

**“Crossing our borders has become a normal part of life for years already”**

*Deputy Mayor of Kleef, Heinz-Joachim Schmidt*

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### 1. Introduction

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2010, a coach bus is taking 35 European History Educators from Nijmegen in the Netherlands to Kleve in Germany. At some point, phones start notifying the travelers that they have in fact crossed a border.

For most in the bus, this is normal life, for others it is a unique feeling of how a borderless world could be. For some it is everyday life, for others a pursuit for the future. All in all, it is one of the anchored physical expressions of the process of European Integration and therefore a result of History. Do these Teachers and Educators also cross borders in their teaching or is it still a bridge too far to teach common European History?



From 22 – 28 March 2010, in the beautiful surroundings of Nijmegen, Arnhem, Duisburg and Kleve, the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Professional Training and Development Conference of EUROCLIO - the European Association of History Educators took place. It was planned and co-organized over the course of 2 years with one of the founding members of EUROCLIO, the VGN – Dutch Association of Teachers of History and Citizenship. In this relatively hilly environment, close to the German-Dutch border, 189 participants from 43 different countries enjoyed a busy week filled that included lectures, active workshops, local and regional (cross-border) study visits, time for networking and a cultural programme to relax and get to know colleagues from other countries as well. The conference offered a true Professional Development Course to the participants in a unique European setting.

This report aims to encapsulate the positive feelings of participation and the evaluations of the conference, report on all the various activities and reflect on the achieved results within the themes of the conference. It is organized in a thematic way, while a chronological overview of the activities can be found in the Conference Booklet.<sup>i</sup>

## 2. Themes and Aims

As this conference was conceptualized, the first question that came to the table was whether or not it is possible, desirable and/or feasible **to define a “Canon of European History”**? We would be able to study this question by asking ourselves: *What can a study of European history show us about common topics? How common are these topics with respect to different dimensions such as local, regional, national, European and world history? How can we teach and assess these topics*



*in different age groups, different school levels and multicultural classrooms?* Secondly, the organization was deeply concerned with trying **to focus more on the question of how history teaching can contribute** to the promotion of positive values amongst young people including a valuing of democracy and European citizenship. Thirdly, using the opportunity of having so many experts and peers together for six full conference days, we would push ourselves **to envisage a better understanding of what constitutes ‘good’ or even ‘best’ practice** in teaching about these topics in the Netherlands and across Europe. Finally the organization would raise the important question of how we can **learn from each other in preparing young people** to be active, engaged citizens in a 21st century European and ‘globalised’ society.

While addressing these questions, the conference aimed to share the Dutch experience on the learning and teaching of history and explore if these Dutch models offer inspiration for a common European history Canon. Presenting the Dutch and international examples of good practice in teaching topics from a local to a European perspective, taking into consideration different levels in education and different age groups, was essential to ferment the sharing process.

In line with sharing this Dutch experience, a strong emphasis was put on (a) addressing the Narrative of World War II as an exemplar historical theme on a Global level, (b) informing about progress in the development of Historiana- a comparative, common interactive tool for the European level and (c) investigating local Dutch/German cross border European topics on a Regional and local levels.

The conference aimed also to offer opportunities for discussion for history teachers from different countries and traditions, to present results of comparative international research projects and to assess EUROCLIO’s work on the learning and teaching of History in Europe and to decide on its policy priorities for the coming years.

*In the next sections of this report we present the different ways in which we tried to come – through lectures, debates, workshops, study visits, school visits, a varied cultural programme and most relevantly discussion amongst professionals - to solid answers relating to the main conference question: is it possible, desirable and/or feasible to define a “Canon of European History”?*

**3. The Dutch Experience as an example on how to give shape to History though Education?**  
*Presentations and debates on different theoretical concepts and practices.*

The organization chose to discuss the “European Canon”, based on the recent development of a Dutch Canon of Culture and History that sparked a lot of debates and was to some extent controversial for history didactics, but also very much appreciated by other segments in society. In general, The Netherlands has seen a lot of debates and policies on how history ought to be taught in schools in the last decades. The more recent additions to these policy-driven debates were the Dutch Canon for Culture and History and the Framework of the Ten Eras. In addition, a Museum of National History has been called into existence. The need to communicate these Dutch developments to the rest of Europe is not only potentially important for other history education communities in Europe as a source for reflection or inspiration, but it is perhaps more relevant for the Dutch History Educators and Policy makers to compare these developments with other trends in Europe and beyond. The conference specifically organized a full day around the *Sharing of the Dutch Experience*. The day was kindly hosted by the Radboud University of Nijmegen together with the Graduate School of Education.

