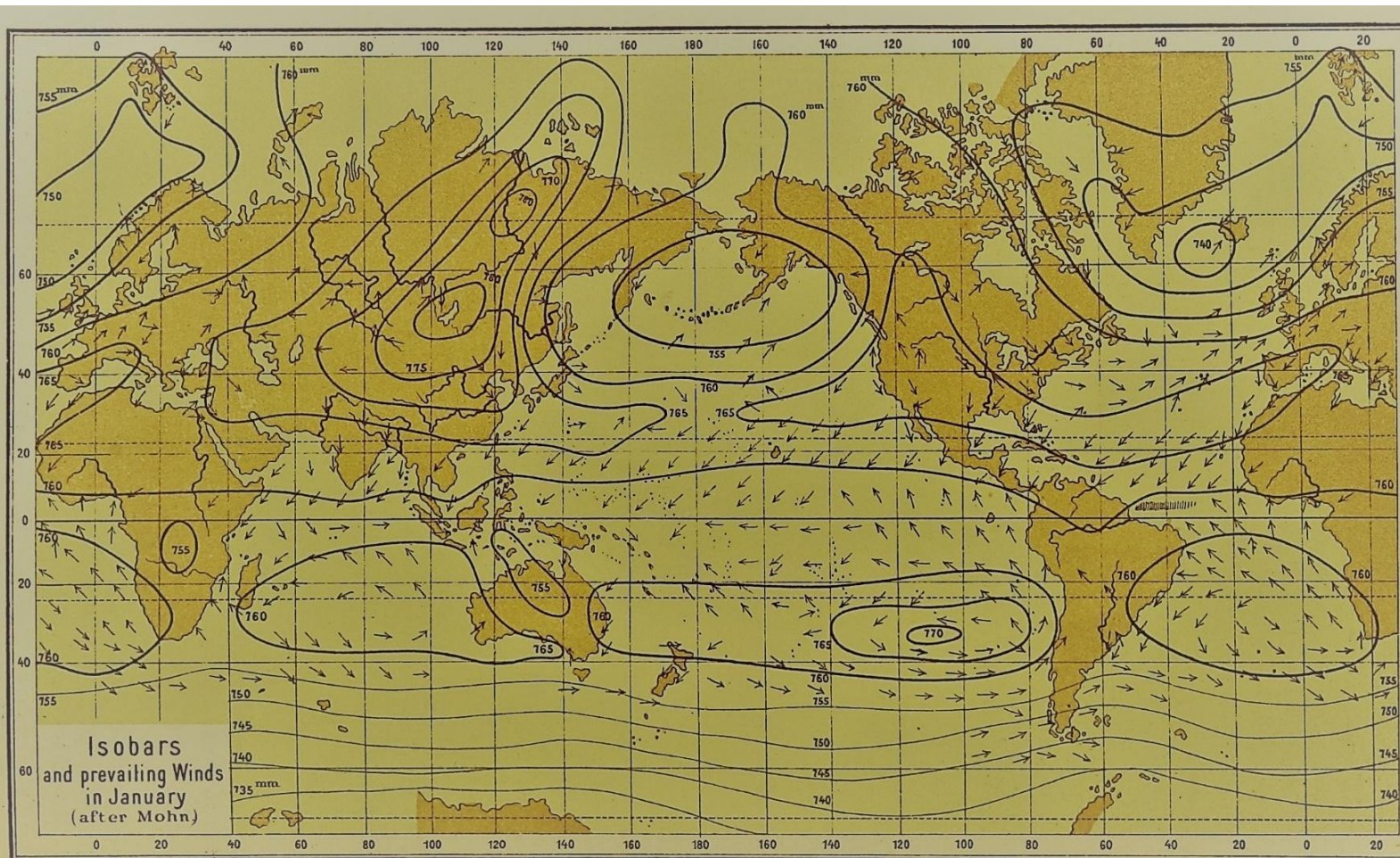


# Training Materials

## How to undertake cross-border history education resource development projects?



EuroClio – European Association of History Educators

2022

## Workshop #1: Designing Your Project (Part 1)

### Introduction

So you want to make a cross-border history textbook, or at least a cross-border history education resource. First of all, what is it? A history education resource can be:

- a textbook
- a set of lesson plans or activities
- a sourcebank (a curated compilation of sources)
- anything else that a teacher can readily use in their classroom for history teaching

A *cross-border* history education resource is when such a resource is made by people from different countries together as a team. The joint Israel-Palestine textbook developed between Israeli and Palestinian historians on their common history is an example of a cross-border history education resource. Now, why would you make one at all?

