

# UNCOVERING DIVERSITY IN HISTORY

## TOLERANCE BUILDING THROUGH HISTORY EDUCATION IN GEORGIA

### HOW TO TEACH HISTORY AND CITIZENSHIP IN A MULTICULTURAL AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT?

2008 – 2011

EUROCLIO Programme – *History for Change*

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*SPECIAL  
REPORT*

სოციალური უტოლანობის  
განადგობის  
საქართველოში



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Blandine Smilansky

## PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### HOW DID WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS?

#### Improve the quality of history education in Georgia in line with the national educational reform policy

A group of **35 authors and editors** with diverse geographical, ethnic, religious, professional and generational backgrounds developed the teaching tool *How We Lived Together in the 20th Century in Georgia*. The book is a collection of **29 modules** offering innovative sources and teaching ideas for the classroom on topics related to **Everyday and Family Life, Religion, Migration and Multicultural Life** in Georgia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This complementary teaching resource is targeted at students from **9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade**. The modules were piloted in **24 schools** across the country and reviewed by an expert on textbook research from the **Georg Eckert Institute** in Braunschweig, Germany. **2000 copies** were disseminated in schools, universities and libraries to be widely accessible to history educators. The book comes along with a 150-page **teachers' guide** indicating for each module the compliance with the national curriculum.

#### A reinforced independent national network of history educators in Georgia

**321 Georgian history educators** were involved in project activities, most of them on a regular basis. **9 national training seminars and workshops** took place in five different regions in Georgia, in the cities of **Akhalsikhe, Chakvi, Gudauri, Telavi and Tbilisi**. Moreover, more than **20 trainings** were organised **on a local level**. The project significantly increased and improved the professional capacity of the individuals involved who became more able and eager to address untouched topics in history, perform innovative methodology and pedagogy, cooperate and share their knowledge with colleagues at the local, national and regional level.

#### Participation of the Georgian educators in the international networks on history education

Participants received capacity building training in the form of interactive workshops, lectures and group works by **14 invited international experts** from **Bosnia, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Latvia, the Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland, Ukraine, UK, and USA**. They represented various fields such as innovative history didactics, pedagogy, intercultural communication, history of the region and textbook development. **24 Georgian history educators** participated in international trainings in **Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and the UK**. Educators participating in activities abroad gave oral and written feedback upon return, thus allowing a wider group to learn from their experiences.

#### A regional network of history professionals interested in good relationships and willing to work together

**19 history educators from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey** participated in project activities as regional observers, benefiting from the trainings, sharing their national experience with Georgian colleagues and establishing bilateral and multilateral relations. As a result, two new History Educators' Associations, the **Public Union of the Azerbaijan Historians** and the **Union of the Armenian History Educators** were created and asked for EUROCLIO membership in 2010. The EUROCLIO project *Shared Cultures – Historical Imprints* gives Georgian history educators new opportunities to collaborate with colleagues from Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as from Ukraine and Moldova.

#### An active and professional History Educators' Association in Georgia, able and willing to take responsibility and ownership

The Georgian Association of History Educators (GAHE) grew **from 30 members in 2008 to almost 300 in 2011**, as a result of the setting up of regional branches and a professionalised membership policy. 8 branches exist in **Adjara, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javareti, Samegrelo, Imereti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti**. The GAHE branch in Ajara opened a **Centre for Methodological Training in History Education** at Batumi State University. In Kakheti and Samkhste-Javareti, **study rooms** for history teachers and their students were created or reactivated in 3 schools. GAHE published two volumes of its magazine on history education, *Istorikosi*, launched its **website**, [www.imsa.ge](http://www.imsa.ge), and developed **partnerships** with other civil society organizations in Georgia.

## Introduction

**History** defines Georgia as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multilingual country. Nowadays, ethnic minorities represent 16% of the population<sup>1</sup>. In this country known for its hospitability and with a widely accepted self-image of a peaceful and friendly nation, why is *Tolerance Building through History Education*, the title of this project, an issue worth addressing?

On the invitation of a group of motivated Georgian history professionals, **EUROCLIO, the European Association of History Educators**, committed to promote responsible and innovative history education through the capacity building of the professional group<sup>2</sup>, decided to work in Georgia and received to do so the support of the **Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. The project started in a difficult period of tension and violent conflict for the country, at the time of the Russo-Georgian confrontation over South-Ossetia during the summer of 2008. The deep determination of both EUROCLIO and its Georgian partners remained strong despite the worries and questions raised. They shared the firm belief that a three year project focusing on the professional development of Georgian history educators was a unique opportunity to innovate history education in Georgia and create opportunities to meet with colleagues beyond their national borders.

