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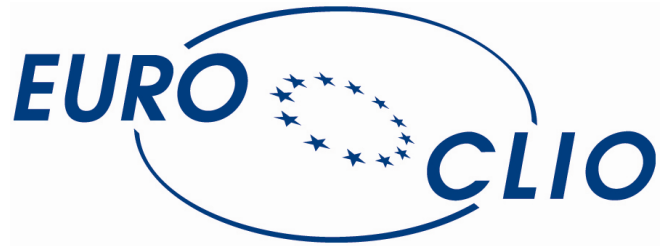
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# SPECIAL REPORT

*Former Yugoslavia Projects*



**By Marleen Brouwer and Lieneke Westerink**

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## *History in Action: a Regional Approach for the Learning and Teaching of History in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, 2003-2008*

Is it possible to talk about history education with countries, which were at war with each other less than 10 years ago; especially since the past was so much used as a weapon during these wars? It was certainly a big challenge in 2003 for EUROCLIO, The European Association of History Educators, to embark on a common project with historians and history educators from **Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia**. The positive results of this work are the basis for this special report on five years EUROCLIO work in these countries of Former Yugoslavia.

From 2003 up to 2008, EUROCLIO has been actively involved in three succeeding projects in the region, supported by the Danish and Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The projects targeted on rebuilding trust and networks among historians and history educators in the region. They used the urgent needs for educational reparations and reform in history education in the area as basis for renewed communication and cooperation. The projects had to address a great variety of aspects reaching far beyond the ordinary process of educational innovation. This report shows the relations between history education and ethnic, religious and nationalistic divisions, the connection between innovative learning and reconciliation and history education, responsibility and civic courage. The report addresses the aims of the projects, the concrete results, the missed opportunities, the unexpected outcomes and finally future possible follow-up projects.



*Sarajevo December 2003*

## Summary Special Report Former Yugoslavia Projects

- Reconciliation between the different societies was strongly required after the wars in Former Yugoslavia. In 2003 History education in the region did not contribute to this process, as it continued to use the traditional textbooks and teaching, shaping negative views on historical and sensitive issues. EUROCLIO, The Danish History Teachers Association and The Danish Foreign Ministry of Affairs decided to launch a project in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia for the innovation, professionalization and disarming of History Education. This initiative was further reinforced by support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.
- Since the growth of post Yugoslavia national identity, the content of history books in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia was religiously and ethnically shaped. The quality of history education, both on the level of content as on the level of methodology, was poor. The curriculum required intense knowledge of political history, offered little insight in the history of everyday life of ordinary people and denied learning about contemporary history. It was high time to professionalize and innovate history and history education in the region.
- Teachers, historians and educational authorities in the region had been isolated from regional, international but often even local communication.
- There was a strong call among young history professionals in the region for a new approach in history education, to transform history education from a tool for the politics of hatred to a tool for peace building, mutual respect, stability and democracy. The societies were still deeply divided and there was a lack of local initiative for change. Professional voices were hardly heard. Therefore, in order to start a successful project, there was a strong call for civic courage and responsibility of local participants. They were asked to dare to set up independent professional networks.
- The overall aim of the three projects was to enhance the quality of history education in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia through professionalization of history educators and historians. This meant intensive training, the development of exemplary innovative teaching materials and enhancing national, regional and international cooperation was needed. Finally, the projects aimed on local, national, regional and international networking and the establishing and strengthening of independent Associations of History Educators.
- The three projects had a wide variety of results. The trust between a younger generation of history professionals in the three countries was restored and a growing regional cooperative network was established. A renewed cooperation and collaboration between history professionals from the three countries emerged.
- A key group of 55 historians and history educators from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia have made personal professional careers due to the project. They have become a new generation of trainers, advisers, textbook authors and curriculum developers as staff members of museums, Ministries, NGO's, universities or institutes.

