



DGIV/EDU/HISTDIM (2007) 06

Strasbourg, 17 July 2007

Project

"The Image of the Other in History Teaching"

Symposium on

"Learning history to understand and experience cultural diversity today"

Strasbourg, 29 and 30 October 2007

Palais de l'Europe, Room 9

Information document

prepared by the Secretariat

I. Introduction and objectives of this document

The symposium on "Learning history to understand and experience cultural diversity today" will take place in Strasbourg 29 and 30 October 2007. This document sets out the general policy context in which the symposium is being held and the background to the project "The Image of the Other in History Teaching".

It also sets out the stages in the preparation of the symposium, the themes chosen for the discussions, the objectives pursued, the profiles of the participants and a preliminary draft agenda.

II. Context

At their Third Summit, in Warsaw in May 2005, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states expressed the desire "systematically [to] encourage intercultural and inter-faith dialogue, based on universal human rights, as a means of promoting awareness, understanding, reconciliation and tolerance, as well as preventing conflicts and ensuring integration and the cohesion of society". In addition, they asserted their conviction "that dialogue between cultures [was] also fostered by accurate understanding of history" and expressed support for the Council of Europe's work on history teaching and its projects in this field.

In October 2005 the Conference of Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs held in Faro, Portugal, to mark the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention adopted the so-called Faro Declaration.

They reaffirmed "[their] vision based on the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, democracy and the rule of law" and rejected "the idea of a clash of civilisations" in the firm belief that, "on the contrary, increased commitment to cultural cooperation – in the broad sense of the term – and intercultural dialogue [would] benefit peace and international stability in the long term, including with respect to the threat of terrorism", stating that they would "work towards a true and open dialogue among cultures on the basis of mutual understanding and respect".

In particular, they wanted:

- "[to enhance] all opportunities for the training of educators in the fields of education for democratic citizenship, human rights, history, intercultural education;
- [to support] the Council of Europe's work on history teaching."

More recently, at the 22nd session of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in Istanbul in April 2007, the Ministers assigned the following objectives to the Council of Europe's work in the field of history teaching:

- promoting history teaching and learning tailored to the increasingly multicultural nature of European societies as part of the new project "The image of the other in history teaching" through educational policy measures and proposals for strategies and methods;
- contributing to the reconciliation of, respect for, understanding of and mutual trust between different cultures and conceptions by promoting the principles of tolerance, openness to others, human rights and democracy in the context of globalisation and history teaching in conflict and post-conflict situations;
- drawing up proposals for general guidelines for the development of history teaching in both school and out-of-school education, with a view to including these in the general work on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and providing governments as well as other partners concerned with proposals for strategies, methods and/or instruments for translating these general guidelines into specific measures.

Lastly, it will be remembered that, in adopting Recommendation (2001) 15 on history teaching in twenty-first century Europe, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe put forward specific recommendations concerning objectives, content, methods and the training of history teachers.

The recommendation stresses in particular that the prime objective of history teaching is to help to produce citizens capable of thinking for themselves in a democratic, multicultural society, who have critical analysis and research capabilities and are able to take part in dialogue with an open attitude not only to cultural diversity but also to the various views and conceptions of history.

III. The project "The Image of the Other in History Teaching"

A detailed description of the project is to be found in document DGIV/EDU/HISTDIM (2006) 06, which is appended to the seminar file.

The project has three objectives:

- To draw up proposals for general guidelines on history teaching policies in the context of intercultural dialogue;
- To propose strategies, methods and instruments enabling these general guidelines to be translated into practice;
- To make proposals for the training not only of history teachers but also of other parties involved in history learning.

In order to tackle the range of issues connected with history learning in contexts that are becoming increasingly diversified in cultural, social and religious terms, three main avenues of work have been identified:

- multiple images, shared destinies, learning about history in a multicultural society;
- images of others and ourselves in the context of globalisation;

- the image of the other in conflict situations: learning different histories as a means of rebuilding trust.

Three European conferences will be held in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively in order to take stock of work and studies on each of these three themes.

The first symposium, entitled "Learning history to understand and experience cultural diversity today", will take place in Strasbourg 29 and 30 October 2007.

IV. The symposium on "Learning history to understand and experience cultural diversity today"

The October symposium is the first of three to be organised in connection with the project. Given the complexity of the subject, it was prepared at two seminars, in October 2006 and June 2007 respectively. The first concerned "The image of the Muslim world in history learning in Europe" (see report, reference DGIV/EDU/HISTDIM (2007)01) and the second, "Teaching and learning the diversity of histories and history of diversity" (see report, reference DGIV/EDU/HISTDIM (2007)05).

a) Objectives of the symposium

In keeping with the general policy guidelines referred to above, the objectives of the symposium will be:

- to adopt a Declaration on global strategies for learning history in a multicultural society;
- to identify and clarify key concepts;
- to identify teaching methods and materials needed for the training of all stakeholders;
- to collect a first set of examples of good practice.

b) Theme and sub-themes of the symposium

The general theme of the symposium, "Learning history to understand and experience cultural diversity today", was chosen in order to highlight the importance of teaching history in all its complexity in the context of a multicultural society, not only to promote history teaching as such but also to show how history teaching can help to forge harmonious relations today among cultures present on the same territory and contribute to their mutual enrichment.

