

Beyond the nation, Trans-national textbooks

Joke van der Leeuw Roord, Executive Director- EUROCLIO

Introduction

EUROCLIO, the European History Educators Association, decided in spring 2007 to acclaim the initiative of the European Union's presidency, Germany, to launch a common European history book for secondary school education.¹ This was a radical change with its traditional policy, where it always recoiled from the idea of a common text or resource book on the history of Europe, as history educators throughout Europe feared that it would create a watered down official European narrative as result.²

The EUROCLIO members were already in 1993, the year of its foundation, aware of the fact that, generally, history education in Europe was neither supporting a common European awareness nor a common European identity: history education had in most European countries in 1993 an unmistakable centric or nationalistic approach. Even with topics such as the Potsdam Conference of 1945, the focus of the third International EUROCLIO Annual Training Conference in 1995 has demonstrated that the national focus was overwhelming.³

The policy of the organisation was, therefore, to create a more open international focus in school history education, without favouring any sort of European canon of knowledge. European history educators were interested in charters of good practice for European school history, as they were issued by the Council of Europe and the EUStory project of the Koerber Foundation in Germany.⁴ However, this approach did not result in more international focus and the teaching of common European historical experiences. On the contrary: recurrent questions in the EUROCLIO questionnaires indicate that since 2000 the political focus in Europe on national history is increasing in Europe and that the interest to enhance a European dimension is subsequently decreasing.⁵ In 2007 teaching national history features high on the political agendas in many European countries.⁶

¹ About the organization: www.euroclio.eu (read 13.11.2007).

² See: http://www.euroclio.eu/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=122&Itemid=26 (read 13.11.2007).

³ Joke van der Leeuw: Altered States and Consciousness, examining Potsdam, in: TES, April 7, 1995 (V-VI).

⁴ Such a charter is formulated in the Council of Europe 2001: Recommendation on the Learning and Teaching of History, which has been subscribed by the Council of Ministers and disseminated to all member states of the Council recommendation on history education: http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_cooperation/education/history_teaching/History_in_the_20th_century/index.asp#TopOfPage. The EUSTORY charter can be found at http://www.koerber-stiftung.de/internationale_verstaendigung/eustory/on/pdf/eustory_charter.pdf (both read 13.11.2007).

⁵ About the results of the 2003-2006 questionnaires please look at http://www.euroclio.eu/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=5&id=57&Itemid=9A (read 13.11.2007) and Joke van der Leeuw-Roord (ed.): History Changes. Facts and Figures about History Education in Europe since 1989. The Hague 2004. Chapter 3: 19-20.

⁶ See for example for the developments in England and the Netherlands: Kees Ribbens: A Narrative that Encompass Our History: Historical history and History Teaching 63-76. In: Beyond the Canon, History for the Twenty-first Century. Rotterdam 2007. Maria Grever/Siep Stuurman (ed.).

The leadership of the organisation understood that only with clear political support for a project, which would trigger a greater European focus on school history education, real change in approach could be achieved.⁷ Therefore EUROCLIO decided to change its attitude and acclaim the idea of a European tool for history education in spring 2007.

With this contribution, I would like to sketch out what has been done over the last decade regarding the development of supranational school history textbooks/resource books/media in Europe. I would like to focus into the recently published Common French/German school history textbook book *L'Histoire/Geschichte* and examine if this, or the recently in Macedonia published *Retelling, the History*, is a possible model to follow for a European wide publication..

Common work on school history textbooks in Europe.

In the early nineteen nineties, there was a massive drive among the political elites, scholars, and practitioners in East and West to change practice in school history.⁸ The focus of the European Union (restricted) educational policy after the Maastricht Treaty was to enhance the European dimension in (history) education, together with the need to innovate history education in order to make it a meaningful subject for young people in the Twenty First Century. Parallel with this development the Council of Europe brought in 1991, for the first time, history educators together from Europe, from East to West, to discuss the role of the teaching of history in Post-Cold-War-Europe.