The present disputable stability in the area, often related to interpretations of a recent and distant past, creates a challenging environment for history teachers<sup>3</sup>. The project offered them multiple opportunities to widen their perspective and to look at the history and history education in Georgia and in the region from a more distanced point of view. Share, learn and inspire: various strategies were used to equip history educators involved in the project with new ideas, skills and tools to raise awareness on the value of cultural diversity among students through the interactive learning of history. How did this happen, what are the achievements and the remaining challenges? This report presents the results of the project and analyses how they contribute to history education in Georgia nowadays, in terms of educational innovation on one hand, and as a contribution to society on the other hand.



<sup>1</sup> Population by ethnic origin(table), *Statistical Yearbook of Georgia 2010* – National Statistics Office of Georgia; Tbilisi, 2011, pp.15-37 ([www.geostat.ge](http://www.geostat.ge))

<sup>2</sup> Responsible History Education in a Globalizing Society, EUROCLIO policy 2020

<sup>3</sup> EUROCLIO Special Report #3, *Abkhazia-Georgia: Too much History, too much Amnesia*, Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, 2005, [www.euroclio.eu/new/index.php/resources-publications-a-websites/country-reports-mainmenu-403](http://www.euroclio.eu/new/index.php/resources-publications-a-websites/country-reports-mainmenu-403)

## I. A new paradigm

### — Inclusive history education in a multicultural and multi-religious environment —

In 2005, the **Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia** started a major reform of the educational system, which created a momentum for the implementation of change in history education in Georgia. Indeed, one of the main aims of the reform was the standardisation of the social sciences curriculum and textbooks in all schools of the country. As a research on the teaching of history in Georgia made in 2006 by **CIMERA**, a Geneva-based organization specialised in political governance, showed, “(the reform) represents a unique window of opportunity to discuss the inclusion of minorities’ history in mainstream history teaching.”<sup>4</sup> This issue is indeed crucial in the multicultural and multi-religious environment of Georgia, especially as regards history education: on one hand, the ethnocentric approach has long prevailed in Georgian historiography and therefore school history; on the other hand, minority schools in the country, mainly Armenian and Azeri ones, used to receive schoolbooks from Armenia and Azerbaijan until very recently. In the context of the new reform, which aims at bringing more uniformity in the national educational landscape, how can a multi-perspective approach to history be encouraged?

**Nino Chikovani** mentions in her analysis of the post-reform history textbooks<sup>5</sup> in 2008 the steps which have been made to shift away from the ethnocentric approach, among them a “better” and “wider” representation of ethnic minorities. However, as she stresses, the way these minorities are represented reflects “(their existence) rather than their participation in the common history”. This identified challenge to show the role played by non-ethnic Georgians in the history of the country became one of the main concerns for the development of educational materials within the project. The title of the teaching tool *How We Lived Together in Georgia in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* illustrates this fundamental characteristic of the project.

However, this choice was not merely an editorial decision: in order to show how ethnic and religious groups interacted in Georgia in the past, the involvement of representatives of these different groups was vital. From the beginning of the project, history educators from minority regions were invited and educational authorities dealing with minority schools were contacted. Regional branches of the Georgian Association of History Educators were created in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, the two regions where most of the schools of the Armenian and Azeri minorities are located. In April 2010, one national seminar was organised in Akhaltsikhe, a Georgian city where almost 40% of the population is of Armenian background. 26 minority representatives from

#### MINORITY SCHOOLS IN GEORGIA

According to the data of the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science for 2008, there are 2462 schools in Georgia. Alongside Georgian schools, which make up the majority, there are non-Georgian and mixed schools with several languages represented. The number of non-Georgian and mixed schools with non-Georgian language sections is 396. The majority of these schools are in the regions with compact ethnic minorities (Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli).

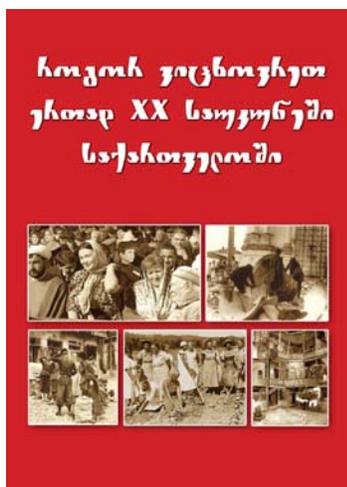
Quoted by Nino Chikovani in “*The Problem of a Common Past in Multiethnic Societies (The Case of Georgian History Textbooks)*”

<sup>4</sup> *History Teaching in Georgia: representation of Minorities in Georgian history textbooks*, Levan Gigineishvili, Ieva Gundare, CIMERA, 2007, [www.cimera.org/en/research/ind\\_research.htm](http://www.cimera.org/en/research/ind_research.htm)

<sup>5</sup> *The Problem of a Common Past in Multiethnic Societies (The Case of Georgian History Textbooks)*, Nino Chikovani, Journal “International Textbook Research” No. 4/ 2008

Armenian and Azeri communities but also Abkhazian, Ossetian, Russian and Ukrainian ones were involved in the project. Four of them acted as authors and two others as editors, thus actively contributing to the collaborative development of educational materials on Georgia's 20<sup>th</sup> century history and bringing in their own experience and diverging perspective on “how we lived together” in this period.

