Decisions and Dilemmas – Learning about the EU from a historical perspective

First Development Workshop
10 – 12 October 2014
Edinburgh, United Kingdom

REPORT

Historiana

EURO CLIO
European Association of History Educators

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Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

About the project

The project *Decisions and Dilemmas: Learning about the EU from a historical perspective* will engage a cross-border and mixed group of academics and school educators in the fields of history and citizenship into the **collaborative development, testing and implementation of online cross-border educational modules for both history and citizenship at secondary school level**. These modules will offer multi-perspective sources and learner-centred activities setting the emergence of post-1945 European cooperation into its historical context. The project will build the capacity of over 50 history and citizenship educators from the EUROCLIO network to teach the history of European integration in a way that is both **academically sound and relevant for nowadays' youth**. It will engage a highly motivated and capable group of practitioners into cross-border cooperation and collaborative tool development that will bring them into direct contact with recent research in the field of the history of European integration. The collaboration between academic experts and school educators will result in a product that is both historically sound and classroom practice-oriented. The project is divided into three modules:

About the meeting

The First Development Meeting of the EUROCLIO *Decision and Dilemmas* project was held in Edinburgh, United Kingdom from **10th to the 12th of October**. The meeting gathered the team to kick-start their work on high-quality material consisting of multi-perspective sources and learner-centered activities **setting the emergence of post-1945 European cooperation** into its historical context.

Aims of the meeting
- To ensure that all team members are **fully informed** about the Historiana programma and understand how this project relates to it.
- To **introduce the team members to the project**, including the outline of the project, the rationale in terms of content focus, nature of the learning activities, and the role of the advisory board and local participants.
- To **identify how the advisory board can best support** the development process.
- To **clarify and agree on the division of responsibilities** within the development team and to get to know the team members.
- To discuss and **agree on how to develop the historical content and learning activities** described in the project.

Participants
The following people participated in the First Development Meeting:

- **Development Team Members**: Edgars Berzins (Latvia), Francesco Scatigna (Italy), Marjeta Sifrer (Slovenia), Helen Snelson (United Kingdom), Ineke Veldhuis-Meester (The Netherlands)
- **Advisory Board Member:** Robert Stradling (United Kingdom)
- **Coordinators**: Judith Geerling (EUROCLIO), Steven Stegers (EUROCLIO)

Executive Summary

The development team consists of a mix of experienced Historiana editors and members with limited experience with Historiana. The new team members were introduced to the project with a special session with **presentations** on the Historiana programme and the Decisions and Dilemmas project by EUROCLIO coordinators Steven Stegers and Judith Geerling. Historiana Learning Team Editor Ineke Veldhuis-Meester **shared her experiences** working on Historiana, developing and editing learning activities.

The team members were informally introduced and got to now each other during on-site learning with a guided tour in **Mary King's Close**, an old Edinburgh close under buildings in the Old Town area of Edinburgh.

Starting with a short introduction of the **Advisory Board** and their proposed role in the project, the team members discussed the **divison of reponsibilities** in the project. They agreed to have one **Historical Content editor** (Francesco Scatigna) and one **Learning editor** (Helen Snelson), who are responsible for the final edit and finishing of the material for the Historiana website. The team agreed that the development process with be a **collaborative effort**. Finally it was agreed that the role of the Advisory Board will be to help with the historical content, specifically with identifying key moments in the existence of the European Union and the key decision makers and their stances in these moments. A **close cooperation** between the Advisory Board and the Development Team, and the integration in Historiana is ensured with the participation of the Historical Content and Learning editors in the Advisory Board Meeting, and the participation of Historiana Editor-in-Chief and Advisory Board Member Bob Stradling in all development team meetings.

A large part of the meeting consisted off a group discussion on what and how to develop the historical content and learning activities for the project. Advisory Board Members and co-developer of this project Bob Stradling started the brainstorm with a short presentation of the **rationale** of the project to the team members. Historiana Learning Team Editor and Learning Editor for the Decisions and Dilemmas project Helen Snelson presented some ideas on learning activities and role plays she developed. The team agreed on the following **focus** and historical content and learning activities:

Background and Rationale

Bob Stradling (Historiana Editor-in-Chief), who had worked with the EUROCLIO staff in the development of the project proposal for the Decisions and Dilemmas project, gave the background to the project outline to help the core team members better understand why the project had been proposed as it was. Here is an abstract of his presentation on the EU policies and initiative, challenges of history educators in teaching the EU and rationale for the content.