These parallel developments stimulated international cooperation on school history curriculum development, history textbook writing, and history teacher training. This cooperation can be divided in four different levels. The first level is textbook research, which is carried out by several agencies such as the Georg Eckert Institute for International based in Brunswick, Germany, the Centre for Democracy of Reconciliation in South Eastern Europe (CDRSEE), based in Thessalonica, Greece.⁹ Individual Universities and study centres also offer studies about history textbooks.¹⁰ The Georg Eckert Institute has carried out textbook research on a world wide level.¹¹

⁷ Perhaps not representative but significant: in the summer of 2007, 90% of the respondents answered affirmative on the website question "EUROCLIO should publish a text- and source book on European History as a supplement to school books ". The respondents were EUROCLIO members.

⁸ Joke van der Leeuw-Roord (ed): History Changes: facts and figures about history education in Europ since 1989. The Hague 2004. Chapter 3: 17-18.

⁹ Georg Eckert Institute: www.gei.de; European Educational Publisher Group: www.eepg.org; Centre of Reconciliation: <http://www.see-jhp.org/aboutus.html>; These websites give abundant information about the work of the organisations (all read 13.11.2007).

¹⁰ Falk Pingel: UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision. Via: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1121703274255/1439264-1126807073059/unesco_WB_meeting_Mar03.pdf. Such guidelines are also formulated in the Council of Europe 2001: Recommendation on the Learning and Teaching of History, which has been subscribed by the Council of Ministers and disseminated to all member states of the Council recommendation on history education: http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/education/history_teaching/History_in_the_20th_century/index.asp#TopOfPage.

The Koerber Foundation in Germany has created the EUSTORY network of institutions organizing historical essay competitions for young people. www.eustory.de (read 13.11.2007). The EUSTORY charter can be found at http://www.koerber-stiftung.de/internationale_verstaendigung/eustory/on/pdf/eustory_charter.pdf (both read 13.11.2007).The Koerber Foundation in Germany has created the EUSTORY network of institutions organizing historical essay competitions for young people. www.eustory.de (read 13.11.2007). EUROCLIO also has developed its principles specified in the EUROCLIO method.

The Centre of Reconciliation has, since its beginning in the late nineteen nineties focused its research especially on the role of history and school history on the Balkans.

The second level of international cooperation regarding history educations are guidelines for good practice. Several agencies have offered guiding principles such as UNESCO, The Council of Europe, the EUStory Network and EUROCLIO.¹² The third level is the work on textbook revision committees, operating between countries with sensitive common history and generally carried out by teams of specialists looking for biased references and mistakes.¹³ This work on history education had started long before the developments of the early nineteen nineties and for Europe has been the special field of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research. Two important Committees which have been working on the long path to international understanding are the 1951 *Franco-German Agreement on Controversial Issues in European History* and the 1975 *Recommendations for History and Geography Textbooks in the Federal Republic of Germany and the People's Republic of Poland*. The latter generated a long and sometimes embittered controversy.¹⁴ The implementation of their recommendations was left at the discretion of authors and publishing houses.

Supra-national publications

The real challenge in common work on school history is to develop supra-national school textbooks, resource books, or media for teachers and students. Here we can find a variety of players. The Council of Europe always rejected the ideas of a common European textbook however has been interested in regional textbooks. Historians and history educators together have produced two regional history textbooks. The first one was published in 1999, under the title *the History of the Baltic Countries* and describes the history of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.¹⁵ The book is well designed and offers accessible historical information for a wide audience both within the three countries as well as outside them, as the books were made available in the local languages Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian as well as in German and English. A second common regional Council of Europe publication is *The Black Sea, A history of Interactions* in 2004.¹⁶ This very attractive looking book addresses a chronological history of the Black Sea

¹¹ They have published a wide variety of publications amongst others Falk Pingel: *The European home: representations of 20th-century Europe in history textbooks*. Strasbourg 2000. A comparison of Europe in schoolbooks.

¹² Most of their research is related to the situation of Balkan textbooks. Christina Koulouri (ed.): *Clio in the Balkans. The Politics of History Education*. Thessaloniki 2002. Maria N. Todorova (ed.): *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*. London 2004. Christina Koulouri (ed.): *Teaching the History of South-eastern Europe*. Thessaloniki 2001. Bahir Şahin, Cem Ertür (ed.): *Improvement of Balkan Textbooks, project reports*. probably 2002, no dating.

