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The European Dimension in History Teaching:
Plural Images and Multiple Standpoints

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Report

**The European Dimension in History Teaching:
Plural images and Multiple Standpoints**

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

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INTRODUCTION

The European dimension has long been a theme inherent in the Council of Europe's reflections on history teaching. The new Project *The image of the Other in history teaching* is continuing this trend by endeavouring to pinpoint guidelines for *history teaching policies as part of intercultural dialogue*. The desire to promote such dialogue provides the main motivation for the discussions, activities and initiatives which have surrounded and will continue to surround the European dimension.

It is nonetheless conceivable that like other projects on history teaching, this one will adopt a markedly different approach to the European dimension and exploit its potential resources in a highly specific manner. While intercultural dialogue and the image of the Other would seem to be inextricably linked to the European dimension, it would obviously be useful to explore this link further in order to identify which horizons it is likely to open up and which, on the contrary, it is liable to shut off.

This is the task which this study will be tackling, starting from three different angles. It will begin by going into further detail on the substance of the "European dimension" concept, which we must say has hitherto been more often taken as self-evident than subjected to thorough investigation of its content. It will then go on to describe the specific direct and underlying relationship between historical knowledge and the European dimension, particularly in the context of concern for objectivity and multi-perspectivity. However, this section will also stress the work that remains to be done in making the European dimension a genuinely operational concept in the field of historical knowledge. After these first two investigations, the third and last section will deal with the possible means of securing a better-organised and more coherent introduction to the European dimension in history teaching.

I. RE-EXAMINING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION FROM A PSYCHOSOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In education, perhaps even more than in the other sectors, ambitious projects need to be re-examined since it is rare for all their implications to be immediately discernible despite efforts to determine their objectives as precisely as possible at the outset. It could hardly be otherwise in the case of introducing the European dimension into teaching. The idea of Europe at the heart of the project was not totally clear and agreed, and a re-examination was therefore going to be needed after events such as the end of the split between western and eastern Europe, or the various enlargements of the European Union. Furthermore, introduction of the European dimension called for radical changes in the teaching approach. However, it is not certain that we have paid enough attention to these changes and to the reshaping that they might have on pupils' and teachers' image of themselves and others.

This fresh look at the introduction of the European dimension, as envisaged by the Council of Europe, will be undertaken in three stages. First we shall review the main decisions on the subject, and other documents to which these have given rise. Secondly, on the basis of these documents, we shall attempt to spell out, from the psychosociological standpoint, the different aspects of the actual concept of a European dimension, and to analyse the process of introducing it into teaching. Where these steps do not yet seem to have been taken explicitly,

we shall go on, thirdly, to consider whether the idea of a European dimension, as thus envisaged, is likely to have the effects intended or should be revised, and if so in what direction.

1.1 The main documents

There are not many Council of Europe documents on introducing the European dimension but they are all critical to an accurate assessment of the aims and thorough knowledge of the intended measures for achieving them.

1.1.1 The 1991 resolution *The European dimension of Education: teaching and curriculum content*

This resolution of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education held in Vienna on 16 and 17 November 1991 was the first to provide an overview of the arguments for introducing the European dimension into school teaching, and of the steps that needed taking to that end.

It nonetheless built on several earlier initiatives. The 1983 Committee of Ministers recommendation *The promotion of an awareness of Europe in secondary schools* had already called for greater familiarity with geography, history and culture on a European scale and had encouraged looking beyond national borders. A European dimension had thus already been adumbrated, even before that term was used. A 1980 recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly, *Educational visits and pupil exchanges between European countries*, advocated arrangements that were subsequently given consistent priority in efforts to promote the European dimension. The 1991 resolution *Contribution of local and regional authorities to European education policy* put forward similar arguments, and the 1989 Parliamentary Assembly recommendation *The European dimension of education* had paved the way for the 1991 resolution.

This 1991 resolution is a key document. It restates the general purpose of a European education policy, to which the European dimension is integral. It sets out the particular aims, states in detail what it involves, and lists the measures to be taken to implement it. European education policy must promote European unity so that lasting peace, co-operation and mutual understanding are established between the peoples of the continent, so that a shared heritage of political, cultural, moral and spiritual values develops, so that sustainable and balanced economic and social development is guaranteed, and so that Europe can exercise its responsibilities towards the rest of the world. This, it states, is all the more desirable after the events of 1989 in central and eastern Europe. By making it possible to cope better with these changes introduction of the European dimension will help to usher in a multicultural and multilingual European society in which understanding and tolerance will reign and where mobility will lead to widespread exchanges between people. It will therefore be necessary to adopt the goal of making people aware of a European identity that is open to the world and of the need to respect the fundamental values on which an enlarged Europe rests. It will also be necessary to put the European dimension into practice by stressing the geographical diversity of the European continent and spreading knowledge of political and social systems and of the European institutions found there. To this end it will be necessary to emphasise the historical factors that have shaped Europe, to highlight the main features of European culture, to point to the benefits of multilingualism, to return to the origins of the European idea, and to stress the need to meet economic, ecological, social and political challenges together. All levels of

teaching and all disciplines will be involved in achieving these goals. In primary schools the European dimension should be introduced merely through immediate experience, but in secondary education all subjects should offer opportunities to highlight it. This will also involve more widespread teaching of foreign languages to the largest possible number of pupils, with priority given to the skills of expression and communication. Education schemes will also need to allow space for the European dimension by incorporating projects on European topics in one or more countries, with consequent exchanges of pupils and teachers. This new focus must give rise to the measures needed for implementing it effectively, which the resolution concludes by setting out in detail. As can be seen, this 1991 resolution mapped out a full-scale programme.

1.1.2 The publication *The European dimension in secondary education*¹

Yet more detailed arguments about what the Council of Europe means by the introduction of the European dimension are to be found in *The European dimension in secondary education*, a booklet by four members of the group which steered *A secondary education for Europe*, a project which ran from 1991 to 1997. The booklet has four chapters devoted respectively to analysis of the concept of the European dimension, a pilot programme on teaching resources, guidelines for school and out-of-school projects based on the European dimension, and the space to be given to it in initial and continuing teacher training.

The first chapter looks at the efforts that need to be made to arrive at a definition of Europe, without which it would be difficult to give a precise meaning to the notion of a European dimension. It points out that conclusive results can scarcely be obtained if Europe is thought of in terms of civilisation: the idea of a European civilisation is a *perilous and dangerous enterprise* which leads to oversimplification and prejudice. Nor is it easy to detect in recent history any convergences which might lend Europe a clearly recognisable countenance. The only solution is to adopt as the goal a model of Europe that accords with the thinking of the Council of Europe, with its implications of respect for the values mentioned in the 1991 resolution, namely:

- willingness to reach understanding, to overcome prejudice and to be able to recognise mutual interests while at the same time affirming European diversity;
- receptiveness to different cultures while preserving individual cultural identity;
- respect for legal commitments and administration of justice within a human-rights framework;
- the will to co-exist in harmony and accept compromises that reconcile the different interests in Europe;
- protection of freedom, pluralist democracy, human rights and justice;
- development of a system of production and international trade that promotes both individual and social wellbeing and political stability;
- concern for preservation of the European and world balance,
- the will to maintain peace in Europe and throughout the world.²

The second chapter examines the *design, development and publication of teaching resources* to promote the European dimension³. What is meant here is dossiers twenty or so pages in length on questions regarded as indicative of political, social, economic and cultural life, or on

¹ Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 1997, 111pp.

² Op. cit., p.22.

³ Ibid., p.39.

issues such as the environment that are thought to illustrate the diversity and unity of Europe. Dossiers of this kind are intended to give teachers of whatever subject a better idea of what introducing the European dimension involves, and to make material available that makes their task easier.

The third chapter examines the European dimension's extraordinary potential for introducing in-school and out-of-school innovation projects in that it involves creating a European co-operative framework providing numerous opportunities for communication.

The last chapter emphasises the need for initial and continuing training for teachers on how to introduce the European dimension into their teaching, since quality and consistency will vary greatly without this. The content of the training should cover the development of attitudes and the acquisition of skills. The attitudes in question are promotion of a sense of partnership, receptiveness to pluralism and multiculturalism, and the priority to be given to dialogue. The skills should embrace mastery of at least one foreign language and knowledge of European education systems, and the ability to *Europeanise* the teaching of different subjects not so much through changes to their content as through the manner in which they are delivered.

As can be seen, this is an attempt to present a complete picture of the steps to be planned for introducing the European dimension effectively and substantially at secondary level.

1.1.3 The 1999 recommendation on secondary education

This recommendation of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, building on the proposals made in the final report of the project *A secondary education for Europe*, devotes considerable space to the European dimension. It naturally remains within the confines of the guidelines set out in the publication just examined, but it nonetheless expands on some of these.

In the priorities to be given to introducing the European dimension, it stresses the need for it to give young people knowledge that will guarantee their mobility and will encourage the development of democratic citizenship. It also refers of course to full awareness of the unity in diversity of European cultures, and to the possibility of reconciling consciousness of the European dimension with respect for other identities and receptiveness to the world.

With regard to the repercussions on the content of teaching programmes, the recommendation is intended to be even clearer and more reassuring than the others. The European dimension is not a new subject. Nor does it mean the *homogenisation* of teaching content at a European level; it simply means setting out to *demonstrate the European dimension in the most exemplary and appropriate parts of syllabuses*.

In school and out-of-school activities, school exchanges should be encouraged within the European context, with widespread use of new information and communication technologies. European clubs in schools should be developed, and projects launched on European themes, involving the whole educational community. In every case these suggestions call for better knowledge of others' languages, which is the precondition for mobility and discovery of the *richness and diversity of Europe*, not forgetting minority languages.

The section on initial and continuing training states yet more forcefully that this is crucial to the introduction of the European dimension achieving the goals set. The emphasis is on the

teaching of skills, rather than on the content of the training: *teaching for school exchanges, the acquisition of group-work skills, project development and establishing international partnerships, and the ability to manage situations of cultural pluralism.*

1.1.4 The other sources

Quite a few other Council of Europe documents explicitly and implicitly refer to the European dimension. This applies particularly to all the documents relating to general Council of Europe policy. At the opening conference marking the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention,⁴ the need was mentioned for the European dimension to be present in *standards, practices and policies*. There are also the various pronouncements on language study, which, as has been noted, is described consistently in all the documents examined so far as key to a European dimension in teaching and training. It is not necessary to go into the details: they refer to the notion of the European dimension in terms similar to those already discussed, although they add to it from a number of different angles. This was apparent in the project *Language policies for a multilingual and multicultural Europe* conducted by the Modern Languages Division from 1982 onwards, the conclusions of which stressed the uniqueness of the European situation, characterised by a language diversity that does not preclude European unity if there is communication based on multiculturalism⁵.

Activities in the field of history teaching have also given rise to many documents in which attention is given to the European dimension. But it is preferable to refer to these in the sections of this report dealing with historical knowledge and history teaching.

1.1.5 Outcomes

This review would be incomplete if it failed to refer to the assessments in the final report⁶ of the project on secondary teaching relating to the actual concept of a European dimension and to the results obtained from its introduction into teaching.

