

TEACHERS ON TEACHING

HOW PRACTITIONERS SEE THE CURRENT STATE AND
FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN HISTORY EDUCATION ACROSS
THE WESTERN BALKANS



Research report

Published by:

EUROCLIO, Riouwstraat 139, 2585HP The Netherlands
CDRSEE, Krispou 9, Thessaloniki 546 34, Greece



Partners:

History Teachers Association of Montenegro (HIPMONT)
History Teachers Association of Kosovo (SHMHK)
History Teachers Association of Macedonia (ANIM)
Association for Social History of Serbia (UDI)
Albanian History Teachers Association (ALBNA)
History Teachers Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina (EU-ROCLIO HIP BiH)



Cite publication as:

Maric, D., & Jovanovic, R. (2017). *Teachers On Teaching: How Practitioners See The Current State And Future Developments In History Education Across The Western Balkans* (Rep.). Hague, The Netherlands: EUROCLIO.
ISBN number: 978-90-828090-0-8

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Aggregated data collected in this research is available upon request at the EUROCLIO Secretariat

Throughout this publication Kosovo* is attributed an asterisk
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The project is implemented with the financial support of the Austrian Development Cooperation as part of the initiative "NETUCATE - Networked education creating a skills web for participation and sensitivity."

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

This introduction puts forward three key messages which help to provide key context for the research report. It should not be considered as exhaustive of complex topics as education reform, history education and the Western Balkan in the context of European Union.

History Education in the Western Balkan Matters

It is often said that Winston Churchill believed that “the Balkan produces more history than it can consume.”¹ Besides the fact that this quote is incorrectly attributed to him, and that it was originally made by a fictional character, and in reference to Crete, it nevertheless resonates very well with all those involved in the promotion of responsible history education in this region.² There is a visible difficulty for the established public and political cultures to refrain from using historical interpretations and concepts as divisive tools, or worse – using history as a weapon. The seminal 2002 publication of the CDRSEE, *Clio in the Balkans*, acknowledged that history in the

Balkans presented a challenge to preventing conflict in the region. However it also noted that “Despite widespread skepticism as to the feasibility of a shared regional history for the Balkans, there is an increasing number of those whom believe in the expediency of a unified approach to teaching which promotes a common historical consciousness, mutual understanding, tolerance among Balkan peoples and, ultimately, peace.”³

But, what does it actually mean when a society “consumes” history? And if we acknowledge that “dealing with the past”, “facing history”, “overcoming” and so on entail the proper “consumption” of the past, which history should be dealt with, by whom and how?

Going beyond the ethical dimensions of the work of the historian, societies all over the world wrestle with the question of compulsory history education at schools. In most of these “history wars”, there is a political battle between the functions of history education.⁴ Put simply, one finds that on one side of the debate there is the opinion that history must uphold a united sense of national identity through the re-telling of a single national history, which upholds one truth as the legitimate narrative. On the other side there is the viewpoint that history education has the possibility to support the emancipation of minority groups as well as the recognition of a variety of historical narratives and viewpoints.⁵ A prevalent focus on each of these sides is on which stories are told. Therefore, regardless of the position, the battle link directly to specific groups trying to ensure their idea of collective history is respected and validated in greater society.

Detailed knowledge of historical events, names, and places, however is not widely prioritized by the greater society. History, usually presented as a dull one-thing-to-the-next narrative of facts, is in the past. It's done. By-gones. It does not take shape in the present. Normally, this would mean that the act of retelling the history is an equally boring operation. Studying topics such as key historical dates, chronological series of historical events, and leaders of political power are indeed examples of a traditional linear approach to history, and indeed, many historians, for example in the Western Balkan, occupy research positions where they argue, refine and redefine our understanding of specific historical episodes and

¹ "Placing All Bets on Memorials: Memory Mania Goes Balkans." *Balkanist*. August 21, 2017. Accessed November 30, 2017. <http://balkanist.net/placing-all-bets-on-memorials-memory-mania-goes-balkans/>.

² "EU goes back to the future in the Balkans." *Financial Times*. Accessed November 30, 2017. <https://www.ft.com/content/620509da-0968-11e7-ac5a-903b21361b43>.

³ Editorial. "The Guardian view on the Balkans: hold out a hand | Editorial." *The Guardian*. October 03, 2017. Accessed November 30, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/03/the-guardian-view-on-the-balkans-hold-out-a-hand>.

⁴ Keith Brown, *The Past in Question. Modern Macedonia and its Uncertainties of Nation*. (Princeton, 2003), xi-xii.

⁵ Christina Koulouri, *Clio in the Balkans: the politics of history education*. (Thessaloniki: Center for democracy and reconciliation in Southeast Europe, 2002)

⁶ Robert Guyver (ed.), *Teaching History and the Changing Nation State* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)

⁷ Mario Carretero and Angela Bermudez, *Constructing Histories*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

events. The controversy within the maze that is the study of history is usually confined to academia. In short, it could be argued that knowing details of history does not matter. If this is the case, why teach it at all?

A completely different picture emerges when we look at history from issues our societies are wrestling with today. History matters greatly when we listen to public debates about identity, belonging, origins, ownership of lands, claims to cultural traits, heroes, victories, and so on. In addition, history looms largely when groups seek to illustrate injustice suffered at the hands of others. It also features as a constant pillar of international relations, as well as internal affairs. Moreover, political and social leaders also understand the capacity of history to be used as a tool to mobilize the masses. With this aim, monuments are built, streets renamed and a plethora of commemorative events organized. A methodology not only attributable to nationalistic causes, but at times also to cosmopolitan political thinking, where opportunities may arise to promote universal human rights and values.

Yet, we too easily forget that the school history teacher has to somehow prepare young people for wrestling with the many political, cultural, ethnic and ideological interpretations, and (ab)uses of the past. Challenges arise if a teacher must attempt to do so while working for those same political rulers which (ab)use this subject. Many teachers also struggle to access effective tools and resources to deliver democratic history curricula, and furthermore, does society even desire that the teacher does so? As one of the most politicized school subjects, little to nothing is left to the professional community in Western Balkan countries. History curricula as well as textbook production cycles are eagerly controlled, with minimal integration of wider reflections, perspectives or contributions from the broader professional community; which includes teacher trainers, historians, teachers, pedagogues, assessment experts and didactics.

Considering history education that is organized, prepared, and delivered from a multi-perspective and democratic angle may ultimately support the region to not only consume the history produced, but build a larger appetite for it amongst their students, and possibly even an acquired taste. This calls for students to not simply be able to restate the narratives, but to extend their understanding and be equipped to critically interpret the creation of narratives they encounter within history education as well as in their everyday lives.

History Education Can Support Peace and Reconciliation

In 2014, the European Commission issued a specific call for proposals entitled *Reconciliation in the Western Balkans* through the Analysis of the Recent Past, Reporting on Transitional Justice and Advancement of Investigative Journalism, which illustrates an official understanding of the role History Education can play:

The mutual understanding of the recent past is a decisive aspect of the stabilization process and one of the key pillars guaranteeing a secure and better future for the Western Balkans. Dealing with the past, focusing in particular on the period from the post Second World War to the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, is of inestimable significance for the democratization and stability of the region... History education, reporting on transitional justice and investigative journalism offer the adequate methodological tools to analyse different moments of the recent past on a time scale opened toward the future.⁶

Intergovernmental organizations like the Council of Europe, UNESCO, UNICEF and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have also initiated a variety of mandates. The mandates have included, among other priorities, the establishment of moratoria on history textbooks, advocacy for policies for integration of education, coordination of governmental stakeholders toward common standards for history curricula, and support for training and professional development to decision makers and practitioners.

Non-governmental organizations on the local, national, regional and international level have also supported stakeholders in the field. This has involved developing collaborative design of educational resources, providing alternative teaching resources and, like the intergovernmental bodies, providing many opportunities for professional development and training. EUROCLIO - the European Association of History Educators, working together with its member associations in the region, and the Thessaloniki-based CDRSEE have both mobilized academic historians and educators to co-create alternative educational resources. Other organizations, such as Forum ZFD, Centropa and the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, have paved the way for the wider involvement of educators and citizens in developing history for peace and mutual understanding, albeit with a more thematically focused approach to history education (e.g. Holocaust Education, or Mediation)

History education is attributed the specific capacity to bring about peace and mutual understanding. We can

⁶ European Commission, *Reconciliation in the Western Balkans through the Analysis of the Recent Past, Reporting on Transitional Justice and Advancement of Investigative Journalism*. (Brussels: CFP Regional Horizons Programme, 2013)

see three main reasons why those working for post-conflict reconciliation look toward history education.

Firstly, there is recognition that history was used in conflicts to mobilize individuals and to heighten tensions between groups. It can also be seen that instead of supporting post-conflict transition, history teaching can also sustain conflict. The Association of History Educators in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, recently conducted a 12-month study and development project, which concluded that:

History teaching since the bloody breakup in the early 1990s essentially became and stayed part of national (nationalistic) narratives and ideologies. Although there were changes, sometimes intensive changes in official teaching plans and programs and accompanying textbook and other teaching material, as well as occasionally in school manifestations, its homogenizing role was essentially getting stronger as old narratives first indirectly – and lately also directly – included the last war and ‘newly proved differences’ and mutual suffering. In simplified terms it is possible to say that the war was continued by war in histories. Serious facing with the past from the position of a human being and not a member of a collective, or a collective as a whole, has never found its place in history teaching.⁷

This example from Bosnia-Herzegovina resonates well in the Western Balkan region and other post-conflict contexts in calling to “disarm” history education, and develop it in a way that contributes to conflict prevention.⁸

A second reason that history education features high on the agenda of peace-building, is its potential to build shared or mutual understanding of root causes of conflict. One of the key concepts linked to this reasoning is the idea of multiperspectivity.

Multiperspectivity can be described as a way of viewing historical events, personalities, developments, cultures and societies from different perspectives.⁹ Multiperspectivity is fundamental to history as a discipline as it helps

students to understand that there are other possible ways of viewing the world beyond one’s own, which may be equally valid and equally partial. Accepting the existence of different perspectives, and engaging with the evidence and arguments underpinning these viewpoints, is an effective way to help students come to terms with relativity and develop related skills and values.

We have observed over various projects and initiatives that multiperspectivity can be interpreted falsely as the need to firm up and defend ethnic perspective on historical events.

As such, multiperspectivity is not a fixed model for conflict resolution in which all ‘sides’ put forward their perspectives. Rather, it is a sound method of “doing history” which is rigorous and rooted in the academic approach to history. In short, it may not involve the approval of narratives as acceptable perspectives, but rather enabling students to develop historical knowledge through multiperspective analysis.

Finally, history education can also be used as an element of transitional justice in the wake of a conflict. In addition to the work of courts and truth commissions, school history education is considered as a way of upholding certain understandings of the conflict in order to sustain peace. In the case of the conflicts in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal on the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has particularly made efforts to go beyond the courts, and establish special educational outreach activities.¹⁰ The relationship between history education and transitional justice is however not straightforward as the United States of Peace concluded:

History education should be understood as an integral but underutilized part of transitional justice and social reconstruction. It can support or undermine the goals of tribunals, truth commissions and memorials, and other transitional justice mechanisms.¹¹

⁷ EUROCLIO HIP BiH, *Abuse of history... that led to the last war in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A framework for change of paradigm in history teaching in schools in BiH*. (Sarajevo: EUROCLIO HIP BiH 2015), 10

⁸ Sirkka Ahonen, “History Education in Post-Conflict Societies”, *Historical Encounters: A journal of historical consciousness, historical cultures, and history education* 1, no. 1 (2014), 77.

⁹ Dr. Robert Stradling. *Multiperspectivity in history teaching: a guide for teachers*. (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2003).

¹⁰ “United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.” Press | International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. January 31, 2017. Accessed November 29, 2017. <http://www.icty.org/en/press/icty-legacy-dialogues-from-the-tribunal-to-the-classroom>.

¹¹ Elizabeth A. Cole and Judy Barsalou, “Unite or Divide? The Challenges of teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict,” *Special Report 163*, (Washington D.C.: United States Institute for Peace, 2006).

Regional Cooperation on History Education Supports Western Balkan EU Accession

The area politically conceptualized as the “Western Balkans” has seen, in the context of Accession to the European Union, a significant amount of work toward reforms in education.¹² Yet, the bulk of attention has been on higher education, given the fact that the Union’s *acquisition communautaire* does not include provisions on general education.

In some cases, the work done in the context of EU accession has however spilled over from the mandated focus on higher education into more targeted support for reforms on the level of general education. For example, the EU Delegation in Kosovo* has over the period 2011-2016 supported the creation of inclusive, competence-based and learner-centered curricula through the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan which gives special attention to the necessity of multiperspectivity. In Serbia, IPA funds have also included work to develop general education standards toward 2020. OSCE projects on common approval of learning outcome standards and the development of a multi-perspective textbook in conjunction with 2014 seminars for history textbook authors and reviewers in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as a Draft National Strategy for pre-university education in Albania 2014-2020¹³ have contributed to improvement in the quality of the teaching and learning processes through curriculum, institutional and teacher-training reforms with the guiding principles of inclusiveness and active citizenship.

Since these reforms are guided by the European Union, they are undoubtedly developing within similar trends of discourse. We can take the *EU Reference Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (2006) as an important anchor on which the Union has seen its principles expanded by member states within the Open Method of Coordination work. In addition, European benchmarks set for Education and Training (ET2020), despite being *optional*, are clearly visible in the work of the pre-accession field.¹⁴ Whether it is on purpose or not, it can be argued that Western Balkan stakeholders, including policy makers as well as civil society, are modeling reforms on specific trends and features of European guiding documents on education.

For example, looking at the Regional Cooperation Council’s South East Europe 2020 (SEE2020),¹⁵ it is evident that Education and Training are to a high degree seen to contribute to young people’s *employability*. A 2015 research stated,

Recent analyses of education policy discourses in Europe and beyond note the rise of the discourse of ‘employability’ as a new form of regulating the relationship between universities, markets and the state. Education and labor market relationships are also considered to be one of the main aspects of post socialist transition.¹⁶

This indicated a level of connection between policy making on the European and regional level. In a study about education in the Western Balkan, conducted by the European Commission in 2013, which was mainly aimed at fine tuning of reforms in higher education, some notable trends were seen with regard to general education,¹⁷ in particular about curricular reform. The study report stated,

(...) the process of curricular reform is at different stages across the region, with new curricula regarded as making a relatively strong impact in schools in some countries (e.g. in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) or remaining a concept rather than a practice (as in the case of Kosovo). Among the main obstacles for the efficient delivery of the new curriculum identified in the region is the inadequate teacher preparation to implement these changes. Teachers often face difficulties with breaking with the traditional methods of teaching (and introducing new ones, such as inclusive education) and accessing knowledge on how to develop students’ competences. Other challenges include limited capabilities of some schools to address curricular regulations, the lack of coherence among subjects which otherwise would allow for cross-curricular models, and the lack of evaluative feedback at state level. As a consequence, the curriculum reform has a limited effect within some schools and a full-scale firmly-embedded alteration of teaching and learning approaches is yet to be seen.

¹² Pavel Zgaga et al. *Higher education in the Western Balkans: Reforms, developments, trends*, (Ljubljana: Faculty of Education, Centre for Educational Policy Studies, 2013), 15-17

¹³ Ministry of Education Sports, *Draft National Strategy for pre-University Education in Albania 2014-2020* (Tirana, 2014).

¹⁴ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Republic of Kosovo, *Curriculum Framework for Pre-University Education in the Republic of Kosovo*, (Prishtina, 2011).

¹⁵ Regional Cooperation Council South East Europe 2020, *Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective*, (2013).

