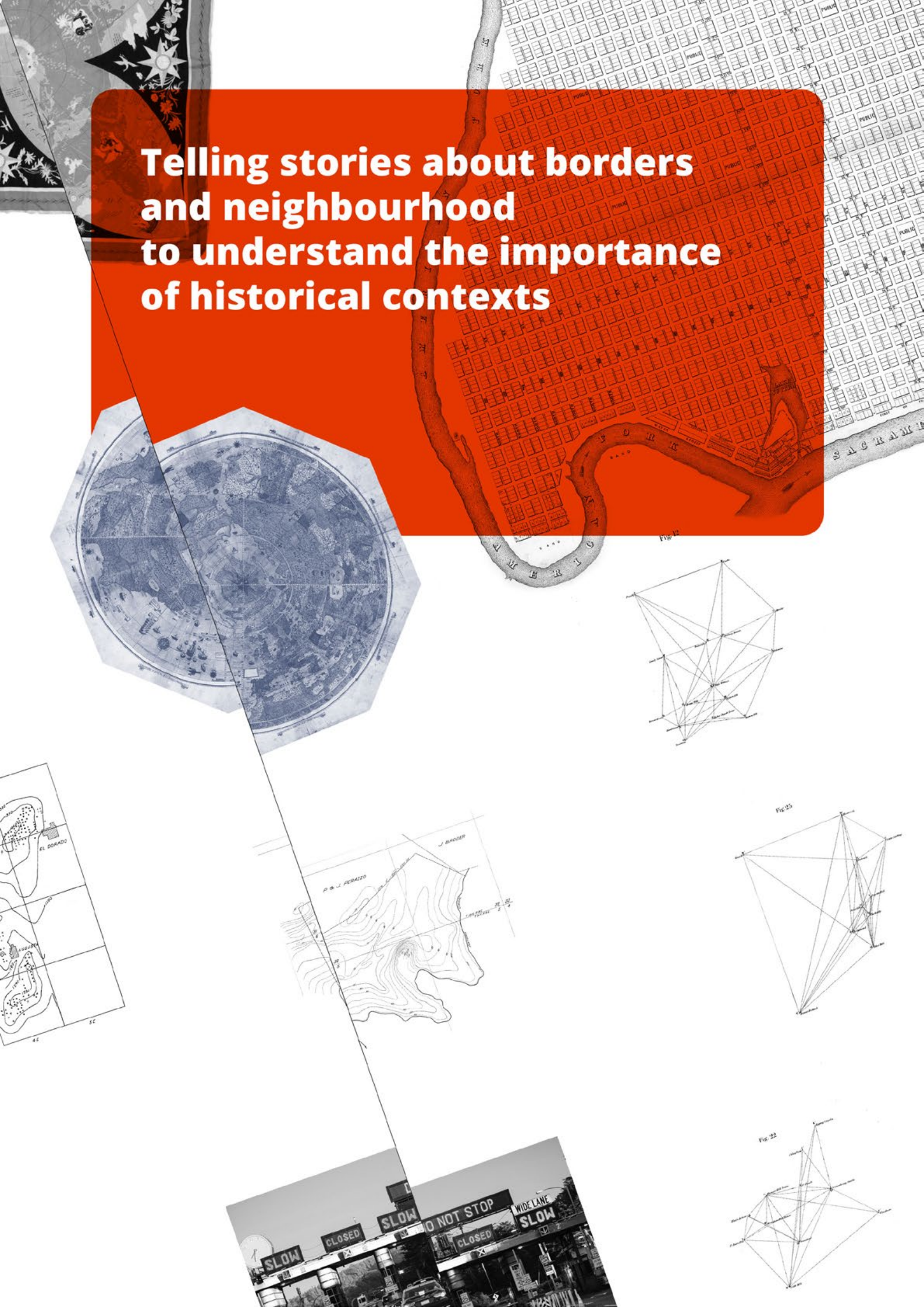


Telling stories about borders and neighbourhood to understand the importance of historical contexts



BIRGIT GÖBEL
& EUGENIE KHATSCHATRIAN
OF EUROCLIO

Editors

MARJOLEIN DELVOU
& HANNA ZIELIŃSKA
OF THE EVENS FOUNDATION

Associate Editors

DAVID SYPNIEWSKI

Design & Creative Direction

MAŁGORZATA PAWŁOWSKA

Translations Desktop Publishing

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(Re)Viewing European Stories was an educational pilot project that ran between October 2019 and September 2020. Co-ordinated by the EUscreen Foundation, funded by the Evens Foundation, and supported by EuroClio, the project brought together archival practitioners, historians and educators, as well as external experts from a number of European countries: Documenta – center for dealing with the past (Croatia), Borderland Foundation (Poland), European Observatory on Memories (Spain), European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (Poland and others), National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute (Poland), Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (Netherlands), with Jacek Staniszewski (Poland), a history teacher and EuroClio ambassador, serving as an independent education lead. It aimed to encourage and promote historical-critical thinking among high school students and teachers

The strategy *Telling Stories about Borders and Neighbourhood to Understand the Importance of Historical Contexts* encourages students to explore different roles a border can play in societies and how it can impact the daily lives of people surrounding the border. Through selecting a case-study of a border region in Europe, students will analyse the history of the border and the ways in which the story of the border has shaped people's lives through creating a storyboard.

This lesson plan is part of a ten-part teaching strategy series designed and tested by teachers for teachers. The overall aim of Sharing European Histories is to help young people understand the complexity, multiplicity, and transnational character of European history. For more information, go to sharingeuropeanhistories.eu or to <https://blog.euscreen.eu/reviewing-european-stories>.



**Evens
Foundation**

A portrait of Maja Drabczyk, a woman with short dark hair, wearing a light-colored top. The image is partially obscured by a dark red overlay on the left side where the text is located.

Maja Drabczyk

Maria (Maja) Drabczyk is member of the board and head of policy and advocacy at Centrum Cyfrowe in Poland. She is a sociologist, researcher, manager of cultural and policy projects in the field of heritage and new technologies. Board member of the EU-screen Foundation and Chair of the FIAT/IFTA Value, Use and Copyright Commission. Previous to her current position, she acted as a project manager at the National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute (FINA), in charge of international cooperation, mostly focused on access and creative re-use of the Institute's digital collection for research, educational or artistic purposes. Passionate about investigating and further strengthening the social value of cultural heritage institutions and supporting both cultural and educational sectors in shaping their, user-focused, digital strategies.