**EUROCLIO**'s approach to history education, which aims mainly to bringing a multidimensional and complex past into being, became more and more familiar to Georgian history educators involved in the project throughout the three years. The participants to the project were invited to put more emphasis in their work on the history of everyday life and on concepts such as migration, gender, mutual inclusiveness, human rights, diversity and environment. One of the project coordinators talked about a more “*human and humanistic*” way to look at history, “*at the level of the people and of what happens among them*”. This reflection was oriented from the beginning of the project towards a concrete outcome: a student-centered teaching tool to be published and disseminated at the end of the three years. As a result, a group of 35 authors and editors produced a collection of twenty-nine modules offering new sources and teaching ideas for the classroom on topics related to Everyday and Family Life, Religion, Migration and Multicultural Life in Georgia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



This complementary resource targeted at students from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade gives evidence of the capacity of the authors and editors to develop practical classroom material. It aims to make history an engaging subject for students by presenting them in a lively way “*why*”, like the introduction to the book says, “*people with different ethnic and religious identities considered themselves part of (the Georgian) society, and what have made them feel marginalized*”. The English abstracts of all twenty-nine modules<sup>6</sup> show the variety and originality of the topics addressed, as acknowledged by **Dr. Robert Maier**, external expert from the **Georg Eckert Institute**<sup>7</sup> invited by **EUROCLIO** to review the publication<sup>8</sup>: “*The authors work sensibly and to great effect with the principle of examples. They take a specific street, a certain village, a particular family, and use these examples to illustrate complex structures and contexts.*”

As it appears in the guide that comes along with the teaching tool, this approach can greatly enrich the broader themes addressed by the national history curriculum. For each module, the guide clearly indicates under which main theme and sub-theme of a given grade does the topic fit. This illustrates very efficiently how a unique and innovative textbook, developed outside the institutional and commercial textbook production system, can be used as a complementary resource for the classroom. In the case of the topics on Religion and Multiethnic Georgia for instance, many interesting links can be made with curriculum requirements for 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, such as the study of “*religion in contemporary world as a source of identity*”, “*inter-religion relations and relations between religion and state*”, or “*Society and Culture in first half of 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Georgia*”.

<sup>6</sup> The English overview of the modules can be downloaded on the EUROCLIO website/Resources/Teaching Materials: <http://www.euroclio.eu/new/index.php/resources-publications-a-websites/educational-material-mainmenu-391>

<sup>7</sup> [www.gei.de](http://www.gei.de)

<sup>8</sup> The pdf of Dr Robert Maier's review can be downloaded from the EUROCLIO website (see link above)



**Dukhobors in Georgia**

*“How did the Dukhobors manage to maintain their identity in 20<sup>th</sup> century Georgia?”*

Seven out of the twenty-nine modules which feature in the teaching tool *How We Lived Together in Georgia in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* focus on a cultural ethnic or religious minority group in Georgia, and most of the others are about intercultural relations between ethnic and non-ethnic Georgians in the recent past. A great interest, but also some surprise, could be noticed among students and teachers when the modules were brought into the classroom during the piloting process. A history educator who participated in the final seminar

where she was trained to use the modules explained: *“Before knowing about this publication I had no clue how to address topics such as “frozen conflicts” in the classroom, but after this seminar, I know what type of lesson can help talk about these sensitive topics.”*

Some students who took part in the piloting process admitted that they discovered with these modules national minority groups whose existence they did not know about. Some individuals and institutions from the wider



**Testing Tolerance during Hardship**

*“ By looking at the Ergneti market (...), the pupil is expected to develop an understanding on how economic relations contributed to maintain mutual understanding among Georgians and Ossetians (...).”*

civil society of Georgia expressed how significant it was for them that their culture and/or religion was mentioned in an educational publication, for instance in the case of the Catholic Church in Georgia. A major difficulty encountered by authors and editors concerns the collection of sources, showing this time negatively how unique was their approach: it proved sometimes very complicated to gather relevant evidence in the form of archival sources, since the topics addressed were very often unexplored and considered too “micro” for official archives.

Authors, editors and other contributors involved in the development of *How We Lived Together in Georgia in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* took up the challenge to present the role ethnic and religious minorities played in the recent national history to secondary and high school students. The history educators involved in the project decided to focus on harmonious manifestations of multicultural life among groups of the population of different backgrounds in order to bring cultural diversity to the history classroom and to encourage tolerant attitudes among young generations of Georgians. The examples are diverse, presented in a vivid way, and most likely to trigger the curiosity and interest of a wide group of students. What about, however, “negative stereotype”, “caricatures”, “enemy images”, what about the “processes of inclusion and exclusion resulting from the construction of identities”?