¹⁶ Jana Bacevic, “(Education for) work sets you free: ‘employability’ and higher education in former Yugoslavia and its successor states,” *European Journal of Higher Education* 4, no. 3 (2014).

¹⁷ European Commission. *Teacher Education and Training in the Western Balkans*, (Luxemburg Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2013), 26

The Commission's report also noted steps made toward liberalization of textbooks, as well as further improvement of assessment and quality assurance and inspection. Such reports, it should be added, as well as strategic policy documents adopted at national and inter-governmental levels have limited capacity to assess actual implementation of reforms because they rarely consult educators. This is one of the main reasons for this report to work from teacher's perceptions on various related issues.

Education reform, however, is not built in isolation from current events. In 2010, the EU Education & Training 2020 benchmarks prioritized technical improvements in education, such as reducing school drop-outs, increasing participation in tertiary education, development of entrepreneurship skills and promotion of early childhood education. In 2015, the EU Education Ministers came together in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, and put out the *Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*¹⁸, which already in 2016 showed a large proliferation of education policy initiatives which prioritized the values dimension of education over the 'hard' priorities identified in ET2020.¹⁹

The *Paris Declaration* effectively builds upon the more extensive and earlier work done by the Council of Europe on *Education for Democratic Citizenship / Human Rights Education*, which in 2016, after a decade of research, published a model of *Competences for Democratic Culture*.

This shift in education reform priorities is also seen in the work of the Regional Cooperation bodies, which is tied to the *Education Reform Initiative - South East Europe (ERI-SEE)*. In the latest review of education reform policies,²⁰ inclusive education features as one of the recommendations for the period 2017-2019. The Western Balkan Platform on Education and Training - a monitoring unit within the European Commissions Directorate on Education - has, however, kept its focus for education reform on the so-called 'skills mismatch', and mentions nothing regarding the aspirational values-based aspects.²¹

Looking at the overall picture of school education reform in the Western Balkan, there seems to be a viable oppor-

tunity to open up conversations about values and attitudes, in addition to the more established agenda on skills and structure of education. This is where we, within the ePACT project²², argue for further focus on school education and on values, as put forward within the EU Education Ministers' *Paris Declaration*.

History Education Reform Should Use Experiences and Evidence of Civil Society

Trends in education reform come and go. On the European level agendas have cascaded from competences for lifelong learning, to new skills for new jobs. The pendulum has shifted from employability and entrepreneurship to democratic citizenship and fundamental values.

Different agencies working within and alongside the European Union, including the Council of Europe, the OSCE, UNICEF and UNESCO have championed various additional purposes, including inclusive education, intercultural citizenship education, life skills education. There are even more academic education specialists, which shed light on many different aspects of understanding education. Education reform is not easy.

The transformative capacity of work on memory, identity and history is present across Europe and beyond in the work done for empowerment of youth, in the interest of reconciliation, as a way to prevent violence and downplay hate speech. School history education is a frequent place for this kind of transformative work. But, at a core level, historians and history educators in the Western Balkan have yet to open up history education and teach from the basis of multiperspectivity and for critical thinking.

Promoting multiperspectivity and critical thinking has always been at the core of the previous work done by CDRSEE and EUROCLIO. In different projects and using different collaboration methods, these civil society organizations have been able to create educational resources which, based on sound historical inquiry, have provided innovative themes (i.e. social, cultural history, everyday life, etc) and challenged pupils to consider different historical sources, and perspectives, in order to form his/her own informed view on a historical matter. In addition to this, educators and historians involved in these projects

¹⁸ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education: Overview of education policy developments in Europe following the Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015*. (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.).

¹⁹ Council of Europe, *Competences for Democratic Culture*, (Strasbourg: Publications Production Department (SPDP, 2016).

²⁰ Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe, *Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) Work Programme 2017 – 2019* (Belgrade: ERI SEE Secretariat, 2016), 40.

²¹ Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission. *From University to Employment: Higher Education Provision and Labour Market Needs in the Western Balkans Synthesis Report*, (Brussels: European Union, 2016). Skills mismatch is a term to indicate that the education sector develops skills, which do not match the needs in the labor market.

²² See the about section of this report p. 38

have been able to extend their networks, enroll in new and more challenging activities, both on local, as well as international levels. For EUROCLIO, it has been of paramount importance that country-level HTAs are able to thrive as providers of training with and on these new educational resources to their members, thus providing evidence to policy-makers of the viability of these new, and often cross-border, tools.

Policy-makers and civil society actors across various agencies seek to mobilize their efforts for reconciliation in post-conflict societies. Balancing an uneven relationships between donor/recipient, or grassroots/intervention, these actors may be at risk of working from a self-fulfilling need that the mission (e.g. peace), that there is no space created for critical feedback or questioning of their approaches. In the case of working on school history education, it is therefore vital that the actual needs and views of educators are assessed, prior to the establishment of further plans.

This is why CDRSEE, EUROCLIO and the History Teachers Associations from the region, have decided to initiate this dialogue, and ask educators to share their views and suggestions. The aim is that the emerging view from the field will be able to make future work more relevant and meaningful. All organizations involved in ePACT have in the past pioneered collaborative cross-border design of education resources, provided high quality teacher training and engaged in advocacy for improved history education policies. It is therefore time to develop a deeper understanding of how this has resulted in practice, and assess the current needs of educators.

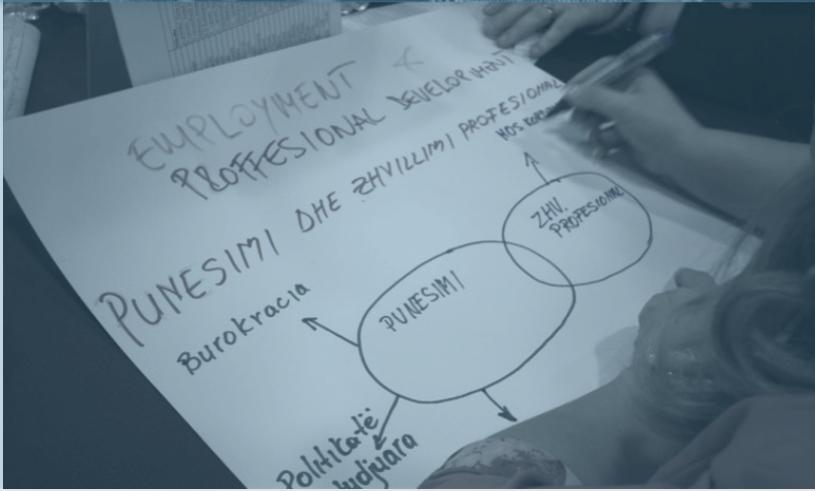
The community of history educators and stakeholders in the Western Balkan are at a unique moment. There is a sustainable push toward competence-based and learner-centred education. There is growing sense of urgency for history learning to be supportive of peaceful attitudes and values as well as instructive for the important competences, which help learners learn, question, analyze and have certain cultural sensitivities.

The Needs Assessment conducted in the ePACT project helps policy makers and practitioners understand how this potential can be optimally reached. Thus, history education does not become a risk, but an opportunity.

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Summary

Following many studies that looked into history curricula and history textbooks in the Western Balkans region²³, what actually happens in the classroom is mostly left unexamined. For example, it is unknown how teachers approach curricular expectations dictated by the state bodies; in which ways they use, and would like to change, the teaching materials prescribed by the educational authorities; how different elements of their societal context determine the ways they deal with difficult topics in their classroom; whether the history teaching paradigm has shifted from lecture-dominant to learner-oriented²⁴ and how pedagogy has shifted from one narrative transmission to narrative analysis.²⁵ Furthermore, given the fact that in the Western Balkan region there have been many international interventions in the field of history teaching, what has been the effect? To try to outline the answers to these questions, together with history teaching experts and practitioners from the region, we developed a large-scale mixed-method study looking into needs of history teachers.

The principal technique of the data collection through an online survey was complemented with focus groups of a selection of history teachers, stocktaking sessions and experts interviews in each country. A total of 793 teachers participated in the survey; around 400 teachers participated in the stocktaking sessions; 40 teachers in focus groups and 14 history education experts completed expert interviews. History teachers from Albania (66), Bosnia and Herzegovina (210), Kosovo* (67), FYR Macedonia (113), Montenegro (115) and Serbia (222) gave their assessment of the current state and the needs in history

teaching in their country through the survey specifically designed for this purpose.

Through the combination of the aforementioned quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection we set out to explore several issues. Firstly, we aimed to grasp teachers' perceptions of their participation in, and level of, democracy in schools and educational systems. Secondly, we wanted to grasp their experiences of employment and professional development procedures. Thirdly, we wanted to explore if the prevailing teaching practices correspond with policy expectations of learner oriented and competence based teaching that would consequently foster critical engagement with counter narratives and controversies. In the end, we aimed to explore if teachers' individual characteristics, their self-perception in the context of schools, educational systems and society, and their understanding of history didactics influenced their practice of teaching controversies. The same topics were explored in more depth by focus groups consisting of history teachers and by history teaching experts that gave their view of the situation and specifics of the context in all six countries. Additionally, we aimed to test the avoider-risk taker continuum model of teacher's roles when facing controversial topics.²⁶ We looked into several factors determining whether history teachers will take a role of the avoider, container or the risk taker in approaching the contested topics. Moreover, we examined how certain individual characteristics (e.g. religious adherence and level of education) and school characteristics (e.g. urban/rural and mono-cultural/multi-cultural environment) affected the teachers' position on the continuum.

Understanding teachers' views and practices can help us understand how teaching controversial topics in a way that dismantles biased and one-sided interpretations can be fostered. This contribution can help improve history teaching in the Western Balkans, but also expand our knowledge of the processes of dealing with troubled pasts in post-conflict societies around the world.

²³ Fond Otvoreno društvo Bosna i Hercegovina. *Obrazovanje u Bosni i Hercegovini: Cemu ucimo djecu? Analiza sadržaja udzbenika nacionalne grupe predmeta*, (Sarajevo: Fond Otvoreno društvo Bosna i Hercegovina, 2007)
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Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, *A Key to Unlock the Past History Education in Macedonia: An Analysis of Today Suggestions for the Future (The Hague/Skopje: EUROCLIO, 2012)*

²⁴ Leo Jones. *The Student-centered Classroom*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

²⁵ Jan Assman, (1995) "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", *New German Critique*, No. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies (Spring - Summer, 1995), pp. 125-133

²⁶ Alison Kitson and Alan McCully. "You hear about it for real in school." Avoiding, containing and risk-taking in the history classroom" *Teaching History*", Vol. 120, London (2005), 32-37.

1. Approach

History education in the Western Balkans has been a subject of interest to many scholars in recent years. Amongst others, academic historians, history education experts, practitioners, and scholars from the fields of memory studies and transitional justice have looked into different roles attributed to history education in respective societies.²⁷ History education is seen as one of the societal pillars in overcoming the legacies of the violent past and researchers have thus looked into how mass violence has been addressed and portrayed in curricula and textbooks.²⁸ Some studies have accentuated that dealing with the legacy of violent past requires much more than representations of bi-perspective or multi-perspective

experiences of the conflict(s) in teaching materials and have looked into the broader history teaching context in respective countries.²⁹ If history education does not aim at developing an inquiry approach to history, it is, consequently, not likely to be successful in supporting pupils develop a critical stance towards the contested topics in the society. Many international initiatives have tried to bring forward changes in history education in this region by providing publications, teaching materials and teacher trainings that foster active methods of learning, learner oriented education and going beyond one exclusive narrative of the past.³⁰ There is, however, also a small number of studies that have looked into how textbook representations of wars in the 1990's are used in teaching or to what extent the curricular requirements and textbooks shape teaching practice.³¹ Moreover, previous research in other contexts have shown that additional societal factors influence everyday teaching practices.³² To gain an insight into how teaching materials, school environment, social context, and teacher trainings influence practice, we needed to ask the teachers themselves about each of the aforementioned aspects and their teaching experiences. We paid special attention to if and how controversial historical events are taught. Furthermore, we took a step forward by looking into what circumstances might be shaping choices and the educational performance when it comes to controversial historical events.³³

²⁷ Wolfgang Höpken, *Oil on Fire? Textbooks, Ethnic Stereotypes and Violence in South-Eastern Europe*, (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1996) Council of Europe. *The structures and standards of initial teacher training for history teachers in in South Eastern Europe* (Strasbourg: European Commission 2004), Christina Koulouri, *Clio in the Balkans: the politics of history education*. (Thessaloniki: Center for democracy and reconciliation in Southeast Europe, 2002)

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Dea Maric, *Homeland war between Innovative History Education and One Truth*, in *History Can Bite, History Education in Divided and Postwar Societies*, (Braunschweig: V&R Unipress, 2016), Snjezana Koren. *What kind of history teaching do we have after 18 years in Croatia?* In A Dimou (ed.) *Transition and the Politics of History Education in Southeastern Europe*, (Braunschweig: V&R Unipress, 2009.)

³⁰ EUROCLIO. *Once upon a time... We lived together: Joint work in a multiperspective approach. 23 workshops (1900-1945)*, (The Hague: EUROCLIO, 2014). EUROCLIO. *Ordinary people in an extraordinary country, Yugoslavia between East and West Every-Day Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia 1945-1990*, (The Hague: EUROCLIO, 2008), EUROCLIO. *Understanding a shared past, learning for the Future. Changes and Continuity in everyday life in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia*. (The Hague: EUROCLIO, 2003), CDRSEE. *Teaching for Learning: A reference guide for results-oriented teachers*, (Thessaloniki: CDRSEE, 2015). CDRSEE. *Teaching modern Southeast European history. Alternative educational materials. Volume 1- 4* (Thessaloniki: CDRSEE, 2005), CDRSEE. *Teaching Contemporary Southeast European History, Sourcebooks for history teachers, The Cold War 1944-1990* (Thessaloniki: CDRSEE, 2016), CDRSEE. *Teaching Contemporary Southeast European History, Sourcebooks for history teachers Wars, Division, Integration (1990-2008)*, (Thessaloniki: CDRSEE, 2016)

³¹ Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, *A Key to Unlock the Past History Education in Macedonia: An Analysis of Today Suggestions for the Future* (The Hague/Skopje: EUROCLIO, 2012)

³² Teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes are important for understanding and improving educational processes. They are closely linked to teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well-being, and they shape students' learning environment and influence student motivation and achievement. Furthermore they can be expected to mediate the effects of job-related policies – such as changes in curricula for teachers' initial education or professional development – on student learning. More in: <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/43541655.pdf>, last accessed 7th of September 2017.

³³ Professional competence is believed to be a crucial factor in classroom and school practices (Shulman, 1987, Campbell *et al.*, 2004; Baumert and Kunter, 2006). To study this, a number of authors have used, for example, measures of the effects of constructivist compared with “reception/direct transmission” beliefs on teaching and learning, developed by Peterson *et al.* (1989). TALIS uses a domain-general version of two teaching and learning-related indices (constructivist and direct transmission) to cover teachers' beliefs and basic understanding of the nature of teaching and learning.

In a time marked by a number of ongoing and anticipated educational reforms, a study of these issues can have a significant impact, as their findings can contribute to better grounded and hence more successful policies and reforms.³⁴

Throughout the design and implementation of the needs assessment of history education in Western Balkans, the European Commission's principles of Responsible Research and Innovation were carefully applied.³⁵ These principles suggest that different societal actors should work together throughout the research process in order to better align the research with needs and expectations of the society. During the research design and implementation phases, we paid special attention to the multi-actor engagement by including various stakeholders in the field of history education. Practitioners from secondary and higher education, history education experts, researchers from the field, policy makers, representatives of educational authorities and activists working on issues of dealing with a troubled past were all a part of the process (see Fig. 1). During multiple rounds of feedback, teachers and policy makers were consulted about elements and the structure of the needs assessment as well as their expectations from it.