### [Open discussion to participants]

Some answers could include (and can be mentioned after the participants share their views):

- helps to counter confirmation bias and break through echo chambers
- reduces the chance of stereotyping and negative portrayals of others
- helps students to see the bigger picture of which their own history is part, and increase their knowledge of the history of their neighbours
- serves as tangible proof that people are able to work together despite differences
- contributes to trust building between nations and people
- “re-humanises” the other

But what will you make? Will you make a textbook? A sourcebook? A set of lesson plans? Depending on your context, different “products” might make more sense than others. Let’s take a look at some of the factors that will influence your decision on what to make. We have organised them as a set of questions to ask yourself about your own context.

### Factors influencing your context

#### 1. *What is the level of government control?*

In a high-control context, there is likely to be a single mandatory state textbook for each subject and each grade. In other words, the teacher has very little or no choice in what textbook they use to teach their class. Teachers *must* teach a certain content and sometimes, they must teach a certain interpretation of this content. If you are in a high-control context, it may be unrealistic to hope that your textbook would gain approval and become *the* state-approved textbook. It would be easier to make a sourcebook, or a set of additional resources for teachers to use in between the existing state-approved material that they must teach.

In a low-control context, there are *many* textbooks that teachers are allowed to use. These textbooks may be screened for quality, but ultimately there is more openness for textbooks to be acceptable by the state. Teachers have the freedom to choose the textbooks they use and have freedom to choose some or all the content. If you are in a low-control context, you will also have more freedom to decide what kind of product to make, as many different kinds could be acceptable

by the state and easy for teachers to fit into their teaching plans. You could be more ambitious, and decide to create a textbook that could go on to be approved by the state.

All contexts fit somewhere on the spectrum between high and low government control. Where does your context fit on the spectrum?

### **[Open discussion to participants to respond]**

#### *2. What are current history didactics like?*

It is also useful to look at how history is being taught in your context at the moment. Let's look at some of the questions which are useful to ask yourself about the context.

### **[Open discussion to participants to respond to the following questions]**

- Who are the main social and cultural groups in a country? Who are the civil society actors?
- What are the expected master narratives? Are there certain tropes that are expected in your historical narrative that you will have to grapple with?
- What are the sensitive and controversial histories?
- Which histories are included and excluded? Are there perspectives which are missing?

### **But what if I don't know the factors?**

You may not immediately know the answers to all these questions yourself. To find the answers, you can ask practicing teachers in your country or context to share their opinions and experiences.

In a recent project in the Balkans, we conducted focus groups to find out what were the challenges in the region. We wanted to know what was the context in each country of the project, so we would know that we were making something useful for every country in the region.

- What's a focus group? A focus group is a group interview. When gathering data for research, you can gather data through surveys, which gains more breadth but less depth. You can also do interviews, with gains more depth but less

Here are some questions we asked our focus group participants:

- *Please share with us some ideas on approaches and strategies that you used when teaching the recent past.*
- *Do you prefer to start this topic by teaching the historical events or by speaking about the memories of this difficult past?*
- *Do you take a more analytical or emotional approach? [Remember, neither is bad!]*
  - *Analytical: focus on teaching critical thinking and engagement with sources*
  - *Emotional: focus on the emotional impact this event had on the community*
- *What are your experiences with using multiple perspectives in the classroom? What are students' reactions?*
  - *Are there limits to multiperspectivity in the classroom?*
  - *Are there perspectives you would avoid to talk about?*
- *Changing perspectives:*
  - *Do you try to encourage students to empathize with the "other"?*
  - *Do you try to surprise students with facts / perspectives that they may be unfamiliar with?*

### **Activity: Develop Your Own Focus Group Questions**

Divide the participants into groups based on the context that they are working in. This might be different countries depending on the context of the workshop. Each group should have 3-4 participants. In each group, the participants should analyse the example questions provided, and use them as a starting point for developing their own focus group questions. What would they want to ask teachers to get to know their own context better before starting a cross-border history education resource development project? After working together, each group can present.

Another option is to divide groups to have representatives from two different contexts. This works best if the two contexts (for example, two different countries) have a common history. The participants within the group can then compare how they would go about identifying their context and see how their contexts differ.

