

Innovating History Education for All

Fourth Core Team meeting
18-20 August 2017
European Solidarity Centre, Gdansk

REPORT

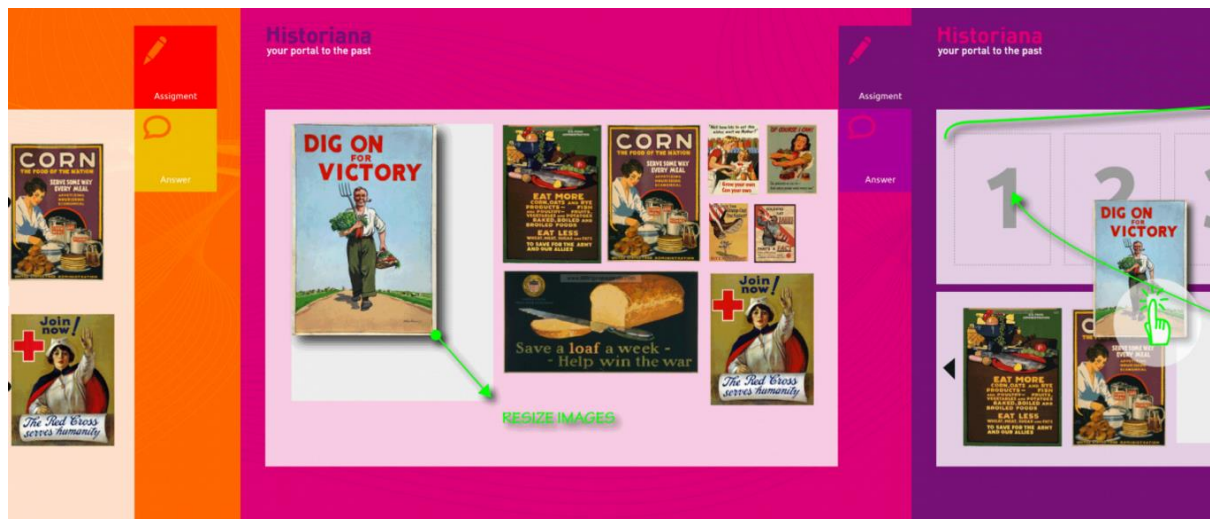


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The team at the European Solidarity Centre

About the project

In the “Innovating History Education for All” (IHEA) project, specialists in history education, researchers and professional web-developers are working together to help educators make use of digital learning tools that help students acquire competences that are specific for history education.¹ The ambition of the project is to find out what history educators really need to make best use of new technologies for the teaching and learning of history. The project works to meet those needs, by developing online learning resources, by providing training opportunities for professional development, and by advocating for policies to support digital learning for history. The project especially targets those educators that are not (yet) confident in the use of ICT, but motivated to learn.

The IHEA project aims to promote high-quality history, heritage, and citizenship education in Europe through the development, testing and implementation of digital learning resources and by researching what is needed in terms of policy and practice. In particular, the project will:

- Enable educators to create their own **online learning activities and tools** specifically designed to promote historical thinking and transversal competences.
- Foster **competence-based approaches** to the subject based on critical thinking and the ability to analyse content in a balanced way, question and compare interpretations, assess evidence and make independent judgments.
- Support a large group of educators to become **more digitally confident**, to act as multipliers with their colleagues, and to transmit their skills to their students.

The project is implemented by a **Consortium** of partners, including Instytut Badan Edukacyjnych (Poland), Georg Eckert Institute (Germany), Mount School York (United Kingdom), Webtic (The Netherlands) and EUROCLIO. In addition there is a **core team** of 5 educators, coordinated by Helen Snelson, who work mainly on the online learning activities, tools and users’ guide. The team consists of Miljenko Hajdarovic (Croatia), Natia Pirskhalava (Georgia), Pascal Tak (The Netherlands), Richard Kennett (United Kingdom) and Súsanna Margrét Gestsdóttir (Iceland).

¹ For more information and a short history of the Historiana project see the Report on the first Core Team Meeting 17-18 February 2015.