Their input was integrated into the steps that followed and have led to the creation of a more appropriate and rigorous research methodology. Besides having contributed to the development of research instruments, such an approach has helped create the sense of ownership among various stakeholders in the project. Most importantly, the teachers expanded their role of main target group and became advisors of the research process.

In line with the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation, there were a considerable number of meetings with different stakeholders throughout the 15 months of data collection. The timeline below presents the development and implementation of the specific elements of the research methodology. After developing the initial outline of the research methodology in May and June 2016, we presented all the constituent elements, their interrelations and the timeline of their implementation at the First Expert Meeting in Vienna in June 2016. The feedback was collected from experts and integrated in the second draft of the survey. The revised research methodology was presented again to the group of experts and 31 teachers taking part in the 2nd EUROCLIO Regional Summer School in Lovcen, Montenegro. In the fall and winter 2016, six national training events were organized and at each of those events, qualitative elements of methodology were implemented: expert interviews, stocktaking exercises, and focus group discussions.

Figure 1: Data Collection Timeline



³⁴ In Kosovo* there is an ongoing reform and it is in the phase of piloting, in Albania more reforms are anticipated, while in BiH the reform was envisaged to be functioning already in 2010. But it was never implemented.

³⁵ European Commission. *Responsible research & innovation - Horizon 2020* (Unknown: European Union, 2017) <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/responsible-research-innovation>,

At the same time, the final version of the survey was developed in English. In order to translate the survey to all the local languages we used the combination of two translation procedures: back-translation and committee approach.³⁶ First the survey was translated from English to the local languages and later translated back from each of the local languages to English by independent translators. In the next step, two English versions for each language were compared in order to understand and correct any possible problems with the translations. Since we needed to create six different versions of the survey in different, yet very similar languages (with an exception of Albanian) we went through an additional step of cross-checking the different survey versions in local languages. All national coordinators came together for the Coordination Meeting in January 2017 in order to produce the final local versions of the survey. The survey was set up and launched on February 22nd 2017. It was closed on May 7th 2017. The preliminary results were presented to the experts and history teachers at the 3rd Regional Summer School in Albania on July 22nd 2017.

³⁶ Cha, E.-S., Kim, K. H. and Erlen, J. A. "Translation of scales in cross-cultural research: issues and techniques." *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, no. 58(2007): 386–395. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04242.x

2. Methodology

In order to explore and understand the current state of history education in the Western Balkans region, we first needed to provide a safe space for teachers to voice their experiences of everyday teaching and the context in which it takes place. To this end, we designed a study looking into different levels and interrelations within educational systems by employing a large-scale mixed-method study, including both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

2.1. Elements of the Mixed-Method Study

Data was collected through several different methods: semi-structured interviews with experts coming from different areas of expertise were held in each of the respective countries, stocktaking exercises on current challenges and needs in history education were organized with groups of teachers in each of the respective countries, focus groups were held with selected groups of teachers and an online survey was distributed to a larger number of teachers in each country.

2.2. The survey

Survey questions aimed at exploring teachers' experiences and perceptions of the topics previously addressed in the stocktaking exercise: initial teacher training, curriculum and textbooks, employment procedures and professional development, school environment, teaching practice and teachers' engagement with controversial topics. The survey was set up using *Qualtrics* online platform³⁷. It was disseminated through national organizations of history teachers and educational authorities in respective countries using mailing lists, social media and other resources available. The responsiveness varied from country to country, dependent on country specific circumstances. The survey was filled out by a total of 802 history teachers in 6 countries of Western Balkan region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, FYR Macedonia, and Serbia.

When presented with elements of the methodology at the first methodology presentation and feedback round, some of the experts from Western Balkans expressed their hesitation about asking for personal information (age, years of teaching experience, gender, ethnicity etc.). Since this data was required to understand the context teachers drew their experiences from, we as the research team decided to keep these questions and pay special attention to introducing anonymity and confidentiality in scientific research. Nevertheless, out of 1399 teachers that opened the survey, 606 dropped out when presented with the section asking about their personal information. There could, of course, be a number of explanations for this. One is that a rather big number of teachers with an initial intention of taking part in the survey felt uncomfortable with sharing personal information indicative of their position. Based on the missing answers to the question "How long have you taught for?" (the first question in the personal information section of the survey) 606 participants were excluded, and the final sample that all the analysis was based on consisted of 793 participants. Dissemination took place along various axis in different countries. In every country, the History Teachers Association was the main disseminator, except in Montenegro, where the Ministry of Education had the lead in the survey dissemination, which is shown in various survey results.

2.3. Focus groups

The survey explored experiences and attitudes of more than 800 history teachers across the Western Balkans, providing quantitative insight into different issues related to history teaching. In order to gain deeper understanding of what lies behind their attitudes and motivations, we complimented the survey with focus groups. We organized 1 focus group per each country as part of the national training events. All 6 focus groups comprised of 6 to 8 history teachers and were created having in mind participant diversity across gender, age, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, characteristics of the community in which they teach (rural – urban), and the level of education in which they teach (lower secondary – upper secondary schools). All focus groups were conducted by at least one of the researchers. In the case of the focus groups in Pristina and Tirana, the conversation was conducted with the help of a professional interpreter.

2.4. Stocktaking sessions

Between 60 and 80 teachers (overall 334) and history education experts took part in stocktaking sessions on the needs in history education in each country. The exercises addressed the following topics relevant for history teaching: initial teacher training, curriculum and textbooks, employment procedures and professional development, school environment, teaching practice and

³⁷ "The Leading Research & Experience Software." Qualtrics. Accessed November 29, 2017. <https://www.qualtrics.com/>.

teachers' engagement with controversial topics. Stock-taking exercises, in the form of World café sessions³⁸, took place at training events organized by national associations of history teachers as part of the project.

2.5. Expert interviews

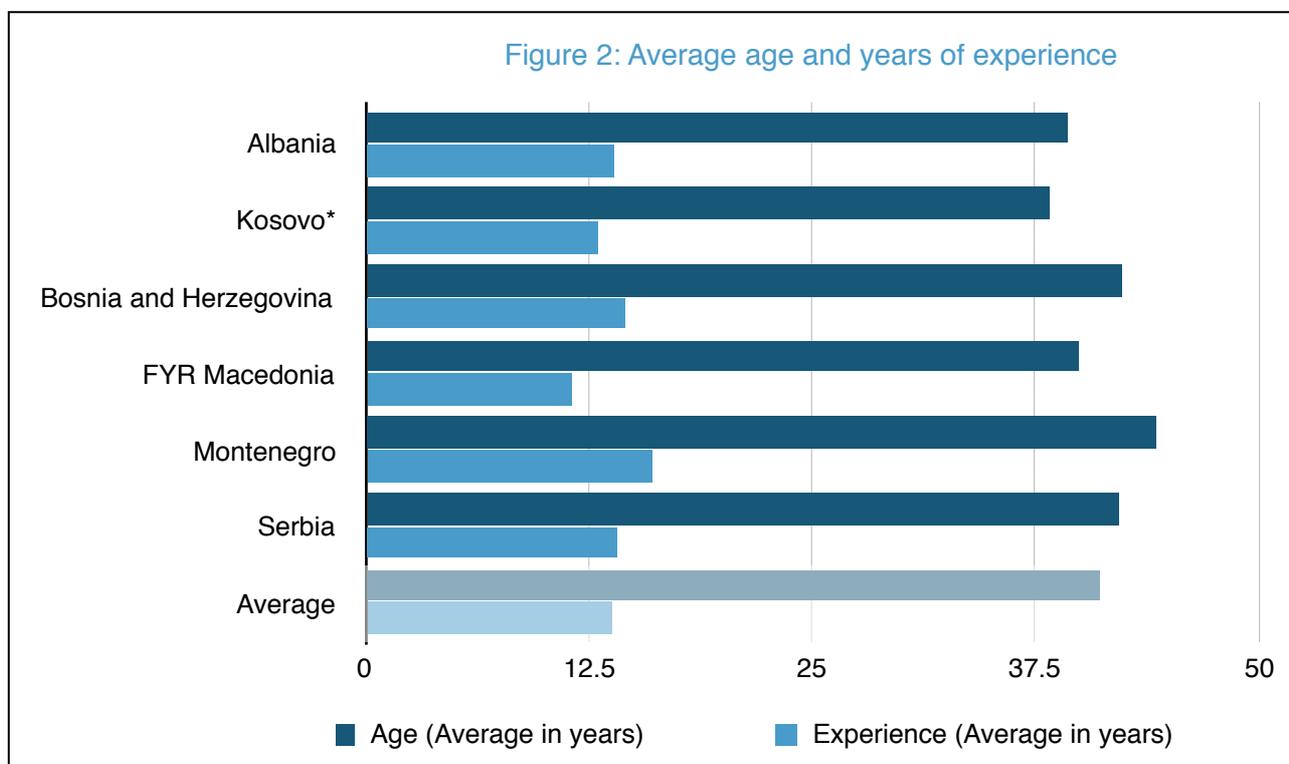
Teams of history education experts were assembled from history education practitioners (secondary education and university teachers) and representatives of educational authorities in Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Individually, the experts filled out the questionnaire containing questions regarding the educational systems and the position of history education within the examined systems. Additionally, national consultations with these expert teams were organized as a follow up to the questionnaires. During these face-to-face interviews with history education experts, we were able to gain better understanding of the specific issues in each of the respective countries.

2.6. Sample

The survey sample consisted of 802 history teachers from all 6 countries. More than 300 history education experts and practitioners took part in stocktaking sessions, 42 history teachers and history education experts took part in focus groups and 14 history education experts took part in expert interviews dealing with specific country contexts of history education.

The average age of the participants was $M=41,24$ years with the average teaching experience of around 14 years ($M=13,97$) (Figure 2). The lowest average age of participants is observed in Kosovo* ($M=38,33$) while the highest is observed in Montenegro ($M=44,29$). Accordingly, the participants from Montenegro have the highest average amount of experience ($M=16,3$) while the teachers with shortest average teaching experience in the sample are the ones from Macedonia ($M=11,59$).

The share of women participating in the survey (Figure 3) across the sample is 50,33%. The highest share of women participating in the survey is in Albania (66,70%) and the lowest share is in Kosovo* (28,4%). Figure 4 presents the ethnic structure of the sample, ethnicity as given by the respondents themselves. The table shows that the survey managed to reach a rather ethnically diverse sample of history teachers. Having in mind the ethnic diversity of the region, as well as ethnicity driven educational policies, we believe that the sample of this composition, even though not representative, is a good basis for a valuable insight into the teachers' perspectives on the issue.



³⁸ The World café method is a method of creating dialogue with a large number of participants. In this process, first several group discussions on different sub-topics of the overall topics take place in parallel. Afterwards, participants can move to another group discussion in accordance with their preference. After one or several changes of this type, a plenary part takes place. In this plenary part, conclusions from each of the group discussions are presented. For more on the World café method: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/> last accessed September, 12th, 2017

Figure 3: Gender distribution

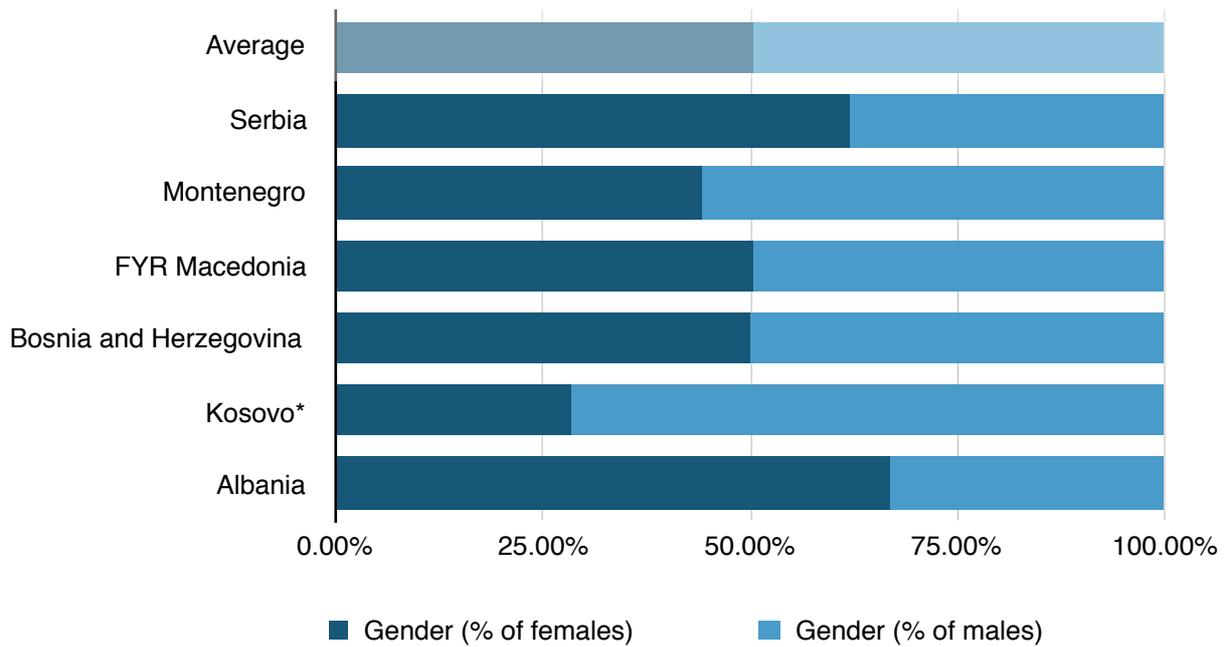


Figure 4: Ethnic structure

Albanian	10,97%
Kosovo* Albanian	6,73%
Macedonia Albanian	2,24%
Bosnian	5,74%
Bosniak	12,34%
Montenegrin	10,60%
Egyptian	0,12%
Croatian	1,62%
Bosnian Croat	4,99%
Macedonian	9,98%
Roma	0,12%
Serbian	29,18%
Bosnian Serb	2,37%
Turkish	0,50%
Other	2,49%

3. Results

3.1. Initial Teacher Training, Employment & Professional Development in Practice

Acquiring teaching competencies starts during studies, where future teachers prepare for whatever awaits them in the classroom. After completion of the study program, the first challenge that needs to be surpassed in order to continue with professional growth is finding a job. Having in mind unemployment rates in the region³⁹, this is already a difficult task for teachers across the Western Balkans. When teachers do get a teaching position in a school, they enter different mechanisms of professional advancement in which opportunities for professional development are offered, and progression towards higher status assessed and rewarded. One of the goals of this needs assessment was to explore how different phases of professional life of history teachers across the Western Balkans work. Particularly, we aimed to address the following key questions:

- Do study programs for history teachers equip them with necessary teaching skills?
- What do teachers think of employment procedures and opportunities for their professional development provided by the educational system and other actors in the field?

³⁹ According to last statistics unemployment across the Western Balkans region is above the EU28 average. Eurostat. Enlargement countries – “Labor market statistics” Accessed October 2nd 2017. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Enlargement_countries_-_labour_market_statistics#Unemployment_rate

⁴⁰ In contrast to some countries where history teacher education is taking place at pedagogical universities, institutes for applied sciences and similar, in countries of the Western Balkans study programs for history teachers take place at faculties and universities. For further details on existing types of initial teacher training of future history teachers in Europe have a look into: Civic and History Teachers’ Education in Europe. A comparative study on concepts, structures and standards of initial teacher education, assessment and tutorial structures for the subjects ‘History’, ‘Civic/Citizenship education’, ‘Social/ Cultural Studies’ and ‘Politics’ available at: http://che.itt-history.eu/fileadmin/CHE_template/pdf_test/doc_7.5_comparative_study.pdf Last accessed October 10th 2017.