- An exemplary cross-border textbook was published under the title '*Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Country, Every Day Life in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia 1945-1990. Yugoslavia between East and West*'. The book is available in hard, as well as on-line copy. On [www.euroclio.eu](http://www.euroclio.eu) or [www.eurocliohip.com](http://www.eurocliohip.com) this publication is available in Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and English. The publication was disseminated and implemented by a series of training seminars in the three countries.
- A national inter-ethnic professional History Teachers' Association was set up in Bosnia-Herzegovina under the name EUROCLIO-HIP. Please visit their website at: <http://www.bih.cliohip.com/index.html>. This Association includes history educators, historians and museum staff from all Bosnian Cantons and the Republic Serbska. A national History Teachers' Association was also founded in Croatia (<http://hunp.com>) and the already existing [Association in Serbia](#) was democratized and strengthened.
- During the projects EUROCLIO organized 10 regional training seminars and 18 national teaching seminars. On top of this 25 workshops and working sessions enabled the involvement of a growing group of historians, trainers and ordinary history teachers in the three countries. 6 Annual Meetings of the newly established History Teachers Association were organized and 2 editing sessions finalized the process of development the exemplary cross-border textbook. Altogether 500 history professionals in the three countries benefited from the 5 year activity in the region.
- Local, regional and international outreach of the projects was established through workshops, lectures, publications, press conferences and other media coverage. Three national public press conferences were given, which generated positive reviews and media attention. Furthermore a project website was created, through which all the project information was made accessible for public outreach. Please visit this website at: <http://www.euroclio.eu/joomla/index.php/Regional-Website.html>. Finally, dissemination of information about the projects was reached by workshops and lectures in Brussels, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, the UK and USA, and through the EUROCLIO Website, Bulletins and Newsletters. As a result of this, more than 2000 professionals in audiences reaching from Cyprus to the USA have been touched by the unique achievements of this project.
- With the help of the Danish History Teachers' Association a Schools Network has been set up between schools in Denmark and schools in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. This resulted in teachers and pupils exchanging experiences with each other through study visits and school exchanges. In addition, project participants attended training and working seminars in Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Macedonia, Netherlands, Romania, Russia and the U.K.
- Despite the success of the three projects, some important matters were left untouched and need future attention. The political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina still obstructs a common approach, but also in Croatia and Serbia important issues are still to be addressed. The total project team mentioned that

they had hoped for better cooperation with the educational authorities in their respective countries. Although there were signs of improvement, there is still much space for further work.

- Although almost 500 history professionals were addressed by the projects, it means that only 10% of the professionals in the region were reached. In depth implementation of the results can only be achieved as a larger group of history professionals is reached.
- Teaching about sensitive and controversial historical issues also requires further attention. Discussing the atrocities committed against humanity by the Tito regime and the emerging Kosovo crisis were, for example, only possible in the very last stage of the project. The far more controversial periods from 1900-1945 and the wars of the 1990s are not addressed so far.
- Curriculum development and innovative and creative teaching methodologies still call for more attention. The development of competencies, reflective and critical attitudes and humanistic values, enhancing a culture of peace and democracy need further attention.
- Evaluating the process, one might say that although the area could still use a lot of help, the projects have at least created a great step towards the right direction. Most of the project participants felt empowered to make career changes from teachers to textbook authors, policy advisors and teacher trainers. Thanks to *History in Action*, there now exists a strong potential for cooperation to take the project results to a higher level and make them sustainable.
- In January 2009 a follow-up project named '*Bridging Histories*' has been launched in Bosnia-Herzegovina thanks to generous support from the Open Society Fund. It will continue to train history educators in Bosnia-Herzegovina on the exemplar textbook. The project offers further opportunities to enhance the teams' competencies for innovative and creative curriculum development. The EUROCLIO-HIP management will also be trained in competences reinforcing the sustainability of the origination.
- The *History in Action* team would like to continue on a regional level and would like to connect these past projects with the broad regional initiative that EUROCLIO envisions for the post-Yugoslavia region.

## Introduction

In the 1990's Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia got entangled in extremely violent interstate and interethnic wars that disrupted life in the countries to a very large extent. After peace was signed, the countries faced the challenge to rebuild their societies. An important key to sustainable peace was the regeneration of trust and cooperation among the different nationalities and ethnicities in the region. Ethnic and religious hatred had been reinforced in the past years by the crimes of war and the loss of many on all sides of the conflict. It proved to be an immense task to start the process of reconciliation on all levels of society.

Important factors in the ongoing hatred during and after the wars were the ethnocentric and emotionally driven views of history in the region, which resulted in feelings of resentment, mistrust and injustice. Not surprisingly, Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats had entirely different understandings of historical events, colored by nationalism, religion, and ethnicity. If left unchallenged, these opposing views, based on incomplete, selective, and one-sided interpretations of events, would continue to foster intolerant nationalism and ethnic mistrust. Thus to solve this problem it was important to tackle these different interpretations of history on a social and ground level. Future generations should be educated a balanced history that is based collaborative values, critical awareness and enhances mutual respect, peace, stability and democracy. This would foster understanding and cooperation and would reduce ethnic and nationalist based thinking.

