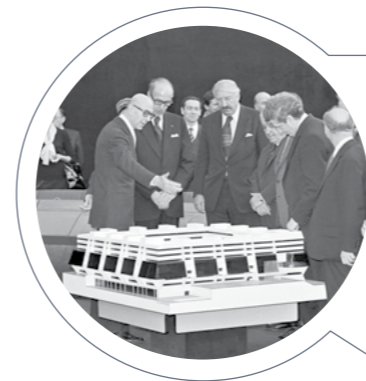


**1969**

**1-2 DECEMBER**  
The EEC’s  
Hague Summit

**1970**

**12 JANUARY**  
European Youth Centre  
set up in response to  
the 1968 crisis



**28 JANUARY**  
“Palais de l’Europe”  
inaugurated in  
Strasbourg (France)

**1977**



**28 NOVEMBER**  
European Convention on the Legal Status of  
Migrant Workers signed

the Middle-East crisis and influence the CSCE process. The CPE directly called into question the Council of Europe’s role as a discussion platform on international issues. Lastly, the EEC was making progress in other areas of European construction. On the initiative of the French President, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, and the German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, **the first European elections were scheduled for June 1979**. This caused the Parliamentary Assembly to fear that it would be marginalised by a European Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage. The signature, in **February 1986**, of the Single European Act, which planned to set up a single market by **1992** and adopted the principle of an economic and monetary union, meant still more competition for the Council of Europe as the new treaty provided for the extension of EEC powers into areas in which the Council of Europe was already active, such as the environment and research.

To retain its place in the European architecture, the Council of Europe defended its role as a protector of human rights and its pioneering contribution to European co-operation and sought legitimacy by turning increasingly to co-operation with the eastern bloc.



As a result, in the human rights field, the European Court of Human Rights became more and more well known and the number of individual applications increased. Human rights protection was enhanced through new protocols to the Convention, the most significant of which was the **1986** one on the abolition of the death penalty in peacetime, and through the Convention for the Prevention of Torture in **1989**. The Council of Europe also did ground-breaking work in many areas in which other international and European organisations only became active later on.

9 NOVEMBER

Fall of the Berlin wall

Scan here to watch the video



1989

For example, in response to the **terrorist attacks at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972**, a first **convention on the suppression of terrorism was adopted in 1977**.<sup>10</sup> To protect the environment, a first convention was signed in Berne in **1979**,<sup>11</sup> well before any involvement by the EEC in this area. Lastly, the Council of Europe succeeded in setting up certain leading forms of co-operation such as the **European Charter of Local Self-Government in 1985**<sup>12</sup> and the **European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1987**.<sup>13</sup> In the area of youth, culture, media and North-South dialogue,

the Council of Europe was also a forerunner. For example, in **1970-72**, it established a **European Youth Centre and Foundation**, which were jointly managed by youth associations, and this was followed in the **1980s** by two other partial agreements setting up a **centre for North-South cooperation in Lisbon (1989)** and **Eurimages**, a support fund for European cinema (**1988**).

History teaching formed part of these ground-breaking spheres of European cooperation, in which the Council of Europe involved itself in a more and more structured way from the **1960s** on.

## A. Creation of the Council for Cultural Co-operation

In the 1960s, after the first round of conferences on the revision of history textbooks, the Council of Europe stepped up its activities. In 1962, it set up a **Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC)**.

This council is the body which set in motion and managed the work of the Council of Europe in the field of education and culture; its tasks were defined by the European Cultural Convention.

10. European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (ETS No. 090): <https://rm.coe.int/16800771b2>

11. Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (ETS No. 104): <https://rm.coe.int/1680078aff>

12. European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122): <https://rm.coe.int/168007a088>

13. European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (ETS No. 126) : <https://rm.coe.int/168007a67f>





1962

16 DECEMBER  
Council for Cultural  
Co-operation (CDCC)  
established

**In 1962, the CDCC was made up of three committees:**

- **the Committee for Higher Education and Research**
- **the Committee on General and Technical Education**
- **the Committee on Out-of-School Education (youth).**

The CDCC programmes formed an integral part of the Council of Europe's activities and contributed, like those in other sectors, to the Organisation's three main objectives. They were intended primarily to protect, strengthen and promote human rights, fundamental freedoms and pluralist democracy. They also sought to raise awareness of a European identity.

Lastly, they attempted to find common solutions to the main problems and challenges of European society.

The programmes were extremely varied. They related, for example, to education for democratic citizenship, modern languages, school links and exchanges, education policies, training of education staff, in-service training and the recognition of qualifications.

History was one of the CDCC's areas of activity. For example, in the beginning it was the Committee on General and Technical Education which steered the activities and conferences on the revision of history teaching textbooks in the Council of Europe member states. It was also tasked with assessing their objectivity and, in **1968**, it concluded that:

***"most textbooks were still not objective as they contained national prejudices, errors of interpretation and imprecise terminology, among other things."***<sup>14</sup>

14. Memorandum of 25/09/1968 - Note to M. Neumann from M.T. Monticone, Council of Europe Archives

## B. The symposiums on secondary education

**In 1965, in Elsinore, a first intergovernmental symposium was held on "history teaching in secondary education" bringing together specialists from the Council of Europe member states.**

This event marked the beginning of a sequence of four symposiums on secondary education, which were the second major series of meetings on history teaching after the conferences of **1953-1958**.

During the first symposium, as in Calw in **1953**, the experts outlined the form that history teaching should take in secondary schools and set some common guidelines:

- history is political and military but also economic, artistic and cultural;
- history must be taught from varying viewpoints using varied materials and focusing on diverse geographical areas so as to be objective and comprehensive;
- it is more important for pupils to understand historical phenomena than to learn dates;
- teachers must be free to interpret the curriculum in their own way;
- history must be taught everywhere, including in technical schools.

1965

21 AUGUST-  
1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER  
Conference on  
"History Teaching  
in Secondary  
Education" in Elsinore  
(Denmark)

Looking at the issue as a whole, the experts emphasised that history teaching must be *"considered as a basis for the education of the citizen of Europe and the world ... like the teaching of geography and civics"*.

As far as possible, history must be presented from a European perspective. This approach could cover the following topics:

- the Great Migrations, in so far as they concern the history of Europe;
- the Crusades;
- representative institutions and legal principles;
- humanism and the Renaissance;
- the development of capitalism;
- the rise of modern states;
- Europe in the world today.

The subsequent symposiums continued this work and made recommendations to the member states. In **1969**, the 2nd symposium, in Brunswick, related to **"History Teaching in Lower Secondary Education"**, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, in **1971**, was held in Strasbourg and was on **"History Teaching in Upper Secondary Education"** while the 4<sup>th</sup>, in **1983**, focused on **"Teaching about the Portuguese Discoveries in Secondary Schools in Western Europe"**.