**Prof. Dr. Peter-Arno Coppens**, Scientific-director of the Graduate School of Education at the Radboud University Nijmegen, and **Ludolf van Hasselt**, Director of the European Commission in The Netherlands, welcomed the participants at the University. Ludolf van Hasselt said that the work done by EUROCLIO is courageous, especially in times of broad Euroscepticism; *“To accept the decisions that EU leaders will take, history teaching about common European things comes in, moreover history teachers fulfill an important role in the acceptance of the EU by their citizens.”*

Also the Presidents of the Dutch Association of History Educators and EUROCLIO, Mr Maas van Egdome and Mr Dean Smart, welcomed the participants.

*‘What kind of history for the 21st century: European or Dutch?’* was the title of **Prof. Dr. Peter Rietbergen’s** lecture. The thought-provoking lecture led to mixed reactions, but also to a good start for thinking about this big question.



One answer to the question above has been the development of the Canon of Dutch History. A Canon of Dutch National History, a (chronological) selection of 50 windows on events, persons, developments and phenomena, served as an example for thinking about ways how to approach history that is shared by every nation in Europe. The Chair of the Canon Committee, **Prof. Dr. Frits van Oostrom**, spoke during the day dedicated to the *Dutch Experience* about **the Dutch Canon of History and Culture**. He stressed that the Canon is produced as an instrument for primary school, and the children who leave primary

school should know about all the windows in the Canon. The development of this provoked a lot of discussion and debate, as perspectives on national history differ because of communal and personal influences. And still voices are heard to make changes in the present selection. The development of a canon on a European scale will hardly be easier from this point of view. Our post-conference survey shows however that 64% of participants liked the ideas behind the canon.<sup>ii</sup>

The Canon, was however preceded by a curriculum framework of the history in ten different eras. **Mr. Arie Wilschut** presented the ideas behind this framework, which intended to make historical knowledge last longer in the minds of the young students.<sup>iii</sup> The ten era-framework is highly liked by the participants of the conference. It seemed that this system is less debatable than the Canon. Unlike the canon, that works as a checklist what student should know about Dutch history, the ten era-framework is set up like a frame of reference for students. Using them together, however, could make it easier for students to remember things they have been taught about.

The presentations and debates about the Canon of Dutch National History and the ten-era-framework were followed up by **Erik Schilp**, the director of the National History Museum.<sup>iv</sup> He connected this debate to the mission of the NHM, and talked about the use of this new museum for history education, and for the history of a country or maybe even beyond, in general. He stressed the importance of a museum for people instead of the importance of the collection itself: “The focus of attention is no longer the collection, but the visitor”, and therefore: “It is not the collection that is important, but the story behind it.” He concluded with saying that of course museums should present important historical events, where the canon is based on. For that, the canon of Dutch National history could be used. However, “taking the fifty windows as the basis for our concept would limit us in our freedom to shape the way we feel history should be elaborated.”

The presenters of this day - Prof. Dr. Rietbergen being excused - were joined by Vincent Loth, a History Teacher and Board Member of the Dutch Association of History and Citizenship Teacher (VGN), to form the highly interactive panel discussion, with the debate being chaired by EUROCLIO Board Member and History Teacher Trainer Huub Oattes. The panel discussion addressed the main question “Is the Dutch Canon model exemplar for Europe?” The interaction with the audience, and the passionate discussion amongst the panelists brought to the surface different points of view on the question asked.