In relation to the results, the final report⁷ agrees with earlier findings, including those of the European Commission, that *real* introduction of the European dimension and its spread *at school level* remain modest and are often the result of excessively scattered initiatives. This appeared to be the norm in 1996, and it is not certain that the situation has radically changed ten years later, judging from the frequent allusions to compartmentalisation of education systems that one finds in Council of Europe discussions and publications. According to the report five pitfalls need to be avoided if the European dimension is to spread satisfactorily. First, it is an oversimplification to view all subjects as having introduced the dimension purely on the strength of their having found opportunities to mention Europe. Second, it would be dogmatic to suggest that the European dimension is some notion of Europe that can be elevated into a *metavalue* in the name of which local and national approaches need to disappear. Thirdly, it would be Eurocentric to forget all the world issues that we face in our age. Fourthly, it would be utilitarian to transform Europe into a crucible of skills for success. And lastly, it would be optimistic to take achievement of the European project as a foregone conclusion. There is good reason to think that these pitfalls are preventing introduction of the

⁴ Wroclaw, 9 and 10 December 2004.

⁵ See *Vivre le multiculturalisme européen*, conference, conclusion and recommendations, Council of Europe, 1982.

⁶ *What secondary education for a changing Europe? Trends, challenges and prospects*, Council of Europe, 1997.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 78-82.

European dimension on the scale needed to bring about the changes in education that will best equip young people to face the 21st century.

The report points out that there are equally severe problems with the concept of the European dimension itself⁸. The main thing, it says, is to avoid two of these - recycling ideas already in circulation which would perpetuate commonplaces and/or rehash preconceived definitions, and launching into a discussion of fundamentals, with the risk of not arriving at the practical outcomes anticipated when the project was set up. This is why a pragmatic, inductive approach was adopted, building on steps already taken in many member states to introduce a European dimension before the term itself was being used and analyse these in order to arrive at a more synthetic and better structured concept.

It may of course be argued that such a perspective brings with it both the advantage of being able to describe a number of different examples of what the European dimension might be, and the disadvantage of never knowing exactly what it is for want of a precise definition. It has to be admitted that such an approach means that it is easier to know what it is not than what it is. It is not a new subject. It is not an instrument of European nationalism. It is a system of attitudes and values. But if it is described in these terms, it is far from clear to what teaching practices it might actually lead, if not to innovations in curriculum design and in the way pupils are taught. To some extent this makes it more workable in pedagogical than in European terms, the link between the two aspects not being immediately apparent.

It can therefore be appreciated why, among the factors to be taken into account in any effective strategy for the introduction of the European dimension, the emphasis was put on *continuing and enriching discussion of the concept of a European dimension itself*⁹.

1.2 The notion of a European dimension

It therefore seems appropriate to try to provide a response to this exhortation. In order to achieve this and identify some common features, it would appear sensible once again to adopt a pragmatic approach, starting with the widely varying statements about the European dimension resulting, as has frequently been remarked, from its many different meanings. What we may call aspects of the European dimension may provide some insight into its content and structure.

From this perspective it may be suggested that three major aspects of the European dimension stand out. The spatial aspect results from the prominence given to movement and dialogue within an area where these have been facilitated. The communication aspect largely has to do with language skills for making contact with the occupants of a territory or with those of other territories within the area. And the cognitive aspect involves bringing out the meaning of what takes place via the two previous aspects, and in particular the similarities and differences in the references underlying the attitudes and behaviours that occur.

In each of these three aspects it is also possible to identify one or more images of the "Other" which clarify their scope and potential ambiguities. These aspects of the European dimension are hardly ever addressed very explicitly in the publications of the Council of Europe or the European Commission, doubtless because these bodies need, for understandable reasons, to restrict themselves to easily comprehensible descriptions of situations and strategies without

⁸ Op. cit., pp. 42-49.

⁹ Ibid., p.82.

going into psychosociological analysis. However, it appears increasingly necessary to pursue such an analysis in order to unravel all the implications of the decisions and statements made.

1.2.1 The spatial aspect and the image of others as partners, customers or neighbours

The first aspect, the spatial one, seems to have been most neglected by the Council of Europe, although the reverse is generally the case in European Union circles. The European Commission frequently remarks that enlargement of the Union expands the European dimension, and it would be difficult to interpret such statements to mean anything other than the primacy of a purely spatial concept of the European dimension relating purely to the geographical extent of the Union. A similar approach is found in the committee that decides each year which city is to be the European capital of culture. The intention is that this decision should take account of the European dimension of the candidate cities, which essentially means the relations that they have with other cities, and their facilities for communicating with these. The best candidate is therefore the city which can be said to have the greatest surface area, this size being measured by the scale of its established presence within the continent of Europe. The same goes for businesses, for whom having a European dimension means having branches in a number of member states, or in colloquial terms, "covering the ground". It is quite reasonable for this to be so: the Common Market thinks of its territory not only in terms of encouraging the movement of people and enterprises within it, but also as an essential element of European identity, including the potential for increasing profits.

In the field of education the Council of Europe and the European Union agree in giving priority to the spatial aspect because of the prime importance that they award to exchanges. This formulation owes its priority to the need to encourage people to meet, it being impossible to launch more ambitious programmes because of the sensitivity of member states over their national prerogatives. It is hoped that the participants in these exchanges will in time form groups large enough to launch projects that will make up for the absence of governmental initiatives or will exert pressure on governments to abandon such restrictions. But for the moment it may well be that the European dimension is primarily spatial in these exchanges, which are described as intended to bring about and stimulate a European ideal of mutual discovery and understanding symbolised by the establishment of networks of co-operation between individuals and institutions. But the beneficiaries of exchanges are often more interested in discovering another country and improving their skills than in playing a real part in this ideal. There is no doubt that what they learn through the exchange or exchanges in which they take part may subsequently lead them to do this, but it must be admitted that an exchange initially consists above all of visiting another country than one's own and of deriving purely personal benefit from that visit. In such cases reducing the European dimension to its spatial aspect severely limits its strictly European quality, which can be defined, as a minimum, as some degree of awareness of being involved in a scheme relating to a Europe that can be identified by certain characteristics. Exchanges are therefore welcomed superficially as tourist trips, with which they sometimes have more in common than is thought. Tourist trips have to be paid for, but the same can be said of many school and university exchanges, which often require more than token contributions from their beneficiaries. Generally tourists learn little about the countries visited, and foreign students on short courses at universities abroad may be required to take courses that cut them off from local students by grouping all the foreign students together. School exchanges should be less exposed to these dangers. However, when they focus on courses to improve language skills they also tend to be on a commercial basis and to fall into the same traps.

Hence, the image of others as partners that might be expected from such exchanges within an environment without barriers is often far from being a reality. For those who have the opportunity to take part in an exchange, the other pupil or colleague becomes a real “Other”, whereas he or she had previously been an abstract figure, and this is a substantial outcome. But the ambiguities of the context, and the persistence of borders and relatively watertight education and training systems, may result as much in indifference as in curiosity towards others, as much in idle neighbourliness as in dynamic partnerships. That is why, instead of there being one image of the Other which exactly matches the spatial aspect and is that of a partner with whom close, lasting and trusting work-related links might be forged, there are a number of images, and it is very difficult for the desired one to win through. Exchanges are too infrequent for this to happen, and the image of the partner has to compete with that of the neighbour, “known” by sight by everyone but having no real contact with anyone – just as happens in housing estates on today’s urban fringes. Here, as in the case of exchanges, it is clear that it is not enough to put individuals together for them to get to know one another, and the spatiality gamble reveals its limitations. On balance, it might almost be better to adopt a commercial approach in which the image of the Other is that of the customer cum partner, or even customer cum friend, with all the ambiguities that attach to such interest-based relationships.

This seductive spatial version of the European dimension must of course be treated with caution, because it is a simplistic solution. It fails to spell out the idea of Europe to which it refers while giving the impression that the very mention of the size of the continent provides a definition in itself. This is certainly an understandable temptation since the only choice is frequently between points of view that are irreconcilable. There are those for whom Europe is a contradictory reality even at the level of geography, in that its relief and climate show extreme variation. There are those who put forward highly developed concepts of Europe, but these call for too much additional analysis for them to become widely accepted as credible. None of these meets the need for as clear a definition as possible of the Europe in question, and it is difficult to deny the impression that this need is seldom if ever fulfilled.

1.2.2 The linguistic and cultural communication aspect: the image of others as interlocutors

The establishment of satisfactory communication with others is naturally an essential requirement if the kinds of misunderstanding that may arise over the spatial aspect of the European dimension are to be overcome. That is why the second aspect relates to language and the means that need putting in place to guarantee as satisfactory communication between Europeans as possible.

The first batch of measures in the direction of learning others’ languages appeared almost as soon as the Council of Europe was set up, and it has constantly been added to. Article 2 of the 1954 European Cultural Convention stipulated that each country should encourage the learning of others’ languages. In 1961 the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education adopted a resolution on *the expansion and improvement of modern language teaching*. In 1982 a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers detailed *measures to be put in place for the learning and teaching of modern languages*. In 2002, as already stated, a conference was held to promote multilingualism in Europe. A 2005 recommendation stressed the importance to be given to the teaching of the neighbouring language in border regions. The 1994 establishment in Graz of the *European Centre for Modern Languages* demonstrated the particular attention given by the Council of Europe to language policy and teaching, fields in

which the Council had already played a key role by defining *threshold levels* that enabled learners and their teachers to assess exactly their level of performance, and by introducing the languages *portfolio* to make it easier for everyone to keep a record of their ability in foreign languages. The European Commission has always taken similar steps to encourage the study of foreign languages, and has consistently stressed that this must be a key priority for the education policies of member states and that the European Commission will not relax its efforts in this domain. There is therefore no disharmony between Brussels and Strasbourg on this matter, but total agreement on the importance of the linguistic aspect of the European dimension.

The first reason for this is that the multiplicity of languages spoken in Europe has often been an obstacle to the desired good relations between the populations of the continent and between their countries. The inventor of Esperanto, Ludwig Zamenhof, wrote that *when people understood each other, they would cease to hate each other*. The remark was highly appropriate to the peoples of Europe, who had so often torn each other apart in wars that could be described as fratricidal, given the closeness between them of which they should have been aware. It was therefore through knowledge of languages that the links whose absence was unacceptable and well-nigh scandalous were to be forged or reforged.

A second and equally pressing reason is that, on account of globalisation, the world today is characterised even more than after the second world war by commercial, scientific and cultural relations that ignore borders. Through a knowledge of languages other than their own, individuals therefore need to be able to take part in exchange networks, on which the prosperity of their societies and their personal wellbeing depend. That is also why the study of languages, contrary to what used to be the norm in the past, can no longer be restricted to an elite but must be extended to the masses in order to meet the huge need for language skills.