⁴¹ Council of Europe. *Civic and History Teachers’ Education in Europe. A comparative study on concepts, structures and standards of initial teacher education, assessment and tutorial structures for the subjects ‘History’, ‘Civic/Citizenship education’, ‘Social/ Cultural Studies and Politics* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2013)

⁴² Focus group Bosnia and Herzegovina, facilitated by Dea Maric and Rodoljub Jovanovic, Sarajevo December 9th 2016.

3.1.1. Initial Teacher Training

Across the Western Balkans, initial teacher training of future history teachers takes place at universities in the form of MA study programs for historians and history teachers.⁴⁰ There are 4 full study programs for history teachers in Albania, 6 full study programs for history teachers in BiH (5 in Federation, 1 in Republic of Srpska), in Kosovo* there is one full study program to become a history teacher, in FYR Macedonia there are 3 full study programs, in Montenegro there is 1 full study program and in Serbia there are 4 full study programs for history teachers.

History teachers in the region clearly perceive a disproportion in their initial teacher training. Half of the teachers surveyed (48,9%) think there is not enough history didactics in their study programs, almost two out of three (61,3%) detect the lack of teaching practice in the course of their studies, and 45,5% of the respondents think there should be more courses related to general pedagogy in their initial teacher training. When asked about the topics they would like to have learned more about, they mostly mention subject didactics, general pedagogy and teaching practice. The proportion of courses on general pedagogy and history didactics in programs for future history teachers in the Western Balkans was lower than in the rest of the European countries researched in the year 2012. And our expert interviews show that this proportion has not improved since then.⁴¹

“Before all, it is education. I think we are not educated enough at the faculty. We did not have any subjects on how to work with pupils with special needs as part of our study program and that would be very helpful for working in elementary school.”⁴²

When it comes to other specific topics they would have liked to learn more about during their studies, a substantial number of teachers explained that they do not feel equipped to work with students with special needs, and that they think future history teachers should acquire these competencies during their studies.

3.1.2. How are employment procedures perceived by teachers?

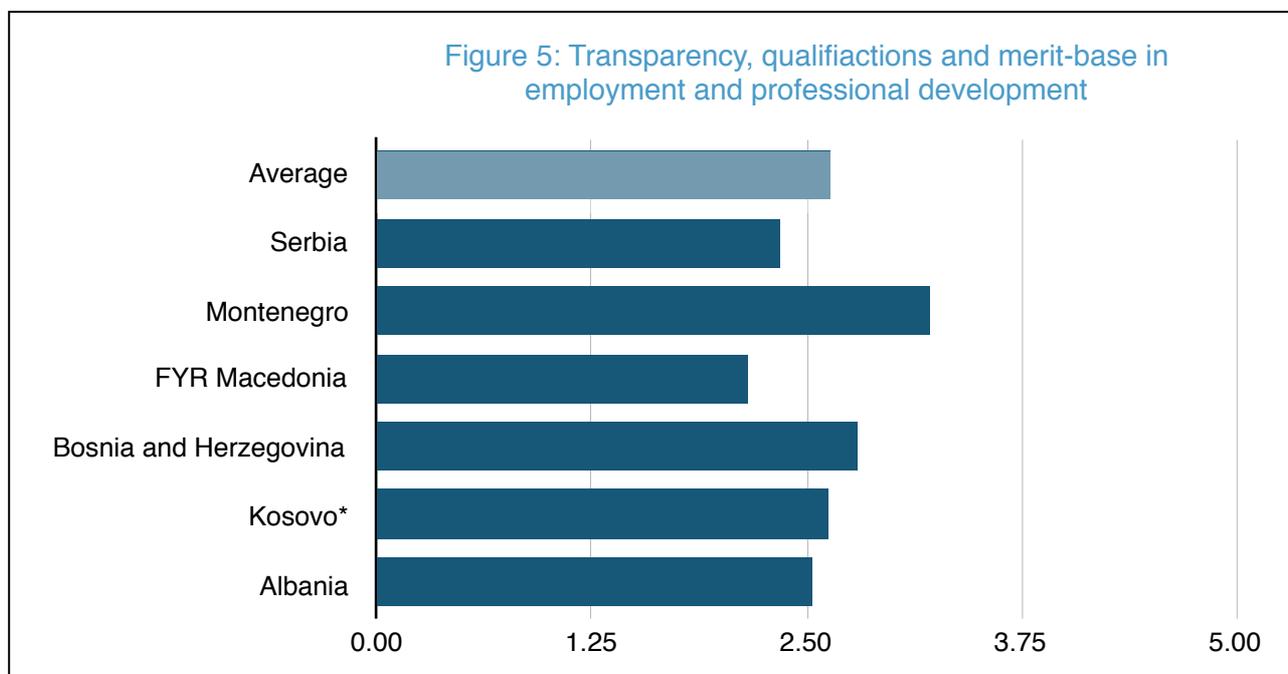
In order to understand teachers' position in the educational system, it was important to understand their perspective when it comes to employment procedures. Factor analysis showed that four items (In my country employment procedures are transparent; Professional qualifications of the applicants are taken into account when they are employed; Teaching experience of applicants is taken into account; Assess the amount of correlation between accomplishments and career advancement in your working environment) loaded onto the same factor and these four items were used to create an index that we refer to as 'Transparency and merit-based career advancement index'. Figure 5 shows the values of this index in all subsamples. Educators from FYR Macedonia score lowest on this index (M=2,15) perceiving the employment procedures as the least transparent and teacher's characteristics as irrelevant to their employment and career advancement, while the highest scoring educators are those in Montenegro (M=3,21). The average value across the Western Balkan countries (M=2,63), indicates that survey participants do not seem to perceive employment and advancement mechanisms as fulfilling the mandates of transparency, qualification and merit-based.

High level of unemployment and its consequences for acquiring a teaching job does not seem to be the biggest challenge for employment procedures of history teachers across the Western Balkans. Of more importance is this:

Overall, more than half of the respondents (53,7%) do not find employment procedures for teachers in their countries transparent. Around half of all participants believe that professional qualifications (46,1%) and teaching experience (50,1%) of job applicants are not taken into account. Moreover, almost half of our respondents (46,8%) think there is a lot of interference of politicians either on local or state level in employment of new teachers in their school. When discussing how employment works, corruption is often mentioned.⁴³

The other colleague said that the biggest problem with employment is that what is assessed is actually one's affiliation with a political party, and family connections as well. Also, school principles make decisions by themselves as there are no criteria such as grades, or working experiences. Sometimes the minister tells him whom to employ.⁴⁴

Findings related to employment issues clearly show that, in practice, other factors (political party affiliations, personal relationships to name a few) are prioritized over qualifications during selection procedures. A lack of transparency regarding selection criteria provides open ground for inconsistency and manipulation, which can obviously also lead to nepotism and corruption. Based on this data, we can assume that teachers do not feel secure and confident enough in their everyday work environment, and we consider this to be a very important determinant of their teaching practice.



⁴³ There is politicized employment and nepotism e.g. employment through relatives, friends and liaisons. The staff can be staff regarding the level of education and the type of education, and should be psychologically adequate. See for example: Stocktaking session FYR Macedonia, Skopje, November 5th, 2016

⁴⁴ Focus group Montenegro, facilitated by Dea Maric, Herceg Novi, December 3rd, 2016

3.1.3. Professional development opportunities in practice

In the past 10 years, most countries in the region have experienced reforms in teachers' professional development and their advancement.⁴⁵ There are different licensing trajectories of professional development across the region, varying in their format and duration. For example in Albania, the license is obtained once without any foreseen renewal structure.⁴⁶ In the case of Montenegro and Serbia, license renewal is required every 5 years and is based on participation at trainings accredited by educational authorities. What is required for the license renewal is having the minimum number of points collected from trainings attendance⁴⁷. In the case of Serbia, there are substantial difficulties with the application of the license renewal system, since the accreditation of seminars does not follow the pace of trainings provided (so the teacher cannot get points for all trainings attended). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a licensing system similar to the one in Serbia and Montenegro was planned as part of the Strategic guidelines for the reform of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2008 - 2015 which were to be implemented state-wide and which would have had the implication of a standardized professional development of mechanisms in both Federation and Republic of Srpska. Due to inefficiency of the implementation bodies (Council of Ministers), most of the reforms foreseen by this document were never implemented and neither was the measure on professional development of teachers.⁴⁸ To this day Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a minimum of statewide mechanism that would trace teachers' career path. In Kosovo, the renewable licensing system has been set up in 2014.⁴⁹ We used different methods to explore teachers' experiences and perceptions of the employment and advancement procedures and professional development and looked into how mechanisms of employment and advancement work in practice in order to see what implications that might have for the professional development of history teachers.

Sometimes we finance our seminar participation by ourselves because neither ministry nor schools offer support. No one wants to finance professional development of teachers.⁵⁰

In some countries, local authorities pay for the professional development of teachers within their local area.⁵¹ This puts teachers working in less privileged areas in a less favorable position. If we complement this with the finding that school principals decide on their staff's attendance of training it provides a broader look into the topic of professional development of (history) teachers across the Western Balkans. Professional development of teachers is shaped to a lesser extent by teachers' needs and aspirations than by the financial credentials of the local community. The following quote clearly indicates one of the implications of existent professional development and advancement procedures. In the case of some teachers, who might not be intrinsically motivated for their professional growth, the system as it is will not foster motivation, but rather demotivate.

(...) a lot of things are based on people's enthusiasm. A mechanism is not developed in a way that stimulates people. That is a broader problem of the state and public services system.⁵²

In recent years, opportunities for professional development of teachers also arise from the cooperation between schools and non-governmental providers. This research also had a goal of mapping different training providers in the field, and exploring teachers' perceptions of their usefulness for their own professional development.

Figures 6 and 7 show an interesting contrast. As shown in Figure 7, overall trainings provided by NGOs are perceived as being of higher quality (M=3,67) than the state organized ones (M=3,33). Figure 6, on the other hand, shows that teachers attend the state organized ones

⁴⁵ Expert Interviews facilitated by Dea Maric and/or Rodoljub Jovanovic (Expert interview Kosovo, Pristina December 3rd, 2016; Expert interview Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo December 3rd 2016; Expert interview Albania, Tirana, November 5th 2016; Expert interview FYR Macedonia, Skopje November 5th 2016; Expert interview Montenegro, Herceg Novi, December 3rd 2016; Expert interview Serbia, Belgrade October 16th 2016)

⁴⁶ The license for teaching can be obtained after 1 year of mentored teaching and an accomplished test – Albania, interview, portfolio after one year mentored teaching in case of Albania (http://www.akp.gov.al/images/pdf/Rregullore_profisionet.pdf<http://www.izha.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Udhezimi-per-kualifikimin-e-mesuesve-2015.pdf>) *Law for teachers in the primary and secondary schools*, http://mon.gov.mk/images/documents/zakoni/Zakon_za_nastavnici_vo_osnovno_i_sredno_obrazovanie.pdf, 2016

⁴⁷ Each training gives a certain number of points and a total of points is required for the renewal of the licence.

⁴⁸ Expert Interview Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo December 09th 2016, *Strateški pravci razvoja obrazovanja u Bosni i Hercegovini sa planom implementiranja, 2008.–2015.* <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/hr/resource-centre/content/strateski-pravci-razvoja-obrazovanja-u-bosni-i-hercegovini-sa-planom> (last accessed 12th November, 2016)

⁴⁹ Expert Interview Kosovo, facilitated by Rodoljub Jovanovic, Pristina December 3rd, 2016, Republic of Kosovo *Administrative Instruction No. 25/2014 Licencing of Teachers* (Prishtina: Republic of Kosovo, 2014)

⁵⁰ Focus group Bosnia and Herzegovina, facilitated by Dea Maric and Rodoljub Jovanovic, Sarajevo December 9th 2016.

⁵¹ Focus group Serbia, facilitated by Dea Maric and Rodoljub Jovanovic, Belgrade, October 23rd October 2016.

⁵² Focus group Serbia, facilitated by Dea Maric and Rodoljub Jovanovic, Belgrade, October 23rd October 2016.

more often; 77,4% of participating teachers attends trainings organized by educational authorities at least once a year while the same is true for 55% of teachers when it comes to trainings organized by NGO's. This is no surprise knowing that only trainings organized by educational authorities are accredited and help teachers accumulate points in the licensing system, if this exists in a specific country. This finding raises many questions, as professional development is seen as one of the key predictors of innovations in teaching practice and more cooperation with other teachers.⁵³ Where is the motivation for

attending specific trainings coming from? Does it come from the wish to acquire the useful skills or does it come from the mechanism regulating professional advancement?

If it was not for civil society organizations, we would not have any possibilities of professional development. But there is also passivity. I recommended this seminar to several colleagues, but they were totally uninterested.⁵⁴

Figure 6: How often do you attend trainings?

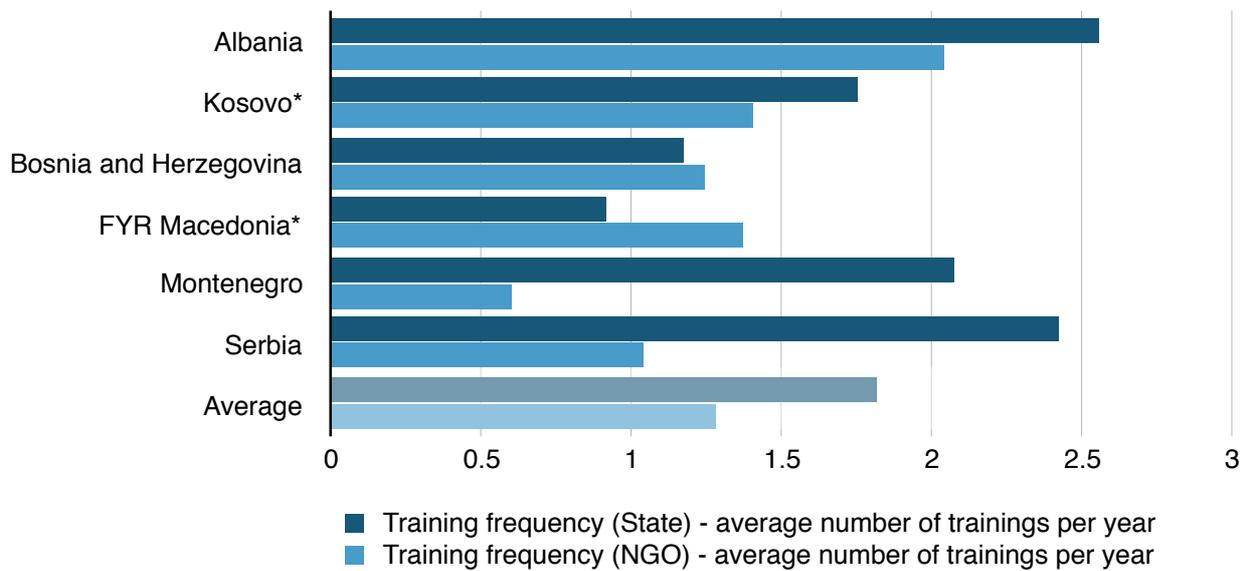
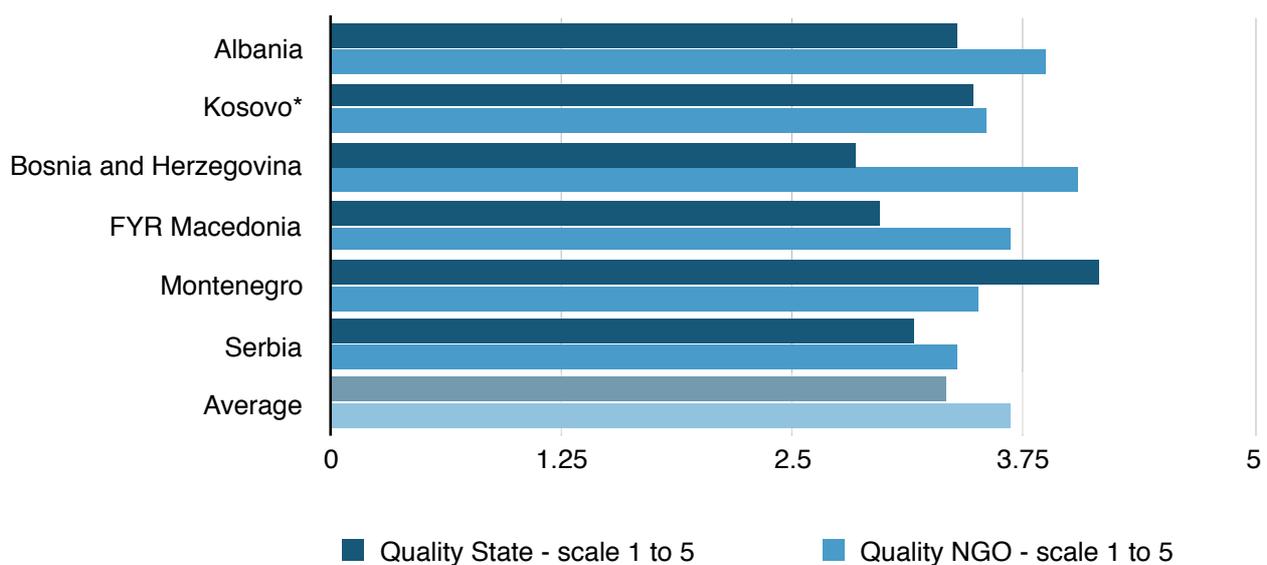


Figure 7: Quality of trainings?