In 2003 the Danish History Teachers' Association addressed the EUROCLIO Secretariat with the request if it was possible to start a project together with support of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry, the Danish History Teachers' Association and EUROCLIO, as well as a group of local history educators in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, were well aware of the problem that the learning and teaching of history in the region was nationalistically shaped and did not contribute to reconciliation in the post-conflict societies. All were convinced that a change of the approach in history education was needed. Otherwise, new generations in the region would also be taught history colored by the same feelings of hatred, which was the basis of many of the unhappy events in recent times in the region.

An international cooperation was established, strengthened by the generous support of the Danish and Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs, which led to the succession of three projects, lasting 5 years in total. Professional cooperation, teacher training, national and regional seminars and international conferences and, last but not least, new innovative educational materials set a real change in history education in motion in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia.

*"It has been a great pleasure to work together with people from the region. I found it both useful and necessary, because of the past events. I'm sure it helped people to become better teachers but also better, open minded citizens. Professional skills, personal connections and friendships are the most important goals of this project. Thanks to EUROCLIO and hope our cooperation will continue in the future."*

**Hjovre Klasic, author**





## Background to the project

### History education and ethnic and nationalistic divisions

History education plays a crucial role in each society as it reflects major milestones and images that a nation has developed throughout its existence. Learning about victorious medieval battles or great repressions, facilitates images that construct the feelings of patriotism and the consciousness of one's nation. In deeply divided societies, as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia were, during and just after the wars, contending groups' historical narratives – especially the official versions presented most often in state-run schools – are intimately connected to the groups' identities and sense of victimization. Such narratives are often contradictory and controversial. History taught in schools is highly susceptible to simplified and biased presentations and this is even more likely after conflicts, such as the wars in former Yugoslavia. How schools navigate and promote historical narratives through history education partly determines the roles they and those who control the schools play in promoting conflict or peace.

*“People who control the past and define major national problems and grievances are also the ones who define the future, for they define who we are and what we aspire to be.”*

**Prof. Karina Korostellina, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University**

Unfortunately, history education in former Yugoslavia – before, during and after the violent break up of the country – fell victim to politicians who used history education as a tool to manipulate the group's identities for their own gain. The national history textbooks were written from ethnocentric, nationalist and victimizing perspectives. By holding a monopoly over the publishing of textbooks, politicians could influence the people's perspectives on the social and political turmoil occurring in the countries.

In addition the quality of the history education was generally poor and there was no attention paid to developing skills like reflection and critical thinking. Over time educational authorities started to develop their own curricula and their poor cross-communication only attributed to this development of separate nationalistically shaped history curricula for Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian schools.

The three countries involved in the EUROCLIO project, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, encountered similar problems with history education during and after the wars. The quality and content of history education was meagre and mostly nationalistically and ethnically shaped. Also, educational authorities were based upon political agreements and functioned on territorial base. In addition there was a total loss of communication between teachers, historians and professionals among the region.

#### *Bosnia-Herzegovina*

According to the regulations from the Dayton Peace Agreement, the education policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina came under the jurisdiction of the different entities: the republic Serbska and the ten cantons. Accordingly, there were thirteen Ministries of Education in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including one on a national level. These thirteen centers in charge of the education policy, pursuant to the law, independently and separately wanted to develop their education systems.

At the end of the war and in the period of signing the Dayton Peace Agreement, Bosnia-Herzegovina had three different curricula: every ethnic/religious community had its own curriculum and textbooks. They were used in the areas where the majority of that ethnic group lived, determined by the borders that were drawn by the war. The Bosniaks used the curriculum and textbooks developed in Sarajevo. The Bosnian Croats mostly in Herzegovina, used the curricula from the neighboring state, the Republic of Croatia. The same counted for



the Serb majority entity, the Republika Srpska, which used the textbooks written and published in Belgrade. As the textbooks were written from a nationalistic and ethnic perspective, they differentiated strongly in their outlook on the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The consequences of this diversity were numerous. Not only did the different perspectives continue to instigate hatred and territorial claims towards the neighboring countries, but they also deepened the gap between the peoples of one country. They continued to strengthen the separate identities.