Executive summary

The fourth and final Core Team Meeting was held from 17-20 August 2017 at the European Solidarity Centre in Gdansk, Poland. The **participants** were:

- **EUROCLIO:** Judith Geerling (project coordinator), Steven Stegers (project coordinator)
- **Mount School York:** Helen Snelson (core team coordinator)
- **Webtic:** Nique Sanders
- **Core Team Members:** Miljenko Hajdarović (Croatia), Pascal Tak (The Netherlands), Natia Pirtskhvala (Georgia), Ute Ackermann Boeros (Cyprus).

The team was updated on the latest web developments, specifically related to the online learning environment and the eLearning tools. In an active session webdesigner Nique Sanders of Webtic discussed ideas on how the Student and Teacher interaction could work in the future. In another session Steven Stegers presented ideas for a new way of showing historical content on Historiana, moving away from a hierarchical structure to a structure of interrelations, whereby several narratives can be told using existing content. The team also had intensive working sessions to develop eLearning activities with the developed tools and the eActivity builder on Historiana. In addition, the team reflected on their experience within the project and lessons learned for future projects.

The aims for the meeting were:

- To **update** each other about the work that has been done in the last year by the historical content team, the teaching and learning team (core team) and EUROCLIO.
- To **agree** on the sustainability of the work by agreeing on a mid-term strategy for the development of Historiana, including roles of the teaching and learning team and the historical content team.
- To **develop** new teaching and learning resources (eLearning activities and learning activities) and plan the future work of the teaching and learning team.

Update EUROCLIO and Historiana

The meeting started with a presentation by EUROCLIO Programme Director Steven Stegers on the progress that was made for the Historiana website since August 2016, the last time the team met. The main improvement in the context of this project is the availability of two of the online Tools: the Sequencing and Prioritizing tool, the eActivity builder (where you can create your own online learning activity using one or a combination of the tools), and the student view – what students see when they click on a link from their teacher inviting them to do an online learning activity.

EUROCLIO obtained several new projects that are related to Historiana, including a project with Europeana (the online portal that acts as an interface to millions of books, paintings, films, museum objects and archival records that have been digitised throughout Europe) that will result in new source collections and in a functionality whereby educators are able to share an eLearning Activity they developed with other teachers, and a superaccount whereby it is possible to publish eLearning Activities on the Historiana website. Another project *“Learning to Disagree”* will deliver more teaching strategies for the Learning Section, and *“Decisions and Dilemmas 3: Making learning about the EU motivating and meaningful”* will use existing materials from the unit Changing Europe for trainings across Europe after translation of some of the resources into local languages.

The team was also updated about the multiplier events that took place in The Netherlands before the summer. During a series of trainings, several of the core team members acted as trainers at teacher training institutes across the Netherlands for the Historiana eLearning environment and the tools. The teacher trainees provided useful feedback on the need for improvements to the tools, while at the same time expressing their enthusiasm for the potential of the tools for use in their own classes.

Development of Historiana in the future

Session on “Student and Teacher interaction”

Webdesigner Nique Sanders (Webtic) presented to the team how the student and teacher interaction will work in terms of functionality, and showed how this could look visually on the screen.

The idea presented: Students will receive an email with a link to the feedback of their teacher. Upon entering their email address, students will see the comments by the teacher. When doing the exercise, students have filled in the different steps of the activity. Teachers are able to give comments to each step (or only to some of the steps). By using different colours it is indicated to which step(s) feedback is given. The feedback is visible as an extra layer over the activity (like a pop-up).

There are several options

- The feedback to each step is given in a different page (4, 7, 9), and students can click further or back – or they can click through their steps and see the feedback.
- The feedback could also be shown in one page, underneath each other (so 4, 7, 9 in the same page).



In an active session the team provided feedback and suggested improvements and changes to the functionality, and prioritises which of these are essential for the functioning of the tools and the online learning environment.

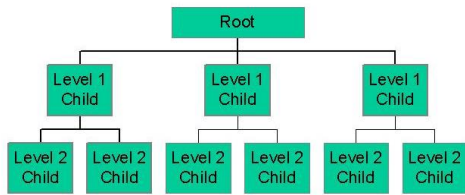
Two main points came out as essential for the feedback interaction:

- Track-changes to the texts that students wrote – **inline comments** – within the text of the students -> write in a different colour (no choice for colours needed, keep it simple).
- Final feedback – **overall comment** on the whole activity.