This question is raised by the external reviewer **Dr. Robert Maier**. While acknowledging that the intention behind the choice of topics is to inspire youngsters with positive examples, Robert Maier stresses the need for “a clearer designation of contradictions and conflict”. It is noticeable, indeed, that the only negative events addressed in the modules where discrimination and violence are involved illustrate arbitrariness and intolerance coming from the state: a mass deportation, a repressed demonstration, or religious persecution.

—— Balancing knowledge, skills and values: towards an active learning of history ——

In its Education Reforms Strategy 2010-2015<sup>9</sup>, the Georgian **Ministry of Education** shows its concern and ambition for the professional quality of the educational staff: “*In order to support strengthening teachers’ capacity and raising their qualification, teachers’ voluntary certification will begin from July 2010. (...) According to the Georgian legislation, all teachers working at schools will be obliged to be certified from 2014.*” This new regulation appeared somewhat threatening and stressful for many history educators involved in the project, because of their lack of experience to deal with such procedures. What this measure points out is at least the need for increased in-service training for school educators. Although not having the legitimacy of a certified training provider in the national system, the project was able to provide some answers and solutions by focusing very strongly on the training of participants. Competence-based teaching and learning was identified at the beginning of the project as a fundamental requirement of the latest educational reform in the country; for each new step in the development of educational material within the project the issue of compliance with the national curriculum was raised. **Tea Karchava**, History Expert at the **National Curriculum and Assessment Centre of the Ministry of Education**, acknowledged during the launch of the project publication that *How we Lived together in Georgia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century* was a contribution to some key objectives of the national educational framework in general and the history curriculum in particular. Developing critical thinking through the analysis of sources is an example of this convergence between the project and the Ministry’s policy.



The final version of the educational materials shows how a common pedagogical framework was used to address the various topics selected, fostering a problem-solving approach to historical issues. History educators involved in the project had to think about how to teach their subject in a way that enhances students’ ability to think critically, to analyse, to question, to interpret, to judge, and to decide. They were helped in this effort by careful monitoring and guidance from the EUROCLIO Executive Director **Joke van der Leeuw-Roord** and the EUROCLIO expert **Rumyana Kusheva**. Participants were introduced at the beginning of

the project to the EU Reference Framework<sup>10</sup> in which key and transversal competences for lifelong learning are outlined, some of them particularly relevant for history education, like learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, or social and civic competences. These elements are merged with the EUROCLIO logical framework for designing a lesson plan, which the authors and editors had to use as a basis to design their teaching materials. The reflection on which competences, meaning content, skills, values and attitudes, can a given history lesson foster in the students, was therefore on-going and addressed in all project activities.

### Structuring a history lesson: using the EUROCLIO operational framework

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Subtopic</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Key question</i>	<i>Skills and attitudes</i>	<i>Teaching approach</i>	<i>Learning outcomes</i>
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<sup>9</sup> General Education Reforms Strategy 2010-2015, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, [www.mes.gov.ge/Ministry/About/Strategy](http://www.mes.gov.ge/Ministry/About/Strategy)

<sup>10</sup> Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, European Reference Framework, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf)

Authors and editors paid specific attention to the design of questions, tasks and activities in relation with the sources when developing their modules. They tried to systematically offer opportunities to engage students in interactive thinking through the observation, comparison and careful interpretation of these sources. Some activities proposed go even further in their interactive dimension and triggered the following comment from the external reviewer **Dr. Robert Maier**: *“I was astonished to find that the authors entrusted the pupils with highly sophisticated tasks, such as to making a film or to creating a website. I hesitated briefly, wondering whether this was really realistic. But I concluded that it is precisely this kind of task that proves the innovative and forward-looking design of this educational material.”* In her research on the outcomes of the piloting process, EUROCLIO trainee from Georgia **Nino Kereselidze** tells about a nice initiative by **Nino Miminoshvili**’s students who piloted the module entitled *Where to Find another Georgia – Emigration in the 1990s*: *“(the topic) turned out to be an appealing and emotional topic for the students especially from the families of the migrant workers. After the lesson the teacher and the students came up with an idea to stage a school performance (which they called) “The Emigrants” (...) During the play, the students spoke out their concerns and tried to show the difficulties that the people close to them face while working abroad.”*

The project participants were supported and stimulated by international experts from the EUROCLIO network in their theoretical reflection and concrete experimentations on how to innovate their teaching practices in a way that makes history an engaging subject for young generations. Each of the nine national training activities was an opportunity for Georgian educators to be trained by practitioners and historians from all over Europe and beyond. A huge interest and even excitement upon discovering how history education works in other countries could be observed in



the project participants whenever in contact with colleagues from abroad. A teacher trainer from Iceland giving a vivid presentation on how students are learning history in her classroom during the national Seminar in Chakvi; a Greek curriculum developer explaining in details what the new school history curriculum she contributed to create in her country entails; and many other contributions triggered a huge number of questions and reactions from Georgian teachers extremely eager to widen their perspective and draw comparisons with their own situation.