At the same time the encouragement given to all to study languages pursues a goal that has to do with languages' status and the impact of this on the image of the Other. Alongside languages that are very widely used are many that are spoken on a far more modest scale. This disadvantages speakers of these second languages, who cannot use them outside the area where they are known without running the risk of not being understood, and this phenomenon is becoming worse as one or more dominant languages push ahead. Efforts by the Council of Europe and others to remedy these inequalities have understandably tended to produce meagre and all but token results. Moreover, the prospects that would be opened up by more numerous and more diversified translations are compromised in advance by financial factors. International institutions will never have the budgets needed for translation into the least widely used languages. The European Commission, which has been an exception so far, is wondering after the latest enlargements that have called for the use of "rare" languages, about the feasibility of continuing, given the costs involved. The budget of the Council of Europe only requires it in exceptional cases to arrange for translation into languages other than English and French, which are its official working languages.

The Council of Europe believes that it is a matter of making other Europeans aware of the multilingualism and multiculturalism that are a feature of their continent. Recognition of multilingualism should lead to recognition of the existence of other languages, and this would be a first step towards their equality in the form of registration in a kind of grand book of languages. Multiculturalism should bring about a second and yet more significant step, given that every language is the medium of a culture, and that from the perspective of

multiculturalism, all cultures are in principle of equal interest, although circumstances may cause them to have widely differing levels of distribution.

This is certainly a point of view that should provide opportunities for easing certain resentments, but for this to happen, it will without question be necessary to delineate more clearly the image of the Other that this will involve. Others may be seen either as real interlocutors treated on an equal footing because they are capable of communicating in the same language as their opposite numbers, or as potential interlocutors able in principle to do the same thing by acquiring the necessary skills. This means abandoning the image of others as strangers by definition incapable of expressing themselves in a comprehensible language, as was once the case among Germans in Russia, who in Russian were called “incapable of speech” because of their frequent ignorance of the language.

But communication cannot be purely linguistic. It must also be cultural because beyond words there is a whole cultural heritage which cannot be separated from meaning. This is why the Council of Europe has always stressed the need not to dissociate the study of a language from that of the culture which it carries and to which it is supposed, sometimes wrongly, to be immediately and intuitively related without any need for deeper analysis. This is also what makes it possible to establish a relationship of equality with others when they are treated not only as speakers of a language seen merely as a means of expression, but also as representatives of a culture, and when both the language and the culture are known to their interlocutor. It is therefore clear that language learning which sets out to be both linguistic and cultural differs profoundly from the view that reduces communication to nothing but the linguistic level, and to giving learners automatic reactions that enable them to ask questions and give answers. This approach was widely adopted in the Soviet bloc during the Cold War, when studying the language of a capitalist country was not intended to include learning about that country's society. It led to dialogues of the deaf, because words were exchanged in the belief that they had been cleansed of tendentious connotations whereas it was their meaning they had virtually lost. It should not be forgotten, however, that commercial language teaching, with its typical concern for speed and immediate effect, often leads to results of the same kind.

The media, from newspapers to radio and television programmes, may have similarly unfortunate consequences. They generally shut out all but one language by, for example, dubbing direct translation on top of speech in foreign languages and sub-titling foreign films. European multilingualism is thus scarcely visible. Nor indeed is multiculturalism because of a focus on the national culture and language, and when there is a move away from this it produces reports burdened with commonplaces and stereotypes. That is why the Council of Europe has always stressed the importance of educating the media and of education in using the media, in order to remind the media of their responsibilities and encourage the reader or viewer to be demanding and select what they find most acceptable. Here too, there can be no immediate or totally satisfactory solutions, but it is better to know the problems than ignore them.

The linguistic and cultural aspect of the European dimension thus justifies the importance given to the study of languages in all the commentaries of which it has been the subject. This has again been illustrated recently, with the proposal from the European Parliament to reactivate the European dimension approach by expanding language skills. But in fact it is never merely a question of improving language skills in the narrowest sense of the term. It is also important to become familiar with a language's entire cultural context. The ability to

communicate is sought after as necessary and beneficial to Europe. It needs to be seen in the context of interculturalism, without which two of the key features of Europe would be forgotten, namely multilingualism and multiculturalism. It is only in these circumstances that it will be possible to achieve both high-quality language learning and high-quality dialogue between interlocutors who are aware of their uniqueness but have also decided that this should enable them to come together rather than remaining isolated.

1.2.3 The cognitive aspect and the image of others as unlikely fellow citizens

The third aspect of the European dimension that needs to be taken into account is the cognitive aspect. This is necessary because all the statements on the European dimension allude to a heritage that Europeans supposedly have in common. This may embrace historic events, geographical features, trends in literary and artistic creativity, and many other traits which will vary depending on the time and place at which the statements were made. Even in the 19th century, conservative circles did not refer to the same shared tendencies as did the adherents of the early democratic movements. And, as is demonstrated by the arguments about whether to mention the role of Christianity in the European heritage when the European Constitution was being drafted, these disagreements still persist today. A first point to stress is therefore that it is far from easy to identify the heritage that Europeans are supposed to share.

But a second point is that, whatever the point of view adopted, these shared tendencies in the past or the present always need some cognitive effort because they are not immediately obvious, to political leaders, academics, the media or the wider public. This calls for an approach which, even when partisan, must be prepared to make the analytical and justificatory effort that enquiry always demands to some degree.

It is nonetheless possible to challenge conclusions reached, even without adopting a heated or biased approach contrary to the most basic rules of objectivity. Even then, in order to achieve the desirable convergence, a huge number of situations, events and works need to be compared to identify what they have in common. Interpretations based on such syntheses have increasingly been regarded as over-ambitious, either because they cannot make full use of the superabundance of material or because they restrict themselves to using some of it, but not enough of it to reach valid conclusions. In the event one or more items nearly always frustrate the endeavour because they run counter to the general trend or the general view that was intended. Attempts at world history or at histories of large areas or periods have frequently been criticised on these grounds, and a similar reaction continues to greet enterprises of this nature. It has been argued, for example, that there is no such thing as European baroque art because the baroque breaks down into a number of styles, the contrasts between which cannot be bridged artificially or simplistically¹⁰.

It may be that the new information and communication technologies will offer a way out by making it easier to collate and treat far more material than in the past. However, although computer processing may make it possible to increase the number of items that can be examined, it may also generate yet more that compromise the chances of revealing anticipated similarities.

Discovery of supposedly common heritage shared by Europeans is also at risk of being based on questionable knowledge that is easily dismissed as impossible, rather than on

¹⁰ See for example Pierre Charpentrat, *L'art baroque*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1967.

incontrovertible evidence that it was hoped would instantly unveil a Europe needing no further definition. It is difficult to see how features will emerge by themselves that are sufficiently significant to allow those who share them to feel a sense of common belonging akin to that which has grown up in the nation-states. In the latter case the shared heritage is assumed to have the solidity and self-evidence conferred by a supposedly intangible past, while it is merely a future promise in the case of Europe. That is why the Council of Europe has found it preferable to base the sense of belonging on exercise of democratic citizenship, not nearly as simple a matter as the obviously and instantly shareable heritage.

The expected image of the Other, cognitively speaking, is that of the compatriot enjoying a pool of shared references and specificities drawn from experience. But it has to be admitted that this is seldom the case. The Other is a fellow citizen who has far more abstract and far less accessible references drawn from a distant universe that is difficult to define. The Other makes an unlikely fellow citizen.

1.3 The process of introducing the European dimension

Having highlighted these aspects of the European dimension in order to see its general shape, we need to examine the ways in which it can be introduced on the scale intended - first in teaching subjects and secondly among those teaching or learning those subjects. But there is always the same pattern, with a starting point at which the European dimension is absent or unknown, and an arrival point at which it is acknowledged to greater or lesser effect. Its introduction must therefore be regarded as a process and analysed as such if the aim is to gain a better grasp of its nature and outcomes.

Analysis of aspects of the European dimension reveals that each of them takes the form of a set of practices that refer to values. The linguistic aspect is the quest for communication between interlocutors who mutually respect one another on the basis of acceptance of multilingualism and multiculturalism. The spatial aspect is characterised by exchanges in which others are not always treated as equal partners because the rules may not permit it despite providing an ideal that shows up inadequacies. The situation is similar with the cognitive aspect: knowledge of a shared heritage is problematic, but it is still a requirement that signals the key goal to aim for.

It is therefore conceivable to view the process of introducing the European dimension in terms of adopting new teaching practices derived from a set of values linked to a vision of Europe, such as tolerance or respect for democracy and human rights. But such a conception runs the risk of coming into conflict with those very values. It suggests that new teaching practices will necessarily derive from those values without allowing those putting them into practice any autonomy or freedom of choice. That is why the 1994 Commission green paper on the European dimension caused some concern by giving priority to knowledge of European institutions, thus seemingly borrowing the civics model used in member states, with its implicit compulsory acquisition of attitudes and behaviours laid down in advance by the powers that be. It is well known that this is not the way to introduce the European dimension. Research on the subject reveals widespread apathy and reluctance, and although this is the conclusion from surveys chiefly conducted by the European Commission there is no reason to think that surveys of the rest of Europe would arrive at a very different one. This is perfectly normal since more encouraging results would require more compulsory regulation by the educational authorities, and as has already been said, this is currently impossible in the

European Union, and it is difficult to see how the situation might differ in the member states of the Council of Europe.

However, it must be admitted that these two elements are closely linked. Without the reference to values there would be no justification for practices, which would in fact be devoid of purpose. And without practices values would be divorced from reality and inoperative. A middle ground therefore has to be found where people can make use of the European dimension, seeing it as desirable rather than compulsory, and more as a matter of personal choice than obeying instructions. This is what seems to happen with the Council of Europe approach to introducing the European dimension. This always involves using tools that are made available, but the manner of using which is a matter of free choice. Linguistically, the European dimension offers a capacity for communication which the possessor may use or not as he/she sees fit. The same applies to the exchange-oriented teaching that should be a part of teacher training. Even if a headteacher wants to extend such teaching, it is only on a voluntary basis that he or she can expect to find the necessary support. To take another example, which anticipates what we shall be saying later, the teaching of history must arouse similar personal commitment on the part of pupils and teachers. This teaching has to encourage a range of ways of looking at events, and this means presenting a variety of interpretations, between which choices – not necessarily the same – have to be made by both the teacher and the pupil. Tools of this kind which can be used with total flexibility are the key to introducing the European dimension and are a third element in that process, which will of course take a wide variety of forms because of the far-reaching autonomy with which choices are made.