A portrait of Jacek Staniszewski, a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark shirt. The image is partially obscured by a dark red overlay on the left side where the text is located.

Jacek Staniszewski

Jacek Staniszewski is senior researcher in the Educational Research Institute (IBE) in Warsaw. He graduated in History at the University in Gdansk. Since 1996 he taught History in one of the first private higher secondary schools in Poland run by the Gdańsk Education Foundation. After moving to Warsaw he became a member of the History Section at IBE that prepares research projects concerning historical competences of students in Polish schools and intends to develop and implement good teaching practices, new educational solutions and to examine their effectiveness in empirical research. He is especially interested in using ICT skills during the History teaching process. For the past few years Jacek Staniszewski has been one of the authors or co-authors of didactic tools for teachers that the Institute prepares. He has been actively involved in promoting the Good Practices Database and animating the teachers' community around the Database. He is co-founder of The Good Education Association that runs several schools across Poland. He is especially involved and works actively in The Good Education Academy in Warsaw dedicated to children who, for one reason or other, do not fit or achieve their potential in the traditional education system.

Telling stories about borders and neighbourhood to understand the importance of historical contexts

MARIA DRABCZYK & JACEK STANISZEWSKI

This Teaching Strategy aims to show how a border can play different roles in a specific historical context. It is about seeing borders as the main “characters” in a story. Using the storyboard technique and visual resources, including archival moving images, students are asked to tell stories about borders and, as the result of this exercise, see how many roles borders can play in various contexts. This Teaching Strategy is based on the Learning Activity developed within the framework of the (Re) Viewing European Stories Project.

OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

Rather than focusing on how borders can change as a result of international conflicts, this Teaching Strategy puts more attention to how borders influence the lives of ordinary people.

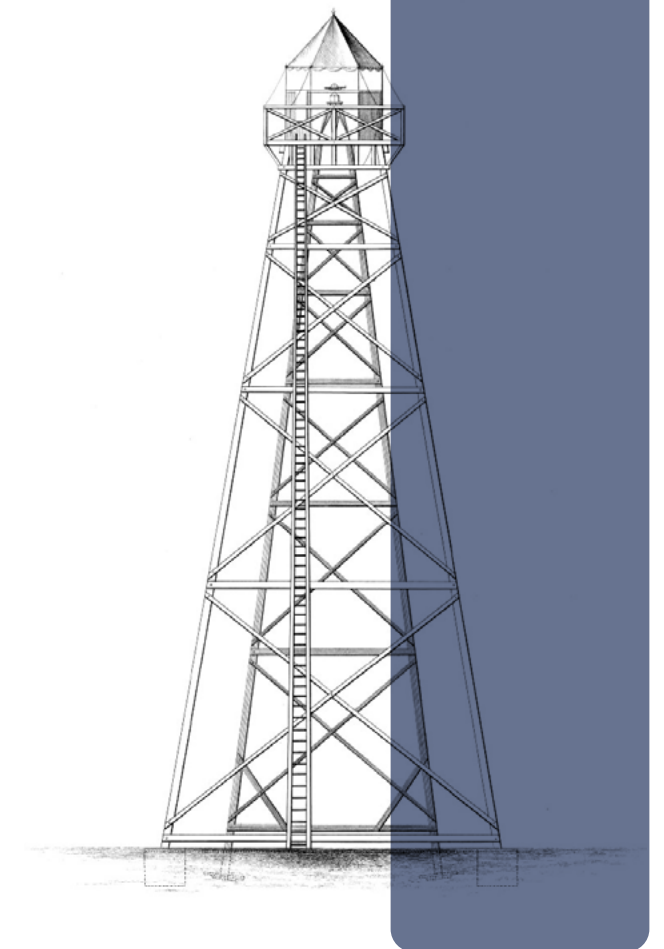
A border as a dividing line is a very natural concept for students to understand, but on the other hand, its role is greatly diminished in today's mostly border-control-free Europe.

The strategy shows how a border can move, while people remain in place, as they try to find and define themselves in a new political situation. Using the storyboard technique and visual sources, including archival footage, students are asked to tell stories about borders and, as the result of this exercise, see how many roles borders can play in various contexts.

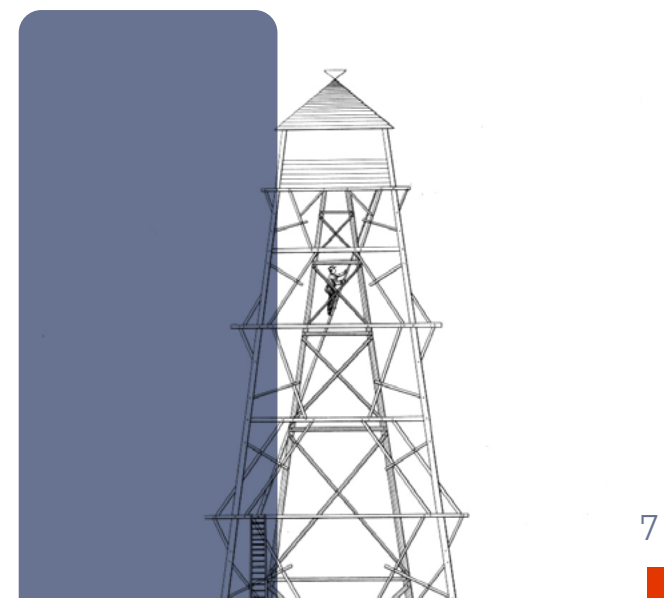
WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE STRATEGY?