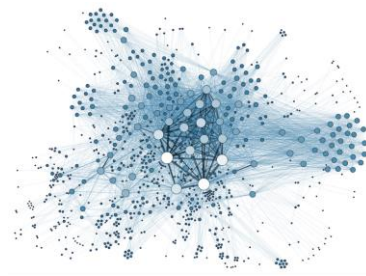
The input provided will be integrated in sketches by the webdesigner, and further discussed in online feedback sessions with the Teaching and Learning team, while EUROCLIO will look for opportunities for funding to make these improvements possible.

Session on “Storytelling” on presenting historical content

In this session Steven Stegers (EUROCLIO) and Nique Sanders (Webtic) presented the ideas on how to improve the way historical content is presented on Historiana. Currently the presentation is very hierarchical, although the website moved to a graph database. This type of database enables showing different interrelations across content.



A hierarchal database model



A graph database model

Some of the added value of using a graph database as opposed to a hierarchical database is that terms that are difficult to understand could be more easily explained (key words), that sources that appear in historical content resources could be selected and used in MyHistoriana, and the ability to use parts of existing historical content resources to make new ones. For instance by using big questions to cut through existing content. Here you could think of a question such as: *In what ways did the railways shape the century between 1850 and 1950?*

It was pointed out by the team that some of the wishes might result in changes to the editing of the materials, which can be quite time-consuming, especially if you need to go back to already existing bulk of material. Therefore it was considered important to indicate how significant changes are. They also had a discussion on whether there should be an option for users to suggest changes or improvements and perhaps even edit materials (here you could think of a Wikipedia-like system).

It was decided that all historical content that is published should contain a timestamp. That way it is evident to users when the resource was made, and that it is possible that some of them are not up-to-date. Another important point raised here was the need for a good version management, whereby it should be clear if a resource is updated or whether there have been historiographical changes. Eventually this could provide a possibility for a teaching exercise on how narratives change over time.

Development of exemplar eLearning activities

During two intensive working sessions the core team worked on the development of exemplar eLearning activities. They worked on the use of single tools, and combinations of the tools. The developed eLearning activities will be features on the Historiana website.

On-site learning: Solidarity museum and Museum 1939



Solidarity museum

The on-site learning programme included a visit to the Solidarity museum. The museum commemorates the revolution of Solidarity and the fall of communism in Europe, but it is also an educational, research and academic centre, an archive, library and multimedia library. With a narration-based approach the museum covers the history of the Solidarity movement in Poland, from its birth to its influence on democracy and peace nowadays. The team was very impressed with the collection and the lay-out and approach of the museum.

Museum of the Second World War

Another visit was paid to the Museum of the Second World War. This somewhat controversial museum covers the period of the Second World War in Poland. Looking at roots and consequences, perpetrators and victims, heroes and ordinary people it has as its mission to learn a lesson from this tragic history. The main exhibition comprise three main narrative blocks: "The Road to War", "The Terror of War" and "The Long Shadow of War". The exhibition presents the Polish experience of the war and places it in a broader European and international context, comparing it to other dictatorships and authoritarian regimes at the time (i.e. colonial Japan and communist Soviet Union). This provided some interesting views, which sparked some good discussions in the group on multiperspectivity, the role of providing sufficient context, and impact of the visit and the educational value.

Reflections on the project

Since this was the final meeting in the project, EUROCLIO coordinators and team members also used this opportunity to reflect on how the project proceeded and how the cooperation went.

Throughout the project it became clear that the timeplanning originally envisioned was not realistic for the wishes. The webdevelopment requirements were much bigger than anticipated and as a result of that, it took much more time than originally thought to deliver on the eLearning Environment and online tools. As a result the team was able to work on the blogs about existing tools and how these could be used for history education (labs.historiana.eu), and learning activities to accompany the developed content on Historiana. However, it also meant delays in the organisation of the trainings, and in the development of the user's guide and exemplar activities.

At the same time the team expressed that the practise of scouting missions, whereby one or two of the team members visit conferences or trainings on didactics and methodologies and where they collect interesting teaching strategies to be used on Historiana was very interesting for them and very useful to populate the Historiana website. The team also expressed the will to continue working on Historiana, serving as a feedback group for the webdevelopment and as trainers for the eLearning environment.

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