The Panel Discussion started with questions about the Dutch situation, as was described in the earlier speeches. Many teachers were surprised that although the curriculum is approved by the government,



politicians are hardly involved in developing it. That is done by experts in History, Didactics, etc. Also, the curriculum is formulated in a way that gives a lot of freedom to the authors of textbooks and teachers, which is not the case in many European countries. The general opinion was that this is an exceptional situation and that people in the Netherlands should consider themselves lucky. The title of the panel discussion, 'is the Dutch model exemplar for Europe', proved more difficult to answer. Although most people agreed that the philosophy behind and the execution of the Dutch curricula is very good, they didn't think this will ever work in their own countries. Furthermore, people agreed to the need of more focus on Europe in national history education, but not in the form of one canon for Europe.

All these theoretical debates and viewpoints were balanced by a very crucial part of the programme; the school visits. School visits were graded with a very high mark of 3,9 out of 4. Most of the participants considered this part of a program as the most interesting and useful. Twelve different educational institutes kindly hosted tours, debates and lunch at their facilities. Participants visited these secondary schools, a primary school, Teacher-Trainer-institutes for both and an assessment centre to see a part of this cycle and how these institutions cooperate. Every school or institute made a specific programme. While some showed how history was being taught to students 'live', others focused on the exchange of views on the pros and cons of the used textbooks and the place of history and European issues in the curricula for different age groups and school levels. One school had 13 and 14 year old pupils give a presentation about the Holocaust, in English, to the participants.



The visit to the teacher training institute for primary schools (PABO) addressed discussions on the European dimension in training future teachers in primary and secondary schools. There was an exchange of views about the responsibility of teachers regarding the introduction of students to European and even global citizenship. Historical knowledge about the World Wars, the Cold War and European integration was considered essential in the process. During the conference also other topics made clear that they can be used for such purposes. Finally, a special School Visit was hosted by the Assessment Centre CITO. One History Teacher from Ukraine reported: "The visit to the CITO was helpful highly. The practice of the institution what has the wide experience in measuring the academic achievements of students, especially in the testing of knowledge and skills on the school history. This will be used by in my future work."

These Dutch debates were greatly present throughout the week and certainly were taken home by the participants. On Mary Nombulelo a Teacher Trainer from Lesotho, these debates had a unique effect. She wrote us: "The Dutch canon is one such example in that the former High Commission Territories of

Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland which used to be grouped together and continue to do so as independent states of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (BLS Countries) could use to revise their joint history curricula.”

During the School Visits, participants were happy to share experiences of history teaching in their own country. Lyubomir Georgiev, a young History Teacher from Bulgaria, wrote us: “The topic was connected with Communism and as a representative of Eastern Europe, I found myself in the centre of profound discussion answering different questions for more than half an hour.” Participants were surprised by the language skills of the pupils, but also about the way in which history is educated as a subject.

So, do we want a Canon of European History in the Dutch way? The Netherlands does not operate in isolation, and it became more and more clear that in many different countries similar political tendencies exist. History Educators are sometimes involved and enthusiastic that a more solid framework on what to teach arises, but more often find themselves being on the sidelines of what can be better seen as identity politics.

*In the next section it is investigated how perhaps a more sober focus on history in a local and regional sense fosters a better sense of belonging, while not blindly following the 19<sup>th</sup> century national history pedigree.*



#### 4. “A True Sense of Belonging”. Local and Regional Cross-Border History

It is a bit of a truism that where we live is very important to our identities. The history teacher has the task of fermenting and deepening this local identity by bringing in a wide framework of national, European and world history. To which extent do we really endorse a local/regional identity, and to which extent do we understand these as being cross-border at the same time?

The conference was held not in the more urbanized Western part of The Netherlands, but in the area of **Nijmegen, Arnhem** and near to and across the German border. All outdoor activities took place in this region, including visits to medieval towns like **Kalkar, Xanten, Kleve**, Nijmegen and Arnhem, including antiquity museum based on Roman History, including the industrial complex of ThyssenKrupp in the Ruhr-area city of Duisburg and also including modern-day phenomena like the postwar-reconstruction provincial house in Arnhem and the newly built Mosque in a Ruhr-area suburb.