¹³ See for further assessment and guidance: *International Cooperation in Textbook Evaluation*. In: *The Braunschweig Institute Kent Pillsbury Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Feb., 1966) S. 48-52; . For an overview of UNESCO's role in the revision and review of Textbooks and learning materials: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001171/117188e.pdf> (both read 13.11.2007).

¹⁴ The Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research based in Brunswick has been, since its constitution 1975, in honor of the work of the historian Georg Eckert from Braunschweig, who put, inspired by UNESCO's awareness of the detrimental role of textbooks in shaping views of the enemy, a major effort to contribute to reconciliation and peace education. Via de website:

<http://www.gei.de/index.php?id=59&L=1> information about the Franco-German Textbook can be found. The German-Polish Textbook Commission is dealt with on <http://www.gei.de/index.php?id=57&L=1> (both read 13.11.2007). For more information about history teaching on the Balkan: Wolfgang Hoepken (ed.): *Oil on Fire? Textbooks, Ethnic Stereotypes in South-Eastern Europe*. Hannover 1996.

¹⁵ Zigmantas Kiaupa (ed.): *The History of the Baltic Countries*. Talinn 1999.

¹⁶ Dr Zofia H. Archibald: *The Black Sea, A history of Interactions*. Norway 2004.

countries Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. Unfortunately this book is only made available in English. A very daring project is a common publication within the Tbilisi Initiative of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia and Turkey on the history of the Caucasus. Although several meetings have been organised and papers are submitted, the book is in the end of 2007 still in the making.¹⁷

The Centre for Democracy of Reconciliation in South Eastern Europe (CDRSEE) has developed in 2005 four regional History workbooks: *The Ottoman Empire*, *Nations and States in Southeast Europe*, *The Balkan Wars* and *The Second World War* (All Thessaloniki 2005) covering sources from the history from all Balkan countries.¹⁸ The editors were a group of regional academic historians, who asked assistance of regional history educators. They have come forward with resource books with a wide variety of sources, and activities which address the targeted issues on a Balkan wide scale. The books were initially published in English, but the target is to make them available in each Balkan language.¹⁹

Also EUROCLIO has embarked on international textbook projects, urging participants to look for supra-national communalities and differences. The first regional project took place from 1998 to 2000 and brought together Estonia and Latvia under the title *New Ways to The Past*. The project produced a common Teacher Resource Book under the same title, which addresses two different topics: *Democratic and Authoritarian States in Europe between 1920 and 1940* and *Effects of the Soviet regime on society in the Baltic States 1945-1991*.²⁰ This book is available in Estonian, Latvian, and Russian.

A second regional common textbook project took place in the Balkan region. This project brought experts together from 2000-2003 from Albania, Bulgaria, and Macedonia; its result was the book *Change and Continuity in Everyday Life in Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia 1945-2000*.²¹ This publication is made available in Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and English.

In 2003, EUROCLIO embarked on an ambitious and sensitive project to write a common text/resource book for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. This project has produced *Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Country, Every Day Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia* in 2007, with a series of 20 active lessons related to the history of Yugoslavia between 1945 and 1990.²² The book posed serious questions about the language of its publication. After long deliberations the project team decided to use the national Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian

¹⁷ The Tbilisi Initiative is the name given to the preparation and publication of a joint Caucasian history textbook by teams of authors from the region.

¹⁸ <http://www.cdsee.org/jhp/editors.html> (read 13.11.2007). Halil Berktaş and Bogdan Murgescu (ed): *The Ottoman Empire*. Mirela-Luminita Murgescu (ed): *Nations and States in Southeast Europe*. Valery Kolev and Christina Koulouri (ed): *The Balkan Wars*. Krešimir Erdelja (ed): *The Second World War*. All Thessaloniki 2005. The Center has published a variety of publications on and for history education in South Eastern Europe.