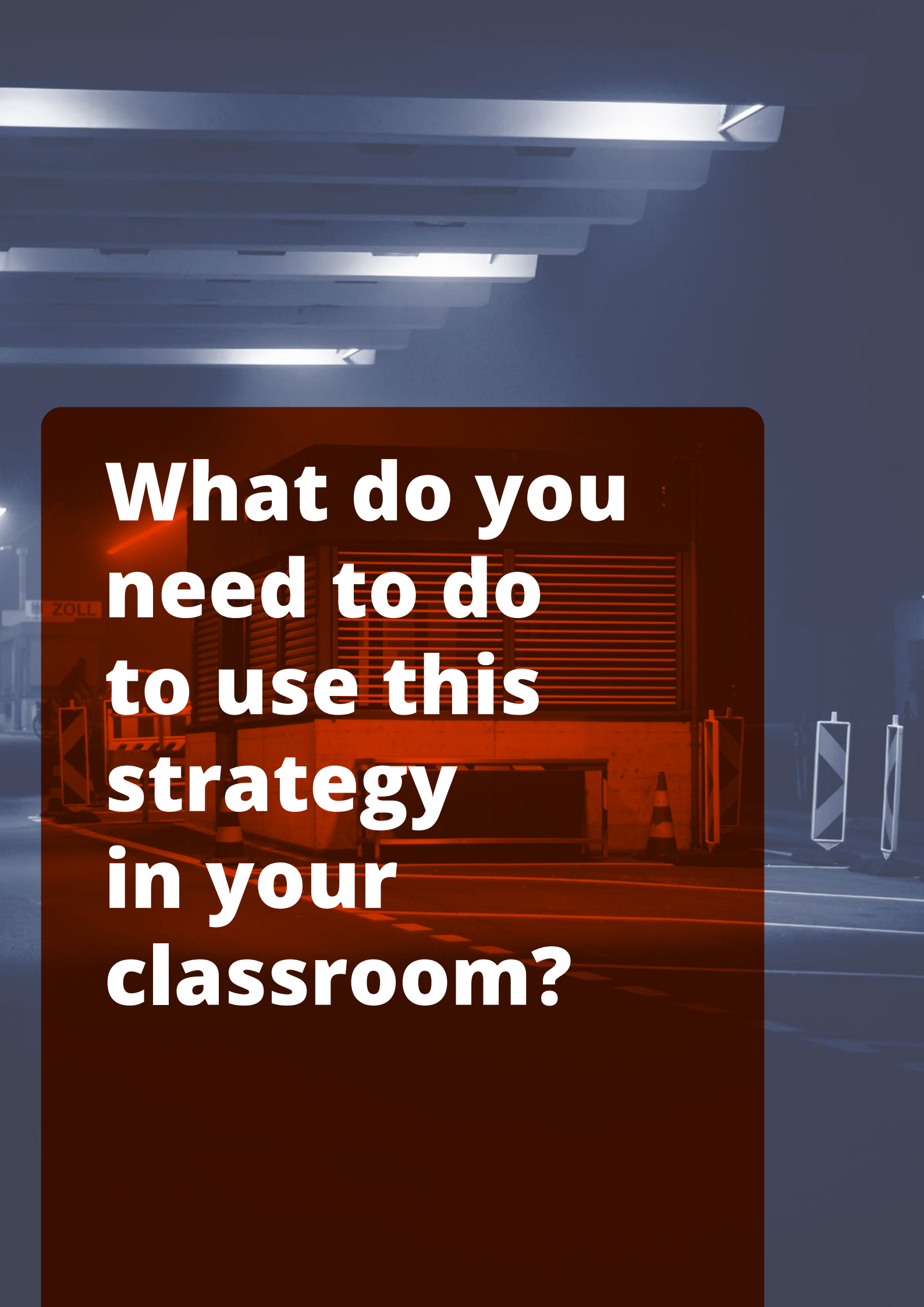
The strategy is primarily aimed at teaching about the complexity of historical events where the same place has different histories and narratives. It provides students with tools that help them to explain difficult, lesser-known factors that make the present situation better known and better understood. Last but not least it invites them to critically analyse provided archival audiovisual sources and to further explore digital archives to gather a broader perspective on the issue.

Analysing specific case studies and the chronology of events that impacted borders and their role in the daily lives of people and their local communities, will help students to understand historical continuity and change as well as to learn about how global or European events and political developments or decisions can change the roles of borders in a local community over a period of time.



Creating storyboards and focusing on the role of borders in different contexts and time periods, will also help students to understand that borders could have different meanings to different people and communities in the same event or time. It will also turn the learning task into an engaging and interactive experience bringing the students closer to digital and media literacy and use of storytelling tools.





What do you need to do to use this strategy in your classroom?

STEP 1: PREPARE THE MATERIALS

To carry out the strategy, you need to create a short information package, containing contextual knowledge about the case-studies of the borders that you would like to present to your class. For this strategy, you can select three borders that students will be able to choose from. The information packages should include (chronological) short summaries on three different borders, as it will provide students with a chronological framework and general background of the given case-study. Depending on the local history of the selected case-study, the information package may, for example, include historical background information on the period of World War I, World War II, the Interwar period, the period of the Cold War, the years following the fall of the Berlin Wall, or any other specific time period and milestones that you deem relevant. You can make a selection with different time periods and relevant turning points that are appropriate for your curriculum and lesson plans. The information package may be also enriched with archival sources coming from online archival repositories, like Europeana or EUScreen.

When presenting different periods of time, you may want to ensure that for each period, information is included on the historical milestones within the broader context of European history or global development and how this shaped the regional context and affected the localities on both sides of the border of the given case-study (e.g. political agreements that shifted the border), also including key historical figures that played an important part in shaping the border.

In addition to the information package, students will also be presented maps that show the borders throughout different time periods, through which students can obtain a better understanding of the political context of different time periods and the border. Maps can be created in house for the purpose of the exercise, or can be found on a variety of different online national and local archives and databases such as the [British National Archives](#), [Europeana](#) or [Arcanum Maps](#). Usually, online catalogues of national archives and libraries are good starting points.

For each of the three case-studies, collect at least two maps for the different periods of time (or turning point) with one map depicting the border before the time period or event, and one map describing the border after the event. Besides the information package and the maps, students will watch a video about the border in the case studies. To prepare the students, select a video for each border that you think encapsulates the history of the countries surrounding the border in question. It is even better if the video can also give an insight into the tensions that are present. Alternatively, you could also select multiple short videos. Videos can also be part of longer documentaries or films portraying the story of the border. You start by using archive sources and in addition, or alternatively, use videos on YouTube, but also on international online repositories ([Europeana.eu](#), [EUScreen.eu](#)) or online catalogues of local museums, libraries and archives.