On Monday the conference kicked-off with an introduction to this region with a Study Visit to the City of Kleve in Germany. This **Euregio** is the oldest one formed in Europe, and is situated in what had been crucial battleground in World War II. The region had been historically connected in the Duchy of Gelre in medieval times as well. Anno 2010 both the Mayors of Kleve – a German city near the border – and of Nijmegen – stresses the close economic interdependence and the need for an open border and cooperation. For History Educators from across Europe, it was argued that this type of historical change should be emphasized in teaching History from regional perspectives.



Four examples were presented to the participants of importance of matching historical to regional perspectives, the first of which being the topic of antiquity in general and the **local legacies of the Roman Empire** specifically. The Archaeological Park and Museum in the town of Xanten kindly offered a tour of their exhibitions by the museum educators. Artifacts were exhibited with various stories behind them, showing the commonalities shared throughout Europe through Roman Heritage and the common themes they address. Moreover, the hosting city of Nijmegen prides itself on being the oldest town in The Netherlands with roots in Roman times. The **Valkhof Museum** hosted a creative workshop about working with shards and other archaeological materials to bring to the classrooms a real sense of antiquity. Participants could experience history by feeling and studying real ancient shards and sources from ancient to early modern times. This was a workshop that showed how you can give students the feeling of historical sensation and teach them something with it. This way of working suits every age. Another workshop was hosted by Marian Heesen from the **Via Egnatia Foundation**. This extension of

the Roman Road the Via Appia connected the former Western and Eastern Roman empire. It runs through current-day Albania, Republic of Macedonia, The Balkans, Greece and ends in Istanbul. As it served economic and social purposes for more than 2 millennia, it serves as a good historical example for connecting the above mentioned states. The Via Egnatia is a good example of using regional history in a relevant and purposeful way to go beyond the national perspective.

However, as most of the Roman Heritage is small in size, tour guides and city promoters, expanded their presentations of this city to more focus on the **medieval and early modern period**. They see it as a continuous history of international significance, pointing to residents like Charlemagne, Fredrick Barbarossa and events like the Treaty of Nijmegen (1678-1679). But, perhaps more relevant in the city touring business, most pictures were taken at the City Hall and of the St. Stephen's Church. Within the same political sphere during medieval and early modern times lay the town of Kalkar. Also in this town, the medieval architecture captured most attention. **Dr. Bert Thissen** kindly guided a group of History Educators through his native town of Kleve. He noted how



this town was under the influence of the Dutch under the rule of Johan Maurits van Nassau, but retained her western orientation in contrast to the rest of Germany after switching hands.



The third example of how historical narratives can benefit from cross-border regional comparisons was encapsulated by an awe-inspiring visit to Duisburg, addressing **Industrial Revolution, Migration and Globalisation**. One of the 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries most important steel production site – ThyssenKrupp – was visited. Many of the participating History Educators had been teaching about the History of Industrial Revolution for years, never to have sensed the true scale of their subject. This study visit certainly addressed this discrepancy. Donika Xhemajli, a Member of the



History Teachers Association of Kosovo, said “One hour inside the factory made me understand the industrial revolution. Inside the factory I did not see more than five employees; this was a clear indicator of how advanced the technology is within the factory.” Predecessors of this Steel Plant had played crucial roles in arming German armies but anno 2010 the Director of this company is sending his thousands of workers – most of which from migrant background – to study visits to educational sites like the Dutch Liberation Museum. It was very encouraging to learn about how this company looked to the future without forgetting the past. To enhance the understating link between industry and migration, an additional visit was kindly hosted by the Merkez Mosque, one of the biggest of Europe. Not surprisingly, most of the work of the mosque is in the social and integration sphere, involving many inter-religious initiatives developed by the enthusiast group of mosque volunteers.

The fourth example given was more contemporary and politically sensitive one. Europe still isn't free from **conflict regions**, and some states acquired their independence only recently. In cooperation with the Nijmegen Students of History Association Excalibur, a public seminar on history teaching in post-conflict regions was held. As former citizens of the broken state of Yugoslavia, **Edin Radusic** from Bosnia-Herzegovina, **Tvrtko Bozic** from Croatia and **Goran Miloradovic** from Serbia talked about history education after the Yugoslav era. The debate was enlivened by them sharing their personal experiences during the Yugoslavian wars in the nineties, but also agreeing and pointing to the needed next steps with peace building through balanced and multiperspective history education. That there is already such good cooperation between these people on educational level should be cherished.