¹⁹ The books can be downloaded since November 1, 2007, in English, Serbian and Greek from <http://www.cdsee.org/jhp/index.html> (read 13.11.2007). The Croatian translation has been published in November 2007.

²⁰ *New Ways to the Past: Search, Versions, Approaches*. 2000. Teacher resource book, published in Estonian, Latvian, and Russian.

²¹ *Change and Continuity in Everyday Life in Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia 1945-2000*. 2003. Teacher resource book, published in Albanian, Bulgarian, English, and Macedonian. Also CD-ROM publication.

²² *Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Country, Every Day Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia 1945-1990*. Regional teacher resource book in preparation, Publication in the end of 2007.

languages.²³ In 2006 EUROCLIO acquired a project to develop inter-ethnic teaching materials in Macedonia. This resulted in 2007 in the publication *Retelling the History*, about the short Macedonian Independence with four exemplar lessons on *Political system; Transition; Interethnic Relations* and *Everyday Life*. a publication in Albanian, Macedonian and English.²⁴

These are all examples of regional resources, a Europe-wide textbook has been rare. There is only attempt developed in 1992, when the European dimension euphoria was at his height. The banker Ferdinand Delouche published a uniform (school) textbook on European history: *The History of Europe*, in English *the Illustrated History of Europe* written by twelve historians, representing twelve European Union countries.²⁵ There book has been translated in many European languages.

In 2006, the German publishing house Klett and the French Publisher Nathan published a common French/German school history textbook *Histoire/Geschichte, Europa und die Welt seit 1945*, Europe and the World since 1945. This book is the first in a series of 3 textbooks, targeting on the last three years of Secondary history education in France and Germany. The second volume on the history from 1815 to 1945 is to be expected in 2008, and probably a year later the last volume on addressing the prehistoric times to 1815 will appear. The publication claims to cover the centralised French history curriculum, as well as the variety of 16 current German Gymnasium curricula, and is therefore applicable for history in all upper secondary schools in both countries. The book is actively promoted by German and French politicians, diplomats and publishing houses, and although it appeared too late on the market in 2006 to be implemented in the school year 2006-2007, in April 2007 30.000 German and French copies were sold.

In the introduction of the authors group it becomes clear that the publication has even higher ambitions than to be used on a nation wide scale in France and Germany: according to them, it could also be considered as a foundation stone for a future common European school history textbook.²⁶ The authors also claim that the book should clarify the assertions of the historical profession to students: to explain the present in relation to the past in order to be able -in best knowledge and conscience – to look into the future. This book, presented as a possible example for a common European history book, deserves therefore in the scope of this article to have a serious evaluation.

The publication is a result of a combined German/ French youth Parliament meeting in 2003, which asked for a shared history textbook for both countries, in order to widen the common historical understanding. As a result, the Minister of Education in France and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Germany decided to stimulate the production of such a textbook.²⁷ In order to maximise the implementation range, they stipulated that the publication should appear as a series of genuine school history textbooks for upper secondary education, instead of the traditional approach to produce additional resources. Although the book clearly was a political initiative, the initiators declared that it should not be a political publication, but a real school history text book, written by historians and published without political intervention.²⁸ A commercial tender was therefore issued addressing publishing houses with already existing French/German twinning

²³ The books in PDF format and other materials will also be made available on www.CLIOHIP.com (not yet online on 13.11.2007).

²⁴ *Retelling the History*

²⁵ Frederic Delouche (ed.). *Histoire de l'Éurope*. 1992.

²⁶ See *Histoire/Geschichte* (footnote 30). S 6.

²⁷ As in Germany education is allocated to the governments of the 16 separate Lander (countries), it was the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in stead of the Federal Ministry of Culture that took the initiative.

²⁸ Lecture of Jean Pierre Dubois-Montfort, a French diplomat, involved in the production of the book during the policy meeting in Brussels on 3 May 2007.

partners. The partner publishers Nathan/Klett won the tender in January 2005 and created separate national authors teams, with writers, which were already part of the publishing house school history networks. The total production of the book took altogether less than two years. The publication is in full colour and comprises more than 300 pages, plus a CD for the French market. The chief editors are Guillaume le Quintrec and Peter Geiss, the rest of the team consisted of historians and history educators.²⁹ The different authors are individually responsible for specific chapters. The authors have never been together as a team: neither to discuss the proceedings, nor to examine the final manuscript. The writing procedures began in March 2005, the first drafts were ready in January 2006, and in April 2006 the book was ready for publishing. It came on the market in June 2006.