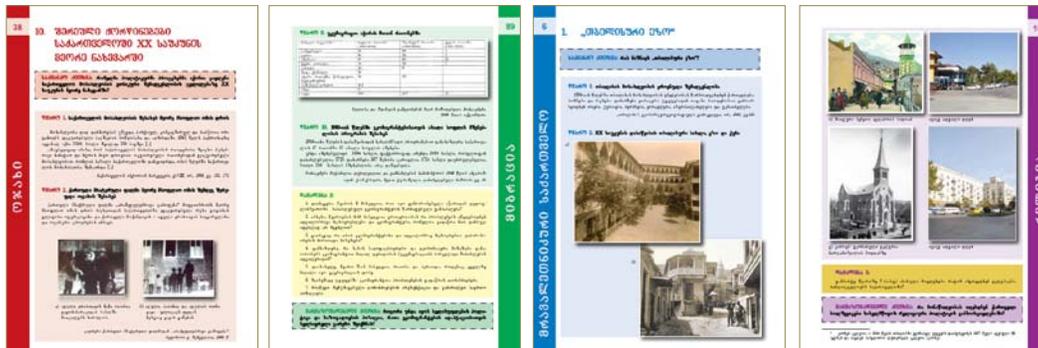
Coupled with the participation of Georgian history educators in international events abroad, these transnational exchanges allowed a growing awareness and eagerness to take into account the regional and international dimension of history (education) to develop. As one participant wrote in his evaluation sheet during the final Seminar, *“We became aware of wider trends and general tendencies in history teaching across Europe and we are thirsty for more learning opportunities coming from other countries in Europe.”* On a similar note, a participant pointed out how *“this project played a role in the integration of our country in Europe through the promotion of European values”*, while another one acknowledged: *“We needed such inputs from colleagues from abroad, their practical experience on innovative teaching.”*

The way this project contributed to enhance the quality of history education in Georgia can be considered groundbreaking despite some clearly identified and acknowledged remaining challenges. The publication *How We Lived Together in Georgia in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* is the tangible outcome of a multifaceted process whose main features are a growing inclusiveness of the Georgian Association of History Educators, a strong sense of ownership and a truly innovative outlook on professional practices for the individuals involved. By focusing on issues related to cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue the project opened up a part of Georgian civil society to global ideas and networks on topics which are debated at the international level in key areas of research and policy analysis. This broader perspective which reinforces the relevance of the project is illustrated for instance by a recommendation of the Council of Europe recently ratified by the Committee of Ministers (hence by the Georgian Ministry of Education) on “intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching”. Among other points, the document states as follows that:

**“(…) In particular, the provision of history textbooks and teaching material generally should be as diverse and pluralistic as possible. History textbooks or teaching aids should:**  
- be a data source in itself, in a framework of multiperspectivity;  
- facilitate access to sources of various origins;  
- stimulate and facilitate debates and queries;  
- be designed by teams closely attuned to cultural diversity and be the subject of careful consultation with authors from different cultural backgrounds.”

*Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching. (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 July 2011 at the 1118<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies), Council of Europe*

Obviously, such approach to history education implies to sometimes touch upon politically sensitive issues. Addressing the national history from multiple perspectives and creating a sense of equality among various ethnic and religious groups is not neutral. It says something about the kind of society we would like to have, it means that history education is seen as a tool to foster intercultural dialogue and peace, or “tolerance” like the title of this project says. The fact that this approach is not value-free does not mean however that it is driven by petty political objectives, like the (very few) critical notes uttered by some officials implied. A powerful argument to justify a pluralistic and open teaching of history is the risk there is to leave controversial topics exclusively to the “realm” of the family or the street, where emotional memory often prevails. A carefully developed thinking and methodology such as what EUROCLIO defined and keeps refining allows on the contrary an approach to history based on intellectual honesty and consideration for the evidence.



## II. A contribution to Georgia's civil society

### GAHE: a professional Association run by Volunteers

Although the **Georgian Association of History Educators (GAHE)** existed for more than ten years already when the project started in 2008, the resources and capacity it brought clearly acted as a formidable “motor”, in the words of one of the local coordinators. The Association went from an average of 30 members in 2008 to around 300 individuals in 2011. The participation in project activities was presented as a first step for educators to join the Association. The coordinators and Association Board made sure however that the members’ involvement would not be restricted to the participation in project activities. This was achieved mainly thanks to the setting up of the eight regional branches of GAHE all around Georgia, in order to enable teachers to feel responsible and take action at the local level, always in liaison with the central office and Board in Tbilisi. The



development of a membership policy at the national level, through the filing of names and contact information of all individuals, was progressively implemented and seen as crucial for the strengthening of the Association by local coordinators. Again, this process was facilitated by the participation in project activities and the dissemination of the project results, which both required establishing comprehensive lists of people to reach out to. The next step which is envisaged is to raise a symbolic fee among members, as a way to reinforce their feeling of ownership of the Association.