The fourth symposium concluded that when teaching about the Portuguese voyages and European voyages in general, it was important to do justice to the considerable achievements of contemporary civilisations in other parts of the world, such as Africa, India, China and Japan. In this way, teaching on these endeavours could open up a window on other cultures and foster better intercultural understanding. Furthermore, teaching on this exploration should not be limited to a mere list of the various events and stages of the expansion process. Pupils should be helped to understand the complexity of the phenomenon, in other words the origins of and reasons for European expansion and its overall consequences for Europe and for other parts of the world.

**1972**

European Youth  
Foundation (EYF)  
established

**1978****8 SEPTEMBER**

Protests in Tehran, start of  
the Iranian Revolution and  
second oil shock



In parallel with this work, a more thematic symposium was held for the first time in Louvain, from **18 to 23 September 1972**, on the subject of **"Religion in school history textbooks"**. Although it was decided not to define the term "religion" because of its complexity, the subject was debated so as to produce recommendations on how it should be taught as this was considered important by the experts. For instance, according to Professor Haenens, fewer than 1% of history textbooks in the **1970s** covered religion. In view of this finding, researchers highlighted the central position of religion in history and recommended that it should be re-introduced into textbooks. However, they also argued that the treatment of history should be impartial, including no value judgments and showing religion in all its complexity, dealing with religious structures, social forces and links with politics. The subject should also be taught on the basis of what the pupils already knew, namely their own religion.

It was during this symposium that it was noted that history teachers could play a role in the transmission of biases when teaching the history of religions.

**History teachers must not present one faith as being superior to all others because the others are distant in space and more different in dogma and practice. While the textbooks used in Western Europe devote a pre-eminent place to European forms of Christianity (Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy), they should not lose sight of the role of other religions (Judaism, Islam, etc.) and their contribution to the development of European culture. In so doing they will serve historical truth and contribute towards a spirit of open-mindedness and ecumenism.**

Following the symposium, the researchers highlighted the need to continue its thematic exchanges and agreed to work together more, within both the CDCC and other co-operation bodies such as the International Committee of Historical Sciences and national associations of history teachers.



## C. From the Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly against pro-fascist and racist propaganda to work on the pedagogy and didactics of history

**A turning point for co-operation on history teaching arose at the beginning of the 1980s.**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1980, at a time when virulent pro-fascist and racist propaganda accompanied by bombings had returned to Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 743 on the need to combat resurgent fascist propaganda and its racist aspects.<sup>15</sup> The resolution adopted a clear stance in favour of a form of history teaching which promoted democracy and humanitarian values. The parliamentarians urged the Council of Europe member states:

***"to take appropriate action to attack the root causes of the ills from which such propaganda springs by ensuring access for all to justice, to the right to work, and to culture and education, which should in particular include adequate teaching of modern history, so that young people will be better prepared to promote democracy."***

15. PACE Resolution 743 (1980) on the "Need to combat resurgent fascist propaganda and its racist aspects": <https://pace.coe.int/files/16154/pdf>



1980 was also a time when the Council was diversifying its partnerships.

For instance, in March 1980, the Council of Europe supported the creation of the International Society for History Didactics (ISHD). Its purpose was *“to advance the study of history didactics as a scholarly discipline by means of the mutual exchange of bibliographical information, research findings, ideas about the subject, teaching materials, syllabuses and any other relevant information”*.

These days, the ISHD works regularly with the Council of Europe and its Observatory on History Teaching in Europe.

1987

7 OCTOBER

Yugoslavia accedes to the Cultural Convention



23 OCTOBER

First Council of Europe Cultural Route established with the Santiago de Compostela Declaration

1989



1<sup>ST</sup> JUNE

Catherine Lalumière, first woman elected Secretary General of the Council of Europe

8 JUNE

Council of Europe grants special guest status to Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia and the USSR

6 JULY

Mikhail Gorbachev gives *“common European home”* speech



1990

Workshop in Brunswick on Methodologies of Textbook Analysis, held by the Council of Europe

This period also saw the establishment of the International Students of History Association (ISHA), which is a network of students of history and related sciences whose aim is to share viewpoints to improve understanding of history and culture. This non-governmental organisation is an important source of information and advice for the Council of Europe and takes part in disseminating its work.

**In addition, in 1990, the Council of Europe held a workshop in Brunswick on Methodologies of Textbook Analysis, which gave rise to several recommendations.**

Firstly, history's aims were to be redefined. Pupils had to be helped to develop a critical eye and an understanding of history rather than to be able to recite dates and names. Young people also had to be taught to fight against prejudice and appreciate parliamentary democracy and a multicultural society. As to methods, time had to be taken to produce good textbooks which carefully assessed recent history, struck the right balance between world history and local history and adjusted teaching methods to pupils' ages.

It was also important for materials to include high-quality illustrations in a world where "images reigned supreme" and for teachers to be given some discretion.

**Lastly, the Council sought to promote research projects on the analysis and assessment of school textbooks, for instance by incorporating them into the EUDISED database (set up in 1972). Likewise it began compiling, in collaboration with the Georg Eckert Institute, a list of research institutes on school textbooks and computerised national bibliographies (in the European Education Thesaurus).**

**In short, throughout the period from the 1960s up to 1990, Council of Europe co-operation in the area of history teaching became increasingly structured.**

Through the Council for Cultural Co-operation, the symposiums on secondary education and the symposium on religion in history textbooks, ongoing in-depth work could be carried out by experts so as to promote the founding principles behind the orientation of history teaching in

Europe, namely democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 743 confirmed this democratic thrust of history teaching at the Council of Europe.



# 1990 to the present

Teaching history in a pan-European Council of Europe



1990

3 OCTOBER  
German  
reunification

1992

7 FEBRUARY  
Maastricht Treaty  
establishing the  
European Union  
(EU) signed



The period from 1990 to the present day is characterised by a revival of the Council of Europe, which became the first pan-European organisation in a new era of international relations.

The fall of the Berlin Wall on **9 November 1989** marked the end both of the division of Europe and the Cold War. Events moved very quickly. Gorbachev abandoned the Brezhnev doctrine of limited sovereignty, and the central and east European countries began a process of democratisation and transition to a market economy.

**German reunification was achieved on 3 October 1990, then in 1991 the Warsaw Pact was disbanded and finally, the Soviet Union broke up.**

This was the end of the old system of two superpowers and Russia had to reposition itself in a new balance of powers in which the United States weighed heavily, particularly on the military front. Very quickly, Europe was also rocked by new conflicts. After the break-up of Yugoslavia in **1992**, war broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**No sooner had this conflict been resolved through the Dayton Accords in December 1995, than another began, over the independence of Kosovo, in 1999.**

In both cases, the Europeans alone could not remedy the problem and had to call on NATO – and the Americans in particular – to take military action in the region.