⁵³ Teachers who undertake professional development undertake a wider array of teaching practices and are more likely to co-operate with other teachers. OECD. *Teaching Practices, Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes* (Unknown: OECD Publishing, 2009)

⁵⁴ Focus group Bosnia and Herzegovina, facilitated by Dea Maric and Rodoljub Jovanovic, Sarajevo December 9th 2016.

Figures above show the topics mostly covered at state and non-state organized trainings.⁵⁵ State organized trainings tend to deal with more general and overarching topics in education such as planning, classroom management, human rights, teaching methods, critical thinking and sources. Non-state organized trainings cover some topics similar to those covered at state-organized trainings such as ICT, (new) teaching methods and concepts, but in general deal to a larger extent with controversies, sensitivities and ways of approaching specific sensitive historical experiences and their interpretations. Having in mind both the mandate of educational authorities and the agenda of international policies and funding programmes, this finding is not striking per se. It is obvious that topics covered at these two types of trainings

can complement each other as there is a need to cover both more general topics but also specific sensitivities related to historical experiences in the region. However, data on perceived quality of trainings and training attendance put the topics covered by these two training categories in context. The call for measures that would include better quality-assuring mechanisms of both state and non-state organized trainings is clear. Additionally accreditation mechanisms for both state and non state organized trainings would assure better quality of trainings. In this way, the educational system and other training providing actors will be able to address teachers' professional development needs in a substantial and systemic way.

Figure 8: Topics of state organized and non-state organized teacher trainings



Figure 9: Teachers and professional development across countries of WB

Albania	4 BA programs (180-240 ECTS)	4 History MA programs (60-90 ECTS) 4 scientific MA programs (90-120 ECTS)	Phase 1: 1 Year Apprenticeship +end of the year assessment by the Regional Educational Directorate	Phase 2: Exam designed by the National Examination Agency
Kosovo*	1 BA program (180 ECTS)	4 MA programs	Temporary teachers licence, Career Licence, Licence for Mentor, Merit Licence	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6 BA programs	1 MA program	No systematical licensing trajectory implemented	
FYR Macedonia	3 BA programs	3 MA program	Phase 1: 1 Year Apprenticeship with an assigned mentor	Phase 2: Internal Exam
Montenegro	1 BA program	1 MA program	1 Year Apprenticeship with an assigned mentor	Every 5 years teachers are required to have 36 hours of training in different areas of the country
Serbia	4 BA programs (240 ECTS)	4 MA programs	Phase 1: 2 Years Apprenticeship with an assigned mentor	Phase 2: Exam-teach a class in front of the commission+State Licence exam

⁵⁵ Expert Interviews facilitated by Dea Maric and/or Rodoljub Jovanovic (Expert interview Kosovo*, Pristina December 3rd, 2016; Expert interview Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo December 3rd 2016; Expert interview Albania, Tirana, November 5th 2016; Expert interview Macedonia, Skopje November 5th 2016; Expert interview Montenegro, Herceg Novi, December 3rd 2016; Expert interview Serbia, Belgrade October 16th 2016)

3.2. Teachers in Schools & Educational Systems

Among other things, we wanted to explore what constitutes the working environment for teachers in the Western Balkans. We assumed that the school context and characteristics of the educational system together with teachers' position in these influence the way they teach.⁵⁶ Teaching infrastructure was often overlooked by policy makers but also by researchers looking into the issues of history teaching in the Western Balkans. By including this dimension, we wanted to draw attention to structural issues we consider vital for the teachers' everyday practice. Size of classes and teaching equipment outline the workfield of teaching. Moreover, teachers' perception of the level of democracy in the schools and educational systems and the role they play in both of these systems are factors that need to be taken into account when discussing their teaching performance and possible ways of improvement.⁵⁷

3.2.1. Teaching infrastructure

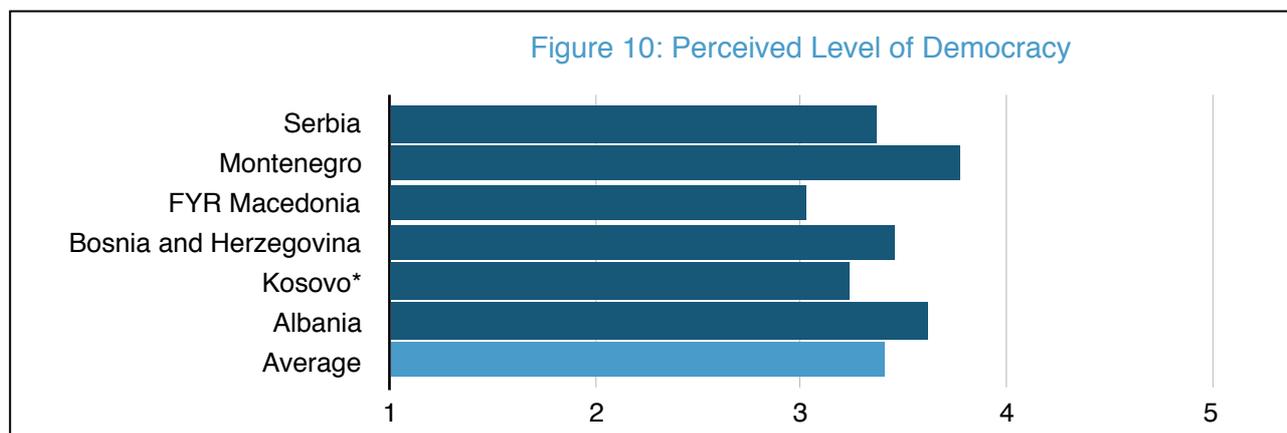
The issue of teaching conditions and lack of basic material infrastructure in some schools was raised by several teachers during the course of this research. Technical and technological equipment of the schools was stated to vary considerably across rural-urban and economically less and more privileged areas. Also, the issue of classrooms being too populous was raised at several stock-taking sessions.⁵⁸

Consequently, students are bored by the theory and the lack of practical work in history courses. Add to that the issues history as a subject has in itself and that new methods need other conditions, be it in infrastructure, or the number of students. It's difficult to apply new methods in classes consisting of 40 students.⁵⁹

In some areas of Albania, it is not uncommon that one class consists of more than 35 students. Naturally this has a negative impact on the use of active, competence-based and learner-oriented methods of teaching and reaffirms traditional educational practices. Moreover, in the case of Albania the contrast is also strong between private and public schools.⁶⁰ On the other hand, private schools have been described by some teachers as more favourable surroundings for the use of participatory and active methods of learning. This seems to be closely related to smaller classes and better technical equipment.⁶¹

3.2.2. Perceived level of Democracy in Schools

Figure 10 presents teachers' perception of the level of democracy in the schools in which they teach. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 meant not at all and 5 meant very much), they were asked to assess 6 different aspects of democracy in practice: teaching staff participation in decision making, school management, participation of students and parents, but also the extent to which the diver-



⁵⁶ On why it is important to research teachers attitudes: OECD. *Teaching Practices, Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes* (Unknown: OECD Publishing, 2009)

⁵⁷ As proved by other research, school climate is positively correlated to teachers' commitment and efficient teaching; School Climate and Social-Emotional Learning: Predicting Teacher Stress, Job Satisfaction, and Teaching Efficacy Rebecca J. Collie, Jennifer D. Shapka, and Nancy E. Perry and Relationship of school climate dimensions and teachers' commitment Cammellia Othman, Jati Kasuma

⁵⁸ Stocktaking session Montenegro, facilitated by Dea Maric, Herceg Novi, December 3rd, 2016

⁵⁹ Focus group Albania, facilitated by Dea Maric, Tirana November 5th 2016

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid

sities are represented in their school, and what the status of students with special needs is. Since the statistical analysis shows there is good reason to consider these 6 items together, we created an index of perceived democracy in the school environment by averaging out the scores. The lowest level of democracy in schools is perceived by teachers in Macedonia (M=3,02) and the highest level in Montenegro (M=3,77). However, when we complement these results with results collected through qualitative methods, we get a less positive image. Teachers do not seem to witness a lot of democracy in practice in their schools.⁶²

They want cooperation with other entities, but they fear how schools or ministries will react.

(Cross-community cooperation, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

School principals make their own decisions because there are no official criteria.

(Decision-making process on employment, Montenegro)

Teachers point out different types of authoritarian management on the level of schools. This type of decision-making reflects itself on a wide scope of teacher and school related issues, from cross-school cooperation to professional development of teachers. Supportive and democratic school context is an important factor in shaping teaching practices. If policy makers and educational authorities wish to foster creative, critical and responsible history teaching, they should seek to ensure supportive and democratic teaching contexts.

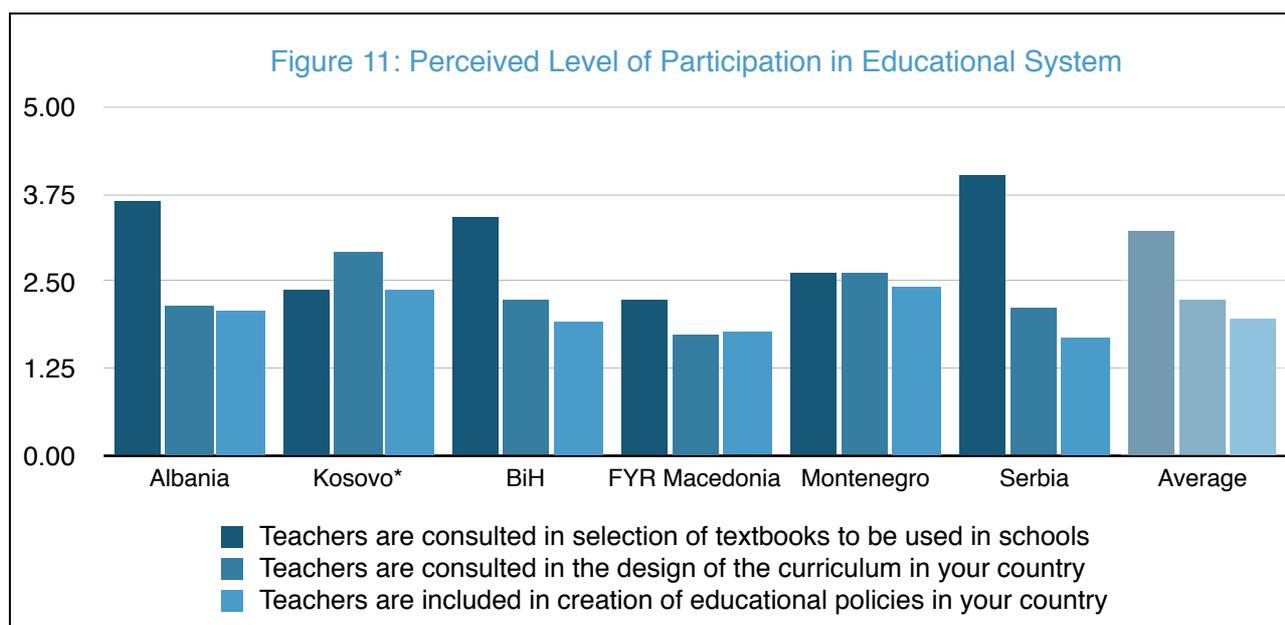
3.2.3. Perceived Level of Participation in Educational System

One of the most important aspects of teachers' position in school and educational system is the level of teachers' participation in various decision-making processes within the educational system. We assumed that practitioners' participation in a reform processes is very important both in shaping experience-based educational decisions, but also in putting forward changes of which the teachers will feel ownership.

Figure 11 presents teachers' responses to the following questions: (1) Teachers are included in the creation of educational policies on the national level, (2) Teachers are consulted by educational authorities on matters related to history curriculum and (3) Teachers are consulted in the selection of textbooks to be used in their school. Respondents perceive that they are consulted more in the choice of the textbooks than in the creation of educational policies and curriculum design. This suggests that the higher-level and more crucial the decision-making process is, the less consulted and included teachers are.