*The, do we want a Cross-Border Canon of History?*

These examples showed that bridging history by crossing borders, while focusing on a singular region or keeping a local perspective is possible and deepens the historical understanding. The Conference was evaluated with 3.7(out of 4). This high rating provides a sound indication that it was very well perceived by a majority of participants. EUROCLIO strives and promotes meaningfully regional and local dialogue about history and history education, and it seems that history carries so many perspectives and can be approached by so many paths; it makes no sense to strive for 'the' Canon of European History. No comprehensive European textbook is possible, even though certain theme like migration, or social development could be brought together.

*In the next section, these big themes are constructed and it is analyzed if they allow us to form or build this European Canon, for instance around a significant event like the Second World War.*

## 5. “A Bridge too Far?” Common European History and our Big Stories: research and teaching common themes and topics

The title of the conference bore an important question and a challenge in itself. As xenophobia, intolerance and exclusiveness seem to be on the rise in Europe – questions about how to deal with them have to be answered. The future of the European project may benefit there for from an exploration into the idea of a common European History Education. In the 2010 EUROCLIO Questionnaire 69% agreed that the approach to multi-perspectivity is not satisfactory.<sup>v</sup> Moreover, it became clear that History curricula across Europe are still oriented mainly on national history: events, persons and developments are placed within a national context; this may underpin the focus on national issues in politics and society for the future. How do then modern methodological tools of the history teachers like active learning and multiperspectivity fit into this boxing in of common historical themes into more narrow national borders?

During the conference many had the chances to explore these common topics. In the first place 25 **workshops** were held through the conference, with 31 presenters from 8 countries.(see annex programme). In addition to the workshops, **key-note lectures** were given on this topic from a societal perspective by Prof. Dr. Maria Grever, Dr. Carla van Boxtel and Dr. Harry Jansen. Also, earlier and current **EUROCLIO work** was showcased as way to go forward with the challenge of teaching common history in Europe. Finally, a full day was dedicated at the conference to the topic of the Second World War as a Shared European narrative

The workshop topics and methodological approach were very diverse, but with an emphasis on bringing something new, innovative and exciting. As a result the Workshop element of the conference was highly evaluated reaching 3.4 in the scale of 4.

**Marc van Berkel** (History Teacher Trainer from Hogeschool Arnhem Nijmegen, the Netherlands) hosted a workshop entitled *Appeasement: Munich 1938 and After*. Participants were asked to personify the politicians present at the press conference in 1938. This role-playing meant that participants had to consider their “own” political motives as well as the official story that was brought out then. **Koen Henskens** (Teacher trainer at Hogeschool Arnhem Nijmegen, the Netherlands) focused on using a wide variety of sources to deal with the Crusades. **Bas van Rooijen** (Deputy-Head and History Teacher at SG Stevensbeek secondary school, the Netherlands) asked participants to work in groups with different clues to solve the ‘mystery’: ‘Who’s responsible for the outbreak of the First World War?’ A workshop



on Pop Music in the Cold War by **Jan de Vries** (Teacher trainer in History Graduate School of Education, the Netherlands) had the participants think and explain the contents and ideologies in different songs. Increasing the sources we look at in history lessons came back later in a workshop by **Marco Gabellini** (Historian and Member of Education Liaison Unit of CVCE, Luxembourg). He presented the Digital Library of the history of European integration ([www.ena.lu](http://www.ena.lu)), which has a rich collection of source material on a topic in history that is often featuring only in the margin of history textbooks.

