

**History, heritage and citizenship education for promoting
citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance
and non-discrimination**



HELSINGOR DECLARATION

*European History Educators' joint response to the 17 March 2015 declaration
by the Education Ministers of the European Union*

Introduction

The declaration of the EU Education ministers entitled “Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education” (dd. Paris, 17 March 2015) draws direct attention to the immediate challenge of social cohesion, citizenship and non-discrimination in Europe today.

EUROCLIO very much welcomes this renewed emphasis on citizenship and values, which are fundamental in constructing education for key competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes), in particular social and civic competences.

The expressed commitments in the Paris declaration to strengthen the actions to address these challenges are very promising and should be acted upon.

History, and the way in which it is taught in schools, has been identified as an important area in the development of inclusive, peaceful and democratic societies. Ministers of Education at the Council of Europe have issued several [recommendations](#) affirming this.

On 20-25 April 2015, the Association brought together 157 history, heritage and citizenship educators, many of which being representatives of larger associations and civil society organisations, as well as experts and representatives of inter-governmental organisations from over 40 countries to draft a common response to the EU Education Ministers’ declaration.

The occasion was the 22nd Annual Professional Development and Training Conference “Roads to Democracy: Can History Teaching Pave the Way?” in Helsingor, Denmark, which EUROCLIO organised together with the Danish History Teachers’ Association.

The conference was part of EUROCLIO’s International Training Programme that provides opportunities for professional development for history, heritage and citizenship educators from all over the EU and beyond and supports implementation of Lifelong Learning as identified in Erasmus+, Education and Training 2020, the EU key-competences for lifelong learning and more relevant European policies in the area related to the Digital Agenda and Neighbourhood policies.

The declaration was drafted following two preparatory conference days, including key-note lectures on responsible history education and the role of history education in advancing open and democratic societies in Europe today and practitioners’ workshops on best practices in history and citizenship education. A full-morning world cafe session in which all participants were able to constructively analyse and discuss the ministerial statements resulted in the following identification of needs, proposal for actions and suggested ways forward.

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Needs

With regard to the statements made by the EU Education Ministers on the role of education, we urge the educational authorities in Europe to promote policies, strategies and actions in Education that:

1. **Put intercultural dialogue at the core of the mission, vision and action of schools**, as a pathway to instil respect for diversity, democracy and mutual understanding.
2. **Build students' capacity to reflect on their own social, cultural and temporal position in society** in order to think critically and tolerate, accept and respect 'others' in society.
3. **Increase students' capacity to deal with differences of opinions** and help them to deal with emotions (while not 'dictating good values' or 'aggravating students' negative perceptions) and being sensitive to context (on the level of school and society).
4. **Support students' capacity to think critically in the digital world** through learning about the challenges and opportunities of how information and opinions are expressed online.
5. **Rethink education from a cultural paradigm of cooperation and quality** rather than competition and excellence as the sole road to success.
6. **Bridge (historical) narratives** promoted by parents, society and politics while appreciating that diversity should be beyond commonality.
7. **Centralise all key-competences for lifelong learning** (knowledge, skills and attitudes), with a focus on the social and civic competences, into current assessment frameworks.
8. **Give teachers enough time to actually teach** instead of making them increasingly responsible for management (control, inspection and reportage) and accountability (evaluation and standardised testing).

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Actions

History, heritage and citizenship educators and education policy makers should address the needs identified above through collaborative action in the field of:

1. **Development of new educational tools and resources** that:
 - a. Include historical perspectives on the causes and consequences of inequality.
 - b. Instil a critical understanding of the instrumentalisation of history in the public debate.
 - c. Empower students to apply learned historical consciousness for daily use, also outside the classroom.
 - d. Support schools in conducting and hosting public discussions on equality and racism.
 - e. Highlight interdisciplinarity on dealing with critical and analytical evidence-based interpretation and argumentation in the context of intercultural dialogue.
 - f. Address gaps identified by research into existing educational tools and resources, including textbooks when it comes to diversity and discrimination.

2. **Reform, tuning and adaptation of official curricula and examination frameworks** so that they:
 - a. Highlight shared histories across national, cultural, ethnic and religious divides in order to foster students' cross-border mindset.
 - b. Offer educators flexibility in choosing themes and topics in order to balance between content and competences and connect better to current affairs and how they are addressed on social media.
 - c. Offer educators' communities (associations, networks, etc) ownership and responsibility for quality of education.
 - d. Support inclusion of family-level history and relate what is taught in the classroom to students' own social and cultural backgrounds.
 - e. Implement a general course (separated from subjects) on critical thinking.