The book consists of 18 chapters. Thirteen chapters are dedicated to general themes such as *Memories to the Second World War, the East-West Conflict, The World Population – Changes in Life Style and Living Conditions* and the *Global Cultural Changes since 1945*. Four chapters directly focus on individual and common comparative developments in both countries. These 17 content related chapters are split into sub-chapters subdivided in maps, dossiers, orientations and topics. The topics are put forward by means of key questions such as *with which Problems was France Confronted in the end of World War II or in what Way Differ the Western and Socialist Economic Systems?* One chapter is devoted to methods of working in the history classroom addressing issues such as how to analyse statistics and cartoons, how to interpret a text or how to write an essay. The book also includes 49 biographies of - mainly political- world leaders.

Quick scanning through the book leaves the impression of a visual attractive, modern history textbook addressing a wide variety of possible themes. All of which can be considered important for the understanding of the developments in the world after 1945: decolonisation, reform of the welfare state, demographic developments or sport. The topics are tackled through an explanatory and connecting author's text as well as through a manifold of written and pictorial sources. This book seems on first sight to offer all what modern history education asks for: a global and a multiperspective approach with a special focus on the (common) German and French experiences and perspectives complimented by engaging questions and suggestions about methodology.

- Offering multiperspectivity and multiple narratives
- Showing historical complexity
- Inclusive
- Addressing controversy and sensitivity
- Giving a variety of dimensions
- Emphasizing on methodology and pedagogy
- Developing among students curiosity, a spirit of inquiry and the ability to think independently
- Using impartial/neutral language
- Result of team work

Comparing

This resulted in 2007 in the publication *Retelling the History*, about the short Macedonian Independence

²⁹ The authors were Ludwig Bernlochner, Lars Boessenberg, Michaela Braun, Claus Gigle, Daniel Henri, Enrique Leon, Mathieu Lepetit and Bededicté Troucheboeuf.

But does this book keep its promises? A closer look into the publication brings about doubts about the first positive impressions. The authors text is extremely heavy going and at the same time superficial and each sup-topic is in general covered by only two pages. On these two pages the authors' text has to compete with a variety of sources and questions. This results in very dense type pages, using a small letter fond and a small margin to fit everything in. I found it, as a passionate reader, hard to keep concentrated for a few pages and wonder how a young generation, known as not too keen on reading, would cope with it.

The questions are generally asking the students understanding of the text and sources. Some questions are amazingly long: *What will a student answer on the question: which consequences have the processes of urbanisation and the formation of big metropolises for the inhabitants of the cities? Examine in how far the definition of Ulrich Beck about individualisation depicts a well chosen analyses of the modern urban community.* Others are short, but also demand big answers like: *Is it possible to speak about a European democracy?* Both answers have (only) to be based on the two pages allocated to the related topics *Urbanisation and Individualisation- on the Way to a New Society and the Democracy in Europe.*

Such approach might consequently lead to superficial copying of the information from the sometimes rather disconnected author's text and the sources. The *dossier* on the women's movements in France and Germany offers a short introduction, which in 6 sentences is remarkably able to suggest that the women movement was built on the traditions of the French and 1848/49 revolutions and that the right of self-determination regarding abortion lead to polarisation as it leads to ethnical questions.³⁰ The sources contain a map with the dates of the introduction of voting rights for men and women throughout Europe; a chart comparing the steps to improve the legal position of women in Germany and France; a speech of Simone Veil about the legislation of abortion in France; a photo of a Dutch demonstration in favour of the pill in front of the Embassy of the Vatican in the Hague and statistics comparing the rate of employment participation of men and women in countries such as Italy, Sweden, USA, and both countries involved. All these issues are without doubt related to the gender issues but go far beyond the title of the chapter the Feminist (women) movement in France and Germany. The elements are not well connected either and do not enlighten the student about the relation between the two mentioned revolutions and the developments after 1945. But perhaps the relation through the concepts of equal rights and self-determination is considered obvious by the authors for all French and German students. And finally, the dossier shows the growing legal opportunities for women but offers no support in creating an emphatic understanding of past and present gender challenges among the students.

