

Decisions and Dilemmas – Exploring European Union History through the Lens of Contemporary Issues

Authors Meeting
17-18 September, 2016
Athens, Greece

REPORT



Historiana

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Summary of the Project

Within the EUROCLIO project “*Decisions and Dilemmas: Exploring European Union history through the lens of contemporary issues*”, EUROCLIO and its partners will develop a series of learning resources that are ready to use in history and citizenship classes at secondary school level across Europe.

The focus of these learning resources will be on contemporary issues for the European Union. These issues include: Enlargement; globalisation; foreign relations - particularly with the USA, Russia and China. But also Energy supply; economic imbalance and the north-south divide within the EU; terrorism and border controls in a Schengen world; and the democratic deficit. All issues that are currently troubling the European Union.

The aim is that all these learning resources together, will help students to be aware of the complexity and interdependence of European/international decision-making and diplomatic processes. This will help students to see and understand the complexity of the EU and the dilemmas that policy makers face when they have to take multiple factors and stakeholders into account. All these people have their own perfect outcomes for dilemmas, but there is never one solution that will please all parties involved. This gives the students an understanding of contemporary issues in their historical context and lets them see how issues recur over time and how new challenges (can) result from solving other challenges.

Each of the issues will result in a learning activity based on active learning methods (such as scripted drama, various forms of debate and discussion, and project work) that are best suited to the nature of that particular issue. As a result the project will show various ways in which students can learn about the EU on an active and engaging way.

These learning resources will be developed, tested and implemented by an international group of experienced educators (who are currently teaching citizenship and/or history) with the support of Jean Monnet professors as academic advisors. The involvement of leading academics and school teachers and teacher trainers, will make sure that the learning resources are both academically sound and suited for use in diverse classroom settings

The key project activities are four development meetings and one international training seminar.

About the Meeting

The Authors meeting was the fourth meeting within the project. During this meeting, the authors of the development meeting met in Athens to peer-review the developed learning activities. Team member Kate Smee from the United Kingdom participated online via Facetime.

Participants

The following participants were present at the meeting in Athens, Greece:

Participants:

Development Team:	Bojana Dujković-Blagojević Guido Lessing Ute Ackermann Boeros Kate Smee (online)
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Aims of the Meeting:

- To peer-review the improved version of learning activities resulting from the previous meeting in Bruges, Belgium, 27-29 May, 2016.
- To integrate the feedback given by Historiana learning editor Helen Snelson.
- To develop a vision on how to further peer-review and pilot the materials.

Outputs:

- The learning activities will be given to a non-native English speaker to read it through to identify vocabulary that teachers could give their classes in advance. This would help with reducing the amount of confusion in class, and thus improve the quality of the lessons.
- Plan for piloting of the learning activities.

Executive Summary of the Meeting

The team members met in Athens for the weekend for an intensive work session. They discussed each learning activity, going through the lesson plans step-by-step and discussing the sources in detail.

They decided that during the next and final development meeting, the team will peer-review the final draft activities, including feedback from the piloting phase. There, they will also discuss the preparations for the workshops in San Sebastian for the international training seminar that is integrated in the EUROCLIO Annual Conference in April 2017.



The team at work in Athens

Key Issues

1. Economic Imbalances in Europe.

As discussed in the Meetings in January and May, Guido Lessing develops the learning activity around key issue economic imbalances that focuses on the EU countries and the possible candidate countries that might join the EU in the future. He developed 5 case studies looking into different country cases including accession to the EU and impact of the financial crisis of 2007/8. The case studies include evidence files and personal statements, looking into a person from Portugal, Estonia, Germany, Italy and Luxembourg. Guido received feedback from the team members on the cases and sources used, and the complexity of the statistics used in the activity.

2. Energy Dependency

This key issue focusses on the energy supply of the European Union. Europe is depended on other countries for a large part of its energy supply. Most of these energy supplies come from Russia, the Middle East and other parts of the world in the form of natural gases and oil. European dependency on these forms of energy is massive which also implies it is easy to have tensions arising between countries that are dependent on one another. Kate received feedback from the team members on improving her activity, and the need to further explain some of the methods proposed. This also raised a larger point that all lessons should be proof-read by a non-native English speaker, to see which terms

and methods could use some more explanation, both for the teacher in the teacher’s guide or for students in the form of a vocabulary list.

3. Trade in a Global Context

This key issue is focussing on the EU and Trade in a global context. The activity centres on the key question: “How does European trade effect African chicken farmers?” Ute worked on the starter activity, and source sheets with factual information including an African chicken farmer, a German chicken farmer, a European citizen that wants to live a healthy lifestyle and an EU Commissioner.

Ute received feedback to add another option for the task to write to a local MEP. Although this is common in the United Kingdom, this practise is much less common in some other countries in Europe.

4. Opening Europe’s Borders for People / Schengen.

Bojana Dujković-Blagojević is developing a Learning Activity centred around the question ‘Opening Europe’s Borders for people and border controls in a (post)Schengen world?’. The idea so far is to start the lesson with a video explaining ‘Schengen’. Once the students have an understanding of the concept of Schengen, they are divided in three groups. Each of the groups have different perspectives: (1) ‘Re-establishing of borders’, (2) ‘European politicians – EU has a role in dealing with Migrant crises’ and last (3) ‘the Non-Schengen countries’. Bojana further developed the perspectives, including factual information from interviews and other sources.

The peer-reviewed piloting of the draft learning activities have been very fruitful and helped the team to further improve their activities. When they meet again in November, the learning activities will have been piloted in the classroom with students and final improvements will be made to the materials.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Authors Meeting was a useful opportunity for the team to work together on further improving their materials for a longer period of time. Despite the challenge of online participation of one of the team members, this was a very fruitful exercise to get in-depth feedback on the activities.

The next meeting will be the final development meeting in Budapest in November 2016.

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