STEP 2: USE THE MATERIALS IN THE CLASSROOM

Activity 1: Hook the students' interest and introduce the concept of border

Before creating the storyboard, students will be introduced to the case-studies that you have selected and to the different ways the concept of "borders" may be interpreted. To hook students' attention, show the selected video for the case study (or multiple short videos) during class. Following the videos, invite students to a class discussion in which they will further reflect on the videos and share their first thoughts on the topic. For this, you might want to use a mind map collecting different thoughts or definitions regarding the concept of "borders". The main aim of this activity is to explore what different meanings the term "border" can have and to create a common ground of understanding of the concept. Some guiding reflection questions on the videos (or videos) for the whole class could be:

- What do the videos depict?
- What does the border in the video look like?
- Can you describe the history of the borders shown in the video?
- What, do you think, the borders in the video mean to the people living on both sides of the border?

Some guiding questions for class discussion following up on the video

- What does the word “border” mean to you?
- What kind of different types of borders can you identify?
- If you live near a border, do you know its history?
- What different roles can borders have in people’s lives?

Activity 2: Getting to the case-study and analysing maps

Following the class discussion, students will analyse the maps that have been selected in preparation for the lesson. Prior to analysing maps, allow your students some time to familiarise themselves with the information packages that you have prepared, as an introduction to the case studies and their different periods of time. Alternatively, you can also provide the students with the information package as homework to prepare for the lesson, depending on the time available for your lesson. Following the information provided, you can divide the class into three groups with each group focusing on one of the borders. Students can then choose which group they would like to join. If the groups are too big, you can also choose to make several groups or to work in pairs, depending on the size of your class.

Within their groups (or pairs), students can choose a specific time period or historical

event that they would like to focus on in telling the story of the border. Once the students have chosen and are ready, provide them with the pair of maps that you have selected for each case study and period of time. Students will be tasked with analysing the maps depicting the border before and after the chosen time period or historical event. To help with the analysis, students may want to focus on the following set of guiding questions when comparing the maps:

- Can you describe how the border looks like in both maps?
- When comparing the maps, which differences do you see?
- How do you think these differences changed the lives of the people living on both sides of the border?
- Can you explain the differences between the maps? (If you see that the border has changed or shifted, can you explain why?)
- Which similarities do you see in comparing the maps?
- Can you explain the similarities? Why did these specific aspects of the border remain the same?

Students can collect the findings of their analysis in a mind map or a written form, to prepare for the next activity, in which they will be creating a storyboard to tell the story of the border.

Activity 3 – Creating the Storyboard

In this activity, your students will create a storyboard with an animation to tell the story of the border that they have chosen. Students will be challenged to transform the information that they have obtained from the information packages, the videos and the map analysis into a storyboard animation. The main aim of the storyboard is to portray the different roles that borders can play throughout time: Do borders divide? Do they connect? What happens to the people living on both sides of the border?

For creating the animation, different platforms can be used. You might already be familiar with a specific platform. If not, [Canva](#) can be an efficient and easy tool to start with. Alternatively, students may also draw the storyboard on paper, depending on the accessibility of online tools and students’ preferences. In preparation for making the storyboard and the presentation of the animation, it is important to provide students with the following pointers:

- Remind your students to present the history of the border in a simple way, without including too many facts and details;
- Ideally, the animation should not be longer than one minute. Students can also decide to focus only on one specific part of the history of the border that they have chosen;
- Students are encouraged to also use archival materials at the background of the animation or to show more details. This way, the animation may also present real images or written sources on the history of the border. The strategy in action includes an infographic on how to start with archival research;
- Depending on how the animations will be presented, students can prepare short notes that describe what their animation is describing to help them prepare their presentations.

Before creating the animation, students will be tasked with developing a script for their storyboard. Feedback to the script for the animation may be provided by both the teachers as well as their classmates, depending on which format of feedback you prefer. The script should at least answer the following questions:

- Which border will be depicted?
- On which time period will the animation focus?
- What role(s) of the border will be explored in the animation?

When providing feedback, several of the above mentioned pointers can also be used as criteria to ensure that the script includes all the elements suggested. Once the script has been approved, students can proceed with their creations.

To get students started with the animations, they can have a look at [these graphic elements](#) that can be used to make the animation, derived from (Re)Viewing European Stories. The example lesson of this Strategy contains a sheet with suggested instructions on how to turn a storyboard into an animation using the stop motion animation technique. Students are of course encouraged to explore other methods of animation. Alternatively, students could also create their own comic book. A step-by-step guide on how to create a comic book is also included in the example of this strategy.

Activity 4 - Presentation and Evaluation

The animations can be presented in different ways - some students may want to use a digital animation tool, while others might prefer drawing their storyboard on paper. There are different ways for students to share their work with their classmates. Teachers and students can decide how to proceed. You may want to ask each group (or pair) to briefly show and explain their animations in no more than five minute presentations. Each presentation may be followed by a ten minute plenary reflection during which other students may ask questions or invite the presenting students to share their experiences in the creation of the animation and their search on archival resources. Some questions that the students could ask to the presenting group to get the reflection session started, could be:

- If you have chosen the case study yourself, why did you choose this specific border?
- Why did you choose the specific time period?
- Can you explain what role the border has in your animation and why you think it has this specific role (or roles)?
- In what ways do you think the border has impacted people's lives?

Alternatively, you may want to organise a longer class discussion after all the groups have presented their animations. This will allow students to compare and contrast their case studies. Some guiding questions for this discussion may be:

- What kind of roles do the different borders have?
- Do you see any similarities in the histories of the different borders? If so, what are they?
- Can you name the different ways in which the borders have affected people's lives?
- Having studied these borders yourself, what does a "border" mean to you?

HOW COULD YOU MAKE THIS STRATEGY MORE INCLUSIVE?

Supporting lower attaining students

To make this Teaching Strategy more inclusive and accessible to lower attaining students, you can offer other ways of presenting the story of the border. Creating animations might not be equally accessible for every student for several reasons. In this case, students could also explore other ways of presenting the story of the border, for example, through a play, a self made video or a paper mockup with materials provided beforehand, or simply a powerpoint presentation. In addition, you could also provide your students with character cards that present short life stories of individuals that lived on different sides of the border, challenging students to think and reflect on how the history of the border has impacted their lives.