This lack of gender perspectives in the book becomes also painfully clear in the section biographies of important persons since 1945: only two women feature in this part, Angela Merkel and Margaret Thatcher.³¹ The French authors were not able to come forward with one female compatriot from this period. In fact, the entire book is very male dominant: my coarse estimation is that more than 80% of the visual representations pictures male persons, women hardly feature. Anne Frank and Simone Veil are individualised, but most women are unknown and are represented as mothers serving the family ideal, as women behind Stalin, as Communists

³⁰ See Histoire/Geschichte (footnote 30). S 210-211.

³¹ See Histoire/Geschichte (footnote 30). S 326 and 328.

demonstrating against Vietnam, and as victims. In short: women since 1945 suffer, are mothers, and at their maximum demonstrate. They do not play any substantial or powerful role.³²

In several presentations of the book, the multiperspective approach of the book was praised.³³ The speakers claim that the book offers a variety of standpoints and perspectives within one chapter. In some chapters we get a glimpse of this approach such as on the cold war as a war on ideology, or about the European idea. However the chapters rarely offer a real confrontation of different ideas and opinions. On the contrary: almost all texts are serious official political statements, reports, political speeches and newspaper articles. The authors use very few ego documents or specimens of oral history. Also the great ambition of the makers, trying to fit in all requirements of the 16 German Gymnasium programmes as well as the French Examination programme, sometimes interferes with this important target of multiperspectivity. An evaluation of the roles and consequences of the French and the German resistance during the Second World War is not possible as the topic resistance is not treated in the same school year in both countries. The French Resistance is addressed in the third volume, for Germany we have to wait for Part 2.³⁴

My assessment of the existing attempts of common textbook productions so far already revealed a variety of problems. However, the gained experience can also be considered as positive as they can serve as learning for the future. Prospective ventures can build on the existing materials, knowledge, and experience. Moreover: the common French/German history textbook production is very important as it is the first example of a clear political common action based on the awareness that school history has a role to play for the project Europe.

EUROCLIO believes that the fate of students in the European nation states is tied to larger European and global currents that must be gasped historically. It is important that students are able to understand these currents and the effects on the world they live in. History and citizenship education seem to be one of the first educational environments to learn about Europe, but a recent Dutch research has demonstrated that the construction of meaning regarding Europe, largely seems to emerge independently of history education.³⁵ It came out that the amount of European history in Dutch history classes is often limited, and dealt with in an implicit and indirect manner. The study concluded that if students are not offered enough information and knowledge about Europe, they will not realise that Europe concerns their personal lives. Other recent Dutch research shows that most students consider European history neither interesting, nor important.³⁶ And as said before also the EUROCLIO Questionnaires, targeting on its international audience, show similar trends since 2000.

³² Geertje Mak gives a subtle argument of the poverty in curriculum development when gender perspectives are reduced to the appearance of women when they are emancipated. Geertje Mak: Gender in and beyond the canon. In: Beyond the Canon, History for the Twenty-first Century. Rotterdam 2007. Maria Grever/Siep Stuurman (ed.). S 128-142.

³³ I participated in the presentations in Bern, Switzerland on 17 March 2007 during the First Swiss Historians Days and in Brussels, Belgium on 3 May 2007.

³⁴ See Histoire/Geschichte (footnote 30). S 22-23.

³⁵ Suzanne de Visser, Is Europe History? History education and students' construction of meaning regarding Europe. Master Thesis History of Society. Rotterdam 2007. Published on: http://www.euroclio.eu/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=19&id=82&Itemid=104 (read 13.11.2007).

³⁶ Maria Grever and Kees Ribbens: Nationale identiteit en meervoudig verleden. Amsterdam 2007.