Underlying the discussions and debates about what exactly common European history is, questions about historical significance and conflicting histories come into play. **Jannet van Drie** and **Brenda Stam** (Teacher Trainer at the Graduate School for Teaching and Learning, the Netherlands) had researched homework and opinions of pupils and how they were understanding significance and grasping historical reasoning. Because of children were thought these skills, the selection of any canon itself could be used as a classroom tool to practice with and to debate about the content of the canon, instead of only using it as a guideline for the topics to be addressed. **Chris Rowe** (former head of history at Winstanley College, United Kingdom) and Alan Midgley (former head of history at Oundle School, United Kingdom) gave a workshop in how to teach about inter-communal conflicts. Useful was a list of 10 points what to do and what not to do teaching about these conflicts. Important was multi-perspectivity; therefore the use of different sources from different perspectives was the main issue in the practical part of this workshop.



The quality of the workshop sessions organized during the conference was also the internationality of the workshop hosts. **Marat Gibatdinov** (Academy of Sciences, Tarastan, Russian Federation) for instance, shared a unique view on how to bridge between Christian and Islamic communities. The position of Islamic communities in different European countries came to be discussed in small groups. **Ulrich Schnakenberg** (teacher of History and English at a German Gymnasium, Germany) gave a workshop on the use of political cartoons in the classroom. The topic was mostly for history teachers how to use these cartoons in the classroom. Later, the group was divided in smaller groups to analyze a few cartoons on the history of Europe and the EU. A workshop hosted by **Maureen Cooney** (supervisor of trainee teachers of History, Ireland) gave good insight about how important multi-perspectivity can be in history education. The example of the neutrality of the Republic of Ireland during WWII shed light on the way Irish and British looked at this event.

The workshops led to many discussions about historical events, developments and phenomena on an interregional European level, with the aim to look for commonalities in the history of Europe and the possibilities to use multiperspective approaches.<sup>vi</sup>

In addition to the many active workshops, the conference brought international experts in the fields of history and heritage education to present their latest research. From the Centre for Historical Culture at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, **Prof. Dr. Maria Grever** talked about Creating commonality for young students is an important aspect for learning opportunities. This basic need is often grounded in history - whether artificially constructed or not- and **Dr. Carla van Bortel** presented a dynamic approach of heritage encompasses the view that heritage is a social and continuous process of selection and meaning making related to the ever changing orientations towards the future. **Dr Harry Jansen**, lecturer Theory of History, Radboud University Nijmegen, talked mainly about benchmarks in the history curriculum, discerned in three different types: benchmarks to augment the interest in history; benchmarks for history as a discipline and benchmarks regarding the society we live in nowadays. There was a good opportunity to debate these research results, to exchange further suggestions and perspectives from other countries.



EUROCLIO does not only bring the aforementioned history educators together to discuss important and relevant themes and topics, it also aims to support and implement innovation processes in deeper and more significant ways. This is done through various history education projects and material developments programmes, supported by the European Union, the Council of Europe, Open Society Institute, United Nations and many Local, Regional and National authorities.



One of the biggest initiatives in EUROCLIO's 20-year history is **Historiana.eu**. Historiana is an initiative of EUROCLIO, the European Association of History Educators in which an **online, interactive, multimedia tool will be developed as an alternative to a European textbook**. **Steven Stegers**, EUROCLIO Project Manager from the EUROCLIO Secretariat and editor-in-chief **Dr. Robert Stradling** presented the ideas behind this initiative, explained the current status of the project and invited participants to actively contribute themselves to what according to EUROCLIO's Executive Director **Joke van der Leeuw-Roord**, *"might be one of EUROCLIO's most challenging initiatives up till now"*

In addition to the presentation and warm reception of Historiana, many different EUROCLIO Project and programmes were presented at the conference's Information Market.

A very special thematic day at the conference was organized around the Second World War as a transversal theme of all of the above aims and objectives of the conference. The day included visits to the Dutch National Liberation Museum and the Airborne Museum, the production of a short documentary by the Dutch History Channel (Geschiedenis24), The day was highly evaluated (3.7 out of 4), and the organization is especially content with offering such a varied day on the last conference day, showcasing all the different local actors that can be involved (re)telling the history of the second world war.