Challenging higher attaining students

To make this Teaching Strategy more challenging for higher attaining students, several preparation activities may be transferred from the teacher to the students. This may include creating an information package (doing additional background research) on a border and the relations between neighbours. In this case, students will select a border and proceed with gathering information about the history of the border and the people who lived there. In addition, students can also be tasked with finding appropriate maps for their case-studies and the different periods of time. In addition to creating an animation, students may also be challenged to explore personal histories of people living near the border and translate these into short stories. This can be done either during the lesson or as homework. Another alternative could be to explore and map current-day (tangible or intangible) traces of the border change. These can be religious sites, buildings or language differences (dialects or accents), ethnic differences or specific habits.

WHAT OBSTACLES COULD A TEACHER FACE WITH THIS STRATEGY?

Difficult to find maps/information

- Some case studies might be very sensitive and lead to contestation in the classroom
- Copyright restrictions may impact the use of videos and other archival resources
- Archival sources may not be available in the teacher's native language

Example of the strategy in action

POLISH - LITHUANIAN BORDER

The example provided in this Teaching Strategy derives from the eLearning Activity *Borders that Save, Move and Divide*, from the (Re) Viewing European Stories project.

STEP 1: PREPARE THE MATERIALS

In preparation for the lesson, provide your students with an Information Package on the different case studies which your students can choose from. In each case study, include information on different historical periods of time that had an impact on the border.

(Re)Viewing European Stories

POLISH-LITHUANIAN BORDERLAND

INFORMATION PACK

The Sejny region in North-East of Poland and the Vilnius region in Lithuania were and still are a borderland in every sense. Despite the fact that this area was not always directly in close proximity to the current border line. Borderland here means a place through which borders run on the inside, not on the outside, with inhabitants speaking different languages, praying in different temples, claiming different nationalities. In this small piece of the continent nothing was less stable than state borders. Here one can meet people, who, while never leaving home, at various times were citizens of three, or even four different states.

THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH

In medieval Europe this region was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which after 1385 was associated with the Kingdom of Poland forming the four-hundred-years-long-lasting formal alliance - the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was home to different ethnic and religious groups: Poles, Lithuanians, Jews, Ruthenians (ethnic Ukrainians and Belarusians), Germans, Russians, Roma-Gypsies, Tatars, Karaites (Turkic-speaking adherents of Karaite Judaism), Muslims.

From the end of the eighteenth century to the outbreak of World War I, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ceased to exist when during partitions its territory was divided among the occupying powers of its neighbors - Prussia, Russia, and Austria. The areas on the left (west) side of the River Niemen were annexed by Prussia whilst Russia took the right (east) side.

INTERWAR PERIOD

Because of the 20th century conflicts and wars of neighbors this region experienced the disintegration of the multicultural community which once formed a rich and dynamic civilization here. After more than a century under the rule of Prussia,

Austria and Russian Empire both - Poland and Lithuania emerged as a sovereign nations. The result of World War I was a bloody struggle (1919-1920) around the new borders which damaged the relationship between the two countries during the interwar period.

Polish-Lithuanian conflict evolve around the city of Vilnius (Wilno in Polish) - for Lithuanians the historical capital of their state, for Poles very important center of Polish culture. To make the situation even more complicated in 1919, Polish-Soviet War began and resulted in the Red Army taking over Vilnius and giving it to the Lithuanians. The Soviets authorities proclaimed a Lithuanian-Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. Inspired by Józef Piłsudski (Commander in Chief of the Polish Armed Forces), the Polish army, captured Vilnius and pushed out the Lithuanian army, at the same time starting the period of Polish administration in the region of Vilnius. In February 1922 Vilnius region was incorporated into Poland. The conflict over the land caused tensions between the two countries and freezing of diplomatic relations until 1938.

II WORLD WAR

In September 1939 Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland: the area around Sejny was first overrun by Soviet tanks, then handed over to Nazi Germany. As a result of the agreement between the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, Vilnius and its surroundings were given over to Lithuania. In 1940, Lithuania as a Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic together with other Baltic countries was annexed to the USSR.

The Germans invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. Nazi occupation of Vilnius, which began on June 24, 1941, effected the extermination of Jews. Vilnius (Vilna in Yiddish) was in a deep sense also a Jewish city (known as "Jerusalem of the North") - for many generations Jews co-created the history and

heritage of this region. Nazi policy in Lithuania set itself the goal of murdering all people of Jewish descent and almost realized it. Lithuania was the first place in German-occupied Europe, where Jews were executed on a massive scale. In July and August 1941, Einsatzkommando soldiers, together with local forces, deported hundreds of people who were murdered in a forest of Ponary near Vilnius. The same fate met Jews from Sejny who were driven by the Germans and then murdered. The Jewish world in this region ceased to exist.

The Red Army returned in 1944, defeating the Germans – and then also defeating the Poles and Lithuanians who had been fighting the Germans. The region of Sejny was again part of Poland, this time one that became communist. Lithuania, now a Soviet republic, not an independent state, was once again just across the border with Vilnius as the capital city. Therefore, the Polish-Lithuanian relations after the war practically did not exist.

AFTER 1989

In 1989 (Poland) and 1990 (Lithuania) both countries emerged as independent democracies. With strong resentments towards each other – being the legacy of strained relations in the past – and sizable minorities of the other's nationals within their borders. However when asking about the identity of the inhabitants of this regions one can still encounter a different meaning of the world “borderland” – not only a place, but a certain ethos and tradition, explained best by the phrase “a Borderlander” It happens that the Borderlanders are known as “the last citizens of Grand Duchy of Lithuania”. It describes the identity, a sense of citizenship which is broader than single national or religious identity and which refers to the heritage of Grand Duchy of Lithuania which ceased to exist long ago but continues to exert influence on thinking about the identity of Polish-Lithuanian borderland.

HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF SEJNY

To understand the rich multicultural heritage of this borderland the history of the town of Sejny could be instructive. Sejny (Lith. Seinai, Yid. Seini) – a town today inhabited by Poles, Lithuanians and Russian Old-Belivers. Located at the border weave with Lithuania (12 km), Belarus (16 km) and Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast, 42 km). The first owners of the town were Dominican Friars who built here, in the 17th century, a monastery and basilica containing the miraculous figure of Our Lady of Sejny. In the 18th century the Friars invited to settle here Jews helping them to build their synagogue. A description of its opening was preserved, during which the rabbi and prior of the Dominicans - Wawrzyniec Bortkiewicz jointly brought Moses Tablets to the synagogue. Sejny became an important center of Jewish life, boasting learned rabbis, especially Mojżesz Icchak Awigdor, the creator of the yeshiva famous among enlightenment supporters. Thanks to him, the Sejny shtetl becomes the center of the Haskalah (Jewish enlightenment movement) all over Lithuania.