In this context, the central and east European countries wished to be integrated as quickly as possible into the organisations and alliances of the West, especially the European Community. However, for the latter, the main aim was to consolidate before enlarging. The path to political and monetary union was traced out by the **Maastricht Treaty of 1992**, which turned the EEC into the European Union (EU) and changed its institutional structure by setting up three pillars,

one for Community matters, one for the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and a third for internal affairs and justice. These reforms were not enough to prepare the EU to incorporate the central and eastern European countries. The Council of Europe seemed the best placed body to play the part of pan-European organisation and, as a result, it began the most spectacular process of enlargement since its creation. From 1990 to 2009, it doubled the number of its members, growing from a 23-state organisation to a 47-state one. It started with a first wave of enlargement, to the central and east European countries, up to 1993, before a second wave, covering the former Soviet countries (including Russia) and the former Yugoslav republics.

**It was only on 16 March 2022, because of the war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, that Russia was expelled from the Council of Europe, reducing the number of member states to 46.**

2022

**24 FEBRUARY**  
Russian Federation launches war against Ukraine

**16 MARCH**  
Russian Federation excluded from the Council of Europe



1990

**10 MARCH**  
Creation of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission)

To be able to accommodate the new member states from the 1990s onwards, the Council of Europe had to carry out some internal restructuring. It set up new co-operation bodies and it began a reform of the Court and its mechanisms for the protection of human rights. It also continued to improve existing leading co-operation projects. Accordingly, the waves of enlargement were accompanied by the establishment of new tools and new techniques of assistance for the countries concerned, such as the assistance programmes and the **Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) in 1990** or a monitoring procedure in 1994 to ensure that states were honouring their commitments. The revival in the importance of the Council of Europe on the European stage was also confirmed by its Summits of Heads of State and Government. Like the EU Summits, these meetings *“at the highest European level”* served to set guidelines for the Council of Europe’s activities and to launch major institutional reforms.

**For instance, the 1993 Vienna Summit provided the impetus to set up a Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in 1994 and a single Court of Human Rights in 1998. The 1997 Strasbourg Summit launched the idea of a European Commissioner for Human Rights, who was appointed in 1999, while the 2005 Warsaw Summit instigated the negotiation of a memorandum of understanding with the EU.**

1997



**10-11 OCTOBER**  
Second Council of Europe Summit in Strasbourg (France)

In the Council of Europe's new institutional architecture, the European Court of Human Rights acquired a central role. In 1998, it became a permanent institution and grew in scale and importance both through the exponential growth in the number of individual applications lodged with it and through its judgments, which gradually acquired quasi-constitutional status.

**Significant changes also occurred in the ECHR. The prohibition of the death penalty under all circumstances in 2002 proved that Europeans had a vision of this issue which differed from that of the rest of the world including the United States, which saw it merely as a catalogue of human rights to be respected.**

In addition, the Council of Europe was continually adding to the ECHR through more specific conventions such as the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995)**,<sup>16</sup> the conventions on biomedicine in 1997,<sup>17</sup> the Warsaw Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005),<sup>18</sup> the Lanzarote Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007)<sup>19</sup> and the **Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011)**.<sup>20</sup>

The Council of Europe now faces new challenges. The enthusiasm of the enlargement period has worn off and, above all, the Council of Europe is no longer the only organisation with pan-European ambitions. Since 1994, the CSCE has transformed into an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and is called on, like the Council of Europe, to take action to stabilise Europe through conflict prevention assignments.

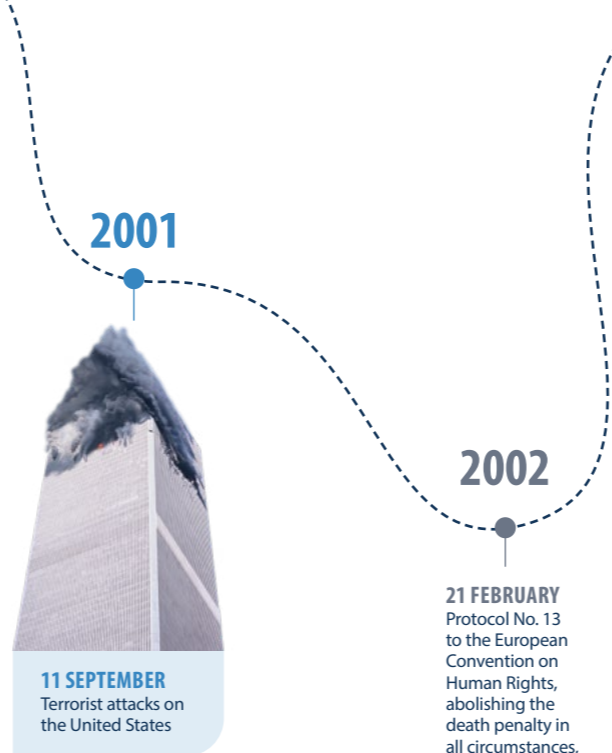
16. Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157): <https://rm.coe.int/168007cdac>

17. Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (ETS No. 164): <https://rm.coe.int/168007cf98>

18. Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197): <https://rm.coe.int/168008371d>

19. Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201): <https://rm.coe.int/1680084822>

20. Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210): <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>



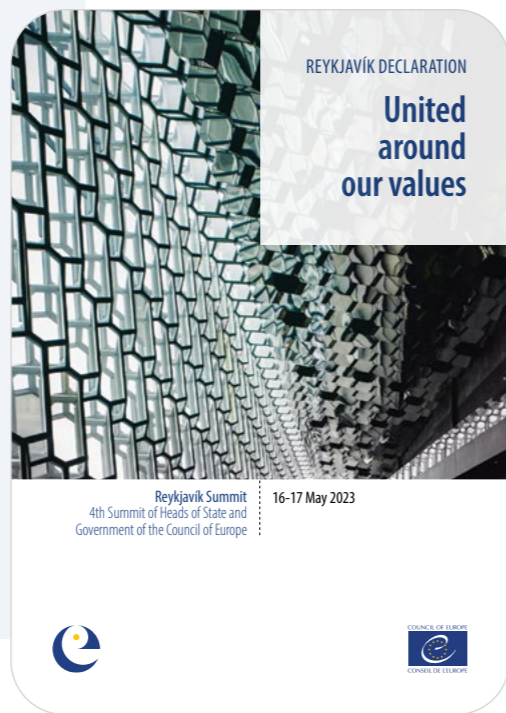
After the signature of the **Treaty of Nice on 26 February 2001**, the EU was enlarged, comprising 28 member states including 10 central and east European countries by 2012. After **Brexit in 2020**, it now has 27 member states. From 2009, the Council of Europe engaged in structured co-operation with the EU in three areas in which it was intended to establish a complementary relationship: political cooperation, legal cooperation and cooperation programmes for non-EU member countries. This co-operation is rendered all the more important by the many crises that Europe is currently undergoing – a migration crisis, a crisis of international terrorism, a health crisis and war in Ukraine – and all of these call for a joint effort by Europeans to tackle them together.