Therefore, EUROCLIO has recently started a campaign to raise awareness among European Union politicians and donors for a possible Common European tool for school history.³⁷ As in 2007 the choice for a textbook would be rather outdated, EUROCLIO concentrates on the creation of a flexible and interactive multimedia tool on key themes in Europe's recent past, addressing multiperspectivity and inter- and intra-state diversity for innovative European school history, geography and citizenship education. Moreover: such a tool gives not only admission to the obvious target groups of history, geography and citizenship educators, students, and teenage students, but it also lends equal access to an interested general public.

Possible themes and issues can comprise differentiation within European political and parliamentary systems, constitutions, voting rights, human rights, active citizenship and political involvement, emancipation, migration, integration, heritage, life style, religious diversity, and science and technology. Each topic could offer information and resources from a local to a global perspective, and at the same time it can give specific insights for individual European countries. The topics might also contain a collection of key dates, key individuals, and key regions with explanation, a collection or international selection of appropriate documents and written and visual resources on the internet, reference lists of international articles and textbooks and learning and assessment materials. Already existing materials, among others developed in earlier mentioned projects, could work as the threshold for the website. And also a present projects, such as the Europaeum/EUROCLIO project *Connecting Europe through History* could be a further resource the website.³⁸

We have formulated a set of requirements for this project idea under the working title *utopia*. The site does not intend to serve as a compulsory European Canon, fulfilling every curriculum requirement of each European Union member states, or of the even larger audience of the Council of Europe member states and replacing all existing national textbooks. Neither has the initiating group a chronological approach in mind covering European history from Eve till the European Union. What is aimed at is a *framework of windows* for educational purposes in class rooms, museums, and heritage settings. So might common historical knowledge about Europe be constructed, without losing a plurality of perspectives and inter- and intra-state diversity.

Such a project means a long term commitment and both international, as well as national, team work and cooperation. Before it starts, a critical (European) mass is required to decide for the first selection of appropriate themes. My suggestion would be to start with the 20th century topics, as school history in Europe generally claims to help students to understand the world they live in, and the research of Youth and History in 1995 demonstrated that students have the most interest for this period.³⁹ Bob Stradling has already suggested some interesting overarching European/world history themes in his book *Teaching 20th-century European History*.⁴⁰

³⁷ The EUROCLIO Press release about this project, dated 2nd of March 2007, can be found via http://www.euroclio.eu/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=5&id=15&Itemid=26 (read 13.11.2007).

³⁸ Information about this project can be found via <http://www.connectinghistory.eu/> (read 13.11.2007). The theme for 2007 is Human rights in Europe? Tolerance, Democracy, Citizenship, Critical thinking and Multiperspectivity as European Values.

³⁹ Magne Angvik/Bodo von Borries Ed: A comparative European Survey on Historical Consciousness and Political Attitudes among Adolescents. Hamburg 1997. S 67/68 and 72/74.

⁴⁰ R. Stradling: *Teaching 20th-century European History*. Strasbourg 2001. S 22.

However such a tool has to be widely disseminated and implemented and can only succeed when it is connected to a life long learning strategy. Therefore a large scale national and international training for educators has to be organised as part of the project.

It is obvious that this project is deemed to meet with many problems and obstacles however, to paraphrase Professor Dr. Peer Vries: “Better to be visionary and fail, than be unimaginative and die”.⁴¹ At present, we address several audiences to promote the idea and to receive feedback about the appeal of the project. In general the plan is well received by its prospect users, and people show readiness to participate. If we will be able to succeed in our efforts to receive enough financial support to get it started, time will learn.⁴²

Joke van der Leeuw Roord, Executive Director- EUROCLIO.

⁴¹ Said during the seminar: Does history evolve?, June 9 2007, in Leiden, the Netherlands. It was organised by Jonathan Even-Zohar and Steven Stegers, who are also EUROCLIO staff members.

⁴² In a personal e-mail of 12 November, the Director of Erfgoed Nederland has informed me that the Dutch Ministry of Education will give a grant to organize a project stakeholders conference. The working title Utopia is replaced by an official project name: *Past, the Future of Europe*.