A clear challenge for the project was to equip GAHE with relevant tools to be identified by the professional group and the society at large as an entity with a defined identity and vision. Action was taken both on the strategic and on the communication level, and the Association was able by the end of the project to offer concrete outcomes with lasting effects: new statutes encompassing a consistent mission statement, an office for members to meet and work together, a regularly updated website and a magazine on history education, **Istorikosi**, whose first issue, published during the last year of the project, was praised as a unique and essential contribution by many GAHE members.



The project invested in the development of management skills among local coordinators and project participants in order to increase the professionalism of the Association, according to the idea EUROCLIO advocates that individual talents are the main factors of change. The practical organisation of the project activities proved each time a useful learning experience for the local coordinators and their colleagues who assisted. They became progressively more at ease and efficient with anticipating, sharing and fulfilling tasks such as: supervising participation, negotiating with hotels, organising transportation, contributing to designing the programme, preparing all background documents and more of the like. In general, project coordinators, authors, editors and

other contributors learnt how to work in a result-oriented way and to meet deadlines, especially thanks to regular management meetings with EUROCLIO coordinators, always preceded by the drafting of an agenda and followed by the circulation of decisions and tasks. The hiring of a professional manager for one year provided the Association and Board members with increased guidance on management issues, more particularly as regards financial management. Project coordinators, editors and authors became accustomed to work with various computer applications to deliver their work. Project coordinators for instance were asked to use Excel to prepare financial overviews; authors of the educational material used Power Point to present their work to their colleagues. Editors had to work with various digital layout tools to fine-tune the materials.



Participants involved in the development of educational material were regularly invited to present their work in progress to an audience of colleagues and experts, and thus enabled to develop their communication skills. Communication in other languages, thanks to the internal and transnational mobility allowed by the project, was facilitated and improved among project participants. Teachers from minority communities taking part in the project activities improved their skills in Georgian language and created links among themselves as well as with ethnic Georgian colleagues. Russian language proved a useful means of communication with observers from neighbouring countries. All project participants were exposed to English language with the involvement of EUROCLIO coordinators and international experts in the activities. Educators who participated in international events abroad got a unique opportunity to practice their English.

A volunteer professional Association is certainly a huge challenge in a country where teachers' wages are so low<sup>11</sup> that they often have to work extra outside the school to earn sufficient living. The history educators who contributed actively to the management of the Association and/or the development of educational materials within the project were paid according to their level of involvement and quality of the results. But beyond this retribution, many of them started to give time for the Association and the project even when financial compensation was not involved, for instance through the piloting of educational materials under construction with their classroom.

Project participants came to understand how they could use for instance the network built through the project, which represented for many an opportunity to collaborate with professionals they would never meet in their daily work. A school teacher being offered a job by a headmaster while both of them were working as authors in the project; another teacher starting her Phd on minorities history and choosing as a tutor one of the expert involved in the development of educational materials; these are some of the examples showing how participants were able to work a personal benefit out of their contribution to the project.



<sup>11</sup> In 2010 the average monthly teacher salary was between 350 and 400. This amount represents only 60% of the total monthly average wage in the country (*Study on Teacher Education for Primary and Secondary Education in Six Countries of the Eastern Partnership: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Brussels, September 2011)

In parallel, volunteer involvement for the development of the Association became increasingly common practice towards the end of the project, when people started to act independently to find solutions for their professional needs, in a way that looked clearly beyond the timeframe of the project. The opening of the **Centre for Methodological Training in History Education** at **Batumi State University** in June 2011 is certainly an example of an initiative inspired and supported by the project, with at the same time an institutional basis and a long-term vision which allow it to be sustainable.

Major efforts were also put during the project to initiate a structured dialogue between the Association and other sectors of Georgian society, and develop among history educators a sense of responsibility beyond their professional interests. This was achieved by constantly stimulating the Association's Board and members to act and react from a professional standpoint on key developments in institutions, media and civil society at the local and national level. GAHE Board members met with various governmental and non-governmental actors in the field of education throughout the project, establishing themselves as key interlocutors in their field. PR and lobby initiatives were taken together with the members at the local level.