3. **Networking and dialogue** of history, heritage and citizenship educators with:
 - a. Educators from across Europe from different social and cultural backgrounds in order to further define what actually "common values" are.
 - b. Policy makers, civil society organisations and experts in the field of education, culture and social cohesion, to bridge the gaps between policies and maximise the role of schools and teachers.
 - c. Local civil society, including social entrepreneurs, fundraisers and cultural managers to boost the impact of education at the community level.
 - d. Families that established large multi-national firms to highlight their migrant background as a success story with significant legacy.

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Requirements

The actions identified above can be addressed through increased investment, on local, national and European levels in new and/or more:

1. **Facilities for teacher mobilities and exchanges**, including cross-border professional development such as teacher training, tailor-made job exchanges across borders, social and cultural settings and contexts (e.g. minority and majority schools, rural and urban schools, schools subscribing to different denominations and philosophies and public and private schools)
2. **Teacher education programmes** (initial and in-service) that equip teachers with mediation strategies and skills to deal with classrooms with diversity, controversial and sensitive issues, and manipulation and propaganda on social media.
3. **Project opportunities** which enable educators to discover resources (practices, pedagogies, approaches and concepts) in the (immediate) local environment and share experiences on national and European levels.
4. **Partnerships** facilitated and supported by educational authorities between schools, cultural knowledge organisations (e.g. museums, universities, libraries and archives), social/civil organisations (e.g. sport associations, employment centres, etc) and employers and businesses.

Conclusion

In Europe, we have a proud history of overcoming adversity, and once again, we must rise to the challenge of protecting and strengthening Europe's spirit of freedom, a spirit which values critical thinking as much as respect for others in line with the values of the Union. (EU Education Ministers, Paris Declaration)

Many politicians in Europe today speak about "our proud history" without considering the nature of history – being complex, transnational and constructed. Indeed, history and the teaching and learning of history in schools can be used as political tools or even abused as weapons. This is a challenge worth addressing.

In the [Manifesto on High Quality History, Heritage and Citizenship Education](#), EUROCLIO has recognised that History, Heritage and Citizenship Education is fundamental to help young people today understand the globalised societies they live in, and that it is an area of learning that can provoke, inspire and equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to address critical challenges for the future.

EUROCLIO, with all our member associations in all EU Member States and beyond, is deeply committed to support actions and initiatives in the field of education that help European societies face the challenges posed by extremism, inequality, intolerance and discrimination through the promotion of citizenship and common values.

The European Union has a key role in developing education policies that support this and policies and tools such as [Erasmus+](#), [Education and Training 2020](#), [eTwinning](#) and the [School Education Gateway](#) should be strengthened and streamlined for more effective implementation.

We urge the European Union to continue to seek structural improvements to the mechanisms of the Erasmus+ funding system by consulting with beneficiaries and civil society organisations and to continue to build actions and policies flowing from the declaration made in Paris on 17 March 2015.

The capacity of educators to help learners to develop democratic values, inquisitive mindsets, dispositions or respect and tolerance and open-minded attitudes need to be as much developed and strengthened as the development of knowledge and skills. Education policies cannot evade values.

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About EUROCLIO

EUROCLIO, the European Association of History Educators, established in 1992, supports the development of responsible and innovative history, citizenship and heritage education as a way to promote critical thinking, mutual respect, peace, stability and democracy. The Association advocates a sound use of history and heritage education towards the building and deepening of democratic societies, connecting professionals across boundaries of countries, ethnicities, and religions.

It seeks to enhance the quality of history and citizenship education through capacity building for educators and producing and implementing innovative teaching tools. EUROCLIO has been able to define and pragmatically refine a methodology building on the practical work it carried out. Its approach is process-oriented and it believes in reinforcing professional talents as fundamental resources for innovation and change.

EUROCLIO represents 68 independent and volunteer history, heritage, and citizenship educators' associations and related institutes from 45 mostly European countries and reaches out to a network of at least 25,000 history, heritage, and citizenship educators, who work with up to five million students and pupils per year.

The Association works on preventing abuse of history by promoting respect for diversity, human rights, intercultural dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders. It stimulates the transfer of reliable academic historical knowledge and innovative educational theory and inspires methodological discourse to the school and training institute levels, and the development of history and citizenship curricula, teaching tools and assessment procedures. In order to achieve these goals EUROCLIO utilizes knowledge and experience transfer through peer-learning, exchange of expertise, and a system of expert, peer, and student reviewing.

In 2014, the Association has unanimously approved a set of principles in the [EUROCLIO Manifesto on High Quality History, Heritage and Citizenship Education 15 Principles for the recognition of the distinctive contribution of history to the development of young people](#).