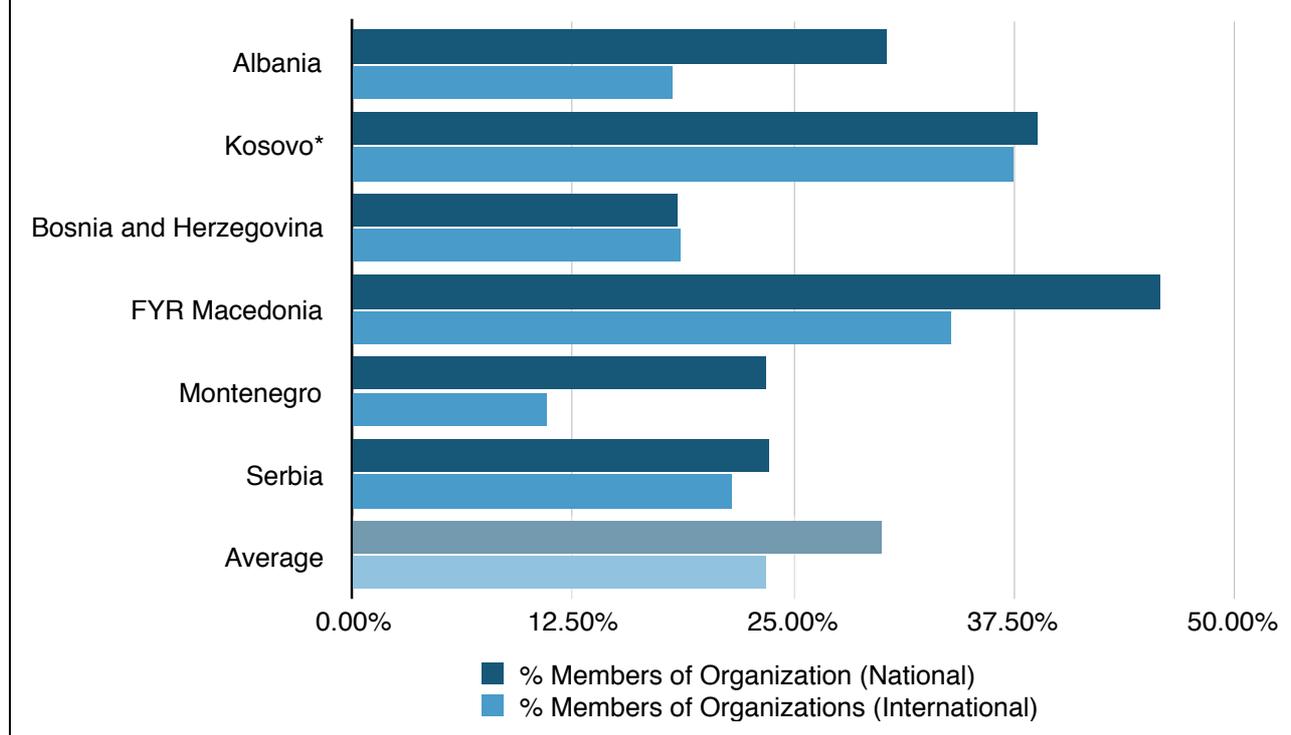
Another relevant indicator of teachers' participation is their involvement in organizations dealing with history teaching. On average, every third participant (30,08%) is a member of a national organization dealing with history teaching while every fifth participant (23,44%) is a member of an international organization dealing with history teaching. The biggest percentage of participants that are members of national organizations related to history teaching is found in FYR Macedonia (45,9%), and the biggest share of participating history teachers being

Figure 11: Perceived Level of Participation in Educational System



⁶² Stocktaking sessions facilitated by Dea Maric and/or Rodoljub Jovanovic (Stocktaking session Kosovo*, Pristina December 3rd, 2016; Stocktaking session Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo December 3rd 2016; Stocktaking session Albania, Tirana, November 5th 2016; Stocktaking session FYR Macedonia, Skopje November 5th 2016; Stocktaking session Montenegro, Herceg Novi, December 3rd 2016; Stocktaking session, Belgrade October 16th 2016)

Figure 12: Membership in the organizations dealing with history teaching



members of international associations on history education is that of Kosovo* (37,5%). These numbers indicate quite a big participation of teachers in associations related to history teaching and show that teachers are joining associations that work towards innovation of history teaching. At the same time, results on teachers' participation in different processes (Figure 11) in the educational system show that they do not feel included in strategic changes in the educational system. Taken together, these results suggest that there is a potential in teachers' motivation for working towards changes in history teaching which is not fully used in the educational system.

Seemingly authoritarian procedures have implications for the professional development of teachers, but also employment procedures and the design of extracurricular activities seem to play an important role. This raises further questions about the merit-base of employment procedures, foundations of decisions about professional development of teachers and their connection with teachers' needs. When it comes to decisions regarding cooperation with other schools, it is important to note that school principals can be a factor that hinders steps towards cross-community cooperation. Having in mind the scope of the principal's decision-making, the cautiousness of some teachers in engaging in innovative approaches seems very well founded.

⁶³ This report p. 6

⁶⁴ Christina Koulouri, *Clio in the Balkans: the politics of history education*. (Thessaloniki: Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, 2002)

3.3. Has the teaching paradigm changed?

History education in the Western Balkans has been a subject of many intergovernmental and non-governmental interventions and reform attempts in the past 20 years.⁶³ The intent to intervene and reform had to do with the following "diagnosis": History education in the Western Balkans was often described as serving to transmit one, ethnically shaped narrative of what had happened to *Us*, whereas *Others* featured in the story mainly as negative characters, oppressors, aggressors, suspicious foreigners and enemies.⁶⁴ Traditional methods of teaching were serving the purpose of passing on a ready-made narrative very well. Teachers were seen as transmitters and students as recipients of the story of *Us* through time. Questioning historical interpretations and learning how they are constructed and used was not seen as an aim nor systematically fostered through the means educational authorities had at hand.

Meanwhile, interventions and reforms towards more inclusive history education, and in general towards competence-based and learner-oriented education took place. Curricula were submitted to changes, textbook pluralism

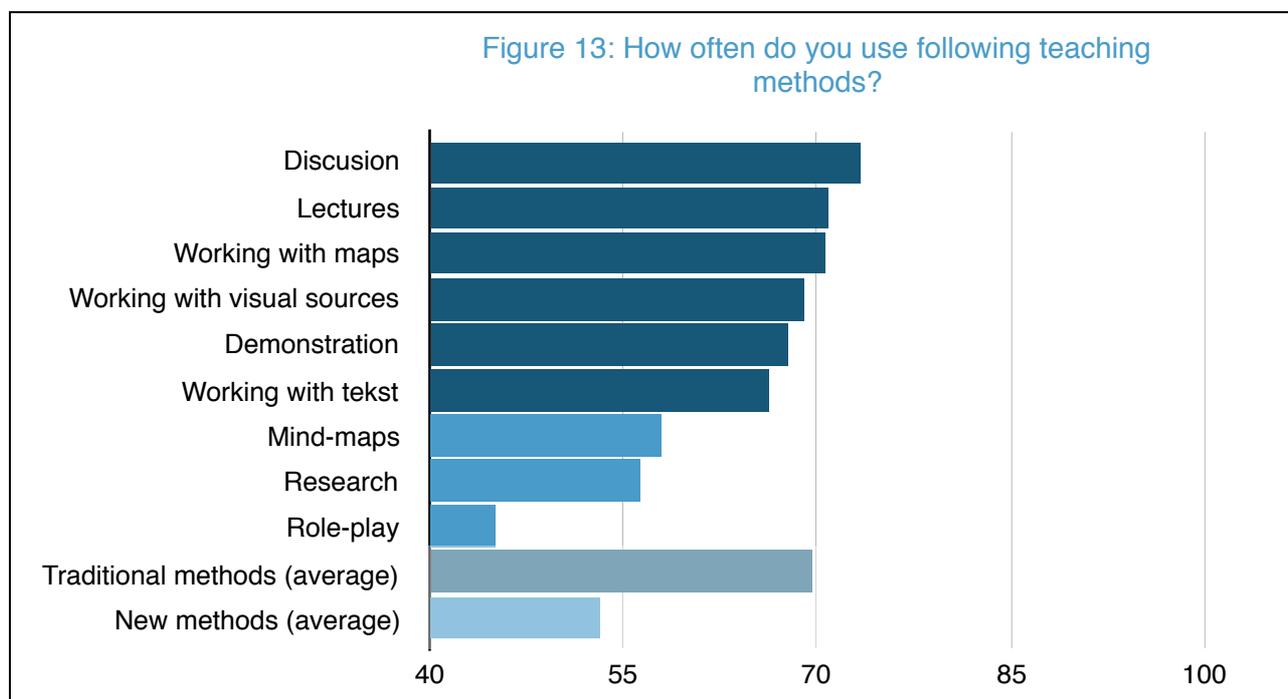
was introduced, in some countries teaching standards⁶⁵ and textbooks guidelines⁶⁶ were established, teacher trainings organized and attended, alternative and additional teaching materials produced.⁶⁷ But, how much of all this has made a change in regular, everyday teaching across the region? Can we trace the impact of competence-learner-oriented teaching- critical thinking agenda in the ways teachers perceive the purpose of their teaching and in the ways they actually teach?

In order to find out where we stand at this moment in relation to these issues, we asked teachers about the methods of teaching they use, the complexity of tasks given to students (based on a revised Bloom's taxonomy), (3) key competencies developed by history teaching as well as (4) teachers' ideas of how curricula and textbooks should be. We asked this, because we thought those factors might indicate the shift in the teaching paradigm. We believe that a shift towards more active learning methods is essential in learner-oriented education, and therefore we wanted to see which methods teachers use most often. Giving more complex tasks to students and teaching them how to accomplish such tasks is essential for developing critical and creative thinking and historical thinking in general, and thus we wanted to look into what kind of tasks teachers work on

with their students. Understanding that history education can contribute to the transversal and generic skills students need in contemporary society and working towards that goal is indicative of one's attitude towards a learner-oriented and inter-disciplinary approach in teaching. And that is why we explored teachers' perceptions of their history teaching in relation to key competencies as defined by the *European Framework for Key Competences in Lifelong Learning*. What kind of curricula teachers would like to follow and what kind of textbooks they would like to use in their classrooms are indicative of their understanding of the role and purpose of history education and, more importantly, of their understanding of professional autonomy and responsibility.

3.3.1. What methods and approaches of teaching do teachers use the most?

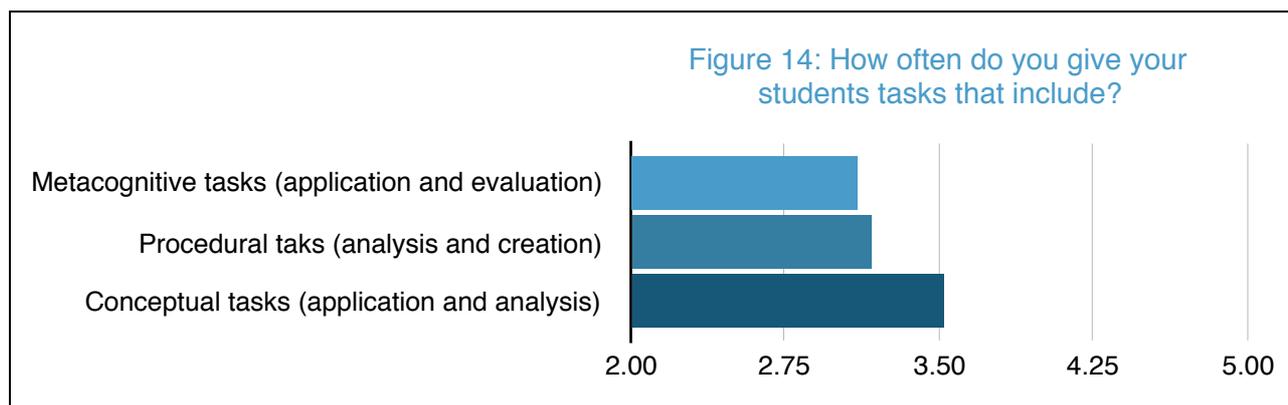
Figure 13 shows what methods teachers most often use in their everyday teaching. We can see that teachers use the first 6, more traditional methods (Discussion, Demonstration, Work with text, Work with map, Work with visual resources and Lecture) much more than the last 3, more active methods (Role play, Brainstorming and Research). The most traditional method: lecture is used most fre-



⁶⁵Република Србија Министарство просвете Завод за вредновање квалитета образовања и васпитања. *Образовни Стандарди За Крај Обавезног Образовања* (Belgrade: Министарство просвете Завод за вредновање квалитета образовања и васпитања, 2010), Република Србија. *Општи Стандарди Постигнућа За Крај Општег Средњег И Средњег Стручног Образовања И Васпитања У Делу Општеобразовних Предмета* (Belgrade: Завод За Вредновање Квалитета образовања И Васпитања, 2015)

⁶⁶ Expert Interviews facilitated by Dea Maric and/or Rodoljub Jovanovic (Expert interview Kosovo*, Pristina December 3rd, 2016; Expert interview Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo December 3rd 2016; Expert interview Albania, Tirana, November 5th 2016; Expert interview FYR Macedonia, Skopje November 5th 2016; Expert interview Montenegro, Herceg Novi, December 3rd 2016; Expert interview Serbia, Belgrade October 16th 2016)

⁶⁷ See p. 6 of this report



quently and another traditional method: demonstration is also used frequently. In terms of frequency, discussion is the next method used after lecture, which indicates more participation of students and thus implies a move towards more active methods of teaching and learning. Work with map, visuals and texts seem to be used relatively often which also indicates a somewhat more active participation of pupils in the learning process. On the other hand, the more engaging and challenging the methods are, the less frequent they seem to be used.

3.3.2. How often do history teachers give more complex tasks to students?

Categorization of tasks used in this question is based on the Revised Bloom's taxonomy.⁶⁸ We asked teachers how much they give higher order cognitive tasks addressing conceptual (application and analysis), procedural (analysis and creation), and metacognitive (applying and evaluating) knowledge.⁶⁹ We can see that the teachers most often give their students tasks that are more traditional: conceptual dimension of knowledge is more popular than procedural knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge is least popular. According to history education experts, higher order tasks of conceptual and procedural knowledge constitute the core of critical and creative thinking.⁷⁰ The more complex the tasks are, the less often teachers report giving them to their students. Procedural knowledge is essential in developing competencies that constitute the core part of didactic strivings. Critical thinking is mentioned in history teaching curricula in each of the respective countries and is prioritized in many international policy documents on history teaching. The metacognitive dimension of knowledge, or what is

often referred to as "learning how to learn", is the dimension of knowledge addressed the least in the teaching of our respondents. This data indicates that curricular expectations and recommendations are not fully met in everyday teaching. This, of course is the case very often to some extent, but these results rightfully raise the question if the application of critical thinking (foreseen by curricula in force) is at all present in classrooms of the Western Balkans.

3.3.3. Do teachers think their history teaching develops key competences?

Teachers were asked if they think their history teaching develops 4 out of 8 Key Competences as defined by the European Framework for Key Competences in Lifelong Learning. They report that Learning to learn and Social and Civic competencies are much less integrated in their teaching than the other two. These results complement the Chart on the type of tasks given to students by the teachers. Learning to learn, as a horizontal key competence, is not being developed in history classes, which corresponds to the result from the chart above where it is obvious that metacognitive tasks (aiming at teaching students how to learn efficiently) are given the least. These findings indicate that the current way in which history is taught in the Western Balkans has very few added values for students besides the subject specific knowledge they gain, which is not a very soothing notion in a fast-changing world and a shifting job market. Moreover, this makes the future position of history education in general education not very defensible, as it can be very hard to prove that history teaching practice contributes to what is often described as transversal or transferable skills.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Anderson, L. W. and Krathwohl, D. R., et al (Eds.) *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. (Boston, MA: Pearson Education Group, 2001)

⁶⁹ The category of tasks traditionally most popular with teachers - the factual dimension of knowledge - was left unexamined in the survey since we assumed it was the method used most frequently.

⁷⁰ Anderson, L. W. and Krathwohl, D. R., et al (Eds.) *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. (Boston, MA: Pearson Education Group, 2001)

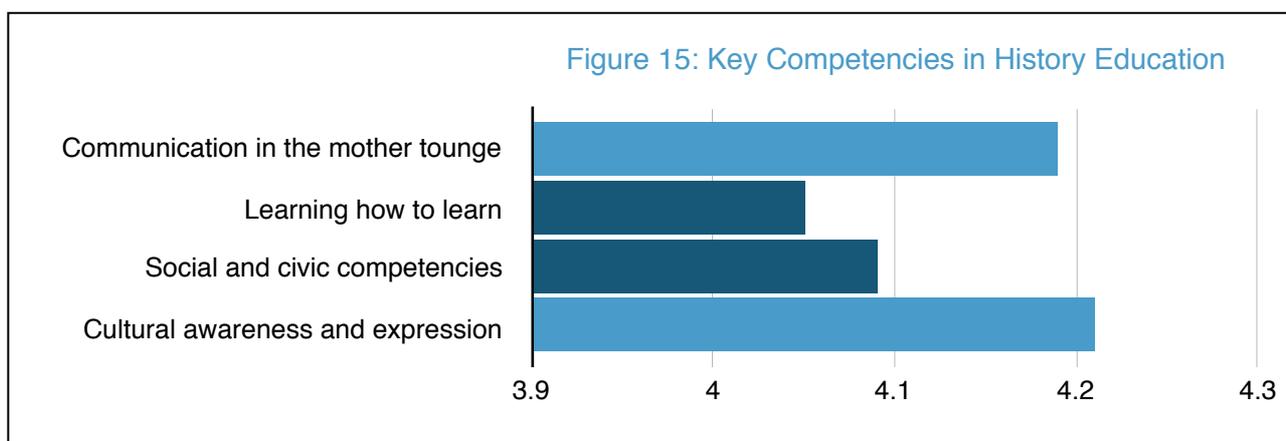
⁷¹ See for example World Economic Forum List of Skills that will be needed in the job market in 2020 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/> last accessed 10th of September 2017.