It is thus easy to understand the very close link between innovative teaching and introduction of the European dimension. This is not limited to shedding new light on syllabus content in order to highlight similarities with the concerns, attitudes and practices found in other European countries. It is the entire approach to education that is at issue. It is a question of teachers and pupils becoming personally responsible for what they teach or learn, not because they decide the syllabus but because they fully accept the syllabus and make use of the welcome and increasing room for manoeuvre it gives them for making the space they want for the European dimension. It is now known how important it is for teachers and pupils to feel they are taking the initiative and in control of what they are doing if the approach is to bear fruit by stimulating the desire to teach and learn. The introduction of the European dimension is not the only way of getting there; all teaching methods that opt for innovation do the same by emphasising the autonomy to be encouraged among all the protagonists in education. It is nonetheless reasonable to suppose that introducing the European dimension will help in several respects. First, it is in principle relevant to every subject; it provides a link between subjects and reduces the compartmentalisation which is known to worry pupils, especially at the start of secondary school. Secondly, this decompartmentalisation makes an interdisciplinary approach easier, which is likely to motivate pupils better because they are confronted with less fragmented lessons and exercises. Lastly, although this is a point that is difficult to demonstrate, but which well-organised exchanges may help to make plain, it may be that teachers and pupils will be readier to make the necessary effort if they are made aware that the same is expected of their colleagues and peers in many other European countries. The introduction of the European dimension might thus give the impression that it contributes less to increasing familiarity with a particular notion of Europe than to encouraging innovations in teaching in which space is given to democratic decision-making and openness to others. It can be claimed that these things are not alien to the European dimension, but it may also be held that that dimension is not the main driving force behind *them*. And if we go down this road,

we shall quickly be forced to remind ourselves of the uncertainties and ambiguities surrounding the very notion of a European dimension, and to argue that it addresses concerns that have been those of all the great humanist educators since Comenius.¹¹

Such reactions lead to the accusation that the notion of a European dimension is too loose, so that its interpretation is so vague that it can no longer be given any precise meaning. But if this is the case, is it not because the whole idea of Europe is vague? Attempts have been made to define it through a set of values, but it remains to be proved that each of them taken alone and all of them taken together are specifically European. It must be accepted that they now appear to be the prerogatives of all present-day societies with any claim to be democratic or to respect human rights, even when their actions may seem either wholly or partially to undermine that claim. With few exceptions, nearly always associated with scandals, the time has long gone when Victor Hugo could praise republicanism and democracy as the emblems and symbols of Europe.

1.4 Europe as a project

As has been seen, efforts to arrive at an undisputed definition of Europe fail. They do not reveal an essence of Europe that might form the basis for its identity and the characteristics of that identity. Attempts in this direction are hampered by contradictions which prevent the characteristics being integrated into a unitary structure, or by characteristics which are not peculiar to Europe but belong to most countries in the world.

Rather than regarding the failure of these attempts as evidence of the impossibility of defining Europe, it would be equally plausible to suggest that they are chiefly a sign of the impossibility of seeing Europe as a tangible reality that is easy to grasp, is in a fixed state and can be dissociated from others. That is why there is much talk of its relative identity. This occurs in the teaching dossiers produced as part of the secondary teaching project, in which European ways of looking at questions such as technological revolution and economic change are never entirely identical or completely original. Going even further in this direction, one author believes that Europe can be recognised by its “secondarity” - that is, the absence of any claim that it has made choices that are its alone - and by the plurality of heritages with which it has to contend and which cannot always be reconciled¹². It is remarkable that even in the dossiers, or looked at from the standpoint of secondarity, the process of defining Europe and its identity never arrives at a one and single Europe. It is always a matter of assemblage through a process of overcoming obstacles. Even the European Union adopts this approach. We never find, therefore, an immediately comprehensible, absolute identity. Hence the identity is far more potential than actual, always needing to be discovered rather than already there, with the result that Europe will probably always be a project. It therefore remains to be shown that, contrary to widespread opinion, this is a form of existence which, far from being a sign of fragility and inconsistency, has substance and is not without advantages over other forms.

If Europe is perceived as a project, we firstly avoid seeing its incompleteness as a flaw. Europe has set ambitions which, if achieved, would provide a unity that would guarantee an identity, but they are either not realised at all, or not fully. The best illustration of this is the

¹¹ See Christoph Kodron, *Zu Kooperationsproblemen bei der Einführung einer Europäischen Dimension in die Lehramt-Ausbildungen*, in Christoph Koron, Ingelore Oomen-Welke (eds), *Enseigner l'Europe dans nos sociétés multiculturelles*, 1995, Filibach Verlag, Freiburg im Breisgau.

¹² Rémi Brague, *Europe, la voie romaine*, 1999, Folio Gallimard, Paris.

European Union's attempt to achieve political and cultural unity, the advent of which is still unforeseeable, and a resultant common market that is still incomplete in many respects. The Council of Europe does not have the same aims, but the values that it seeks to promote are far from universally accepted, and it is similarly unclear when general observance of them will come about. This is evident from the existence of the European Court of Human Rights, and the numerous cases referred to it. But this unfinished business is inevitable for want of means of coercion, the lack of which is not due solely to their unobtainability or to a refusal to contemplate using them. The proposed European Union constitution provides for a European army, though one with very restrictive rules of engagement even in situations similar to that in the former Yugoslavia. There is even less chance of the Council of Europe using any form of constraint to impose its views, and this is the result of the desire always to find a peaceful way of resolving conflicts, which is an approach shared by Brussels. The unfinished state of Europe is thus more intentional than unwillingly endured, and probably more permanent than temporary. If this is so, Europe has to be seen as a project – a fixing of clear objectives that may never be met, and perhaps above all a cultivation of the attitudes needed for signing up to the project and never being disheartened by its necessary uncertainties. This is what leads one British academic to speak of “the beautiful elusiveness of ‘Europe’”¹³ as impossible to define except through values. Hence we need to demonstrate the energy that is essential to confront dangers that cannot be vanquished, in the knowledge that we need to be clear about this if we are not to succumb to pernicious illusions.

At first sight this seems to go against most of the political and social decisions that pride themselves on providing supposedly final solutions to major problems, if not all the problems facing societies. And these problems, like their solutions, are linked to a destiny that allegedly gives them originality and full and complete meaning within a closed microcosm. This of course is the position taken by the traditional nation-states, which claim an identity based on the unity of their territory, their language, their culture – the list could go on indefinitely. This has resulted in the juxtaposition of closed sets analogous to Leibnizian monads, but lacking the support of a pre-established harmony that will ensure they form part of a universe of reciprocal relationships. It is now clear that such unitariness is imaginary and has innumerable cracks in it that impair the miraculous identities claimed. We should be glad that Europe has not attempted to adopt a scaled-up version of this model. It is because it has abandoned it that the national and state identities that might have turned in on themselves have agreed to draw closer together and to renounce their claims to absolute singularity, or at least to moderate them by entering into a universe of sharing and co-operation. It is an unfinished Europe that has enabled its component parts to extract themselves, or to begin extracting themselves, from these closed worlds they imagined to be unimprovable on. There has been a huge benefit in joining the unfinished European project because it has led to a forced relativisation of certainties which were untested and wrongheaded, and to a recognition that taking part in a project is a more substantial commitment than gesticulating as a substitute for real action. The realities of Europe do not fit the criteria that normally apply in the analysis of political and social phenomena, but do reveal the misconceptions on which these frequently rest.

We need to accept the idea of a Europe that is basically unfindable, not because it does not exist or is indefinable but because it exists in a form that makes it hard to pin down on account of a large number of contradictions that prevent our finding a logic on which to base a definition. That is also why the best way of approaching Europe is not to try to find out about some dispiritingly complex object, but to identify the values that allow us to keep under

¹³ Yasemin Soysal, blog, 5 December 2001.

constant review all the attempts to come to terms with it. It is therefore less a matter of working out a concept or concepts of Europe than of encouraging the attitudes most likely to ensure participation in the European project. The list of values initially suggested in the 1991 resolution on the European dimension and repeated in the publication produced as part of the project on secondary teaching is therefore fully justified.

1.5 The outlook

In the wake of this analysis, what is the outlook for the concept of the European dimension and its introduction into teaching?

The key mental adjustment that needs making is that there is no point in trying to build up a picture of Europe by simply teaching the features of the various states that make it up. Doing this would only result in a jigsaw puzzle well-nigh impossible to put together without leaving huge gaps. It is far better to start with an assembly plan and put in what one can. In other words the values governing the European project or projects need to be described first, showing some of the choices made by a few member states but without disguising the distortions to be seen in relation to respect for democracy and human rights. Recognition of the unfinished nature of Europe goes hand in hand with acknowledging its imperfection, and this may be a salutary reminder to the member states of the progress that they sometimes still need to make. That does not mean, however, that pupils should not be familiarised with the realities of other European countries than their own. However, this is only the antechamber to the European dimension, beyond which lies its core. It goes without saying that looking at how the various countries stand in relation to European values does not imply apportioning praise or blame, and that it is crucial to bring out what respect for these values means in examining how they are treated. Approaching the European dimension like this is a complicated and delicate business involving ideas and skills that can really only be mastered by secondary pupils. It should therefore be kept for the secondary level. At primary level it would be better to keep to mere familiarisation with certain features of European countries, in the spirit of a former Council of Europe project, *Europe in school*, but taking care that the glimpses provided do not feed preconceived ideas. That is why it is all the more essential for teachers to have initial and in-service training that thoroughly examines the actual notion of the European dimension and shows how to introduce it into subject teaching. Failure so far to distinguish between the two levels has unquestionably resulted in inadequate preparation.

In this teaching, one question which will have to be addressed is how to adapt the material to different subjects. It is safe to assume that the European dimension cannot be introduced in the same way in all disciplines. Full coverage of the European dimension presupposes dealing simultaneously with all the three aspects identified in this study, but it is natural and prudent to bear in mind that it may give rise to approaches in which one aspect is more prominent than another, as has been seen when exchanges become unbalanced. It may also be thought that the cognitive aspect deserves always to be stressed in order to call attention to the need to identify as far as possible the implications of decisions and be aware of the difficulty of interpreting them.

The European dimension therefore cannot be introduced in the same way in all subjects.

It may be anticipated that in scientific subjects, in which knowledge is dispensed that is considered undisputable at world level, it will either play little part and be necessarily restricted to very secondary aspects of them, or an attempt will be made to link it to crucial

aspects of them which are not strictly relevant to it. In the former case more information might be given about formulators of mathematical theorems or key figures in physics and chemistry in order to give greater shape to the science that has been built up in Europe, but this would not greatly enrich the syllabus and would also run the risk of a Eurocentrism akin to the nationalism that has enabled countries to claim ownership of innumerable inventions for which they were not in fact responsible. It would be interesting to measure the impact of advances in science in different countries, and this might help to explain the involvement of the values on which the European dimension rests, but this has more to do with the history or sociology of the sciences than with teaching them in school. Of the different aspects of the European dimension, the cognitive would therefore seem to be the one to emphasise.

The situation does not seem radically different in the arts subjects, dealing with works of world significance to which the life or origin of the artist or composer could be regarded as of little importance. It is well known, however, that proper appreciation of works has always required knowledge of their creators and the cultures that nourished them. It is therefore worth considering whether or not there is reference to the values of the European project, and it may be relevant to find out whether, and to what degree, it is possible to speak of European art or to argue that some values more than others have inspired certain forms of expression, as in Delacroix's painting *Liberty leading the People*. The shift to abstract art, with its greater universality, will not entirely do away with such connections. There is obviously a whole sector where the introduction of the European dimension as understood here would be fully justified for a fuller appreciation of what a European culture might mean. All three aspects of the European dimension could be brought out here, including the spatial aspect, which could explore the geographical and human context in which artists were working.