The Council of Europe does training work on education in and the preservation of fundamental values in Europe, which is also reflected by its activities on history teaching in the enlarged “*New Europe*”.

**More recently, in 2020, the establishment of an Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Observatory on History Teaching has fleshed out this work through a factual database on the state of history teaching in the member states of the agreement.**

The latest Council of Europe Summit, in Reykjavik in 2023,<sup>21</sup> focused mainly on support for Ukraine and the introduction of tangible measures seeking justice for the victims of Russian aggression. The Summit also saw a renewal of the members states' commitment to the Council of Europe's values through a joint declaration entitled *"United around our values"*.<sup>22</sup>

**The declaration specifically mentions history in the context of access to information and the fight against hate speech and disinformation, particularly against the instrumentalisation of history, stemming from a desire to "overcome the past and create solid foundations to build unity in the spirit of harmony and co-operation with respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law".**



21. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/fourth-council-of-europe-summit>

22. <https://rm.coe.int/4th-summit-of-heads-of-state-and-government-of-the-council-of-europe/1680ab40c1>

## A. Meetings on history teaching in the "New Europe"

In the 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the eastern bloc, the Council of Europe's enlargement to take in the central and east European countries, the former Yugoslav republics and many countries of the former USSR saw **co-operation on history teaching take on a new dimension**.

The Organisation had to engage in a pan-European discussion on history teaching with its new member states. It began bringing together experts, teachers and officials from eastern and western Europe to discuss their views on teaching. These meetings made for renewed co-operation to establish together what avenues to explore to reform teaching in central and eastern Europe. All of the Council of Europe's activities during this period took place in the context of a project called **"New Europe" (1989-1998)**.

From 1989 onwards, the changes in Europe and the democratic transition in the central and east European countries influenced the Council

of Europe's activities. Priority was placed on support for history teaching reform in these countries, through specific programmes and acknowledgment of the impact that these changes could have on history teaching in all the member states, and on a review of the notion of a European dimension.

History teaching was indeed a priority in the new member states in democratic transition, and there were several reasons for this. Firstly, there was a need to assess the period under communist rule during the Cold War because for them, "understanding the past helped to understand the present". Subsequently, education helped to train citizens in critical thinking; open-mindedness and tolerance were considered key to living in modern society and reaching out to other cultures. Lastly, history enabled people to feel like both full citizens of their country and representatives of Europe or even the world, thus fostering European and national unity.



**The Bruges Symposium (1991)** was one of the most important meetings of this period. It brought together for the first time, experts, history teachers and education officials from western and eastern Europe to exchange views on history teaching in the “New Europe”. It highlighted a paradox which has since emerged during periods of hardship, namely a lack of interest among learners but, at the same time, a revival of interest in history among the broader public.

The symposium led to the foundation of the **European Standing Conference of History Teachers' Associations (EUROCLIO)**, but it also heralded the organisation of other symposiums to assist history teachers in the East. Lastly, it was an opportunity to redefine history teaching goals, with contributions both from the West and from the East.



**1991**

**9-13 DECEMBER**  
Bruges symposium: for the first time, history teachers from western and eastern Europe meet to share their views on history teaching as part of the “New Europe” project (1989-1998)

**1992**

European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO) established with the support of the Council of Europe



**1998**

**30 OCTOBER**  
Decision to launch the “Europe, a common heritage” campaign adopted at the second Council of Europe Summit in 1997 in Strasbourg (France)

**1995**



**14 DECEMBER**  
Dayton Accords end interethnic fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The aim was:  
**“to hand down a heritage, a historical culture, whose purpose is to provide pupils with roots. The term ‘roots’ can be understood in an open sense, if the idea is to make pupils aware of the past history of the society, regional or wider, in and with which they live”<sup>23</sup>**

23. Quotation taken from the document “The Council of Europe and School History” by Ann Low-Beer (1997) from the Council of Europe’s digital archives, page 26

It should be noted that the Bruges Symposium raised questions about national identity, some of which still arise occasionally and are still open to debate.

***"How is national history to be thought of if the political state has been quite recently created? What is national history where there are substantial minority groups? How can national history create a sense of citizenship if recent history is inextricably entwined with what now are other nations?"***<sup>24</sup>

From a political viewpoint, the participants in the symposium asked the Council of Europe to draw up a European charter for history teaching with a view to guaranteeing respect for the integrity of historic material and the intellectual integrity of history teachers and protecting the latter from political manipulation. These requests were not followed up on immediately but, later on, in **2010**, in a broader context, the Committee of Ministers adopted a Council of Europe **Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education**.<sup>25</sup>

24. Ibidem, p.2

25. Recommendation (2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education: <https://rm.coe.int/16803034e3>

2009

**MAY**  
Council of Europe publishes a collection of factsheets on Roma history



The following symposiums and seminars made it possible to redefine the bases of history teaching on various themes:

***"The Teaching of History since 1815 with Special Reference to Changing Borders"***  
(Leeuwarden, 1993):

launched a major debate on national identity and nationalism; it was argued that it is not legitimate to teach history to promote nationalist agendas. In countries which are not uniform on the cultural and ethnic level, a balance has to be struck between the feeling of a shared political identity and the recognition of the history of minority ethnic and cultural groups.

***"History Teaching and European Awareness"***  
(Delphi, 1994) :

confirmed that the notion of multiperspectivity which emerged during the symposium was the best guiding concept for history teaching.

***"History, democratic values and tolerance in Europe: the experience of countries in democratic transition"*** (Sofia, 1994) :

suggested that the Council of Europe should draw up a European Charter for History

Teachers, designed to protect them from political manipulation. Reference was also made to the history teachers' civic courage.

***"The reform of history teaching in schools in European countries in democratic transition"***  
(Graz, 1994) :

addressed the major difficulty in supplying schools with textbooks and other teaching materials enabling a class of thirty pupils to learn and the importance of reducing the prevalence of political history. It was agreed that in the new approach, social, political or gender-specific conflicts should be highlighted at all levels.

***"The preparation and publication of new history textbooks for schools in European countries in democratic transition"***  
(Warsaw, 1996) :

drew up in particular a list of criteria and standards to be applied when drafting textbooks.

***"The initial and in-service training of history teachers in European countries in democratic transition"***  
(Lviv, 1997)

Widespread co-operation was established through conferences, seminars and meetings of experts, either with some Council of Europe member states specifically (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Russian Federation) or with geographic areas of Europe such as South-East Europe, the Caucasus, and North and South Europe.

At these meetings, academics and Council of Europe experts had the chance to discuss, among other things, the many different approaches to world history and multicultural societies in school textbooks. A new feature was that all the stakeholders were involved, including ministries of education and sciences, regional governments, civil society organisations, a wide range of history teachers and even their pupils. Even organisations such as UNESCO, the Georg Eckert Institute and EUROCLIO took part, meaning that a broad cross-section of partners was represented.