European interest in the field of education

In the past the EU's interest in education tended to be limited to institutional and structural issues and promoting initiatives in fields such as Lifelong Learning. It avoided anything to do with the school curriculum.   But in the new Millennium the Commission and the Council of Ministers became increasingly concerned that there was:

• a **knowledge deficit** about the EU – the public didn't know what it was, how it worked or what it was trying to achieve;
• a **democratic deficit** – that the turnout for European elections was consistently lower than for national or local elections; and
• a **tendency** for citizens and member governments **to blame the EU** for everything that goes wrong.

Over the last decade or so the EU has become increasingly concerned about what they regard as a **paradox**: *On the one hand* popular support for the European idea or project has decreased dramatically compared with, e.g. the period when the EU was being enlarged post-1989, and yet – *on the other hand* – the EU has never had such a high profile in public political discourse, but it is a negative profile. It is being held responsible for declining standards of living, inflation, insecurity of the Euro, too much bureaucracy, power concentrated in too few hands, immigration levels, internal migration of labour, etc.

Teaching the EU

In reaction, the Commission began to give **more emphasis to citizenship education**. At first, the in-house phrase within the Commission was "teaching the EU". Until fairly recently a lot of the education materials they had sponsored had focused on the purpose and functions of the various institutions, the treaties, the supra-national legislation, etc.   Most of it focuses on **key dates**; **institutions**; **important political figures** such as Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Spaak, de Gasperi; the important treaties, such as Rome and Maastricht, and the enlargement of the membership from 6 to 9 to 12 to 28, etc.

There is usually an **historical dimension** but typically the materials either begin in 1950 with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community or in 1957 with the Treaty of Rome and the creation of the Common Market or EEC. The historical context seldom goes back beyond WW2 and I

sometimes get the feeling from these materials that the development of the EC/EEC **took place in a vacuum** determined primarily by its own internal concerns.

Evaluations of European citizenship education were commissioned and the **main criticisms** were:

1. That the materials were mainly aimed at **addressing the knowledge deficit** but **not the democratic deficit;**
2. That, within the knowledge-based approach the **focus was on structures and processes** and there was **not very much on purpose and aims**; i.e. on why the EU was set up in the first place and enlarged and why it works in the way that it does and on how it tries to adapt to changing external circumstances;
3. That the materials did **not focus on the problems that the EU is trying to solve**, particularly those that can only be solved at an intergovernmental or even a supranational level, e.g. international relations, particularly with Russia, China and the USA; international trade; international terrorism; problems in the Middle East; immigration; internal movement of people; cyber-crime; and so on.

The evaluations tended to overlook the **main criticism from a lot of teachers**, which was that their students found the materials and the topic of the European Union boring.

Teaching European Citizenship

Since the financial crisis of 2008 there has been much **more emphasis on** "**teaching European citizenship":** the need to build active, informed and responsible citizens in the context of rapidly changing social, political and economic environments. This culminated in the European Year of Citizens in 2013.

As far as I can tell the EU approach to active citizenship within a European context is **more or less the same** as the approach adopted in most of the member states for citizenship education within a national context. In other words: Democracies need active, informed and responsible citizens; willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and their communities and contribute to the political process.

One or two EU documents I have looked at specify that young people should:

• Be aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens;
• Be informed about the social and political world;
• Have a sense of community and belonging and collective responsibility;
• Be tolerant of diversity;
• Be concerned about the welfare of others;
• Be able to articulate their opinions and arguments;
• Be capable of having an influence on the world;
• Be active in their communities;
• Be responsible in how they act as citizens.

This is all very familiar to anyone who has been involved in developing or teaching citizenship education in their own country. As far as I can tell, the only competences in this EU literature that seem to be **specifically related to the European dimension** are:

- An understanding of European structures and the integration process, and
- A sense of belonging to and collective responsibility for something beyond the nation state – the idea of a European community of peoples.

The Decisions and Dilemmas project will need to produce materials that will address these concerns. We have to bridge the gap between the academic research and recommendations that emerged from the Jean Monnet programme over the last five years and educational practice in the schools.