Special attention was given to the relations with the **Ministry of Education** from the very start of the project, with the idea to ensure the widest and deepest possible impact for the results. EUROCLIO and GAHE representatives were able to meet with two of the three Ministers which were in office during the three years of the project. Officials from the Ministry were regularly invited to open project activities, and some answered positively, like for instance **Natia Jokhadze**, Head of the **National Curriculum and Assessment Centre**. Several experts on history education playing an advisory role at the Ministry participated actively in the project. In October 2010 the Association was invited to take part in a round-table organised by the Ministry on Intercultural Dialogue in Education: the contribution of GAHE and EUROCLIO representatives who took part in the event was stressed in the next issue of the Ministry's Magazine for teachers<sup>12</sup>. However, project coordinators did not manage to get the support letter from the Ministry necessary to obtain a follow-up project, and were refused the right to organise the final public event in Tbilisi's most famous public school, despite an on-going support in words from central and local authorities. These developments caused disappointment among the team members, given the fact that they regularly insisted on the similarities of the project objectives and the Ministry's policies on intercultural education.



<sup>12</sup> 'Tolerance in Education Programmes', *Teacher* (in Georgian), issue 6, 2010, I. Kakhurashvili, p. 19-22

———— For a democratic culture and a sense of equality among history educators ————



Collaborative work processes were enhanced and stimulated throughout the project, resulting in fruitful interpersonal exchanges and an increasing cohesion in the team. Inclusive participation in the national trainings and GAHE's active membership policy proved successful strategies to reach out to a wide group of Georgian history educators from all regions, minorities and professional backgrounds in the country. Individuals involved in the project all stressed at some point how special it was for them to work with people they would have otherwise never cooperated with. This was the case, for instance, for a prominent

historian from Tbilisi who developed a module on the Georgian city of Rustavi with a school teacher from Gori region. Or for a school headmaster of Azeri origin from Marneuli who was advised in her work as an author for the project publication by an expert on cultural and ethnic minorities in Georgia.

Several examples of these unique collaborations illustrate the project's success in fostering inclusiveness among history educators, while pointing out to the fact that this could have been even deepened and furthered. Indeed, the idea that they as practitioners would collaborate with academics and textbook writers, and vice-versa, was initially somehow shocking and upsetting for many. On several occasions, the truly multilateral dimension of the project was questioned, because people had difficulty to admit that expertise and quality could be shared, expanded and acquired by collaborating and learning together. More generally, going beyond their group of acquaintances and already established network proved challenging at first for the core team. They also encountered difficulties to find interested and competent individuals in isolated areas in the country, or minority communities in Samstkhe-Javareti and Kvemo-Kartli, traditionally more used to cooperate with Armenia or Azerbaijan than with colleagues of Georgian origin.

Various ways were found to encourage cooperation on an equal-footing within the group of history educators involved in the project. Training activities were based on interactive work sessions including discussion groups, classroom simulations, "world cafés", questions and answers, etc. Attitudes were encouraged among educators with the idea to help them develop an interactive teaching of history in their classroom: listening capacities, respect for each other's opinion, ability to give constructive feedback, ability to come up with a commonly agreed proposal, etc. Like **Prof. Romyana Kusheva**, the Bulgarian expert involved in the project as a chief editor of the teaching tool, observed: *"There were often long discussions on certain titles of modules, selected sources and key questions. During these discussions people sometimes changed their point of view."*





Efforts were made to stimulate the transfer of skills and sharing of responsibilities at all levels in the Georgian association. This implied quite a change in the mindset of the Association founders and more active members, used to function among themselves for years already. But all showed readiness and eagerness to move towards a more democratic governance of the Association, and the transfer of management and communication skills happened progressively during the project.

The Association started to open more widely to a younger generation of history educators, without being afraid that their least experience will have a negative impact, but organizing instead an efficient guidance for these new people who are needed to bring new ideas, networks and competences. This is all the more a challenge that the loss of attractiveness of the profession and consequent ageing of the teachers is an issue in Georgia, like in many other countries. Regional branch leaders were given increased responsibilities towards the end of the project. They were encouraged to organise local activities, to maintain updated lists and overviews of members, to interest university history students to the Association, and to create partnerships with local authorities as well as museum and library coordinators.

History educators with English language skills, often of a younger generation, highly appreciated to participate in international events abroad during the project. They contributed to open up the Association to a transnational network of professionals and gained confidence and experience in presenting their work to new audiences. However, language remains an obstacle to international learning mobility for a majority of the professional group.

The accessibility and the use of computers, especially of the Internet, are still limited among history educators, particularly outside the main towns. This represents an important challenge for the Georgian Association of History Educators trying to reach out to isolated areas and to establish a country-wide communication within the professional community. The GAHE website, launched during the project, is a vital instrument to keep alive the links created during the project, and is highly appreciated by the teachers who have access to it. A team has been set up for the website maintenance: an assistant and volunteer students share the workload with GAHE vice-president, main responsible for the website. More individuals still have to learn how to maintain and update it on a regular basis, so that as a shared responsibility it also enables a wider and deeper outreach.