*Many different themes and approaches were suggested and discussed at length. It can be concluded that through the many topics and methodologies addressed in the workshops, the relevant research presented in lectures and the all-round investigations into the Second World War as a shared European narrative it was revealed that, in general, a deeper understanding of the nature of history education is fundamental before designing a European Canon. What is it for? Is it about raising historical awareness in society, and if so, what does this awareness mean? What would the majority of pupils in European schools, who drop the subject of History as soon as they can, need to take out of their lessons with respect to the common European History.*

(On the picture on the bottom-right: **Jan Loos** told across the eyes of an adolescent how hope, sadness, capacity of overcoming and the feeling of humanity appeared among a very hostile and hard atmosphere)



## 6. A European Association in a European Civil Society

*In the final section we would like to show and stress how addressing all the aforementioned themes during a conference, should always be balanced by a good and participatory cultural and social programme. Bringing together History Educators from over 40 countries for 6 days of intense work can only be successful with time for socialization.*

The EUROCLIO Annual Conference is a unique platform that in addition to a strong emphasis on workshops, lectures, school- and study visits offers History Educators many other different opportunities. First of all, EUROCLIO offers History Educators in Europe **a shared and democratic voice** in its General Assembly and the Annual Conference is each year organized in tandem with the National History Teachers Association. Secondly, being a **community of practitioners**, the Annual Conference is attended by young as well as more experienced educators, by teachers from all levels, but also teacher trainers, curriculum developers, textbook authors and education consultants. Thirdly, as History Education is always a National policy, innovative network meetings take place in the fringe of the conference, while a **European Textbook Exhibition** allowed the participants to learn each other's methods, narratives and emphasis. Finally, an elaborate social and cultural programme was organized. A



conscious choice was made for extensive breaks, lunches and dinners, allowing the participants to interact and continue their discussions and in some cases even pursue their own projects.

EUROCLIO recognizes that Europe does not stop at EU borders, and that History Education is relevant for people from all over the world. The conference in Nijmegen attracted participants from all over the world. Some Educators could benefit from the International Visitors Programme, hosted by the Dutch Institute for Heritage.<sup>vii</sup> This programme was especially helpful in being able to allow financially those from outside of the EU to participate. *"I would like to express my gratitude towards the Netherlands Institute of Heritage, which supported international participants' applications and mine in particular. I am sure that the conference in EUROCLIO in Nijmegen is one of the events, which we will not forget during our lives".* Lyubomir Georgiev, Bulgaria

Acting together for a European Civil Society, EUROCLIO has been functioning as a democratic community of practitioners since 1992. An annual General Assembly has been meeting ever since to amongst other discuss and debate policies and to hold election for Board membership. In 2010, three new associations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Turkey became full members of EUROCLIO members. Board members that had reached the end of their terms were discharged with honor and three new Board members were installed in function.<sup>viii</sup>

Two events should be highlighted further. First of all, a Cultural Programme was organized in Nijmegen, in the Peters Church. The programme included dinner and drinks prepared by volunteers and music, cabaret and most importantly a moment to relax and get to know each other and engage in many conversations.



## 7. Conclusions & Next Steps

After two years of planning for a one week International Conference, we are facing again the main questions. Is it possible, desirable and/or feasible **to define a “Canon of European History”**?

Is teaching Common European History a “Bridge too Far”? No, History Educators from all over Europe acknowledge that history does not stop at national borders, and as most people in Europe are fortunate enough to be able to cross those borders effortlessly, it is extremely beneficial for history educators to get an enriched understanding of History Education in Europe. Anno 2010, nearly 200 History Educators met in Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

On the basis of the above reportage, the conference questionnaire, the results of the post-conference concluding questions, we may conclude the following:

- 1. Great Conference.** EUROCLIO and the Dutch History Teachers Association have been able, with support of donors, sponsors and of course participants, to host a unique Professional Training and Development Conference, for the 17<sup>th</sup> time in it’s existence. 189 History Educators from 43 different countries attended a wide range of activities, all focused on the general theme of the conference. The Conference was evaluated with 3.7(out of 4). Attendees enjoyed great differentiation in the program and expressed their interest in taking a part in the next Conference in 2011. Despite all this positive feedback, there is of course still some room for improvement: lectures lasting too long, sometimes lacking clear points and not much time for peer-to-peer discussion after workshops and lectures.
- 2. Changes in Europe.** The Questionnaire gave History Educators in Europe a mirror to look at together. It has been concluded, discussed and re-affirmed that there is a limited satisfaction on how multiperspectivity has been implemented in history teaching practices. There is however still an increase in the National Dimension of the history curricula. At the same time, we see a clear consensus on shared themes and concepts in European History, albeit some of these maybe quite traditional.
- 3. History Educators.** Perhaps the most important conclusion is the need to keep talking, exchanging views, deepen cross-border cooperation, whether it on a local, regional, national or international level. It has been shown clearly during the conference that even if most of the History curricula in Europe do not venture outside of their border, professionals in the teaching history business do, and they should do it more. Listening to one another’s perspectives and ideas about the nature and reason of teaching history has been experienced by all participants as a very inspiring and motivating Professional Development.
- 4. One Association for more Associations.** The Annual General Assembly of EUROCLIO came together and brought forward how important it is to have this Europe-wide association, so that conferences are

not just organized, but they have a shared purpose to continue connecting all of Europe's History Teachers Associations democratically.

An important next step for EUROCLIO is to continue the exploration into a common approach to history teaching in Europe. Common in a way that we can express our political agreement of European Citizenship, that we can move forward and teach history to Europe's children that is meaningful and enables them to understand how the world came to the state in which it exists in 2010.

A central programme in EUROCLIO's work for the coming years is the development of **Historiana**. Historiana is an initiative of EUROCLIO in which an online, interactive, multimedia tool is developed on the learning and teaching of common themes in history and heritage. A thematic approach has been chosen because looking into history from a thematic angle makes it easier to see connections between historical events, the relevance for the world we live in and legacy that remains. The broad nature of the themes that are chosen makes them relevant for various contexts, so that the material can be used for multiple purposes. The thematic approach makes it possible to trace back long term developments, see and analyze turning points in history and see similarities and difference between events and locations. Through this, it shows what people share, with respect for diversity.

We invite you to follow the development of this programme by heading on to [www.historiana.eu](http://www.historiana.eu) and getting introduced to all the belonging activities and plans.

However, we have to end this report on a sad note. As financial regulations are tight and the world finds itself in a financial crisis, as an International NGO, EUROCLIO has to fight for every cent it can get to implement its programmes and strategies. It is currently unsure if – for the first time after 17 years – it will be able to organize the annual conference for 2011, having the same depth and meaning as the 2010 edition.

Jonathan Even-Zohar, EUROCLIO Senior Manager & Ruud van den Hoogenhoff, EUROCLIO Trainee (02/2010 – 07/2010)

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<sup>i</sup> Link to Conference Booklet: [http://www.euroclio.eu/site/index.php/2010-nijmegen-the-netherlands/downloads/doc\\_download/610-conference-booklet](http://www.euroclio.eu/site/index.php/2010-nijmegen-the-netherlands/downloads/doc_download/610-conference-booklet)

<sup>ii</sup> Link to English language website about the Dutch Canon: <http://entoen.nu/en>

<sup>iii</sup> Website of the Ten Eras: <http://tientijdvakken.slo.nl/en/>

<sup>iv</sup> Website National History Museum Dutch: <http://www.jijmaaktgeschiedenis.nu/blog/>

<sup>v</sup> The Questionnaire is available on : <http://www.euroclio.eu/site/index.php/2010-nijmegen-the-netherlands/downloads>

<sup>vi</sup> Link to Conference Booklet: [http://www.euroclio.eu/site/index.php/2010-nijmegen-the-netherlands/downloads/doc\\_download/610-conference-booklet](http://www.euroclio.eu/site/index.php/2010-nijmegen-the-netherlands/downloads/doc_download/610-conference-booklet)

<sup>vii</sup> For an overview of the participants in this programme, please see page 4 of the Conference Booklet:  
<http://www.euroclio.eu/site/index.php/2010-nijmegen-the-netherlands/downloads>

<sup>viii</sup> More information can be found on <http://www.euroclio.eu/site/index.php/euroclio-board-about-euroclio-872/board-news>