History teaching thus helps, in the light of specific situations and histories, to instil and constantly enhance and renew a determination to live together in a society receptive to these differences but also to the world around it.

In the light of the discussions at the two preparatory seminars, four sub-themes were chosen for more detailed debate:

i) History and cultural diversity? Definitions, ambiguities and connotations

Intercultural dialogue in general and, more particularly, in connection with history teaching presupposes that a number of conditions are met. One prerequisite is the establishment of common references and the development of a language that is clear and properly understood by all. It is therefore important to produce clear definitions of the concepts used, for example cultural identity, memory, historical heritage, interdependence of cultures, intercultural dynamics and mutual influences, and civilisations.

In addition, it is necessary to be aware that these concepts may be perceived differently in different cultural contexts and may harbour ambiguities and have connotations which are often unconscious and which must be clarified if dialogue is to be genuine and fruitful.

ii) Teaching and/or learning history?

In the comments it made when the project on "The Image of the Other in History Teaching" was launched, the Steering Committee for Education particularly stressed the need to take account, while focusing on history teaching at school, of the broader context contributing to history learning in present-day societies.

The preparatory seminars highlighted the key role played here by the media, museums, cultural measures, publishing, out-of-school and non-formal activities and the various initiatives by local authorities.

iii) Synergies and strategies at local level

Quite apart from the general discussions on history education in the context of multicultural societies, it became quite clear at the preparatory seminars that strategies

and methods always needed to be adapted to the actual situation on the ground, as it was common knowledge that situations could vary immensely.

Local history of diversity and recent developments in cultural diversity were always related to a particular context. It therefore seemed necessary to devote some of the discussions at the symposium to the conditions for devising and implementing strategies for learning history in the broad sense, on the basis of tangible partnerships involving all the individuals and bodies concerned in the various local contexts.

iv) Awareness-raising and training for all those involved in history teaching

It has to be admitted that history teaching in multicultural societies presupposes significant changes in history teaching traditions that have grown up, particularly within education systems, whether in the form of curricula and syllabuses, teaching methods or the use of sources.

Training not only for history teachers but for all those with whom they may have occasion to co-operate directly or indirectly is a key issue.

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Talks will be given, examples presented and in-depth discussions held on these four themes, either in plenary session or in working groups.

c) Symposium participants

It is important that the symposium should be attended by representatives of all the authorities and other parties contributing to history learning outside the actual classroom. For this reason, invitations will be extended to:

- Decision-makers in charge of history teaching in national Education Ministries;
- Trainers of history teachers and of other relevant professionals;
- Those in charge of teaching-resource centres;
- Representatives of radio, television and the press;
- Museums;
- Publishers;
- Bodies involved in cultural action and local authorities active in the field;
- Representatives of youth movements and students' and pupils' associations;
- Representatives of non-governmental organisations concerned by the subject of the symposium;
- Specialist historians;
- Experts and those responsible for actions that are examples of good practice;
- Representatives of Council of Europe partner international organisations;
- Representatives of other Council of Europe bodies concerned by history teaching: the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, etc.

d) Draft programme

Monday 29 October

9.30 am Official opening

- Secretary General of the Council of Europe or his representative
- Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, etc
- Statement by the Director-General of ALECSO
- Representatives of other international organisations

Keynote speeches

- General introduction to the general theme of the symposium
- A personal account of a multicultural life (diversity of origins, memories and histories)

Plenary session on the theme 1 "History and cultural diversity? Definitions, ambiguities and connotations"

- Statements by experts on the prerequisites for dialogue concerning history in a multicultural context
- General discussion

2.30 pm Working groups

- Four working groups will be set up on the basis of language proficiency.
- The groups will have the same agenda and discuss the following two themes:
 - . Theme 2: "Teaching and/or learning history?"
 - . Theme 3: "Synergies and strategies at local level".
- The discussions will be spread over Monday afternoon and the first part of Tuesday morning.
- They will be introduced by means of short presentations of particularly worthwhile examples, each example being described in a document two to three pages long.
- A short plenary session will take place on Monday before the closure of the seminar, to carry out a preliminary review of the situation.

6 pm End of the first day

Tuesday 30 October

- 9.30 am Continuation of group work
- Round table in plenary session with the rapporteurs immediately after the end of the group work
- 11 am Plenary session on theme 4 " Awareness-raising and training for all those involved in history teaching
- Statements by two or three trainers of teachers, journalists, persons presiding over events, etc
- General discussion
- 2.30 pm Presentation of the general report and discussion
- Adoption of a Final Declaration
- 5 pm End of the symposium

V. Organisation

Secretarial services will be provided by the History Teaching Division, and more particularly by:

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