An interactive activity about the life of a professional volunteer organisation like GAHE showed during the final seminar of the project an overwhelming satisfaction among members about the support they receive from the Association, and allowed them to voice their concerns and suggestions for future actions. The idea that the Association works for history educators' professional development and that they in return work to strengthen the organisation's capacity is rooted in a wider group of people by now, giving a positive sign for the sustainability of teachers' involvement and engagement in GAHE.

———— Cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries: the regional impact ————

At the end of this report, one more aspect needs to be stressed and counted as an outstanding result of these three years of work: the project inspired a common reflection on innovative history teaching and cross-border cooperation among history educators in the region. Invitations and exchanges with colleagues from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey allowed many Georgian participants to unfold the complexity of their regional history, to question their perception of “the other”, the closest geographically being sometimes the less known, to draw comparisons and look for complementarities. The dynamism of the Georgian Association of History Educators boosted by the project inspired enormously the **Public Union of the Azerbaijan Historians** and the **Union of the Armenian History Educators**.

In an interview for the online newspaper **Caucasian Knot** in September 2011<sup>13</sup>, Azeri historian **Rauf Rajabov** gave his overall impression on the involvement of his country in the project: *“It was very important for us to observe the Georgian experience of realizing a large scale and long-term project. We observed the process with great interest. (...) Without saying, based on the experience we obtained from this project, we are going to modernize our ideas and add some Azerbaijani specificity into it.”* Praising the relationship some of the Georgians from Azeri and Armenian background established during the project and their contribution to the teaching tool *How we Lived together in Georgia in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, he explains how it applies to the history of the two countries themselves: *“There is not only the Karabakh conflict and war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Hundreds of years these two nations existed, lived and not only lived but also built families together. Normal relations lasted for many centuries. However, unfortunately, in our history books the good relations between two nations are not mentioned. Only the war issue is mentioned. This is an abnormal fact”*

The project prepared a fertile ground for an increased and widened cooperation among history educators in the region, based on a common motivation to implement innovative and responsible history under EUROCLIO’s guidance. It is in this context that EUROCLIO applied for and obtained a grant from the **European Commission Eastern Partnership Culture Programme** to work on the shared histories of **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine**. This project entitled *Shared Cultures – Historical Imprints*, starting at the end of 2011, will give Georgian history educators the opportunity to share the experience acquired during the project with their neighbours. This new initiative will enable EUROCLIO to bring the recently initiated regional cooperation to another level: Georgian educators will come into contact with many more of their colleagues from the region, and will develop with them transnational educational materials.



<sup>13</sup> <http://georgia.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/192883/> (for an English translation of the article: [www.euroclio.eu](http://www.euroclio.eu) under Our Work/History for Change/Georgia)

## Conclusion

**Amiran Jamiradze**, a history teacher and school director in Tbilisi, said during the final conference of the project in September 2011: *“(at the beginning of the project) We did not know each other very well (...) and we proved in the recent years not to be so tolerant”*. For him, and for many others, the project *Tolerance Building through History Education* made a real difference. School teachers from regions considered remote in Georgia sat around the table and shared ideas with university professors from Tbilisi; non Georgian speaking history teachers working in minority schools contributed to create a textbook on some of the history of Georgia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All participants were asked to engage into an honest and open reflection about the kind of approach to history they wanted to transmit to a young generation of Georgians. This implied for many great efforts to establish a real dialogue across cultural, linguistic, geographical and professional barriers, to question their own teaching practices, to improve their communication skills, and to think creatively and critically.

EUROCLIO can assess the immediate impact of the project thanks to the various feedback collected among participants at different stages of the project. Overall, the opinions of the participants were overwhelmingly positive, to a point that coordinators had to push them sometimes to look with a more critical eye at the results. Participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire at the end of each training seminar, in order to evaluate the success of the activity, its integration in the project development, and its influence on the individual’s professional practice. They had to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 various aspects of the programme, and never gave on average a score lower than 3.5. Interestingly enough, what often came as the lowest, though still quite positive, was the “effectiveness of the discussion groups”, indicating the challenge of a truly interactive and collaborative work. Another questionnaire was designed by the Georgian Association of History Educators for schools which piloted the teaching modules. The 64 questionnaires from piloting schools gave the following results: 95 % of the classrooms estimated the worksheets to 8-9 points from the 10 point scale. Some pointed out however the need for additional contextualisation on these largely new topics for the students, a gap filled thanks to the teachers’ guide. During her traineeship at EUROCLIO, **Nino Kereslidze** managed to collect more in-depth feedback through phone interviews with educators who took part in this piloting process, and heard first-hand stories on how students reacted, as mentioned earlier in this report.

More time will be needed to evaluate the long-term impact of the project at various levels of achievement. It will be useful for EUROCLIO and the Georgian Association of History Educators to observe in the coming years to what extent is the project noticed and referred to among stakeholders, policy makers and the wider audience. Additional resources and increased institutional support at the local level will be needed to sustain the dissemination of results in order to allow a widespread application in professional practices and an adaptation in national educational policies.