3.3.4. What kind of curricula and textbooks do teachers want?

History curricula in the Western Balkans are organized chronologically and are at the same time very prescriptive as regards content. The amount of content prescribed in curricula in the Western Balkans varies between 70 and 100%.⁷² On the other hand, curricula are abound with expectations of “interpretation of historic information in critical thinking with responsibility”⁷³, “scientifically confirmed knowledge of the past and present”, “better understand contemporary processes and phenomena”⁷⁴ “improvement of functional skills and competencies necessary for life in modern society (research skills, critical

take more time to implement precisely because of the “content drill”. When it comes to the textbooks, a large number of teachers would like them to contain more historical sources (83,0%) and more complex tasks for their students (64,3%). They would also want the language of the textbooks to be more impartial (55,3%) and would like to see more historical perspectives represented in the textbooks they use (65,4%).

Looking into results of our research into changes teachers want in their curricula and textbooks, specifically in relation to textbooks and curricula in use, we can reach some interesting conclusions. On one hand, teachers are



and creative thinking, and reasoning ability to express their own attitudes, understanding multiculturalism, development of tolerance and culture of argumentative dialogue)⁷⁵. But the amount of chronologically arranged content prescribed by these curricula is most likely one of the main obstacles for introducing methods and approaches that would develop such skills, foreseen in the very same curricula.

When we asked teachers about changes they would like to see in their curricula, 36,1% teachers said they would want their curricula to be more prescriptive when it comes to content to be taught. 40,3% believes that the curriculum should be more prescriptive in terms of methods and approaches, and 50,5% believes that the curriculum should be more prescriptive in terms of interpretations. This finding is very surprising in the context of the fact that the curricula in question are already very prescriptive and leaves very little freedom to teachers to introduce topics they would want to teach or methods that

obviously in favour of textbooks with more advanced didactical equipment, as they would want more historical sources students could work with and more challenging tasks to accompany those. They also recognize problems with emotional and inappropriate language. All that implies that they are leaning towards what we have described as a new learning paradigm, which focuses more on active learning and making history teaching focus on historical inquiry, and is in general more aware of the language used.

But adhering to that learning paradigm would also imply more autonomy for teachers, more freedom to choose appropriate topics and also freedom to choose which method and approach work best in which context for what purpose. Additionally, that learning paradigm would imply curricula centered on appropriate interpretations, openness to many interpretations, and a dedication to understanding where and how diverse interpretations come from. And our respondents seem to want quite the opposite. We believe the reason for this may lie in the

⁷² A slight deviation to this appears in case of Kosovo* where new curricula that is currently being piloted offers more possibilities for thematic approach.

⁷³ Albania, Expert interview by Dea Maric, Tirana, November 5th 2016

⁷⁴ FYR Macedonia, Expert interview by Rodoljub Jovanovic, Ohrid November 5th 2016

⁷⁵ Expert interview Serbia by Dea Maric and Rodoljub Jovanovic, Belgrade 16th October 2016

history of educational systems of this area, where prescriptiveness has featured as one of the characteristics for at least 70 years, if not more. Teachers may therefore seek shelter in knowing exactly what to do and how. Does that imply they would sacrifice autonomy for the sake of feeling secure and assured of what they do? This is yet another question. How this effects the changes in how history is taught and the prospect of future reforms might be of more importance.

3.4 Difficult Topics

How difficult historical topics⁷⁶ are addressed and dealt with has been studied from different disciplinary angles.⁷⁷ What role is attributed to history education and how is this role appropriated by history educators when it comes to transmitting, contesting or deconstructing narratives of painful and traumatic past events? In relation to sensitive events, history education can take up a role of teaching about complexity instead of promoting simplified interpretations and can constitute itself as a platform for challenging bias and manipulation and in that way contribute to overcoming legacies of difficult pasts.⁷⁸ In order to understand if and how the role attributed to history education is appropriated, a broader educational and socio-political context needs to be explored further. Recent experiences of oppression and violence are traditionally seen as topics very difficult to teach. Some studies have already looked into how these experiences were represented in curricula and textbooks across the region.⁷⁹ As a consequence of international policy efforts attuned to the latest disciplinary trends, certain changes were made in textbook representations of these events⁸⁰ and to some extent also in curricula⁸¹. Moreover, different activities were implemented with the goal of giving history ed-

ucation experts and practitioners opportunities to approach these topics, be it through sharing approaches to difficult topics, or be it through directly addressing these topics.⁸² One of the aims of this study was to explore what influences teachers' choice of their approach to difficult topics. Firstly, we wanted to collect their experiences on topics they found difficult to teach in their classrooms. Secondly, we wanted to see if they avoid or still choose to teach the topics detected as difficult. In the end, we wanted to explore what shapes teachers' strategies in approaching difficult topics in the classroom. For that purpose, we used elements of the Risk-taking model of approaching difficult topics that explores teachers' perception of the social utility of history education and their strategies of avoiding or teaching the topic in a specific way. This model sheds a light on different factors that shape the way teachers approach this matter, from personal characteristics and school context to curricular and other expectations.⁸³

3.4.1. What topics are difficult to teach across the Western Balkans?

We wanted to explore which topics teachers find hard to deal with in their classrooms. Therefore, we asked them two questions: (1) Which topics stated in your curriculum do you find difficult to teach and (2) Which topic(s) not foreseen by your curriculum do you find difficult to teach. Our respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia found that the most difficult topic to teach is the topic of wars in the 1990-ies. This topic is perceived as the hardest curricular topic and hardest non-curricular topic. Having in mind how devastating these wars were in these countries as well as all the contemporary political uses, abuses and disputes connected to these experiences, this response is to be expected.

⁷⁶ This term is used as synonymous to sensitive and controversial topics as topics that are not only historically controversial but also engage emotions and traumas in contemporary society.

⁷⁷ Jovana Mihajlovic Trbovc. *Public Narratives of the Past in the Framework of Transitional Justice Processes: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, PhD thesis, (Ljubljana 2014), Fond Otvoreno drustvo Bosna i Hercegovina. *Obrazovanje u Bosni i Hercegovini: Cemu ucimo djecu? Analiza sadrzaja udzbenika nacionalne grupe predmeta*, (Sarajevo: Fond Otvoreno drustvo Bosna i Hercegovina, 2017)

⁷⁸ Jovana Mihajlovic Trbovc. *Public Narratives of the Past in the Framework of Transitional Justice Processes: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, PhD thesis, (Ljubljana 2014),

⁷⁹ Christina Koulouri, *Clio in the Balkans: the politics of history education*. (Thessaloniki: Center for democracy and reconciliation in Southeast Europe, 2002) Fond Otvoreno drustvo Bosna i Hercegovina. *Obrazovanje u Bosni i Hercegovini: Cemu ucimo djecu? Analiza sadrzaja udzbenika nacionalne grupe predmeta*, (Sarajevo: Fond Otvoreno drustvo Bosna i Hercegovina, 2017)

⁸⁰ On working towards and developing textbook guidelines in BiH, see: Reform in the Field of History in Education Bosnia and Herzegovina Modernization of History Textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Heike Karge and Katarina Batarilo. *From the Withdrawal of Offensive Material from Textbooks in 1999 to the New Generation of Textbooks in 2007/2008*. (Braunschweig: The Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, 2008)

⁸¹ Expert interviews Kosovo, Pristina December 3rd, 2016, Expert interview Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo December 3rd 2016 Expert interview Albania, Tirana, November 5th 2016

⁸² See p. 6 of this report

⁸³ Alison Kitson and Alan McCully. "You hear about it for real in school." Avoiding, containing and risk-taking in the history classroom" *Teaching History*", Vol. 120, London (2005), 32-37.

But why do teachers perceive this topic to be in and out of the curriculum at the same time? We believe this can be explained by curricular treatment of the topic. Curricula in these countries prescribe the topic but do not foster or recommend engaging with any controversies arising from it. If not willing to deal with these, teachers engage in several different strategies. One is connected to the large amount of content prescribed by the curriculum. Having this in mind and the fact that these topics are among the last ones in curricula, it is very often that teachers avoid the topic as a whole. Another strategy is simply teaching these topics while avoiding all the difficult issues about them.

When it comes to curriculum prescribed topics, the results from Albania, Kosovo* and FYR Macedonia differ from the results from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. In Albania, the French revolution is the topic most difficult to teach, with the Enver Hoxha Communist regime being the second most difficult topic to address in the classroom. In Kosovo*, the hardest topic is the Middle Ages and the second hardest is contemporary history. In Macedonia, the Middle Ages and the Second World War are the hardest topics to teach. When it comes to topics not addressed by curriculum, Macedonian teachers name the Macedonian conflict in 2001. As the hardest topic Albanian teachers name the fall of the Communist regime, and Kosovar teachers name Holocaust. The results coming from Albania, Kosovo* and FYR Macedonia in this section could suggest which different strategies teachers engage in, but because of the small sample sizes we will refrain from making conclusions without additional research.

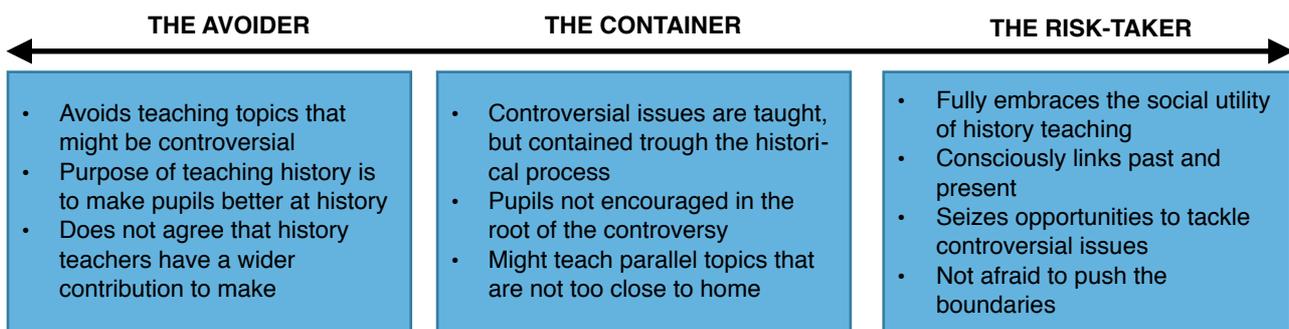
3.4.2. The Risk-taking model of approaching difficult topics in history teaching

In our exploration of the approaches history teachers in the Western Balkans make in regard to difficult topics in their everyday teaching, we applied the model developed in the course of a similar research done in Northern Ireland.⁸⁴

This model brings a continuum of risk-taking that outlines differing approaches to sensitive and controversial topics in the classroom. On one end of the continuum is the avoider type of educator, representing avoidance of any controversies and issues that might spark fierce discussion and emotional reactions of students in the classroom (See Figure 16). Contrary to this and on the other end of the continuum, the risk-taker educator seizes opportunities to refer to contemporary uses and abuses of history and embrace the social role of history. In the middle of the continuum are the teachers that deal with controversies but only through their historical dimension, that way containing the discussion and steering away from topics that could be emotional. This model also looks into teachers' perception of the purpose of history teaching and their choice of the approach, stating that teachers who think history teaching has to make a contribution to wider society and play a role in the contemporary world are the ones who take the risks and bring in difficult issues precisely to engage with their historical and social roots. The ones who completely avoid these kind of issues are the ones thinking history education should solely be focused on learning about the past.

Based on the descriptions of specific behaviors of teachers taking one of the three roles we developed a 10-item Likert type seven-point scale. Teachers were asked to assess the extent to which their everyday teaching could be described in a certain way (example item: I seize opportunities to tackle controversial issues). Since the statistical analysis showed there is good reason to consider the 4 items describing risk-taker behavior together, we created an index of risk-taking by averaging out these scores. In this way, we were able to see the connection between the roles teachers take up in the classroom (avoider, container, risk-taker) and various characteristics of their everyday practice. Moreover, we wanted to see which of the teachers' characteristics are connected to taking risks.

Figure 16: Continuum of risk-taking, Kitson and McCully, 2005



⁸⁴ Alison Kitson and Alan McCully. "You hear about it for real in school." Avoiding, containing and risk-taking in the history classroom" *Teaching History*", Vol. 120, London (2005), 32-37.

The teachers who tend to see themselves more as moderators in the learning process, more often see themselves as educators, innovators and researchers. They perceive themselves more often as members of the school team, partners of external organizations and participants in the cultural life of the community. In their teaching they focus more on conceptual and metacognitive dimensions of knowledge, and put more emphasis on developing their students' social and civic competencies. They are more focused on the needs of their students and aware of the influence of the political context on their teaching. These teachers see the curriculum as less prescriptive and do not follow their textbooks to such a large extent. Furthermore, they try out new approaches or methods, they are more often members of CSOs, and it is more likely that they took part in a project related to innovation of history education. A certain risk-taker profile emerges from this descriptive analysis. Being a risk taker is connected to different aspects of teachers' everyday practice: their approach to teaching materials, cooperation with civil society actors, and their participation in professional development opportunities across different training providers. Additionally, male teachers are more often risk takers, so are the less religious and further educated teachers.

3.4.3. Does history education have a wider contribution to make?

According to the Kitson and McCully model, teachers who agree that the only purpose of history education is to learn about history do not engage in teaching controversial issues (avoiders). Almost 60% of the Western Balkan teachers who participated in the survey do not agree with this statement (59,5%). Also, 86% teachers agree that history teachers should have a wider contribution to society. According to this model, those respondents fully acknowledge the social utility of history education, which is predictive for those teachers to bring in and address sensitive issues in the classrooms. However, only 43,9% of our respondents actually seize opportunities to tackle controversial topics. Teachers in the Western Balkans seem to be very aware of the social role of history education.

(...) I think we should be extra careful with these topics, because we should transfer the content to children without transferring the hate, to teach them how to be cosmopolitan (...)⁸⁵

Yet, this does not seem to be predictive of them engaging with controversies in their classrooms. The following quotes may shed additional light on why this is the case.

I would like to come back to the history textbooks and add that they are filled with contradictions (...) you do not always know how to explain this to students, whether there is one truth, whether there is a second or third one etc.⁸⁶

I also have the experience that pupils ask if we will deal with the period of the recent war, but it is easiest for me to avoid that subject and tell them that the subject is not in the teaching plan and program, but soon will be. But I have the impression that most of the pupils know something about the war, they hear the stories in the families, I do not believe that they don't. I simply try to avoid it. I think that we need time to pass.⁸⁷

The findings show that some teachers feel very uncomfortable with teaching the most contentious topic in their society. Some of them choose to either completely avoid the topic of the recent wars while others tackle the issues arising from the recent wars (individual instead of collective guilt, respect for diversity) through other topics (Holocaust, the Second World War).

3.4.4. Others and difficult topics

We believe that there are certain additional factors worth outlining when discussing the position and treatment of difficult topics in history education. Topics recognized as difficult to teach across the Western Balkans in this study are topics of conflicts with other political, ethnic, or religious groups and sufferings that resulted from them.