At the turn of the 20th century active here was the famous Lithuanian poet and simultaneously Bishop of Sejny, Antanas Baranaukas. He was the first priest who, during the consecration in the Sejny cathedral, addressed the faithful in Lithuanian. At the basilica, there was a seminary in which the future creators of the independent Lithuanian state studied. Sejny became a centre of the shaping then Lithuanian national identity and independence movement, which in encountering similar tendencies on the Polish side led to the Polish-Lithuanian conflict of 1919-1920. Before it was decided to which of the newly created nation-states Sejny would belong to, the city changed hands eleven times. Conflict between neighbors after which no-one left. The memory of the events of those times cast a shadow on Sejny community until today.

Before World War II it was still a multicultural town.

In 1913 the interesting statistical overview of the inhabitants of Sejny was published in the "Tygodnik Ilustrowany". According to this data Sejny has 3493 inhabitants: Poles - 1345, Lithuanians - 144, Russians - 119, Germans - 93, Tatars - 5, Jews - 1787, Spaniards - 1.

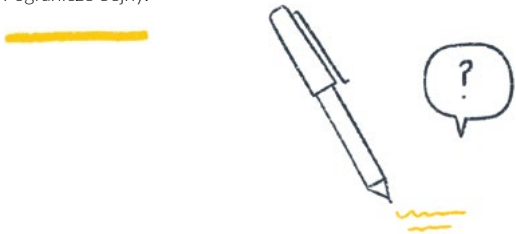
During the World War II the town was under the Soviet and German occupation. In the Sejny region in July 1945, the Red Army rounded up thousands of men who had resisted the Germans and murdered hundreds of them. The whole Jewish community perished in the Holocaust. Single survivors were scattered around the world. The synagogue in Sejny, as was typical under communism, was given over to economic use. Today Sejny is a Polish town with an active Lithuanian minority, and with only a few families of Russian Old Belivers. Although one needs around 7 minutes to walk from one end of the town to the other the topography of this place still reflects its rich multicultural heritage. The old Jewish quarter remains in the center of the town, there is an old protestant church, catholic basilica and monastery, there are Polish and Lithuanian schools and cultural centers.

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STEP 2: USE THE MATERIALS IN THE CLASSROOM

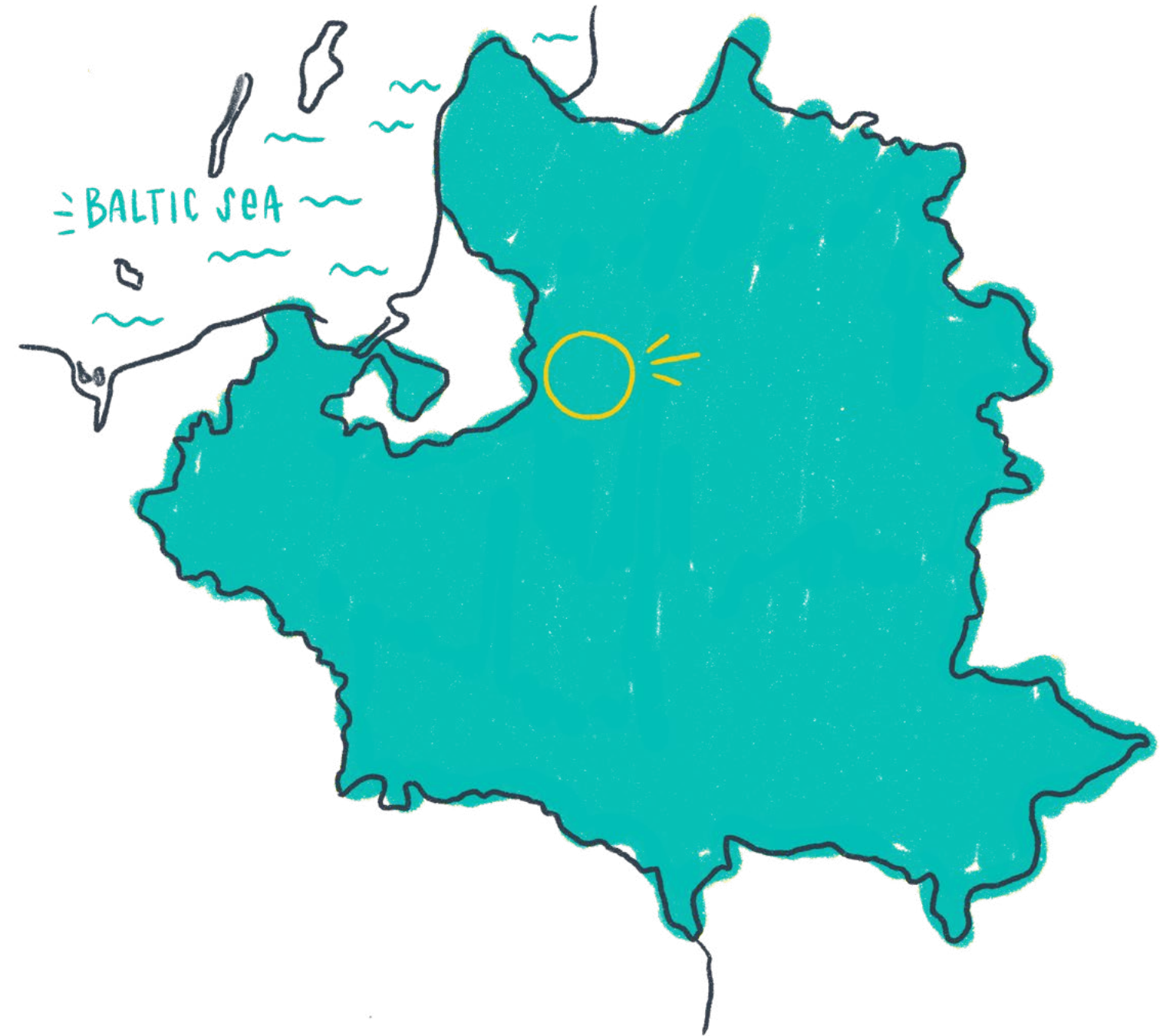
Activity 1: Hook the students' interest and introduce the concept of border

For this case study, students will watch a video on personal stories from the Polish-Lithuanian border, after which a plenary discussion will follow with guiding questions as provided in the Strategy. You can find the InBetween video for this case study via this link.