It goes without saying that the humanities and social sciences are the area where it appears most natural to introduce the European dimension, particularly as Europe already often features explicitly in them. Many writers have claimed to be "European", such as Hugo, Mazzini and Dostoyevsky (who was the subject, in the project on secondary teaching, of a monograph correcting certain misunderstandings about attitudes wrongly thought hostile to Europe). Literature is one of the fields in which it would be most appropriate to emphasise both the difficulty and the relevance of establishing exactly what "European" means. Nor should one forget geographers, who have frequently attempted to describe Europe in its entirety or as the context within which they wished to locate the countries or regions that they were studying.

It must therefore be asked whether the general model of a European dimension and the approach to introducing it will vary from subject to subject. There are grounds for supposing that the three aspects that we have been able to identify in this process may differ in their composition and functions. Some values may be more attractive than others, and particular practices and tools are likely to be adopted as more appropriate to the methodology and teaching styles of the individual discipline. Peace in Europe and the world will surely be given greater prominence in civics than in geography, though even there it will not be entirely lost sight of. It can also be assumed that these two subjects will not give the same importance to the cognitive aspect of the European dimension. Above all the investigative approach will not be the same because of the difference in subject matter - highly objective data in the one case, and in the other attitudes that are subject to differing interpretations. It should be possible to verify this in relation to historical knowledge and the teaching of history, which will now be examined further.

II. HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

Since its inception the Council of Europe has always given much attention to history teaching in its discussions and activities. This focus has sharpened since the emergence of the “new Europe” – Europe since the disappearance of the Soviet bloc and of Yugoslavia, with the resultant tensions and frequently very violent conflicts arising out of serious state, ethnic and religious disagreements.

This has been reflected particularly in the adoption of a number of resolutions and recommendations on history teaching which stress the need to take into account the European dimension in order to analyse situations more adequately and restore opportunities for mutual understanding between parties to disputes. Special programmes have also been introduced to help some member states reconstruct their teaching of history, work that continues in the case of the Russian Federation and the countries of the Caucasus and south-east Europe.

But in addition to the interest in history teaching, there has been parallel interest in historical knowledge itself. This is well seen in the project “History teaching in the 21st century” (1997-2001) and the project “The European dimension in history teaching” (2002-2006). These projects had two main aims. One was to encourage teaching of European history that took account of the results of the latest research and of interpretations promoting pluralist, tolerant visions. The other aim, particularly in the second project, was to address the European dimension more effectively. But although this second project was still concerned with history teaching, as the title suggests, the main concern was in fact non-academic aspects of historical knowledge, to elucidate what were often very complex periods in the fifty years that had just elapsed. In both cases, therefore, the focus was on highly typical aspects of historical enquiry - work on source material and differing interpretations of it.

It should be pointed out that the orientation chosen for the second project risked exposing identification of the European dimension to certain difficulties. It was agreed first of all that the focus should be on a study of “key events” in the history of Europe, without spelling out from the outset whether this should mean events that revealed the European dimension and if so, in what way. Secondly and most importantly, all the key events selected were associated with conflicts, mostly of great violence and degenerating into massacre. The question was therefore raised as to whether the European dimension, conceived up to that point as generally peaceful, could still be invoked, and if so, how, in these spirals of violence of which the outcomes were very uncertain.

In order to attempt an answer to this question we should first examine the documents setting out the profile and role of the European dimension in historical knowledge and in history teaching, then assess the extent to which the studies carried out as part of the project were inspired by these documents, and finally compare the European dimension that emerges from this research with that identified earlier. We shall inevitably come up against the problem of how to view and teach the history of Europe - as sombre history punctuated by repeated wars, or as “gentle” history in which the alarms of the past can be forgotten through reconciliation.

2.1 The recommendation on teaching history in the 21st century

This Committee of Ministers recommendation of 30 October 2001 is of particular importance from two points of view. On the one hand it restates the guidelines on history teaching as

detailed in earlier documents. On the other it explicitly sets out for the first time in practical terms how the European dimension is to be seen and applied.

Three objectives stand out in particular in relation to history teaching which, it must be stressed, is not clearly distinguished from historical knowledge here any more than anywhere else. History teaching, and in consequence a knowledge of history, are essential to European construction. This was also the thinking behind Recommendation 1283 (1996) on history teaching in Europe, Article 2 of which states that history also has a *key political role to play in today's Europe*, and had been the line taken by the 1994 Delphi symposium on history teaching and European awareness. Secondly, the study of history plays a key role in the development of mutual understanding between peoples and between individuals (an aim likewise found in Recommendation 1283, according to which a knowledge of history fosters a *democratic, tolerant and responsible civic attitude*¹⁴ and in the recommendation on teaching history in the 20th century, which favoured a pluralist, tolerant conception and open approaches to sensitive issues in the teaching of history). Thirdly, history teaching needs to stimulate respect for difference and a range of ways of looking at historical events and situations, as had already been explained in the recommendations referred to and in many other documents, particularly those concerned with democratic citizenship.

The European dimension itself is the subject of a large portion of the appendix to this recommendation, which sets out its aims and the ways of promoting it. The aims derive from the finding that *the building of Europe is an expression of both a decision freely entered into...and a historical reality* - both a project awaiting realisation and tangible elements of the past and present. It is these which the European dimension needs to highlight, bearing in mind the following points. The continuity of historical relations at all levels results in various heritages with which members of different communities can identify, and the similarities between which may provide a basis for seeking a European identity. If certain events are given their true European importance, this will make it possible to identify typical features of Europe and of how it has developed. There is also a need to teach others' histories in every country, and to teach the history of the building of Europe. And it is appropriate to arrange co-operation and exchange projects on the history of Europe. The appendix also suggests how to promote the European dimension, but this generally relates to pedagogical matters which will be considered below when we come to history teaching proper.

2.2 The "European dimension in history teaching" project

The project on the European dimension in history teaching followed up the recommendation just examined, which is reason enough to consider it in detail. But the recommendation viewed the publications that were to form part of the project as one way of promoting the European dimension, giving us further reason to devote attention to them. This is all the more natural in that the project chose to study "key events" in European history, reflecting the objective assigned to the European dimension of *teaching about periods and developments with the most obvious European dimension*.

This project gave rise to five symposia: *The year 1848 in the history of Europe; 1912-1913: impact of historical events on the changing lives of ordinary citizens; 1919; The year 1945; and 1989*. Each symposium was given ten or so papers by high-level specialists, mostly on the situation in a particular country during the period in question. The papers frequently drew on

¹⁴ Article 4.

archives to which there was still little access or which had only recently been opened up for consultation, especially in the Soviet Union and its former satellites.

One abiding impression from these papers is of extremely valuable new information and insights, whether concerning different perspectives on the 1848 Revolution, the reasons for the instability and brevity of the alliances during the Balkan wars, errors made by the general staffs in the First World War, the motives of the protagonists at the Yalta Conference, or possible explanations for the collapse of the Soviet system.

But another equally strong impression is the paucity, and indeed absence, of reference to the European dimension of the events. There is never any doubt that these events are of signal importance in European history (“major” events, “key” events). The 1848 Revolution marked the beginning of Europe’s march towards the spread of democracy and the nation-state. The sequel to the Balkan wars was implacable hatred between neighbours, which produced unmanageable situations for which the rest of Europe eventually paid the price of a first world war that bled it white and destabilised it for many years. It is scarcely necessary to reiterate how crucial the post-Yalta split was from a European point of view, or the reunion after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Or was there a “Europeanness” so obvious that to mention it in terms of a European dimension would have been a huge understatement? Were these events thought self-evidently European, having embroiled vast portions of the continent and so many European states? Equally self-evidently, the events had an undeniable European impact which could, for example, be seen at a glance from the new maps that had to be redrawn after each conflict.

This is a recurrent issue concerning the European dimension, an issue which, as suggested in the final report of the project on secondary teaching, may still be regarded as inherent in most subject areas, and therefore as likely to crop up of its own accord without any particular uncovering. This perception is probably particularly tempting in history, where any topic addressed may be seen as having a European dimension if it is concerned with Europe.

Nonetheless, the impression of the papers given at the symposiums, from a European standpoint, is that they do not go as far as might have been expected in analysing the impact of the events. Rigorous historical analysis will probably reduce that impact in some cases, of course. It is not certain, for example, that it was the first world war that was the key to all that happened in the 20th century, and the League of Nations to which it gave rise certainly brought Europe neither unity nor security. It is therefore understandable that the decision was made to concentrate on the year 1919 and on the post-war situation in various countries. It must also be admitted that the Potsdam Conference had results that were variable and did not last¹⁵. As for the Balkan wars, historians are forced to two obvious conclusions: firstly that they cannot draw lessons from them without infringing the rules of their trade, and secondly, that instead of helping to create a European ideal of respect for law and equality, they gave free rein to the pride of independent peoples in affirming their own language, culture and identity¹⁶. But the question then almost inevitably arises whether the key events selected were those that should have been chosen to demonstrate the European dimension – that is, to give the term its usual meaning, trends associated with a particular notion of Europe. It could always be argued that whatever does not fit with or runs counter to these trends is part of them, but if this argument has the advantage of making it easier to distinguish between what

¹⁵ Symposium on 1945, collected papers, p.64.

¹⁶ Symposium on 1912/1913: impact of historical events on the changing lives of ordinary citizens, p.13.

does relate to the European dimension and what does not, it also as the disadvantage of widening the European dimension so far that it becomes impossible to grasp.

This is clear from the symposium *The year 1848 in the history of Europe*, whose very title suggested it was far likelier to reveal the European significance of the events investigated. The first paper to the symposium stated that *the 1848 Revolution marked a turning point in the history of Europe* and that both *the revolution and the repression and counter-revolution created a European unity that did not exist before 1848*¹⁷. This unity, which was associated with the quest for a new political organisation based on democracy and the nation-state, took numerous different shapes but eventually spread more rapidly and widely in Europe than in most other continents. The 1848 Revolution, and its failures, prefigured that unity rather than being its first manifestation. But the meaning it acquired thanks to the “peoples’ spring” gives it an unrivalled symbolic value which goes far beyond its content as an event. Hence it surely offers one of the best examples of what referring to the European dimension may mean in a historical context of this kind. It is an interpretation of events which both sticks to the material facts and goes beyond these in a way that is plausible and can be accepted by historians, who are themselves familiar with such an approach because they are seldom able to offer interpretations that can lay claim to absolute truth. It also demonstrates that such an approach needs to be comparative, both for the purposes of historical research and for those of introducing the European dimension, if it is to show the similarities and differences between situations by reference to an average model. This is what happens when the variants of the Revolution in different European countries are analysed by reference to the Paris model.

This makes it clearer why the other symposiums seemed disappointing, despite the value of the information that they contributed, which was often new. They failed to compare the national situations that were discussed at them, probably chiefly because the authors of the papers, like many historians, were either not convinced this was necessary or left it to their listeners or readers to do the work. Mainly, however – unlike in the case of 1848 – they had no points of comparison such as the quest for democracy or for the nation-state. Non-comparison was also of course the direct consequence of the key events selected, which were basically more important at a general than a European level or which needed analysing from specific standpoints relevant to the European dimension rather than in overall terms.