### *Croatia*

History education in Croatia was shaped by the state central approach, strong influences of politics and the public opinion. Therefore Croatian history educators were not used to act themselves, and certainly did not dare to act against the mainstream public opinion. History education in Croatia had a strong focus on teaching for national identity; issues such as teaching about minorities or for active citizenship had never been addressed. An approach to history education with emphasis on modern 'European' values and elements of school history education including minorities, gender issues and multiperspectivity had been lacking for a long time in Croatia. Moreover, the subject of Croatia's relations with its neighbouring countries in the past was underrepresented in the textbooks.

At the end of war, the Ministry and the so-called Pedagogical Institute announced that there would be reforms, but the aims of the reforms were unknown until 2004. In addition there had been a lack of quality teaching materials that use international experiences and perspectives; materials which could have led to a better understanding of the national situation. For example, the topic of the Second World War had not been addressed by historians in Croatia since the 1990's. Especially Croatia's relations with its neighboring countries during the Second World War had been neglected; teachers had hardly any information to teach this subject in school.

### *Serbia*

In Serbia, history education was unaffected during and after the wars of the ninety nineties. Serbia itself suffered from the unrest occurring within the country. The minorities of ethnic Albanians, Hungarians and Roma/Sinti expressed their feelings of resentment towards the Serbian government. Regardless of these incidents, the teaching process continued without any major distractions in all parts of Serbia. This said, most of the teachers did attempt to avoid the topic of war as a result of fear and sensitivity surrounding this issue. A deviation from the textbooks was the choice of the individual teacher and its own responsibility.

The Serbian state provided a national curriculum for schools; however there were no official guidelines on how to develop national or ethnic identity in history education.

Nevertheless, it was the supremacy of the mass media and at that time general politics that influenced and guided people towards strengthening their national and ethnic moods. So, it occurred that the majority of the Serbian history teachers followed the guidelines for national history education, due to the fact that propaganda was very influential. Also history teachers were part of the community and thus sharing the same values and fears as the rest of their community.



*Belgrade, September 2006*

## History education and reconciliation

After the wars had ended, there was a strong need for a new approach towards history education in the region, to transform history education from a tool for the politics of hatred to a tool for peace.

As much as history education can be a tool of hatred, it can also be important for the development of democratic values, stability, mutual respect, tolerance and active citizenship. By teaching history from international as well as regional perspectives, by stimulating critical thinking and by developing skills, students become more independent thinkers. This will enable them to deal with sensitive and controversial issues. Through the use of multiple narratives and varietal sources, students learn that the interpretation of sources is crucial and this will allow them to distinguish between facts and opinions. These skills increase the student's and young people's abilities to judge political propaganda and act as responsible citizens.

In practical terms, this transformation of history education to a tool for peace building meant changing the content of history teaching materials and books. This had to be done by removing ethnically and nationalist coloured paragraphs and introducing new values, such as multiperspectivity, inclusiveness, gender issues, international focus and tolerance. In addition, a renewed cooperation among history researchers and educators in the region was very important to tackle the existing problems. They were also carrying the burden of the wars on their shoulders and their personal experiences during the wars influenced their views upon history writing and teaching. Only, when *they* were willing to listen to and accept or tolerate the views of the other, a new approach to history education could be set in motion. When teachers are professionally trained and support a new educational approach, they can convincingly teach their pupils and students inclusive and multi-perspective history that fosters democratic citizenship and tolerance.

All in all the reform in history education that had to be made in the region was huge and at that time, courageous steps had to be taken to start the project. Several inter-governmental organisations actors such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE undertook action, mainly towards the educational authorities in the three countries. Their actions were on a unilateral basis.

EUROCLIO, the European Association of History Educators, chose an alternative approach. It suggested a cross-border approach targeting on the professional group, creating independent NGO-networks. As a first step history educators, academic historians and researchers from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia had to be traced, who were interested to work together and to participate in the project. It took a great civic responsibility and courage of them, to develop contacts with professionals from different ethnic backgrounds so soon after the war. They needed to cooperate and find common ground on historical issues, with the memories of the war still freshly in their minds. The next step was Secondly the development and dissemination of new innovative teaching material. Finally, independent national but cooperative History Educators Associations were to be strengthened or set up in the three countries to make the efforts during the project sustainable for the future. A important challenge was to convinced the local Educational Authorities, local Media and local



*Training seminar, Bosnia-Herzegovina 2005*

Politicians. Regardless of the immense and difficult task that laid ahead, the project took off in good spirit and this helped to keep continuing the activities at all times.