Activity 2: Getting to the case study and analysing maps

Students will analyse three different maps of the Polish-Lithuanian border, depicting three different periods of time.

MAP OF
POLISH-LITHUANIAN
BORDERLAND
18th CENTURY



(Re)Viewing
EUROPEAN
STORIES

MAP OF
POLAND
AFTER
1923



LEGEND

- ORTHODOX
- ROMAN CATHOLIC
- EVANGELIC
- GREEK CATHOLIC
- ☆ JEWISH
- ☾ MUSLIM
- 🐫 KARAIMS
- ✝️ OLD BELIEVERS

(Re)Viewing
EUROPEAN
STORIES

MAP OF
POLISH-LITHUANIAN
BORDERLAND
2020

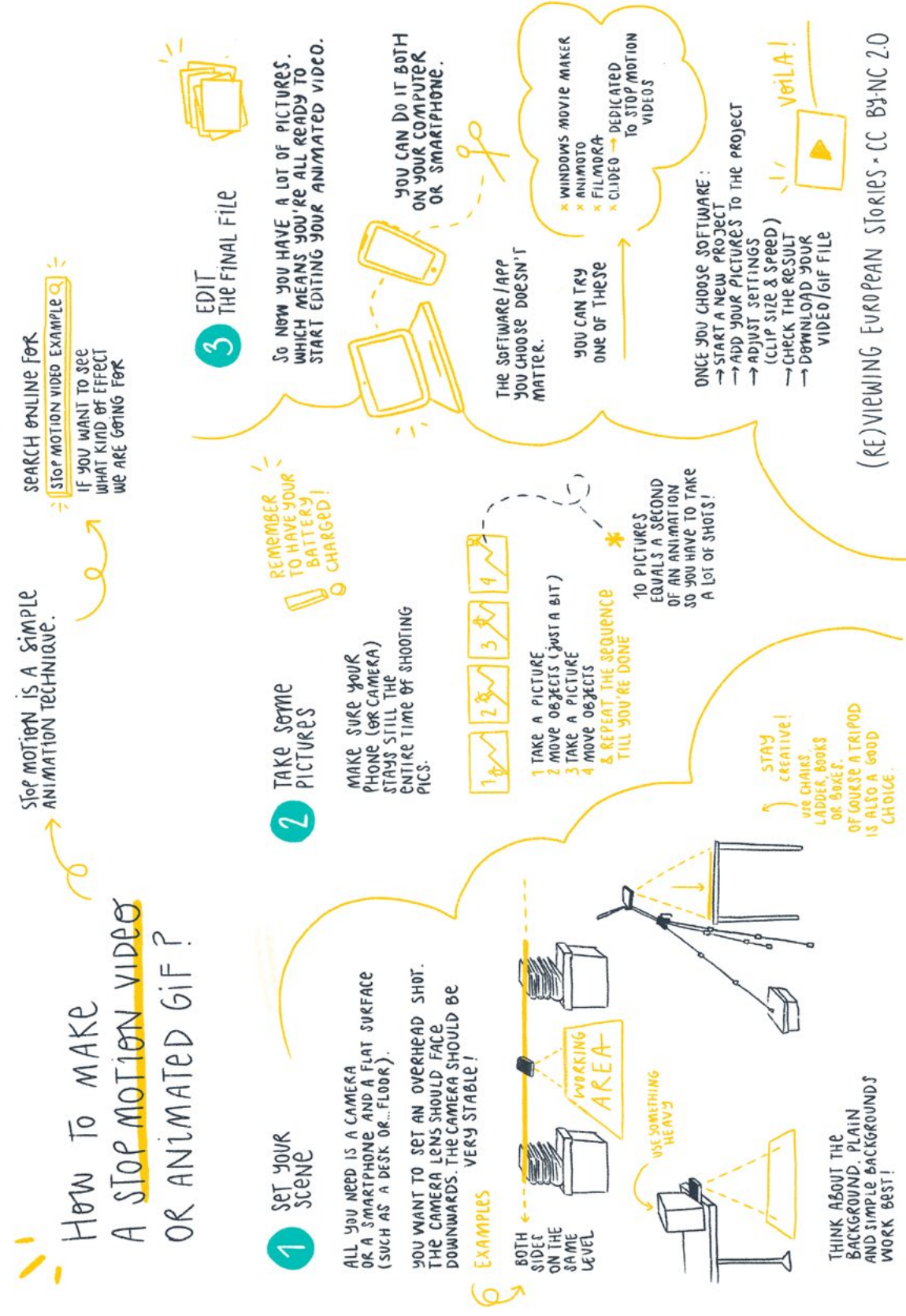


(Re)Viewing
EUROPEAN
STORIES



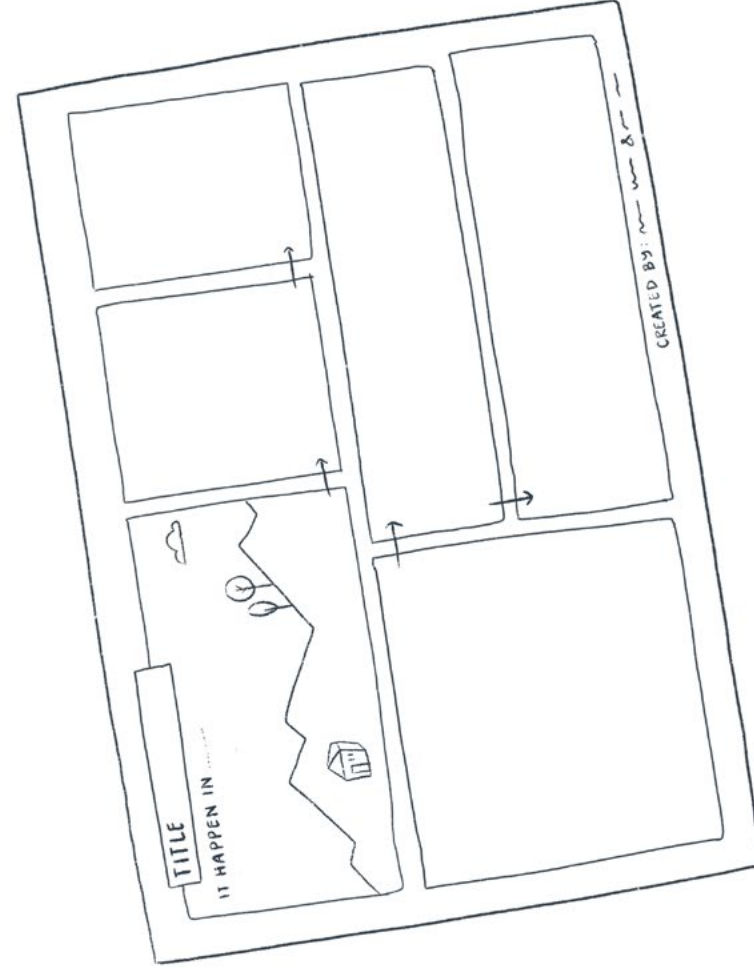
STEP 3: CREATING THE STORYBOARD

To help students on the way with creating animation, they can follow a step-by-step guide on how to create a **stop motion animation**.



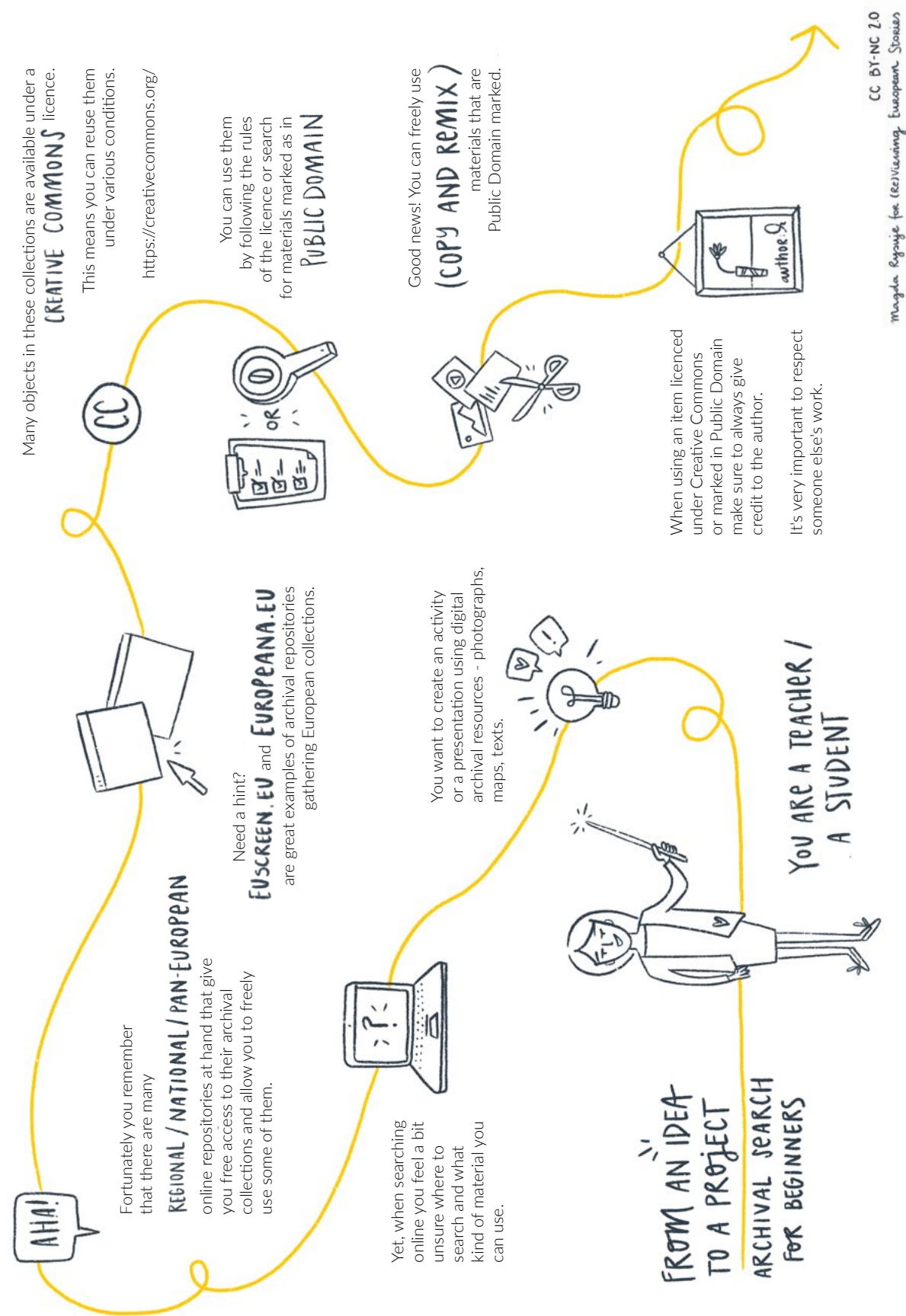
Alternatively, students can also create or draw their own **comic book**.

How To WORK ON A COMIC STORY?



- 1 START WITH THINKING OVER THE CONCEPT. DECIDE HOW MANY FRAMES YOU'LL NEED TO TELL THE STORY
- 2 SKETCH THE LAYOUT. THE MOST IMPORTANT FRAME SHOULD BE THE BIGGEST
- 3 REMEMBER ABOUT THE TITLE
- 4 WILL THE READERS KNOW WHEN & WHERE DID THE STORY HAPPEN?
- 5 NOW THE FUN PART! CUT OUT, DRAW, CREATE!
- 6 DON'T FORGET TO SIGN YOUR WORK

As mentioned in the Teaching Strategy, students are encouraged to include archival sources into their animations to give a more realistic depiction of the border, its role and history. A guide on finding archival materials can be found below.



Set in stone, history blinds. Set in motion, it opens minds.

HISTORY TEACHING MATTERS.

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An initiative of the Evens Foundation and EuroClio.



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