However, this would have required a better definition of what was to be understood by the European dimension, but this was, on the whole, neglected.

2.3 What European dimension?

Even more than in the project on secondary teaching, the definition of the European dimension that was put forward was neither sufficiently exact nor sufficiently usable to make clear what attributing a European quality to an event, a series of events or any other situation actually means.

The publication *The European dimension in history teaching in the 20th century* discusses the European dimension at great length¹⁸ without revealing clearly what it is or how it can be used in practice. According to the author, there are two possible options as to what best characterises Europe, one being its shared heritage, the other its diversity. Each option has its advantages and its drawbacks. The first, which emphasises *a continuous narrative*, favours a

¹⁷ The Year 1848 in the history of Europe, collected papers, p.9.

¹⁸ Op. cit., pp. 29-39.

linear development embracing the main branches of the European heritage such as the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, the main artistic and architectural trends, and the emergence of the nation-state. Hence it rests on the idea of a European civilisation that presents common phenomena within different cultures, but it ignores the areas and periods not demonstrating the influences considered essential. The main feature of the second option is the diversity that manifests itself in the dynamism that Europe has displayed in all fields – political, economic and cultural. There is thus a danger either of developing an atomised vision of Europe or of highlighting darker aspects not tempered by developments which might generally permit greater optimism. A balance has to be struck between these two points of view, between the general and the particular, *between a vertical perspective emphasising vast periods and general trends, and a horizontal perspective emphasising specifics*. But there are no details as to how this balance is to be reflected in the practice of history, and we constantly come back to the need to focus on what is *historically important* and has had *a major impact on a large part of Europe*. But are we in fact given the means to do this? We are given a list of key concepts and key skills which will supposedly make it easier to achieve this balance. However, the list has to do with the general approach to history teaching, and it is difficult to see how it can resolve essential issues such as the standpoint to be adopted on the European dimension or the importance to be given to certain events that have occurred in Europe. At the very least we need to be told how to get from these general explanations on methodology, which are of course essential as a guide for pupils and teachers, to a set of methodological principles that will shed light on what events to select and what meaning to give them.

It would therefore seem appropriate to imagine what might result if the aspects of the European dimension identified above were to be applied to the events examined in the project on the European dimension in history teaching, as a test of whether a very broad concept of the dimension is enough, and, if so, of how it needs to be adapted to the particular period or place. As will be shown briefly, these aspects of the European dimension remain usable but have to be adapted to the context, and the images of the Other to which they refer have to change appreciably.

The spatial aspect is still crucial. When it comes to assessing the European significance of an event, the area of Europe which it affects is a decisive criterion. If the 1848 Revolution and the first and second world wars are of European importance, it is primarily because of the number of European countries involved. The Balkan wars are only of comparable importance because they ultimately dragged in the other European powers. But Europe was then quite unlike what it is today. There was no freedom of movement. It was an area partitioned by borders that were far more tightly sealed than today. As a consequence, exchanges of people at all levels, whether official or private, hardly ever gave rise to partnership roles. People were always more or less like neighbours who do not know one another because direct contact is too infrequent, and relations were not helped by the stereotypes and prejudices to which they were subject. For the Bulgarians after the 1878 war of liberation and after the Balkan wars, the Turks, Greeks and Serbs were threatening neighbours, just as the Germans were for the French after the first world war, or the Austrians and Hungarians for the Germans who had hoped for change after 1848.

The aspect of linguistic and cultural communication might seem unlikely to be of much prominence when the dominant languages of the most powerful states and of their elites had forced out the languages of numerous minorities in remote country areas. However, the enthusiasm created by the multilingual republican assembly in Berlin in 1848 should not be forgotten. This was intended to symbolise the hopes raised by the peoples' spring of seeing

citizens overcoming the obstacles of linguistic and cultural communication. Nor should we forget the increasingly vociferous demands by speakers of minority languages for unequivocal recognition of their existence so that their use would be tolerated. It can therefore be argued without hesitation that a concern with linguistic and cultural identity was a key feature of political and social life in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries; nor has it lost its currency today, as is evident from the Council of Europe's 1992 European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages. Nonetheless, with a few quite rare exceptions, there were far more speakers of one language than of several. Languages were spoken to communicate with fellow speakers of them. The vast majority of these were one's compatriots, and except in 1848 and afterwards in revolutionary circles, the needs and possibilities of communication with the outside remained very limited, despite small elites who knew one or more foreign languages. Nonetheless, we may conclude that linguistic and cultural communication has been a long-standing concern in European history, and it should be added that the circulation of newspapers and translations of books has made a significant contribution to the spread of ideas and the opening of minds. These trends may often have been more potential than actual, but they were nonetheless the precursors of those that have become current today.

The cognitive aspect also made its presence felt, without always coming up against the obstacles which it increasingly encounters today. The protagonists of the events examined in the papers to the symposiums of the project on the European dimension in history teaching scarcely alluded to it, and the same goes for the authors of papers. But the countless writings about the pre-national and national histories of the inchoate or emergent entities may be viewed as a reasonable substitute. They were invariably associated with characteristics set out in writings of all sorts, from official statements to supposedly erudite papers, and from impassioned first-hand accounts to explorations of mythology. Material of this kind is still found with reference to national contexts or the European context. It is quite obvious, however, that there was little resistance in the 19th century to their claims of putting forward proven knowledge. Even among historians, there was still no very clear distinction between fiction and what was verifiable. As is evident from the works of Michelet and many others, the *roman des nations* was an acceptable genre which did not start to be decried until after the second world war. There was thus a presumption of knowledge fairly comparable to what we see with the European dimension as envisaged now, but with less care taken to avoid over-ambition and unfounded statements. This, then, is also an aspect of the European dimension which is still absolutely relevant despite necessary qualifications because of the specific nature of the context.

It is therefore evident that the concept of a European dimension has survived the passage of time, even though variations inevitably resulting from differences in context need to be acknowledged. Hence it would seem necessary to accept that the European dimension differs in profile according to the period, and to bear this in mind in order to avoid anachronisms. The European dimension when the idea of Europe was barely present or had barely started taking shape in the minds of political leaders and the European dimension as referred to in Council of Europe and European Union projects can scarcely be the same. It is possible to argue the contrary by opting for a very general idea of Europe not affected by differences of context. But it seems impossible to view Europe in this way since it is a time-bound historical reality. Another possibility would be to adopt a notion of the European dimension that was sufficiently general to fit all periods and all places. But while this would mean choosing between a European dimension based on what was similar in the various European realities found, and another based solely on their diversity, there is little chance that a clear choice

could be made, with the consequent danger that we would again be faced with an idea so vague that it would be difficult to know what to do with it.

2.4 What idea of Europe and its history?

Of course, the approach adopted towards the European dimension cannot be dissociated from that towards the idea of Europe and its history, and this raises the question whether diversity actually addresses the real issues. Talking of diversity means referring to relative differences rather than marked contrasts. For many philosophers, historians and sociologists, the issue is one of opposing and even contradictory phenomena rather than reducible diversity. The attitude of Edgar Morin is well known. Many agree with him when he writes: *While Europe is law, it is also force; while it is democracy, it is also oppression; while it is spirituality, it is also materialism; while it is moderation, it is also hubris; while it is reason, it is also myth, including the inner core of the notion of reason*¹⁹. And this means that we need to acknowledge the disagreements of all sorts and the conflicts resulting from them which have punctuated the history of Europe. There is therefore no question of inventing a “soft” version of it²⁰. The history of Europe has to accommodate all the wars and the violence that have caused bloodshed not only in Europe but also on practically all the other continents, frequently on Europe’s behalf. If we look for historical continuity we discover a history composed as much of disjointed, contradictory periods as of periods linked by some hidden meaning in some miraculous unity. Nor can the Europe that, in theory, is at peace today always escape their reappearance. It is the hope of finally eliminating the risk of this which drives contemporary European projects, but this is not some happy ending that means we can forget the past. As Jean-Frédéric Schaub again writes, European countries have had relations *sometimes and indeed often dominated by violence rather than transaction, by contempt rather than understanding, by resentment rather than by recognition and nothing could be more contrary to the vocation attributed to historians than to forge a golden legend with no historical substance*²¹.

2.5 Historical knowledge of Europe and the European dimension

We still need to establish whether this vision of Europe marked by discontinuity and opposition is sufficient to overcome the reluctance of many historians to think that Europe is a subject of study that can meet their knowability requirements.

According to the experts, mentioning a European significance is akin to imposing some spurious unity on a series of heterogeneous events. In any attempt to give it such significance, even the 1848 revolution cannot escape this reproach, since it did not mobilise the same sections of the population in the various countries, nor was it pursuing absolutely identical aims. Hence, in the eyes of those for whom historical knowledge must be able to claim an objectivity based on analysis of verifiable facts, leading to interpretations that do not go further than what they can deliver, Europe is not a possible subject. According to a group report from French history and geography inspectors, it is an important element of civic education, but has a *weak scientific paradigm*. And it must be agreed that the examples of European history available to us do not always permit us to dismiss such criticism. The author

¹⁹ *Penser l'Europe*, Gallimard, 1987, p.33.

²⁰ To borrow from Jean-Frédéric Schaub’s article *Les dangers d’une histoire douce de l’Europe*, presented at the colloquium *Les détournements de l’histoire : un enjeu pour l’éducation en Europe au XXIème siècle* (Council of Europe July 2001).

²¹ *Ibid.*

of a huge work, *L'Europe, histoire de ses peuples*²², who does not try to hide that he is attracted to a Europe gradually attaining political unity states that *the European Community has existed, initially in embryonic form, since distant times, and then in an increasingly developed form despite wars, conflicts, blood and tears*. But in such statements there is a danger of a considerable gap between the author's conviction and evidence to support it.

We may then ask whether the same difficulties are encountered from the perspective of the European dimension. First, unlike what happens when historians express their personal views, even when they are careful to keep to the rules of their trade, the European dimension permits opinions about Europe to be expressed that are far less isolated from the dominant model of discourse. In the wake of initiatives by European institutions, the idea of the European dimension has become familiar to wider and wider circles, and has therefore given rise to statements that are sufficiently numerous that they have created an environment in which the interpretations that circulate echo one another and create a space within which analyses can generally be conducted that are sufficiently comparable not to be easily dismissed as odd or doubtful. This is partly because, as has become apparent in this study, the concept of a European dimension may be further refined and become a more effective interpretative tool. In short, the European dimension may be regarded as an approach to knowledge which, while being open to challenge, is not unacceptable in, especially, fields such as history and political science where a totally rigorous approach and absolute certainty of results are rare.