Challenges for history education for teaching the EU

There are **three main challenges** related to this for history educators that we attempt to address with this project:

1. How to make the EU **interesting** whilst at the same time conveying the contextual information that is necessary in order to help students understand:
   - Why a group of political leaders in Europe wanted to establish a means of facilitating social and economic cooperation leading eventually to some kind of greater political integration;
   - Why the resulting institutions needed to be able to adapt to changing international circumstances in the second half of the 20th Century and into the 21st Century.
2. How best to approach the issues and problems facing the EU now and in the future;
3. How to ensure that this approach was delivered through active learning that would promote the competences that are important for active citizenship at a European level.

The rationale for this project

To address these challenges, the project will focus on Decisions and Dilemmas. For us, as an organisation promoting history education, it is important that our approach would use the past to understand the present, i.e. to understand the dilemmas and problems facing the EU today and how it is trying to resolve them.

That means helping students to understand that the EU is not simply an intergovernmental organisation like NATO or the UN but that it is also a dynamic political system trying to mediate between the needs of its member states and electorates while at the same time adapting and responding to changes in the external world: We want students to understand the bigger picture.

In order to do this, we proposed to focus on three content areas:

- **The Long Search for Peace:** A historical perspective and present Post-war European economic and political cooperation as part of the search for a lasting peace.
- **Europe in 1945-1947:** The origins of the EU from a perspective of ordinary citizens in the years just after WW2.

- **EU in the Context of a Changing World:** How the EU has had to adapt and evolve in the context of its time.

Although there is a strong emphasis on content, the acquisition of knowledge about the European Union is not the goal of the project. In the project, we hope to develop effective ways of helping students to use this information constructively to understand the world they now live in, the problems it faces – not just internal problems but the problems associated with globalisation and international politics - and the ways in which political and economic cooperation might help.

Rather than telling young people what to think, we need to help them to understand that there may be alternative ways of doing that and that discussion and debate about these alternatives is as legitimate for current and future citizens as it is for governments and Commission officials.


Team members working collaboratively on the description of what will be developed
in the project and the time plan.

Development Educational Resources

During the meeting the core team discussed the content areas that were proposed in the project and started to discuss possible learning outcomes, potential learning activities and more detailed descriptions of the contextual information needed for students. Here is
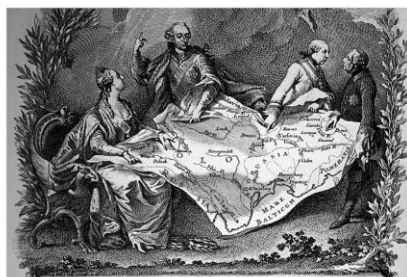
Part 1 "EU in the context of the search for a lasting peace" (1815-1945)
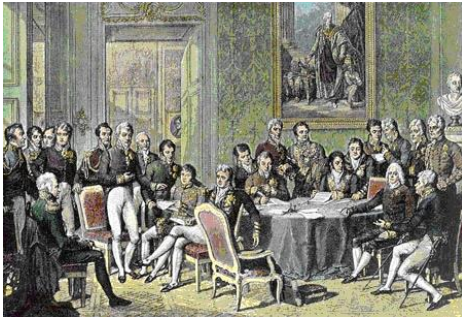
From the proposal: This online educational module will articulate multi-perspective historical content around a set of key questions allowing teachers to **put the history of EU integration in a longer-term perspective** with their students. Instead of studying the EU and the idea of European integration in a vacuum, students will develop some understanding of the **context** that led to it and the challenges it had to overcome. The module will integrate key historical moments and consecutive developments, from the alliance system which emerged out of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to the failure of the League of Nations to prevent WW2. Instead of an overload of information, the module will be based on a careful and balanced selection of sources that show complexities and connections across Europe.

Concretely: This part will consist of a **timeline** that starts with the Peace of Utrecht. The timeline that is already on Historiana will be used as a starting point, but its rationale has to be rewritten. See http://historiana.eu/timeline/long-search-peace/.