### **Conclusion**

We have now explored the different factors that need to be taken into account when starting to design a project to develop a cross-border history education resource.

Be aware that where you fall on these spectra will be different between different countries, and these differences must be taken into account when designing the project. The level of danger that actors on both sides might experience will be different, for example, depending on the contexts.

## Workshop #2: Designing Your Project (Part 2)

### Introduction

We have explored the different factors that need to be taken into account when starting to design a project to develop a cross-border history education resource. Now, let's see how those factors will influence the decisions that need to be made about the design of the project.

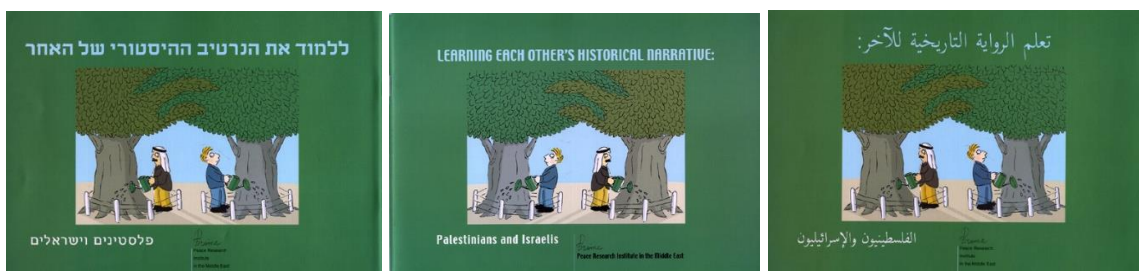
Most importantly, you need to decide what product you will make. Broadly, there are 3 types of products that you can make. Of course, there are many that fall between these categories, but for the sake of simplicity, we have divided them into three groups:

1. Narrative-based textbook
  - a. Single integrated narrative
  - b. Side by side narratives
2. Ready-to-use lesson plans
3. Sourcebook

Let's look at what these formats look like, what kinds of contexts they fit best in, and what are their advantages and disadvantages.

### Narrative-based textbook

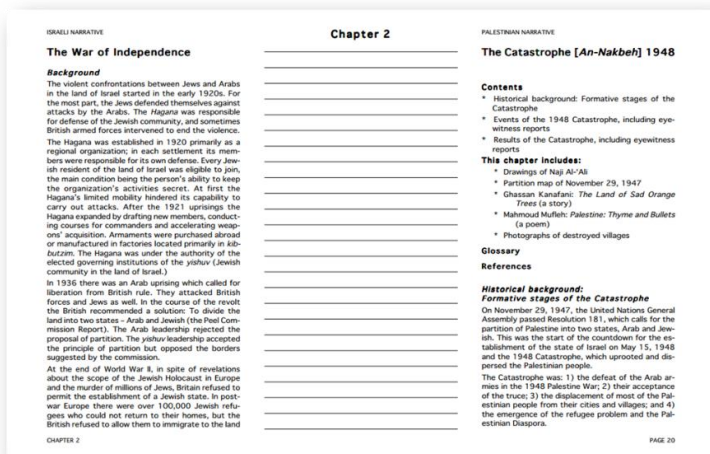
A narrative-based textbook is one which provides an interpretation of the history to the students, by telling history as a narrative. Because the authors of the textbook are from different countries or contexts, they will have different interpretations. They can try to combine these interpretations into one narrative, through discussion. This is a **single integrated textbook**. If they are unable to agree on an interpretation, then they can create a **"side-by-side textbook"** where the two perspectives are not integrated, but rather presented in their original form next to one another.



*Pictured above: The Hebrew, English, and Arabic versions of the Israeli-Palestinian publication.*

### Side-by-Side Case Study: Israel and Palestine

- An example of a side-by-side narrative is the Israeli-Palestinian case, "Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine" or "Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative" (2006).
- The project developed a textbook and teacher's guide of the common history between Israel and Palestine, with the goal to "disarm" the teaching of Middle Eastern history in Israeli and Palestinian classrooms. The project team consisted of six Palestinian history and geography teachers, six Jewish Israeli history teachers, and six international observers.
- The final product was the two dominant narratives from Israel and Palestine, respectively, running alongside one another, with a blank space left in the middle, where students could add their own interpretation of what happened based on the two accounts.