However, we have yet to resolve the issues involved in having to distinguish between plausible use of the European dimension in the present and its far more problematic application to the past, which can lead to a very questionable reconstitution of trends and developments. It is probable that there are misunderstandings in this area. Reference to the European dimension in the present is thought more acceptable, or at least tolerable, because it forms part of a European project which makes mention of more or less identifiable tendencies that are dependent on a future yet to take concrete shape. But when it is a matter of the past, everything has already been played out, and it is no longer possible to rewrite it so that it anticipates and forms part of the future. However, it should not be forgotten that even the most positivist, event-based history has never regarded the past as an untouchable fact which has been interpreted for all time. But the European dimension does not mean taking yet another look at the past. It is a quest for items capable of sustaining – as opposed to justifying – the project for the future. There is far less concern with the past than with mapping out the future. There is no question of rewriting European history. The concern is to write that of tomorrow. There is the ever-present danger of ending up professing a European essentialism according to which Europe has a reality that has come down over the centuries and we need to find evidence of it so that its full potential is achieved. But here we are in the realm of mythology, to which the nation-states have been very partial. Europe needs to avoid this if it is to be a responsible project which is aware of its difficulty and fragility and that it must content itself with relative certainties rather than massaging history to fabricate absolute ones.

III. THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN HISTORY TEACHING

Before tackling the question of the space to be given to the European dimension in history teaching, it is necessary to consider how this teaching relates to historical knowledge. For a long time there has been a gap between the knowledge taught in school, especially as

²² Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, Perrin, 1990, 423pp.

contained in school textbooks, and the approaches adopted in the academic research on which it is supposedly based, but from which it has had to depart for two reasons: so that it is graspable by pupils, and so that it responds to the demands of society, which include providing support for national, political and cultural decisions. But this is no longer generally the case today. School knowledge needs to be knowledge like any other, and this is also the case in history, where considerable efforts have been made to avoid too great a gap between historical knowledge that meets the criteria recognised by researchers and school knowledge that does not take these into account. Today pupils, following the example of professional historians, are introduced to marshalling the evidence to support their interpretations and are brought to realise that the factors explaining certain situations and decisions are complex.

It should be noted, however, that introducing the European dimension into history teaching may mean raising issues quite different from those met so far in this kind of adaptation. When the subject of enquiry is the European dimension or Europe, historical knowledge is often equivocal, easily giving the impression that it is dealing with them while in reality merely treating them as implicit or approximations. There is therefore a risk of their treatment in school further accentuating their lack of precision and leading to repetition of empty formulae rather than the intended enlightening explanation. But if such explanation is achieved, it too presents a danger of leading in strange directions that may unsettle pupils. It will inevitably tend to highlight the probable rather than the certain or have to overstate the case to make it convincing. The European dimension to situations is always a plausible tendency rather than a matter of established fact, and Europe remains more of a project than a reality. The learning of history in school is intended above all help in deciphering contexts that are well defined in time and space, where it is possible to point to easily identifiable causalities. It is to be feared that this will not be the case in practice, though. But by giving way to pessimism, we may end up wondering whether the whole approach runs counter to the spirit of Recommendation 1283, according to which the history taught in schools should provide an initiation into the ways of acquiring historical knowledge.

We also need to bear in mind the obstacles associated with the nature of the syllabus. As is pointed out regularly in Council of Europe documents, the syllabuses that are laid down by the national or regional authorities prescribe contents and timetables that only they can change. Requests to introduce European history or the European dimension into history syllabuses can therefore usually only be met minimally, with a few lines in the regulations and a handful of lessons in the timetable, or may be rejected because the curriculum can always be made out to be too full already. It is also always possible to claim that considerable space is already given to other European countries or Europe in general so that there is no reason to make new arrangements. Moreover, syllabuses generally give priority to national history, and this is a major obstacle because introducing a more European dimension would reduce the space given to the topic regarded as most essential and most educational.

To introduce the European dimension into history teaching, we therefore need to see first how the obstacles of the primacy of national history and the rigidity of syllabuses can be overcome. Secondly, the point should be made that introducing the European dimension, far from compromising the chances of continuing to fulfil the requirements of satisfactory historical methodology, can offer wide opportunities for enriching it with new approaches that are vital to a better understanding and appreciation of our own age.

3.1 The national context and the European context

The primacy of the national framework stems both from political concerns and traditions of historical research. From the 19th century onwards the nation-state relied on history, backed by civic education, to give its citizens points of reference for reinforcing their attachment to the values enshrined in the political model. By celebrating the nation's uniqueness, continuity and merits, national history provided it with a unique destiny that justified the devotion and sacrifices it demanded. Historians played their part in this by writing national histories based on archives that were also national, because they had been collected on that principle and were frequently only available to the citizens of the country in which they were located.

The objectivity of these national histories, written in many cases to glorify existing authority, was of course questionable, and the 19th century "scientific" historians who had taken the place of the chroniclers of princes did not dissent, because of the nationalist atmosphere and the outbursts of impassioned patriotism in which their age wallowed. One typical figure was Ernest Lavisse (1842 – 1922) in France, who was the author both of an impressive *Histoire de France* and of a small book of French history for children, aimed at propagating the cult of the Republic and the mother country. Even the present age, which might have been thought inimical to this tradition, is far from immune. In 1952, a revised edition of the *Manuel d'histoire nationale* by Arthur Herchen appeared in Luxembourg, with a preface making out an a priori case for a kind of continuous national identity from the age of the cave-dwellers to the present day. In 2004, a book by Roberts Colls was published in England entitled *Identity of England*. According to the publisher it examines how the English state identifies an English nation which, from the outset, refused to be the mere creature of state and king. These two books show the lengths to which this brand of history is prepared to go, serving up a potpourri of legend and panegyric, myth and fable, and forgetting the most basic requirements of objectivity. But criticism of national history now has another, possibly more telling weapon - the accusation of a narrowness that prevents its revealing key causal factors which, today even more than in the past, operate in areas of life that transcend national boundaries. The proponents of national history are branded as *metaphysical historians*²³, not to be confused with "true" historians; moreover, they stand accused of artificially limiting the scope of their analysis instead of investigating what Toynbee calls *intelligible fields of study* likely to lead to plausible and verifiable interpretations.

There are therefore no serious grounds for refusing to abandon the artifice of national frameworks and becoming more open to the wider horizons of Europe and the world. Revision of syllabuses to this end would be fully justified, and has in fact begun in several countries according to a range of models. In England, for example, a wide choice of "units" is offered, frequently combining national with European and world topics. So this approach does not totally eliminate national history, whose role as a provider of points of reference is not about to disappear, especially as in some people's eyes it remains crucial in the present-day world. Linking it with the European framework should in fact give it a better footing by encouraging exploration of aspects neglected until now. If it is to become more credible, national history should in fact turn away from politics and investigate more social, economic and cultural phenomena that will make it easier to grasp notions such as national feeling and national awareness, which hitherto have all too often lacked serious definition.

²³ Marcel Detienne, *Comment être autochtone, du pur Athénien au Français raciné*, Le Seuil, Paris, 2003.

It is therefore possible and necessary to combine attention to the national context and attention to the European context, and this is what the 2001 recommendation reiterates, mentioning at the outset that respect for national identities is among the aims to be assigned to history teaching. However, it would seem that the two approaches cannot be identical. One is primarily concerned with safeguarding a well-known or well-imagined inheritance while the other is necessarily concerned with a project that is still to take concrete shape in many respects. This is one more reason to combine them without confusing them. It is also why the idea put forward by some people of incorporating the European dimension into syllabuses via a history of Europe hardly seems appropriate. If this history were to replace national history entirely, the model would surely be regarded as unacceptable by most countries. If it were a sizeable addition to the syllabus it would be accused of overloading it even more. But the main danger is that this history of Europe would be presented according to a chronological, proprietorial model which would be no better than the highly traditional national history that invites the most criticism. At a time when national history almost has to be reinvented in order to free it from myth, care must be taken that its former aberrations do not contaminate the history of Europe. That is why all the Council of Europe documents stress the need to keep to the most significant events in this history, that is to say, to quote the 2001 recommendation, those *with the most obvious European dimension*²⁴.

3.2 Renewing learning methods

The preference for segmented study of European history explains the attention given to renewal of the learning methods used in history teaching. No school syllabus can aim to be exhaustive, and this is even clearer with regard to the history of Europe, which has to be fitted into limited curricular space or treated from particular angles because of national or local tradition. The topics selected therefore need to be exploited to best advantage in order to derive the greatest possible benefit from them in terms of familiarisation with the aims and outcomes of historical knowledge. This is the point of view adopted in *Teaching history in the 20th century*, and most of the methods which it suggests are applicable to other periods.

From this wider perspective, three aspects of methodology merit teachers' attention. The first two are the key concepts and key skills that pupils must acquire in order to appreciate the appropriateness and relevance of the topics on which it has been decided to focus. Secondly, they should be introduced to plurality of viewpoints or, to put it another way, the multi-perspectivity that is essential if the most basic rules of historical analysis worthy of the name are to prevail, and for the results to encourage dialogue rather than confrontation.

The key concepts are *broad general ideas* which are basic to historical enquiry. These are continuity and change, chronology and reporting. They also include the possible causal links between events, and the use of evidence and first-hand accounts as the basis for causality and interpretation. This will give an insight into the work of the historian and the procedures which the historian uses.

The key skills are multifaceted abilities to choose a subject for historical enquiry and investigate it using methods that will bring reliable results. This means being able to organise the research on well-established lines so as to identify and evaluate the available sources of information. It also means being aware of one's own point of view, linking it with other information already assembled, and contrasting it with viewpoints that agree or disagree with

²⁴ Appendix, § 3.

it. In addition it means being able finally to work out causal links between the events studied and to present conclusions orally and in writing.

At this final stage a plural vision of events should prevail, encapsulating the ethical dimension of historical enquiry. This recognises the fact that there is never one single definitive interpretation of a series of events, and it is this recognition which makes it possible for historical knowledge to make a crucial contribution to the development of dialogue and mutual understanding both between teachers and pupils, and among pupils themselves. This should lead pupils naturally to develop critical minds, independent objective judgment and curiosity. A feeling for research should also be encouraged so that all the information available is used to best advantage, from archives to the new information and communication technologies. This is necessary to guard against subversion and manipulation of history, of which racism, xenophobia and nationalism are the most poisonous examples. This approach will also give considerable space to comparison, which is in fact inevitably encouraged by the application of key concepts and key skills, although this is an aspect of historical enquiry that is too often neglected.

There is thus a whole range of considerations testifying to the desire for a thoroughgoing renewal of history teaching, whatever the content prescribed in the syllabus. Robert Stradling illustrates this well when he writes: *This type of approach presupposes... that priority will be given to active rather than passive learning, learning through enquiry and discovery, the creation of conditions permitting learning in small autonomous groups, "magistral" courses that are open to debate, and... pupils' access to a whole variety of different sources*²⁵.