Part 2 "Europe after WW2"

From the proposal: This online educational module will articulate multi-perspective historical content around a set of key questions allowing teachers to help students living in the 21st century to **put themselves in the shoes of ordinary people across Europe post-WW2**. It will support teachers and students to perceive the sense of urgency, uncertainty and challenge of those days. Sources and

learning activities such as a role-play game will make students reflect on life situations of refugees and displaced persons, families facing acute economic deprivation, life in a divided Europe, relations with former enemies, etc.

Concretely: this part will consist of **life stories** and **transnational evidence files** for the period 1945-1957. The development team members that collect life stories will include some examples of people from their respective regions where they live and work (Baltic States, South East Europe, Western Europe) using their own language skills. The learning activities will focus on a comparison from one of the life stories with the evidence files to explore how typical the experience is.

Part 3 "EU in the context of a changing world" (1951-now)

From the proposal: This online educational module will articulate multi-perspective historical content around a set of key questions allowing teachers to analyse with their students **how the EU developed in the context of its time**. It will propose an approach that focuses on how the institutions of the EU have had to respond to a series of real political, economic and social problems and dilemmas – internally and internationally – whilst balancing the different perspectives and needs of its member states. The module will propose as learning activities **decision making games** on a choice of issues and dilemmas that policy makers in the EU have been facing.

Concretely: This part will consist of several **cases where policy makers were confronted with an issue and had to take decisions**. One case will focus on decisions and dilemmas for policy makers related to the European Defence Community. This case will be discussed with the Advisory Group who will be asked to help identify who key decisions makers were and what their interests were. The learning activities will consist of role plays. In addition a **Multi-Stranded Timeline** will be developed with strands on the global context, the European context and European Initiatives from 1951 until now.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The team members agreed on a timetable for the next meetings. The next meeting will be the Advisory Board Meeting in Madrid, Spain in December 2014, which will be combined with a one-day training for local educators with the designed methodologies. The second development meeting will take place in Brussels, Belgium in February 2015 and will be combined with the EUROCLIO International Training Seminar Waterloo 200.

In terms of content the next steps are the development of a draft timeline on the long search for peace for part 1, the development of life stories and transnational evidence files for part 2, and one example of the content for the decision making game, focusing on the European Defence Community.

Acknowledgements

The Decisions and Dilemmas project is part of the EUROCLIO Historiana Programme[1] and the project results will be integrated and disseminated through Historiana[2]. The project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union under the Jean Monnet Programme.[3] More information about the Decisions and Dilemmas project can be found on EUROCLIO website.[4]

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[1] http://www.euroclio.eu/new/index.php/work/historiana
[2] http://www.historiana.eu
[3] http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/jean_monnet/jean_monnet_en.php
[4] http://www.euroclio.eu/new/index.php/decisions-and-dilemmas-teaching-about-the-eu-

Annex: Overview of material to be developed

Part	Aims / Context	Historical Content	Learning Activities
1. The EU in the context of the long search for peace	• To make students understand European Integration was a way to promote peace in the context of previous failures. • European cooperation being another way of ensuring peace on the continent. • To show how this attempt has been different in terms of including economic cooperation, political structures, build-in sovereignty.	Timeline	
2. Post-War Europe (1945-1957) SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC	• Provide background on how the first Post-War European Initiatives developed in the context of its time. • To give a sense of time and period. • To enable students to put themselves in the shoes of people living at the time. • The establishment of NATO and United Nations moves peace further down the agenda of the European Initiatives and put more emphasis on reconstruction and capitalist development.	Transnational Evidence Files (max 10 files).	Families Life Stories: • Impact of global developments on people's life. • "Typical" experiences. • "A-typical" experiences. • Specific experiences at the time. • References to historical events.
3. EU in the context of a changing world (51-now)	• To show that policy makers had to balance different internal interests and take into account external factors. • To create an awareness of the complexity of international decision-making / diplomacy.	Multi-Stranded Timeline • Global Context (External) • European Initiatives. • European Context (Internal)	Decision Making Activities focussed on issues. PART 1. 1. Students take on a key player (including bureaucrats). 2. What are the agendas of the this key player (hope, electorate) 3. What are their red lines / deal breakers? PART 2. Role-play PART 3. Debriefing. What really happened?
OVERALL	- Impact of the EU on individual's lives. - Changing context in which the European Institutes operates.	Concluding Lesson: Adaptation to changing contexts	