### *The projects*

The first project *“To promote and support the Development of a Regional History Education Network in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, and to identify Ways Ahead for School History strengthening Peace, Stability and Democracy”*, supported by the Stability Pact Programme of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, laid the foundational stone for the cooperation in the area. A second Danish funded project titled *“Enhancing Regional History Education and Civic Society, a EUROCLIO Stability Pact Project on common approaches for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro”* continued the training of local professionals and started the development of educational materials. In 2005 the Danish support closed, due to political changes in Denmark. The Dutch Foreign Office then supported the third project, which was titled *“History in Action – Planning for the Future, a Regional Approach for the Learning and Teaching of History in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federation of Federation of Serbia and Montenegro”*.



*Bosnia-Herzegovina, September 2005.  
Project participants study working materials.*

## The overall aim and goals of the projects

The overall aim of the three projects was to support the regional development of History and Citizenship Education in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, so that collaborative values, critical awareness and mutual respect, peace, stability and democracy could be promoted.

The projects had three main targets:

- 1) To enhance the quality of history education in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and make it contribute to reconciliation;
- 2) To enhance national and international cooperation, communication and networks of history educators in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia;
- 3) To reinforce civil society in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia by creating sustainable and professional History Teachers' Associations.

### *Enhancing the quality of history education*

Throughout the projects training seminars for historians and history textbook authors, trainers, and teachers were held. In addition, the group was encouraged to reinforce ICT as a tool in history education. Participation in international activities on the learning and teaching of history was increased. Hopefully, these steps would help to create a growing awareness for the need of innovative history curricula respecting diversity in society. All together, a growing group of trainers and teachers would be updated and trained.

### *Enhancing national and international cooperation, communication and networks*

Seminars with focus on diversity in society were organized and a core-group of innovative history educators – representing ethnic, religious and linguistic communities in the three countries – was set up. Furthermore, a national and international inclusive network operating on a local, national and international level was to be created and strengthened. All of these matters combined would with any luck set up and fortify relations with national and international authorities related to history education, such as the Council of Europe, OSCE, UNESCO, EU, EUROCLIO, national Ministries of Education and NGO's.

### *Reinforcing civil society*

Professional and active independent History Educators' Associations were created in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. The existing Association in Serbia was democratized and strengthened. Annual meetings were organized to widen the network involved and to develop short- and mid-term policy papers. Workshops were held to develop skills to make the associations sustainable. These Associations had to be able to take the responsibility and ownership on a regional and/or national level. These were also trained to develop professional skills and use information and communication technology more than before.



## Results of the projects

The following summary describes the more specific targets per project and the accomplishments of each of the three projects.

### *2003: the first Stability Pact Project*

The project in 2003 had as title *'To promote and support the development of a Regional History Education Network in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, which strengthens Peace, Stability and Democracy'*. Although the before mentioned overall aims and goals apply to each of the three projects, some more specific aims can be determined per project as well. For the *Stability Pact Project*, the most important goals during the very early beginning stages were to achieve a core-group of innovative history educators representing the different ethnic, religious and linguistic communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. In addition, a national and international inclusive network operating on a local, national and international level had to be set up and strengthened.

The project had a variety of results. However, what might have been the most important result, was that the foundations of professional History Teachers' Associations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia were laid. Thanks to this, a network of history educators was developed and a willingness to cooperate between the three countries arose. During the project one regional and two national training seminars were given and local teams of managers, experts and authors were created. The use of information and communication technology also was enhanced. Thanks to all this, a definition of immediate, mid-term and long term needs for the learning and teaching of history were discovered. A growing

awareness for the need of innovative history curricula respecting the diversity of history arose; it became clear that both a regional and international dimension were needed in history education. The 2003 project finally led to concrete proposals for future cross-border cooperation and projects. The project team was in the end of 2003 eager for reinforced collaboration and proposed a longer term project.