This gives us a whole range of proposals for renewing history teaching, accompanied by suggestions on implementation. Besides the teaching guidelines provided in the publication by Robert Stradling, teachers have a number of other initiatives available. *Pocket teaching guides* have been produced on the history of women, population movements, the Holocaust and nationalism. Other material deals with the sources available for study of the 20th century, giving considerable attention to film, audio-visual material and the new information and communication technologies. In-service training for teachers should also be mentioned. A number of short courses on the European dimension in history teaching have been held, and have taken up the topics just referred to. It should be emphasised that these are specifically concerned with the 20th century, but they have a general relevance to teaching history and to introducing the European dimension into it.

This is the Council of Europe scheme. But the difficulty we have seen with the project on the European dimension in history teaching again raises its head: the European dimension may seem to be everywhere and nowhere given that what is being suggested is a virtually total redesign of history teaching so that it looks at the history of the 20th century from a European dimension, whereas it is nearly everywhere implied that the methodology is applicable to any period of history, whether or not incorporating the European dimension.

Nonetheless, one cannot fail to be struck by the match between the essential requirements for pupils' analysis of events and the values initially identified as the basis for the European dimension. Thus, on *the ability to be aware of one's own standpoint, assumptions and prejudices*²⁶ depends *a willingness to coexist harmoniously and to accept the compromises*

²⁵ Op. cit., p. 106.

²⁶ See *Teaching history in the 20th century*, p.

*that will make it possible to reconcile different interests*²⁷. And the interpretative caution implicit in the various aspects of the plural vision of events echoes *the defence of freedom, pluralist democracy, human rights and justice* which is another of the basic values of the European dimension. There is thus clearly an intrinsic relationship between the proposed reorientation of history teaching and the European dimension, and instead of seeing this everywhere and nowhere, it should be accepted that it is everywhere. The essential role attributed to historical knowledge in the formation of European awareness is verifiable in that any examination of a particular juncture, period or series of events in any of the histories that have unfolded in Europe is an opportunity to highlight aspects of it with a European perspective.

To take this further, since the described approach leads to the highlighting of similarities and differences, it involves making comparisons, and it may be thought that this is another area where the new history and the Council of Europe's European project meet. Comparative history has for too long remained in an embryonic state because the comparisons to which it should have led seemed to come up against too many disparities for it to be feasible. Comparing wars and revolutions, internal policy or cultural policy only seemed possible at the cost of schematic simplification which risked obscuring a good proportion of what was distinctive about the things compared. But it may be argued that the European context in general, and especially the European projects after the second world war, have helped to overcome these reservations. Europe is primarily perceived in terms of its diversity, and to live that diversity it quickly became indispensable to identify similarities, as when detailed comparisons of education and training systems reveal identical or very similar concerns despite greatly contrasting administrative and teaching arrangements. The exchanges of all sorts that are still growing in number today throughout Europe are very often comparisons experienced locally or at first hand before being extended more widely. Comparison is part and parcel of Europe: our glances inevitably meet on account of a proximity which is a constant invitation to penetrate the mystery surrounding our neighbours. This is probably what makes it possible to distinguish between a European dimension and an international dimension, the former leading to an actual relationship between partners who can have quite easy and frequent contact because of their spatial and human proximity, and the latter involving partners much further apart from each other both physically and ethically.

Perhaps the European dimension, which refers principally to values that are not exclusively European, has no need explicitly to invoke Europe in order to define itself and perform its role. It could be introduced into history teaching without being identified as such simply by reference to the values which it implies. This would amount to arguing that there is a formal European dimension that is reduced to an idea devoid of very precise content, and a real, operational European dimension consisting in a mode of conduct that exemplifies the values it claims to represent. Europe would then only be a will-o'-the-wisp if we looked for it where it did not exist, and it would not be rendered non-existent by our having to find it where it was least visible. This is somewhat akin to the quarrel of the universals, in which the Middle Ages argued over which words were devoid of meaning and which had precise meaning. Some people believe they can get round these difficulties by picturing that Europeans as invested with doubt and therefore able to live with such perplexities. This would also be a way of rejecting certainties that were too cut and dried and might lead to violence, in line with one of the ideals of the European dimension, which somehow or other has to show itself without mentioning its name in history teaching and many other spheres.

²⁷ *European dimension in history teaching*, p. 22.

3.3 The European dimension and innovation in teaching

It is not only in history teaching that the European dimension goes hand in hand with innovative teaching. *The European dimension in secondary education* conclusively demonstrates this, being largely devoted to the pedagogical innovation which the topic requires both in teaching itself and in the other activities that complement it.

In history teaching, the use of widely varying sources means practising interdisciplinarity in order to ensure that they are used to best advantage, and a knowledge of the literature of the relevant period, for example, which will make it possible to understand better the reactions of certain first-hand observers or the content of certain writings. An attempt to adopt a European perspective in any subject area will assuredly involve interdisciplinary activities. No geography on a European scale can do without the history that in large part explains the layout of borders. No interpretation of a work of art can disregard the potential contribution of literature and history, especially if these give all the prominence desirable to social, economic and cultural matters. Such interdisciplinarity is of course encouraged by introducing the European dimension, which necessarily involves both broadening the educational perspective and taking into account specific values, contextualising items of knowledge instead of leaving them isolated and disconnected²⁸. The same could be said of the materials and activities designed with the European dimension in mind. The *teaching dossiers* are designed to be *versatile and usable across the secondary curriculum rather than only in certain subjects*²⁹. And the primary obligation of school and out-of-school projects is to *focus on a thematic approach*³⁰ - that is, to adopt an interdisciplinary perspective.

It must also be remembered how the Council of Europe has promoted innovation in many other fields of teaching. This is particularly the case in modern languages, where the European dimension has brought far-reaching innovations. First the emphasis was put on linguistic and cultural communication, which had often been neglected, being regarded as too ambitious or of dubious effectiveness. Language teaching methods then gave rise to reorientations which have become emblematic of modernity and a new effectiveness. Another sector in which the European dimension has been a factor for innovation is civic education, which henceforth should almost be renamed *education for democratic citizenship*, to borrow the title of the project of the same name. This was devoted to very original thinking about whatever might help to give young people, like other citizens, ideas, values, attitudes and behaviours equipping them to lead lives in present-day societies that showed concern for *social cohesion, mutual understanding, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and solidarity*³¹.

There is therefore little doubt that introducing the European dimension into teaching is linked to thorough-going pedagogical innovation, the desirability of which has long been stressed in all Council of Europe discussions if education systems are to overcome their many difficulties and provide young people with the tools they urgently need. It is probable that this pedagogical aspect of the European dimension is valued by teachers and others as distinguishing it from mere political advocacy, and makes it primarily a tool for an innovative vision of education.

²⁸ See *The European dimension in secondary teaching*, p. 25.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.42.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.65.

³¹ Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec (2002) 12, § 2.

IV. ATTEMPTED CONCLUSION: THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION AS THE WAY IN WHICH EUROPEANS VIEW THEMSELVES AND OTHERS

After this tour of the many initiatives that have been taken to justify introducing the European dimension and give it substance, no more than a tentative conclusion or conclusions may reasonably be offered, given that the questions raised at the outset were so vast and complex and have become yet more so.

The question which has constantly cropped up and has not received any very clear answer is whether the European dimension is specifically European. Putting it like this is undoubtedly provocative, but it may perhaps obviate a certain amount of equivocation and evasion. Some authors have set about defining what is specifically European by comparing it with *global education* in the United States of America or Unesco's *international education*. They argue that *emphasising democracy, pluralism and interculturalism* has produced a *concept specific to Europe, with direct repercussions on education policy*³². It can hardly be denied that an approach of this kind did not have the same impact when employed at the end of the last century as it does today with the end of the Cold War and rapid globalisation. With the permeability of national borders, economies and cultures, there is a risk that Europeanness has become harder to define and above all more relative. It has become very difficult not to think of Europe as sharing at least formally the values of democracy, pluralism and interculturalism with other regions of the world. It might be better to admit as much and not to claim a monopoly which is awkward and can easily be challenged. This probably means that Europe will enter a period of doubt. This is the view of the group of French history and geography inspectors referred to earlier, who concluded, having found that little space was devoted to Europe in their subjects, that the proactivism that has been paramount for some time should be abandoned and that we should *restore to the idea of Europe its essentially questioning nature: a European is someone who doubts rather than dogmatises*. This might place us in the even more paradoxical and uncomfortable position of being faced with a European dimension divorced from Europe, with Europe not just ill-defined but indefinable. And little progress would be made by appealing to values which by their nature invite debate and conflict and generally offer few ways out – as was once seen during the argument between real democracy and formal democracy, a debate which can resurface at any time. It would seem nonetheless that the only possible option is to keep to a Europe of values, even though reference to values only conveys relative distinctiveness and it will be a continual struggle to maintain that position and achieve really tangible results from it. In other words, we are back with Europe viewed as a project, and everything Sisyphean that this implies, but at least we shall be fairly clear about the tasks ahead. But with this clarity may come the maturity to see Europe neither as a utopia nor as an unappealing option. The feeling of having to deal with a European dimension without Europe would then be less negative and less immobilising than might be thought. It would not mean missing the target of a non-existent Europe. It would mean not having to pursue and constantly defend something mistakenly deemed possible. The European dimension would still be an irreplaceable means of finding out about Europe, though not in the way envisaged at the outset. Instead of highlighting some essential characteristic of Europe, this approach would provide a whole range of frequently contradictory aspects, among which everyone would find bricks to add to an unfinished and unfinishable building, which might nonetheless be more habitable and friendlier than other similar edifices.

³² *The European dimension in secondary education*, p.63.

In this lengthy collective adventure, more attention will no doubt need to be given than hitherto to interpersonal relations, which have been glimpsed through the aspects that seem attributable to the concept of a European dimension. In each of these aspects, images of ourselves and others appear to present themselves. Partner, interlocutor and neighbour are some of the roles that have come up in discussion. It is obviously worth investigating the contexts in which such images take shape, and all the impressions they contain concerning the people involved in those contexts. This would allow us to look deeper into some of the ways of handling the European dimension and its introduction into teaching. It is obvious in particular that introducing it would entail far-reaching changes to how pupils see themselves and see the Other, and it would be very helpful to identify these perceptions more accurately. There would also be an opportunity to evaluate once again the chances of shedding light on specifically European features. As already stated, these questions of self-image and the image of the Other may be of particular significance in Europe because it combines diversity with proximity. The diversity is that of cultures and very different histories that have created gaps between nations and regions, and have boxed them in. But the immediate or even relative proximity in one and the same continent has encouraged dialogue and comparison. Elsewhere, despite considerable distances, there is little geographical, cultural or ethnic difference and it may be that the need to affirm one's own image and form a precise image of other groups is less strongly felt. At all events it does not seem possible to dissociate concern with the image of others from concern with how we see the European dimension. The Council of Europe's following up the *European dimension in history teaching* project with another entitled *The image of the Other in history teaching* makes that clear.

This more psychosociological approach would enrich the one to which the European dimension has so far given rise, and would allow the Council of Europe to continue to suggest equally crucial innovations in the field of history teaching in order to give young people the intellectual and ethical resources necessary for their personal development and their participation in the European project. All these factors should come together so that the guidelines in the various recommendations on the teaching of history are put into effect and that the activities conducted in the wake of them achieve the results intended.