The 1990s were also an opportunity to step up the fight against racism as war swept through the Balkans. In **1993**, at **the Vienna Summit**, the Heads of State and Government talked of the need to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance. In their action plan, they explained that their objective was to reinforce mutual understanding and

confidence between people through co-operation and the promotion of education in human rights and respect for cultural diversity and by **“eliminating prejudice in the teaching of history by emphasising positive mutual influence between different countries, religions and ideas in the historical development of Europe”**.

The period was also marked by renewed interest in cultural heritage and its importance for history teaching.

**In 1985, based on a French proposal, the Council of Europe launched European Heritage Days.**

By 1993, thirty-four European countries had become involved in this event, which provided opportunities to visit over 26 000 monuments. This figure rose to forty countries in 2000, making the Days one of the largest international cultural events.

**1993**

**8-9 OCTOBER**  
First Council of Europe Summit in Vienna (Austria), to redefine the organisation's role after the fall of the Iron Curtain



## B. Teaching the history of Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the major intergovernmental projects

From the mid 1990s onwards, it seemed increasingly necessary to intensify co-operation on history teaching so as to counter anti-democratic, racist and xenophobic trends. In 1996, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted Recommendation 1283<sup>26</sup> on *“History and the learning of history in Europe”*, which argued in favour of critical thinking, a life of cultural diversity and measures to combat stereotypes and racism. It also called for history curricula which covered all aspects of society including social, cultural and political history, women's history, local history and the history of minorities. It recommended

combining various history learning materials such as textbooks, television, talks, museum visits and information technology.

**The recommendation became the basis for the first intergovernmental project on “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century” (1997-2002), launched in May 1997.**

### **“Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (1997-2002)**

**The project, which lasted three years**, adopted an interdisciplinary and pan-European approach, which stressed the importance of social, scientific, cultural and oral history, amongst others. Similarly, it encouraged history teaching methods using a

wide range of sources and topics, such as the new technologies, cinema, women's history, archives and museums, and developed the concept of “remembrance” as vital to the prevention of crimes against humanity.

26. Recommendation 1283 (1996) on “History and the learning of history in Europe”: <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/15317/pdf>

**Its aim was to produce innovative teaching resources for secondary schools to help teachers and pupils address key historical questions, such as:**

- ***“The changing face of Europe – population flows in the 20<sup>th</sup> century”***,<sup>27</sup> the reasons for individual and collective migration and the cultural and social exchanges to which it gave rise
- ***“Towards a pluralist and tolerant approach to teaching history: a range of sources and new didactics”***<sup>28</sup>
- ***“The European home: representations of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe in history textbooks”***,<sup>29</sup> in cooperation with the Georg Eckert Institute
- ***“The structures and standards of initial training for history teachers in thirteen member states of the Council of Europe”***,<sup>30</sup> a comparative study
- ***“Europe on-screen - Cinema and the teaching of history”***,<sup>31</sup> a series of resources comprising fact sheets on 50 films illustrating 4 themes – nationalism, women, immigration and human rights. This teaching tool is proposed in the context of the use of cinema for historical purposes under all political regimes and how important it is for young people to develop critical thinking.

27. The changing face of Europe – population flows in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: <https://rm.coe.int/1680494249>

28. Towards a pluralist and tolerant approach to teaching history: a range of sources and new didactics:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680494251>

29. The European home: representations of 20th century Europe in history textbooks:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680494254>

30. The structures and standards of initial training for history teachers in thirteen member states of the Council of Europe:

<http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680697321>

31. Europe on-screen - Cinema and the teaching of history:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168049422b>

**Teaching 20th century women's history: a classroom approach**<sup>32</sup> is a teaching pack which presents teaching methods and materials focusing on women's history.

The pack was designed for use in secondary schools with several aims, both for pupils and for teachers. It was intended to help pupils acquire civic attitudes including intellectual honesty, open-mindedness, respect for truth, tolerance, empathy and ***“civil courage”***.

It makes several recommendations including: combating prejudice, taking a cross-disciplinary approach, using varied sources, encouraging analytical thinking and enhancing students' analytical capacities, in short ***“enabling students to be historians themselves”***.

Over and above the general method, the book proposes lines of inquiry on the incorporation of women into history courses. The starting point is to study events (totalitarianism, for example) from the viewpoint of men and women to see the differences in their treatment and their lives. Then it makes pupils think about very specific circumstances, for instance:

***“What if you were a very poor woman living in a city during industrialisation? What would be more important in shaping your life – your sex or your class?”***

Lastly, teaching on women's history should cover the lives of mothers in the home, and the link between private/domestic life and changes in the public sphere (laws, politics, etc.). There is also a need to teach the history of ***“moral panics”*** about women and changes in family life. Globally, teachers should acknowledge the biases they have when assessing and teaching students.

32. Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> century women's history: a classroom approach:

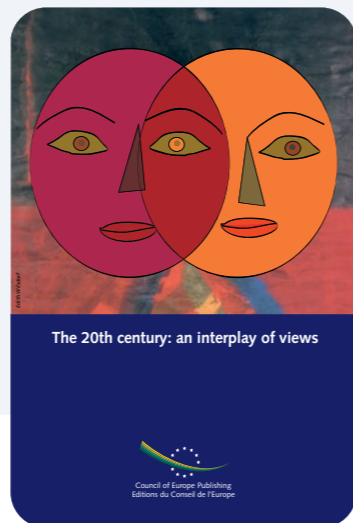
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680494255>



The first intergovernmental project on “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century” led to symposiums on the following themes:

- “Facing misuses of history”
- “The challenges of the information and communication technologies facing history teaching”
- “Towards a pluralist and tolerant approach to teaching history: a range of sources and new didactics”

The final conference, on “The 20<sup>th</sup> century: an interplay of views”,<sup>33</sup> closed the project in Bonn in 2001.



33. The 20th century: an interplay of views: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680494245>

## CONTENT AND METHODS

**Recommendation 2001(15) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe<sup>34</sup> is the first, and to date the only, European instrument of the type in this area.**

It establishes clear methodological guidelines on the aims of history teaching in a democratic, pluralist Europe. It has a broad scope, including several sections which cover learning methods, the content of curricula and teacher training.

The first section is particularly important because it establishes the aims of history teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The main aims, it says, are to teach pupils **respect for differences, based on an understanding of national identity, reconciliation, recognition and mutual trust between peoples but also to develop critical thinking**. History teaching must also promote the fundamental values of tolerance, mutual understanding, human rights and democracy.

The second section addresses the misuse of history including falsification, denial, omission, distortion, a nationalistic version of the past and fixation on one event to justify or conceal another.

Using Recommendation (2001)15 as a reference point, the goal was to help teachers to implement its principles, particularly multiperspectivity. Accordingly, in 2002, the Steering Committee for Education launched a second intergovernmental project aimed at enriching national approaches by placing emphasis on **“the European dimension in history teaching”**.