*Pictured left: The inner structure of the textbook, with the Israeli narrative running along the left, the Palestinian narrative running along the right, and the blank space in the middle for the student to write their own perspective. For more details, see <https://vispo.com/PRIME/index.htm>*

Narrative-based textbooks are the most traditional history education resource, and thus work best in contexts with traditional history didactics, where this is the expected format for a textbook to take. Another format may not be accepted, teachers may find it difficult to implement without intensive training, and students may be unfamiliar with other forms of history didactics.

Advantages of this format are:

- Divisions of text between authors can be straightforward, for example by chapters or events.
- Given its traditional approach, it is more likely to be accepted in contexts with more traditional history didactics approaches.

Disadvantages of this format are:

- A single interpretation narrative is still being promoted by the resource. In the case of a side-by-side narrative, there are two interpretations, but it still assumes that there is one dominant narrative on both sides.
- Lots of authored text must be written, meaning it will be a long process.

### Ready-to-use lesson plans

This is a more practical approach, because it provides teachers with step-by-step instructions for conducting a lesson on a given topic with their students, including interactive activities. Ready-made lesson plans are easier to use by teachers, but have a more narrow scope in terms of content. This format strikes a balance between providing some narrative and some didactical guidance.

Advantages of this format are:

- Authors from different countries can work on one lesson together, ensuring that the sources and the content can demonstrate different perspectives.
- Since the lesson plans can be organised according to any didactical approach, there is an opportunity to present new methods to teachers.

Disadvantages of this format are:

- Because different countries have different curricula, the publication may require a “curriculum navigator” to outline which lesson plans correspond to which curricular requirements in each country.

## **Source book**

This format is a publication that compiles a pool of high-quality sources for teachers to pull from to develop their own lessons. It is often organised by topic, with a set of sources presented per topic. Each source is introduced with a small contextualisation to help insert it into a lesson. This format has little to no didactical approaches, it is only raw source material, and does not offer a narrative interpretation, allowing the teacher to do this themselves.

Advantages of this format are:

- Much more useful in a high-control context, because it does not openly contest the dominant historical narrative, only presents sources which could provide an alternative view if analysed by the students.
- Are much more flexible in their use by the teacher.

Disadvantages of this format are:

- Requires more work from the teachers who use them, and demands some level of capability of working with sources from the teacher.

## **Activity:**

Participants break into groups of 3 or 4 and discuss the following questions:

1. Which type of resource would you find most useful in your own context, as a teacher?
2. Which type of resource would make the most sense to create in your context? Why? Describe the factors that we explored in Part 1 of this workshop that come into play.

## Workshop #3: Working with Sources

### Introduction

The key to ensuring multiperspectivity in a textbook or educational resource is to have a variety of good sources. Sources are the key to high-quality resources, and can be the difference between a textbook being simply a block of text, which can be dull and abstract for students, and a textbook being vivid and inspiring, with the history jumping out of the page. And when applying a multi-perspective approach, you will need to make use of different sources, that illustrate the variety of perspectives and experiences related to a single event.

Historical sources include, but are not limited to: official documents, testimonies, newspaper articles and newsreels, speeches, cartoons, posters, music, monuments and video footage.

First of all, what makes a good source? Possible answers include:

- Credibility or Authority
- Relevance
- Accuracy

### [Open discussion with participants]

Question to participants: Would a tabloid newspaper be a good source? Why or why not? In which cases would it be permissible?

To understand what is a good source for you, you should think of what are the aims that you are pursuing with this source. If you want to push your students to reflect, for example, you might prefer a testimony, while if you want to provide a series of perspectives you could use a combination of testimonies and images. To raise a debate, you will look for a source that presents a specific opinion. Sometimes, you will want to shock your students, to push them to react and engage with the topic. In this case, an image will help you achieve your aim.

### What is a primary vs. secondary source?

- A primary source has a direct relationship to an event. This might be, for example, a witness testimony of a crime which was committed. The witness saw the crime first-hand, and thus are narrating based on their own experience
- A secondary source is based on primary sources. Following the first example, it might be a book written about the crime years after it took place, using witness testimonies, news reports, courtroom evidence, etc. to put together a narrative of what took place.

Both primary and secondary sources can be good sources. However, a secondary source often does its own interpretation work on the primary sources available, and thus can be less useful when teaching students about how to analyse sources and make their own interpretations.

### How do you present a source?

We advise you to contextualise the source. Below are some example questions to ask.