⁸⁵ Focus group FYR Macedonia, facilitated by Rodoljub Jovanovic, Ohrid, November 26th

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Focus group Bosnia and Herzegovina, facilitated by Dea Maric and Rodoljub Jovanovic, Sarajevo December 9th 2016.

This is surely the case of war events of the 1990-ies in BiH, Serbia and Montenegro, and in the case of FYR Macedonia concerning the war in 2001. In the Western Balkans societies, issues of victims and victimhood are mostly observed and discussed through collective, ethnic glasses. This produces ethnic master narratives⁸⁸ void of any perspective from across ethnic boundaries.⁸⁹ Having said that, the treatment of the others in history education seems to be burdened even more. In curricula and textbooks, minorities are predominantly mentioned as a separate entity and mostly in terms of cultural heritage.⁹⁰ Moreover, in Albania, Kosovo*, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia minorities are entitled to have their own (or at least partly) curricula and in most cases even the textbooks they use are produced in the country in which the minority of this country is the majority.⁹¹ In the case of two schools under one roof in Bosnia and Herzegovina⁹², the gap between our and their history, taught in separate classes, is even more evident. The case of FYR Macedonia is a bit more complicated. Although there are common history textbooks (translated to both languages) containing both Macedonian and Albanian narratives of the past, following quotes bring interesting insights into how idea of ‘common’ history plays out in teaching practice.

*To be clear, there is the same textbook, which is in Albanian and Macedonian language, but whether I bring some additional material to the class or tell students more about certain topics, it depends on me . . .*⁹³

*I have not seen Albanian history textbook, but I know that you [referring to Albanian focus group participant] are learning your own national history, and I think this is wrong. In the textbooks in the Macedonian language I'm teaching sections on Albanian history and I have no problem to speak about the Prizren League, etc.*⁹⁴

Research done in other post-conflict areas suggests that when teachers teach in mixed classes, they will be more likely to link the past to the present, to challenge all partial and biased narratives and in general to confront roots of controversies.⁹⁵ The given context of divided school systems is thus not only hindering contact and understanding across ethnic boundaries, but also making responsible, multi-perspective and critical approaches to sensitive and controversial issues less likely.

Overall, it is clear that addressing controversial and sensitive topics should go hand in hand with including minority as well as outgroup perspectives in the curricula. The two are inseparable in any meaningful future effort towards creating history education capable of fostering peace and democracy.

⁸⁸ Jean-François Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (University Press Minnesota, 1984), Brian D. Behnken and Simon Wendt. *Crossing boundaries: Ethnicity, Race and National Belonging in a Transnational World*, (Lexington books, 2013), Vjeron Katunarić. *Sporna Zajednica - Novije Teorije O Naciji I Nacionalizmu*. (Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk & Hrvatsko sociološko društvo, 2003).

⁸⁹ This phenomenon was already explored by several scholars, the last one qualifying it as Collective and Competitive Victimhood as Identity in Former Yugoslavia

⁹⁰ See also: Fond Otvoreno društvo Bosna i Hercegovina. *Obrazovanje u Bosni i Hercegovini: Cemu ucimo djecu? Analiza sadržaja udžbenika nacionalne grupe predmeta*. (Sarajevo: Fond Otvoreno društvo Bosna i Hercegovina, 2007)

⁹¹ Albania Expert interview Tirana, November 5th 2016, Serbia Expert interview, Belgrade October 16th 2016, Macedonia Expert interview, Ohrid November 5th 2016

⁹² “Two schools under one roof” is a term commonly used in BiH for divided schooling of Croatian and Bosniak pupils as it takes place in Federation in BiH. On the basis of the schooling language chosen (Bosniak or Croatian), students take “Bosniak” or “Croatian” classes. Divided classes often take place in the same school, which is where the “under one roof” term comes from. For more on this, see for example: “Segregated Bosnian schools reinforce ethnic divisions” <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/segregated-bosnian-schools-reinforce-ethnic-division> Accessed on September 23 2017. And “Divided schools in BH” UNICEF BH 2009. https://www.unicef.org/bih/Divided_schools_in_BHWEB_1.pdf

⁹³ Albanian focus group participant, Focus group FYR Macedonia facilitated by Rodoljub Jovanovic, Ohrid, November 26th

⁹⁴ Macedonian focus group participant, Focus group FYR Macedonia facilitated by Rodoljub Jovanovic, Ohrid, November 26th

⁹⁵ Alison Kitson and Alan McCully. “You hear about it for real in school.” Avoiding, containing and risk-taking in the history classroom” *Teaching History*, Vol. 120, London (2005), 32-37.

4. Discussion & Conclusions

This research has explored several aspects of history teaching in the Western Balkans, ranging from history teachers' education, to their everyday teaching. One of the aims of this needs assessment was precisely to collect practitioners' experiences and their perceptions of these issues. These findings can help outline weaknesses and strengths of the system as well as inform directions of future reforms of the system.

Initial Teacher Training, Employment & Professional Development in Practice

It was found that study programs (ITT) for future history teachers in Western Balkans, even though perceived as useful by most of the teachers, contain a low proportion of pedagogical, didactical and practice-oriented courses, and history teachers would like to add precisely more courses on these subjects to their teacher education. Equipped with this content-oriented knowledge history teachers across the Western Balkans face employment criteria that are unclear and employment procedures that are non-transparent. The process, often perceived as unfair, leaves space for nepotism and corruption as well as a considerable interference by politicians in the employment situation. Once they have got a job, opportunities for professional development of history teachers provided by educational authorities are seen as non-adequate, while the system of teachers' advancement leaves a lot of space for improvement, especially when it comes to quality assurance. Teachers often turn to non-governmental organizations along with other non-state training providers who seem to be playing an important role in teacher training since the teachers seem to perceive these training courses as more useful than the ones organized by educational authorities.

Teachers in Schools and Educational Systems

When it comes to what determines history teaching practice, some teachers stated that infrastructural preconditions for participatory and active methods of learning are not met. This applies not only to technical equipment, but

even more importantly to big number of students per class. Authoritative forms of decision making in a wide scope of teacher- and school-related issues are not uncommon and this is seen as a factor that hinders innovation, cross-community and cross-school cooperation. Similarly, a large majority of teachers support more cooperation with CSO's and the local community. They see their involvement in decision- and policy-making as very low. Their participation is especially perceived as low in cases of long term and higher impact educational processes and changes. More democracy on the level of schools and more participation of teachers in this respect might lead both to more experience-based educational policies and to creating a sense of ownership among teachers.

Has the teaching paradigm changed?

Teachers report using traditional methods the most, but some participatory methods are also used relatively frequently. There is definitely a shift in terms of methods used, but more traditional methods still prevail. Active methods of learning such as research and role-play seem to be used less frequently in history lessons compared to more traditional methods. Teachers state that the amount of content they have to cover is what prevents them the most from trying out new methods and approaches in their everyday teaching. On the other hand teachers seem to try out conceptual, procedural and metacognitive strategies, along with traditionally important factual knowledge. However, the more complex the tasks are, the less frequently teachers seem to give them to their students. This means that the tasks crucial for developing critical and creative thinking are also given very rarely. Having in mind that these tasks are included in the curricula of all respective countries, it is highly unlikely they are met in teaching practice. When it comes to history textbooks, teachers would want them to bring more historical sources and be written in a language less emotional than the one used in their current textbooks.

History teachers report using less traditional methods in their work. They report putting focus on different aspects of historical thinking in their teaching and wish for less biased textbooks. However, even with curricula extremely prescriptive as the ones in their region are, they would want them to be more prescriptive. This raises further questions about the foundations of teachers' aspirations, about their understanding of the purpose of history teaching and consequently about the change in the teaching paradigm. Teachers that see history teaching as learner-oriented and competence-based would benefit from a less prescriptive curriculum, which would leave more freedom and opportunities for teachers to choose the topics, methods and approaches for reaching the educational outcomes they decide on. Adhering to this teaching paradigm would also imply teaching about interpretations rather than wanting a curriculum prescriptive in terms of interpretations.

This indicates some conflicting attitudes of teachers. Certain changes in teachers' approach to their history teaching are evident. Methods they use include some participation and active involvement of students. They use relatively complex tasks but do not value developing transversal skills as much or work towards developing skills of critical and creative thinking. They acknowledge problems with representations of *Others* in their textbooks and their didactical equipment. However, their reluctance to operate in a more open curriculum indicates a more traditional understanding of their role as well as of the underlying purpose of history education in general. Further research is needed in order to understand why this is the case. In relation to other findings in this research, preliminary interpretations indicate that this might be explained by teachers' reluctance to seize more autonomy and responsibility in incoherent and non-consequent systems.

Difficult Topics

In our exploration of approaches to difficult topics in teaching practice across the Western Balkans, we used a model established in a different socio-political context for the purpose of exploring different approaches to these topics and examining factors that shape teachers' choice of approaches to this matter.⁹⁶ Both teachers' personal characteristics and characteristics of their everyday teaching proved to play a role in shaping choices of teaching strategies on difficult topics. Many teachers in this area feel reluctant to teach these contentious topics. Some of them either choose to completely avoid explicitly or implicitly referring to it in their teaching (avoiders). Others choose to teach other historical topics that in some way resonate with the difficult topic (containers). For example those teachers teach about Holocaust and put focus on concepts related to Holocaust that can be applied to understanding the recent conflict (stated to be the most difficult topic to teach). They then introduce distinctions such as, for example, individual guilt vs. collective responsibility which they would want their students to apply when thinking about the recent conflict. They do not, however, address the transposition of these concepts from one (less contentious) to another (more contentious) historical event.

On the other hand, a certain number of our respondents report bringing in and addressing the most difficult topics in their classroom with the intention of dealing with the roots of controversy and having a full awareness of emotional fallouts that might arise from it (risk-takers). Our analysis also shows that choosing to approach these topics in such a way is connected to certain perceptions of the teachers' roles and their teaching practice as well as some personal characteristics. Teachers who see themselves as moderators, innovators and re-

searchers, members of the school team, partners of external organizations, and participants in the cultural life of the community are more likely to be risk-takers. Teachers who report taking risks in their classrooms see their practice as less determined by curricula and textbooks. They seize opportunities for professional development wherever they occur (teacher trainings provided by educational authorities and teacher trainings provided by NGOs) and seem to acknowledge the role of CSOs in education and want to cooperate with them more often.

Curricular expectations are contradictory, with a clear ethnic bias and often offering only one interpretation of the events and at the same time with the aim of fostering critical thinking and preparing future citizens for understanding and valourizing bias and interpretations. This draws a very complicated educational context. Divided school systems, present in some cases, bring even more challenges for going beyond exclusive and divided narratives. This, of course, further hinders risk-taking efforts. The Kitson McCully model is a valuable tool for examining teachers' approaches to difficult topics. What makes these topics difficult are emotionally charged conflicting interpretations. Teachers can decide to leave dissonance and contradiction aside by teaching in a biased and simplified way. This approach tends to further build divisions in society. Further research should be done to look into what motivates these types of teaching strategies, but we can see that there are no clear and consequent curricular demands preventing this type of history teaching in the Western Balkans. Moreover, the educational outcomes of history education on these topics in terms of students' knowledge, skills and attitudes also deserve to be studied in a thorough, systemic way.

⁹⁶ Alison Kitson and Alan McCully. "You hear about it for real in school." Avoiding, containing and risk-taking in the history classroom" *Teaching History*", Vol. 120, London (2005), 32-37.

5. Recommendations

- ✓ Future reforms should be all-encompassing, systemic and interconnected as they need to tackle initial teacher training, curricula, textbooks, employment procedures, professional development opportunities and advancement mechanisms, decision-making and different aspects of democracy on the level of schools, teachers' participation in the educational systems, as well as supervision and support in teaching practice.
- ✓ Better cooperation between educational authorities, teachers and civil society on issues of educational policies, teacher training, developing educational tools and introducing educational reforms, as the findings show there is often a lack of communication and joint effort on these issues.
- ✓ Developing Initial Teacher Training study programs that will adequately prepare students for their teaching practice. In this respect, more focus should be put on pedagogical and history didactics courses and teaching practice.
- ✓ Employment criteria for (history) teachers should be merit- and qualification-based while employment procedures should be made transparent. Special attention should be given to extermination of nepotism and corruption in the context of employment of new (history) teachers.
- ✓ Independent and unbiased measures for quality assurance of state and non-state organized teacher trainings should be introduced. Accreditation mechanisms should be based on the assured quality of trainings. There is a substantial quality in some trainings provided by non-state providers. This offers potential for cooperation and coordination between different training providers and relevant authorities which should be used to meet teachers' professional development needs in a substantial way.
- ✓ A minimum of teaching conditions (technical equipment and number of students per class) should be ensured within countries, as they are preconditions of participatory and active methods of learning.
- ✓ Special attention should be given to establishing democratic and merit-based principles in a wide scope of teacher and school related issues as authoritarian and non-transparent procedures hinder innovation, cross-community and cross-school cooperation.
- ✓ Our findings suggest that there is capacity and motivation among teachers to participate in and take ownership of processes related to innovation of history teaching across the Western Balkans that are not fully used in educational systems. If used more extensively, this potential can help inform experience-based policies.
- ✓ Certain changes towards more use of participatory and active methods of teaching and learning are evident. There is, however, a strong need to work towards teaching strategies that aim at developing critical and creative thinking skills, social and civic competences of students and learning how to learn in history education.
- ✓ Competence-based, learner-oriented and more open history curricula with a clear and consequent commitment to established aims and goals of history education should be introduced. New curricula should be followed by history textbooks reflecting this kind of curricula. A special focus should be put on the language used and depictions of Others in the curricula.
- ✓ Our findings show that teachers need further support in teaching difficult topics through consequent educational policies reflected in curricula, textbooks, and a supportive and democratic teaching environment. More pre-service and in-service teacher training on these topics, and possible teaching strategies on these topics should be organized. In dedicated teacher training courses, a special focus should be put on prioritizing and developing more complex cognitive and affective tasks for students.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in South-East Europe (CDRSEE) and EUROCLIO, the European Association of History Educators, in close cooperation with the History Teachers Associations (HTAs) in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo*, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, came together in 2016 for a new long-term initiative entitled ePACT, an Educational Partnership for Advocacy, Capacity-building and Transformation.

ePACT is a joint initiative of two experienced civil society organizations and their wider constituencies. This initiative builds on all past achievements by enhancing sustainable partnerships for systemic change in education. Practitioners and policy makers contribute to new regional cooperation and enhance capacity for both reform and implementation.

ePACT calls for new reform strategies for evidence-based curricula, increased capacity for training and implementation at the classroom level, as well as regional advocacy and cooperation. The method to achieve these objectives also includes input from standing working groups, outreach and monitoring of capacity building, and the production of a multi-stakeholder needs assessment, which this report will address.

CDRSEE, EUROCLIO and History Teachers Associations (HTAs) in the region have worked for over two decades on improving regional cooperation on history education. They have created additional resources, reviewed existing curricula, supported and conducted research on a myriad of issues connected to history education, but never have they asked the history teachers themselves, on this scale, about their experiences, their needs and their perceptions.

It is important to acknowledge that addressing the issue of history education does not feature high on national agendas.⁹⁷ This is largely due to the reality that, in light of the European Union's accession process, Western Balkan countries are required to achieve a wider set of reforms which involve complex resolutions of several bilateral and multilateral issues in order to satisfy European Union stipulations. Nevertheless, we believe there is ample opportunity to move forward in the field of history education; which can be seen as an example of advanced regional cooperation between civil society and decision makers across Europe and the Western Balkan.

⁹⁷ European Commission. *Commission Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the 2016 EU Enlargement Policy*. COM(2016) 715 final. Brussels, 2016.



WITH FUNDING FROM
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