Educational tools were developed for secondary school pupils and for teachers and trainers wishing to include multiple outlooks in their teaching practices.

34. Recommendation 2001(15) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe: <https://rm.coe.int/09000016805e2c31>

The two major publications produced in this connection were:

*“Multiperspectivity in Teaching and Learning History: A Guide for Teachers”*<sup>35</sup>, which forms an essential basis for all teacher training seminars on the subject, available in 18 languages.

*“Crossroads of European Histories - Multiple Outlooks on Five Key Moments in the History of Europe”*<sup>36</sup>, which is a contribution to the implementation of a methodology based on “multiperspectivity”, enabling teachers to present many examples of various approaches in their teaching practices and differing viewpoints or ideas on the same events in Europe’s recent history.

**Five conferences were held in this context, focusing on the following subjects: “1848 in European history”, “the Balkan wars in 1912-1913”, “looking for peace in 1919”, “the end of World War II and the beginning of Cold War in 1945” and “events and developments of 1989/90 in Central and Eastern Europe”.**



35. Multiperspectivity in Teaching and Learning History: A Guide for Teachers:

<http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680493c9e>

36. Crossroads of European Histories - Multiple Outlooks on Five Key Moments in the History of Europe:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680493c97>

## HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE – FACING A DIFFICULT PAST

**In section six of Recommendation (2001)15 on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe, it is recommended that each state should devote one day in its schools to remembrance of the Holocaust and the prevention of crimes against humanity. History has a duty of remembrance to prevent the repetition or denial of genocides and human rights violations in general.**

In this connection, in 2002, the European Ministers of Education decided to set up a **Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity**. This undertaking, supported by Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, took up the proposal made at the 20<sup>th</sup> session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education in Cracow in 2000.

At the turn of the century, teaching about the Holocaust became one of the Council of Europe’s priority aims, in response to the resurgence of antisemitism in some European countries and the revisionism which was spreading on the internet. At the Council of Europe’s instigation, works were published on the subject and specialist seminars were held.

For example, in 2001, Jean-Michel Lecomte edited a book for the Council of Europe entitled *“Teaching about the Holocaust in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”*<sup>37</sup>. This collective work sought to construct an educational pathway based on facts and figures concerning the Nazis’ victims, namely Jews, Roma, homosexuals and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Another Council of Europe publication in 2004, on *“The Shoah on screen - Representing crimes against humanity”*<sup>38</sup>, focused on the representation of the Shoah in art and the media.

37. Teaching about the Holocaust in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: <https://rm.coe.int/1680470df9>

38. The Shoah on screen - Representing crimes against humanity:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016804715a4>

Between 2002 and 2008, a series of four ministerial seminars were held on Holocaust remembrance and crimes against humanity. In 2004, a Council of Europe seminar in Budapest broadened the view still further, dealing with the Holocaust and addressing, in addition, the Nazi persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses and the genocide of Roma.

The same year, a European seminar on **"History and remembrance"** was held in Brussels. The participants discussed the prevention of crimes against humanity alongside the role of historical sites, art, culture and teaching materials in teaching.

Joseph Britz made the following point:

***"It is important not to let the education system alone carry all the weight of preventing crimes against humanity ... the other part of the burden most certainly lies with families whose first duty it is to give them an upbringing in accordance with human rights and to educate them in such a way that they become adults who are responsible for their actions"***

More recently, the Council of Europe also prepared guidelines on the Holocaust for history teachers.

**This led in 2010, to the publication of the "European pack for visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum"<sup>39</sup>.**



39. European pack for visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum – Guidelines for teachers and educators: <https://rm.coe.int/16804715a5>



**2020**

The Council of Europe represented by the Deputy Secretary General at the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau

It provides guidance for teachers who wish to take their pupils to visit Auschwitz. For example, it contains methods to help pupils understand the machinery of Nazism and racism and descriptions of ways to approach the subject with pupils and prepare for the visit.

The Council of Europe member states continue to support this work politically. For instance, in 2019, the Committee of Ministers recommended that the tangible and intangible Jewish culture and heritage should be highlighted and better

understood, and it adopted **Recommendation (2022)5** on passing on remembrance of the Holocaust and preventing crimes against humanity.<sup>40</sup> This recommendation provided for the first time a proper working framework for all the member states on passing on the history and remembrance of the Holocaust. At the same time, co-operation agreements were signed between the Council of Europe and remembrance institutions such as the Mémorial de la Shoah and Yad Vashem.

**2017**

Creation of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture

**ERIAC**  
EUROPEAN ROMA  
INSTITUTE FOR ARTS  
AND CULTURE

## THE THEM-US DICHOTOMY

**Between 2006 and 2009, the Council of Europe carried out its third intergovernmental project on "The image of the other in history teaching", whose main aims were to prepare general guidelines for history teaching in the context of intercultural dialogue, devise strategies to convert these into specific projects and make proposals for teacher training.**

The project was centred on three main issues: history teaching in a multicultural society, history teaching and globalisation and history teaching in post-conflict situations. Its target groups were

national authorities and teaching organisations, teacher trainers, textbook authors, non-formal teaching organisations and the media.

40. Recommendation (2022)5 of the Committee of Ministers on passing on remembrance of the Holocaust and preventing crimes against humanity: [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680a5ddcd](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680a5ddcd)

To take its activities in this area forward, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted **Recommendation 1880(2009)** on history teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas which encouraged states to continue

## SHARED HISTORIES

**The aim of the fourth intergovernmental project was to highlight the shared histories deriving from interaction, exchanges, encounters and historical convergence, in accordance with Recommendation (2011)6 of the Committee of Ministers on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching.**

The Steering Committee for Education did indeed point out that the activities scheduled for 2009 to 2012 had included a fourth intergovernmental project entitled **“Shared histories for a Europe without dividing lines”**, which was launched in 2010 and completed in 2014, and which, in keeping with Recommendation 1880 (2009) sought to highlight, from the angle both of post-conflict reconciliation and conflict prevention, the positive interactions and common or shared

implementing the project. This gave rise to **Recommendation (2011)6** of the Committee of Ministers on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching.<sup>41</sup>

elements of European history and its links with other regions of the world, particularly the Mediterranean.

Accordingly, this project paid special attention to the recommendations of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue **“Living Together as Equals in Dignity”**.<sup>42</sup> The project assembled a series of exemplary teaching and learning materials, intended mainly for teacher training, but which



could be used with pupils of different age groups. It explored common ideas in a world of differences and acknowledged that all experiences, including conflicts, were shared. The approach made it possible to break down stereotypes, identity myths and negative views of “others” and had potential therefore to result in intercultural dialogue and the transformation of conflicts. Shared histories investigated the idea that “your” history is also ours and, in the same way, “our” history is also that of others – it is “shared” which does not mean “identical”.