- Author: When was the photo taken? By whom? Why did they take it?
- Subject: Who is in the photo? Who is talking in this video-testimony? What is their story?



These are all questions that you want your students to ask themselves, because they foster curiosity and critical thinking. Furthermore, only by providing context can you ensure that your students will not trivialise the words that are used, or misunderstand the content.

However, it is not always easy to determine if the source you are looking at is appropriate to illustrate painful episodes of the past. This depends to a great extent on your students or on the people who will participate to your activity, as well as on the context in which you are operating.

In the next activity, we will look at different sources that can be used to depict the same topic: what crematoria were used for, and how they were used, in Nazi concentration camps. Take a look at these sources and discuss which one you would select to explain this topic.

Why did you select this source? There are no right answers.

**Activity: Which source would you use to explain what crematoria were used for?**



*Source 1: Buchenwaldcrem (Zyonig - Public Domain)*



*Source 2: Horror chamber at the Buchenwald concentration camp (US Army Troops - Public)*



*Source 3: Demonstrating the operation of the Dachau crematorium (US Holocaust Memorial Museum)*

**[Open discussion with participants]**

Each source is demonstrating the same thing: how the crematoria were used. But as we move from Source 1 to Source 2 to Source 3, they increase in how graphic they are. This begs the question: how graphic should sources be when depicting a violent or traumatic history?

**Not graphic at all.** On one hand, you don't want to shelter students to the extent that they don't learn what truly happened. This can be whitewashing of history, hiding the unpleasantness in a way that is dishonest, evasive, and potentially even insulting to the victims of this history.

**Very graphic.** On the other hand, you don't want to traumatise students or make them feel unsafe. Gratuitously graphic imagery can hinder the learning process, because the emotions experienced in response to the material is so high that students

A decision must be made based on a number of factors:

- **How old are the students?** Graphic material can be inappropriate for students of a young age, who may lack the maturity to process the information being depicted.
- **How sensitive are the students?** This can be known by a teacher when they are familiar with what their students are able to manage.
- **What is the educational value of this source?** What are you trying to illustrate with this source, and does the graphic image accomplish this? Are you using this source for shock value, or for educational purpose? And is there another source that can accomplish your learning goal more effectively?
- **Does the source dehumanise the subjects?** Very graphic material can also be disrespectful to the memory of the people depicted in the source, denigrating them to faceless victims rather than telling a wider story of their humanity outside of this suffering.

## Conclusions

Historical sources are not representing the view of the author, but are tools to support the teaching and learning. Textbooks that make a use of wide range of source materials, are more likely to appeal to a wider variety of students. However, since sources are representations of the past, authors of educational materials should be careful in selecting the best sources available.

## Workshop #4: Working with Controversial Topics

### Introduction

A challenging aspect of the development of cross-border history education resources are sensitive issues. History is sensitive when people have an identity connection with this.

Examples of sensitivities are:

- National heroes
- Religious history
- Wars, especially recent wars
- Territorial disputes
- Mass atrocities
- Colonialism

Every common history between two countries, nations, or peoples has sensitive topics. But how do you approach such sensitive topics when developing the resource, and how do you address it in the classroom with students?

### Dealing with Controversial Topics in the Classroom

Let's say that a cross-border history education resource is being developed between Korean and Japanese historians and history didacticians. One of the most sensitive topics in this common history is Japanese imperialism and the topic of comfort women. Comfort women were women from territories occupied by the Imperial Japanese Army, who were kidnapped, coerced or otherwise forced into sexual slavery for Japanese soldiers before and during World War II. This topic remains contested between the governments of South Korea and Japan.

#### Method: Starting with a "cold" topic to begin dealing with a "hot" topic

So how would we teach about this topic? Suggestion: start by discussing this same topic in a different context. For example, in the case of the Korea-Japan project, you might begin by looking at the French-Algerian case.

- **Background on the French-Algerian case.** French President Nicolas Sarkozy refused to apologize for French colonialism or the Algerian War. He defended his refusal, saying that he was "for a recognition of the facts but not for repentance, which is a religious notion that has no place in relations between states." For more information, see: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-algeria-france-apology-idUKL1063873720070710>

There are questions at the centre of this issue for students to discuss. Should states apologise for the actions of the past? Do states of the present day carry responsibility for the actions of the state in the past? Students in South Korea and Japan can first engage with this topic, because they have no direct attachment to France or Algeria. Then, the same themes can be applied to a topic much closer to home, such as the topic of the comfort women, with the same method.