The Policy Paper [EUROCLIO 2020: Responsible History Education in a Globalising Society EUROCLIO's Roadmap toward Innovative History Education](#) firmly promotes the European Union [Education and Training 2020](#) objectives, in particular the [key competencies](#) for Lifelong Learning, as well as the [Council of Europe recommendations on history education](#) and [education for democratic citizenship](#) as well as the. The paper also is aligned with the recently launched [Incheon Declaration Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all](#).

Moreover, EUROCLIO, supports the wider implementation of these objectives through its active membership of the European Civil Society Platform for Lifelong Learning ([EUCIS-LLL](#)), as partner organisation in the [European Commission Europe for Citizens European Remembrance Programme](#) and through its consultative status at the Council of Europe and UNESCO and its long-term programmes, including many projects and activities in the field of history and citizenship education.

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EUROCLIO Members

- Albanian History Teachers Association
- Armenian Association of History Educators
- Armenian Center for Democratic Education-CIVITAS, NGO
- Austrian - Gesellschaft für Geschichtsdidaktik Österreich
- Austrian Centre for citizenship education in schools- POLIS
- Azerbaijan: Public Union of Azerbaijan History Educators
- Azerbaijan: Bilasuvar Lyceum
- Bosnia-Herzegovina: EUROCLIO – HIP BiH
- Bulgarian History Teacher's Association
- China Association for NGO Cooperation
- Croatian History Teacher's Association
- Croatia: Association for Education and Human Rights Promotion (AEHRP)
- Croatia: Documenta – Center for Dealing with the Past
- Croatia: Faculty of Philosophy, University of Split
- Cyprus: Association for Historical Dialogue and Research
- Cyprus: Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus
- Czech Republic: History Teachers's Association of the Czech Republic
- Danish History Teachers's Association
- Denmark: European Educational Publishers Group
- Estonia: Eesti Ajaloo- ja Ühiskonnaõpetajate Selts
- Finland: Historian ja yhteiskuntaopin opettajien liitto HYOL ry
- France: Association des Professeurs d'Histoire et Géographie
- France: Association Civisme et démocratie (CIDEM)
- Georgia: The independent Association of History Teachers from Georgia
- Germany: Verband der Geschichtslehrer Deutschlands e.V.
- Germany: Georg Eckert Institut
- Germany: International Society for History Didactics
- Germany: Koerber Stiftung: EUSTORY
- Greece: Association of Philology Educators (P.E.F)
- Hungary: Törtenelemtanárok egylete
- Iceland: The History Teachers' Association of Iceland
- Irish History Teachers Association
- Israel: Association of Secondary School Teachers
- Italy: Clio'92 - Association of Research Group on History Teaching and Learning
- Italy:LANDIS – Laboratorio Nazionale per la Didattica della Storia
- Italy:Associazione Linea Gotica
- Kosovo: History Teachers Association of Kosovo
- Latvian History Teachers Association
- Lebanese Association for History
- Lithuanian History Teachers Association
- Luxemburg: Association Luxembourgeoise des Enseignants d'Histoire
- Macedonia: Association of History Educators in Macedonia
- Maltese History Teachers Association
- Moldova: The National Association of Young Historians of Moldova (ANTIM)
- Montenegro: HIPMONT

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- Moroccan Center For Civic Education
- Netherlands: VGN-Dutch History Teachers Association
- Netherlands: International Baccalaureate
- Norway: HIFO - Norwegian History Teachers Association
- Polish History Teachers Association
- Poland: Educational Research Institute
- Poland: Auschwitz Jewish Centre
- Poland: Institute of National Remembrance – Public Education Office
- Portuguese History Teachers Association
- Romania: APIR-CLIO Association of History Teacher of Romania
- Romania: SSIR - Association of History Teacher of Romania
- Russia: History Teachers Association of Moscow
- Russia: History Teachers Association of Buriatia
- Russia: History Teachers's Association of Tatarstan
- Scotland: History Teachers's Association of Scotland
- Serbia: Association for Social History of Serbia
- Slovenian History Teachers' Association
- Spain: Association of History and Geography Educators
- Spain: Ikastolen Elkartea
- Switzerland: History Teachers's Association of Switzerland
- Turkey: History Educators Union Association of Turkey
- Ukraine: All-Ukrainian Association of Teachers of History and Social Studies “Nova Doba”
- United Kingdom: The Historical Association
- United Kingdom: History Teacher Education Network
- United Kingdom: Association for Citizenship Teaching
- United Kingdom: Digital Heritage
- United States: American Historical Association

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