For each theme, the carefully selected sub-topics provided important and interesting information to encourage readers to take an interest in history. The main outcome of the project was the publication with the same title as the project, **“Shared Histories for a Europe without Dividing Lines”**<sup>43</sup>, which was divided into four volumes covering the chosen themes.

The themes chosen were as follows:



**the impact of the Industrial Revolution**



**the development of education**



**human rights as reflected in the history of art**



**Europe and the world**

41. Recommendation (2011)6 of the Committee of Ministers on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching: <https://rm.coe.int/16805cc8e1>

42. White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue “Living Together as Equals in Dignity”: [https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper\\_final\\_revised\\_en.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf)

43. Shared histories for a Europe without dividing lines: <https://rm.coe.int/shared-histories-for-a-europe-without-dividing-lines/1680994a97>



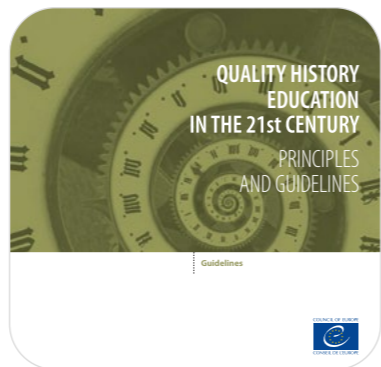
## EDUCATING FOR DIVERSITY AND DEMOCRACY

The fifth intergovernmental project on *“Educating for diversity and democracy: teaching history in contemporary Europe”* focused mainly on what makes for quality in history teaching and learning in the diverse educational context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, taking account of the Council of Europe’s achievements in the history teaching sphere and referring to its Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.<sup>44</sup>

In 2018, the project published *“Quality history education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century - Principles and guidelines”*,<sup>45</sup> which directly confronted the current main challenges with a view to making political recommendations on ways of teaching history to strengthen diverse and inclusive democracies.

History education has an important role to play in confronting the current political, cultural and social challenges facing Europe, particularly those posed by the increasingly diverse nature of societies, the integration of migrants and refugees into Europe, and by attacks on democracy and democratic values.

The overall aim of these principles and guidelines, therefore, is to enhance the expertise and capability needed if history education is to play that role successfully. They build on the Council of Europe’s vision of history teaching as reflected in a number of key documents of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.



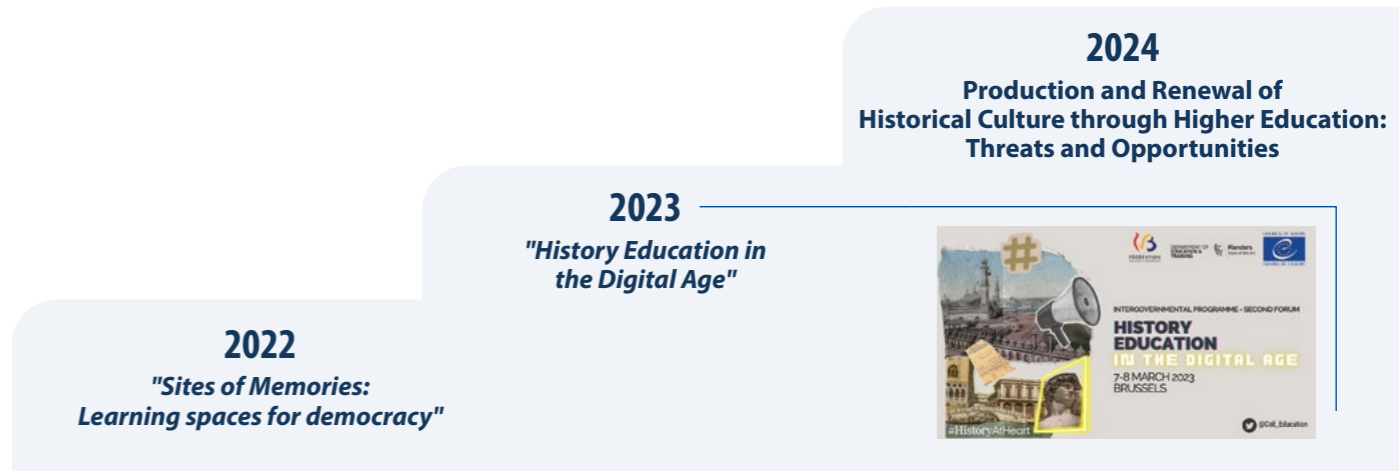
44. Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/rfdc-volumes>  
45. Quality history education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century - Principles and guidelines: <https://rm.coe.int/prems-108118-gbr-2507-quality-history-education-web-21x21/16808eace7>

## FORUMS FOR HISTORY AND DEMOCRACY

Since 2022, intergovernmental co-operation has continued with a sixth intergovernmental project, which is viewed as a second phase of the preceding project and entitled *“History education for democracy – the role of public authorities in history education”*. Its aim is to use a series of forums to identify the components to be included in a policy tool on History and Democracy.

These forums have brought together public authorities, teachers, researchers, learners and civil society representatives to think about the role of public authorities in the themes discussed. In 2022 the theme was *“Sites of Memories: Learning*

*spaces for democracy”* and in 2023 *“History Education in the Digital Age”*. A further forum will be held in 2024 on the subject of *“Academic freedom and freedom of research in history at higher education level”*.



**2022**  
*“Sites of Memories:  
Learning spaces for democracy”*

**2023**  
*“History Education in  
the Digital Age”*

**2024**  
*Production and Renewal of  
Historical Culture through Higher Education:  
Threats and Opportunities*



## C. The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe

The work of the Council of Europe on history teaching took on a significant new scope at the time of the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers in 2019. As a result it was possible to initiate the foundation of an Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTe).

Current affairs, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war against Ukraine, the emergence of artificial intelligence and the (re)interpretation of the Council of Europe's fundamental values by some of its member states made it imperative to make a serious and lasting commitment to the teaching of history in line with the standards set by the Organisation. In response to these challenges, the establishment of an Observatory seemed like an essential measure to guarantee the quality and relevance of history teaching curricula throughout Europe.

The Observatory was created in November 2020.



OBSERVATORY  
ON HISTORY TEACHING  
IN EUROPE

ALAIN LAMASSOURE,  
first Chair of the OHTe Governing Board  
who played a pivotal role in establishing  
the Enlarged Partial Agreement



This enlarged partial agreement of the Council of Europe now comprises sixteen member states (Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye) and two observer states (the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine) and is intended to promote quality history teaching to improve the understanding of democratic culture among young people.

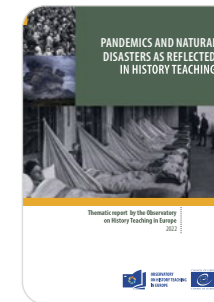
The Observatory's activities are varied. In particular it set itself the task of publishing three-yearly general reports on the state of history teaching in its member states.