- Another example of a controversy: civil wars. A teacher may begin teaching about the Lebanese Civil War, which would be controversial in a Lebanese classroom, by first introducing the Spanish Civil War, and following the same method.

## Dealing with Controversial Topics during the Development Process

One challenge for the drafting stage is that the authors, coming from different contexts, are more likely to disagree on interpretations of history, the selections or reliability of sources, the use of terminology, or selected history didactics. It is easier for authors to agree on a selection of historical sources and questions and activities for students than on certain historical interpretations.

There are certain points of attention when developing cross-border history education resources, which are likely to cause controversy. These include terminology and visual representations, because these make claims on one interpretation or another. Let us explore these two potential triggers.

### Terminology and Language

The importance of choices in language when writing authored text of cross-border history education resources cannot be understated. Different terms are used to describe the same events differently by different sides, often reflecting an interpretation that this side takes of this event. The same event may be referred to by different parties as an aggression, a civil war, a homeland war, or a patriotic war, each of which paint the event in a different light, and assign blame or guilt to different sides. These terms give an indication of how the users of the term interpret the victims or perpetrators of an event, or indeed what the meaning or result of the event was.

If a historical source uses an offensive term, should that term be kept? Why or why not?

#### [Open discussion with participants]

A historical source is a product of its context. Since it illustrates a certain theme or idea, the original text of the source should remain intact, despite its offensive nature, for **academic honesty**.

However, the source should be contextualised. This means that there should be a disclaimer or explanation provided which places the source in its proper context, and clarifies that the author's team is aware that the term is offensive, and is not including it with the intention of causing offense. The disclaimer can explain what the term meant at the time it was written for the people who used it, and what this can tell us about the historical period and actors.

#### ➤ Case Study: World War II

The Eastern Front of WWII is referred to as the "Great Patriotic War" in the Soviet tradition. If this term "Great Patriotic War" is used in a historical source, the historical terms need to be kept as it contains valuable historical information and historical sources need to be translated as truthfully as possible. For an authored text, one should strive to use terms that are both neutral and clear.

### Maps and Visual Representations

This can be a similar case with maps or visual representations. Images can be controversial, especially if they portray historical figures or groups very positively or negatively. Maps can also be controversial, because they have borders, and denote locations as "belonging" to a particular country or nation, which can be a source of disagreement if borders are contested. A question to ask is: what purpose do the maps serve? If they are a historical source demonstrating what a set of actors considered the reality at a certain time, then they can be used as a source and critiqued as one. Or are they being used to illustrate a status quo? In the latter case, they can be controversial.

#### ➤ Case Study: Crimea

During a joint history textbook development project between Russia and Ukraine, there emerged a controversy over how to depict Crimea on the contemporary map. The map was not of Crimea specifically, but of the entire region. At this time, Crimea was under Russian control, but this control

was not recognised by many countries of the world. The Russian and Ukrainian members of the team had a disagreement on whether Crimea should be depicted as Russian land or Ukrainian land. They also pointed out that regardless of what their personal views on the matter were, the textbook would need to be approved by both Russian and Ukrainian authorities to be used by teachers, and that each country had a different, mutually exclusive stance on how Crimea should be depicted.

### **Activity**

In groups of 3 or 4, participants will discuss how they would deal with this controversy if they were on the team making the map. Each group should reach a consensus on their preferred solution, and each group will present their solution, describing the reasons why they chose this solution.

Possible solutions include:

- Not depicting Crimea as belonging to either side, either through use of black and white or another method of neutrality.
- Including an explanation that describes Crimea's ambiguous geopolitical state.
- Hiding Crimea behind the map's legend, therefore including the map of the region but avoiding depicting Crimea as "belonging" to either side.
- Removing the map altogether.

### **Conclusions**

When you do encounter sensitive issues with the team, there are several things you can do:

- Look for a compromise.
- Juxtapose the different narratives.
- State that there is a disagreement.

Because it can be difficult to anticipate which issues are sensitive, you can ask representatives of the different groups to review each other's work and flag what might be sensitive. When there is a real argument, it can help as an external advisor for advice. Overall, controversies should be seen as opportunities for discussion and historical enquiry. In many cases, you can use the case as a learning opportunity and explore the reasons why people disagree, rather than focusing on finding a single "correct" answer to the controversy.