These reports will assess the content of curricula, textbooks and examinations from primary level up to secondary level, teacher training, teaching methods and the impact of teaching on the democratic culture of the countries concerned. It also intends to publish thematic reports.

Its first report in 2023 related to "Pandemics and Natural Disasters as Reflected in History Teaching"<sup>46</sup> while the second focuses on "Economic Crises in History Teaching".

Furthermore, thanks to the data it makes available to education professionals, it facilitates follow-up and assessment of history programmes to make them more inclusive, objective and attuned to the democratic values and human rights championed by the Council of Europe.

The critical understanding of historical phenomena facilitates the acquisition of skills for democracy, highlighting the link between history teaching and education in citizenship.



46. Pandemics and Natural Disasters as Reflected in History Teaching: <https://rm.coe.int/prems-011523-gbr-2527-pandemics-and-natural-disasters/1680aa6262>

This is why the Council of Europe emphasises the need for the member states to review between them what is taught, how it is taught and whether the resources used are of the requisite quality for history students to be able to understand the complexity and the diversity of human behaviour in the past. In so doing they should develop the capacity to investigate varying accounts, study several viewpoints and form a critical view.

The Observatory has a transnational Scientific Advisory Council covering many specialisations, which certifies the rigour of the work carried out.

**The Observatory also holds an annual conference lasting two days and attended by about 150 education professionals, government representatives and other stakeholders.**

**They are presented with the Observatory's activities and aims and take part in debates on the state of history teaching and related policies.**

**The first, in 2021, brought together over 400 participants, on site and online.**



**HISTOLAB**

**Lastly, the Observatory has set up a Transnational History Education and Co-operation Laboratory (HISTOLAB), which is a joint EU-Council of Europe project to foster co-operation in the field through events and tools intended to facilitate exchanges, particularly on innovation in history teaching. The project launched a digital networking platform for all professionals working in the area of history teaching.<sup>47</sup>**

Both the work of the Observatory and those linked to intergovernmental activities can only be conducted in co-operation with specialised civil society and students' organisations.

47. HISTOLAB Digital Hub : <https://histolab.coe.int/>

# PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE



**More than 70 years of history teaching at the Council of Europe has meant that the 46 member states not only discuss their approaches and methods and their views of history teaching but also have improved their tools to found their teaching of European history on the fundamental principles protected by the Organisation, namely human rights, democracy and the rule of law.**

Co-operation on culture and education is a priority activity area for the Council of Europe as this co-operation forms a pillar around which to build a European identity which brings together the European states. It is based not on a Europe-wide standardisation but on respect for cultural diversity, as the Council of Europe member states asserted at the Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavik on 16 May 2023: *“We reaffirm our commitment to developing mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of our cultural diversity and heritage”.*

Co-operation on history teaching forms part of this pillar, and the many Council of Europe activities and the creation in 2020 of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe show how key a factor European history is considered to be in our understanding of European culture and civilisation. All of our work on history highlights in particular the need to base history teaching on democratic

values and the aim of promoting this even more in future. Here again the Reykjavik Summit Declaration spells it out: *“we underline the importance of education to give children and young people the necessary references to grow up embracing our democratic values in culturally diverse societies and take an active part in the protection of our cultural heritage”.*

In the same vein, the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe has a major role to play in preserving democracy. Participation by a larger number of states would foster a more fruitful exchange of information and good practices on history teaching, guaranteeing that school curricula are based on reliable and inspiring sources resulting in a fuller, more objective representation of the past. The Council of Europe member states have a shared duty to preserve democratic principles and historical truth; and the Observatory is a major step towards fulfilling this collective responsibility.



History teaching faces new challenges, particularly at a time of new technologies which can be manipulated in an unfiltered form for populist, nationalist and xenophobic purposes, whose inherent aim is not co-operation but dissension and conflict in Europe. The role of the Council of Europe and its work on history teaching are to counter these trends, a role whose importance was also stressed by the member states at their meeting in Reykjavik: *"We welcome the Council of Europe's prominent role in international standard-setting on freedom of expression and related issues such as media freedom, access to information and combatting hate speech and disinformation, including the instrumentalisation of history, in particular in the light of the increasing impact of digital technologies on these issues"*. By joining the Observatory, countries can step up their collective campaign against the misuse of history and take part in the Council of Europe's fundamental task of promoting democracy.

At a time of fratricidal conflicts fuelled by the manipulation of history and by disinformation, the work within the Directorate of Democratic Participation to promote a high standard of history teaching must continue. European societies must continue along the path founded on a form of co-operation based on respect for the Council of Europe's fundamental values – and that begins with a knowledge of history – and not just one's own but that of others.

## OHTE Exhibition brochure - List of abbreviations

**CIS** - Community of Independent States

**CDCC** - Council for Cultural Co-operation

**CEB** - Council of Europe Development Bank

**CFSP** - Common foreign and security policy

**CSCE** - Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

**ECRI** - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

**ECSC** - European Coal and Steel Community

**ECHR** - Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, better known as the European Convention on Human Rights

**ECtHR** - European Court of Human Rights

**EFTA** - European Free Trade Association

**EDC** - European Defence Community

**EPC** - European Political Co-operation

**EEC** - European Economic Community

**EBRD** - European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

**EU** - European Union

**EUROCLIO** – European Association of History Educators

**EYF** - European Youth Foundation

**FRG** - Federal Republic of Germany

**GDR** - German Democratic Republic

**GRECO** - Group of States against Corruption of the Council of Europe

**HISTOLAB** - Transnational History Education and Co-operation Laboratory

**ISHA** - International Students of History Association

**ISHD** - International Society for History Didactics

**NATO** - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

**OEEC** - Organisation for European Economic Co-operation

**OHTE** - Observatory on History Teaching in Europe

**OSCE** - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**PACE** – Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

**PRC** - People's Republic of China

**UNESCO** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**USSR** - The Soviet Union, officially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

**WEU** - Western European Union

**“Teaching history, grounding democracy”** is an exhibition that draws a parallel between the institutional history of the Council of Europe, its milestones and achievements in history teaching and the major events of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It also shows the efforts of the Council of Europe, the only international organisation to have run programmes in this area since 1949, to promote quality history education.

More than 70 years of experience at the Council of Europe have enabled its 46 member states to bring history education into line with the Organisation's core values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

This booklet is meant to guide you while exploring the different timelines presented in the exhibition. It also provides a deeper understanding of the links between international history, European construction and history teaching at the Council of Europe.

You will thus discover the story behind the construction of the Council of Europe and how it has kept #HistoryAtHeart

[www.coe.int/en/web/education](http://www.coe.int/en/web/education)

[www.coe.int/ohte](http://www.coe.int/ohte)

ENG

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



**OBSERVATORY  
ON HISTORY TEACHING  
IN EUROPE**