*"As a project coordinator, I took part in the EUROCLIO project 'History in action' 2005-2008. This project connected, under a EUROCLIO umbrella, History Teachers' Associations from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. Their cooperation began earlier, in 2004, through a project called "Enhancing regional history education and civil society", again with organization and support of EUROCLIO.*

*Before those projects, cooperation between history teachers in the region of former Yugoslavia was on a very low level, there almost wasn't any. During the years of working together and creating the new, innovated additional teaching materials, the teachers who took part in the project improved their knowledge, developed more skills and attitudes towards modern history teaching. Many teachers took part in seminars which were organized all over Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia, so through those seminars they got opportunities to get to know modern ways of teaching and approaches in education. The cooperation improved regional understanding, by exchanging the ideas, and developing spirit of working together, in sensitive issues as well. A very important part of the project was the fact that teachers from these three countries could take part in international conferences and teacher training seminars, and meet international experts, not just experts from their own countries. Representatives of our project also had opportunities to show the results of our work, transfer our expertise, and share our experiences with other teachers and experts at home and abroad."*

**Ljiljana Lazarevic, local project coordinator**

### *2004-2005: The second Stability Pact Project*

The new project *Enhancing Regional History Education and Civic Society, a EUROCLIO Stability Pact Project on common approaches for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro* took place during 2004 and 2005. The overall aims of this project were to develop innovative regional teaching materials and to strengthen, democratize and professionalize the National History Teachers' Associations of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. The project was again managed in cooperation with the Danish History Teachers' Association. It played a special role in national training seminars and General Assemblies and there was fruitful collaboration with EUROCLIO. The final

results of the second project were numerous. To start with, the Schools Network that was set up between schools in Denmark and schools in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia resulted in study visits of teachers and pupils. Next to that, the Bosnia-Herzegovina team finalized the registration procedure of their History Teachers' Association on a state level. The extended, strengthened network of academic historians and history educators in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia united in independent History Teachers' Associations. During the project (in which English became the main working language), three regional and three national training seminars, related to three General Assemblies, were held. Moreover, project teams existing of a carefully balanced group of academic historians and class room teachers were created. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, this meant that the team existed out of people representing the different ethnic/religious groups of the country. Through the above mentioned, a growing group of ordinary history teachers became involved in the process of developing textbooks and teaching materials. Another direct effect turned out to be the foundation of a Montenegrin History Teachers' Association by Montenegrin observers, who were inspired by the project to set up an independent association in their country. At the same time, the Bosnian EUROCLIO-HIP and the Croatian History Teachers' Association reported growing numbers of members. A high level of international interaction was reached through the attendance of observers from Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Macedonia, Romania and Russia and also training and working seminars were given in Russia, Rumania and Canterbury and Leeds in the UK.

The Association for Social History in Serbia published 2 issues of their magazine on the learning and teaching of history HERODOT, and the article *'Textbooks and the teaching of twentieth century history in Serbia since 1989'* by Radina Vučetić-Mladenović in: After the Wall. History Teaching in Europe since 1989, published by Martin Roberts (ed.) in Vol. 4, EUSTORY Series 'Shaping European History', Koerber Foundation (Hamburg, 2004), page 152-160. Next to this, local educators attended two workshops during the EUROCLIO Annual Professional Training and Development Conference called *'Gaining Equilibrium. Building from the Local to the Global Perspective'* in Riga, Latvia in April 2005. And finally the work showed first results of innovative cross-border materials for teaching history in the region.



*Dutch Ambassador Nienke Trooster speaks during the Dubrovnik Seminar, November 2006*

### *2005-2008: the third project: History in Action*

Despite the overwhelming success of the first two projects, much work was still to be done. The project team addressed the MATRA Fund of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for further support. This project continued the regional cooperation from 2005-2008, under the title: *History in Action – Planning for the Future. Regional Approach for the Learning and Teaching of History in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro*. The last project had a variety of activities and concrete results. The team published an exemplar cross border school textbook *Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Country, Every Day Life in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia 1945-1990. Yugoslavia between East and West*. The textbook covers the history of the region in twenty lessons. The publication of this teaching book was the result of true collaborative writing and multi-perspectivity of everyone involved. The book – which appeared in no less than four languages, namely in Bosnian, Croatian, English and Serbian – is able to picture the past from a multi perspective point of view. Vuk Bacanovic wrote the following in *Magazin Dani* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2008:



*“According to this, the teaching material ‘Ordinary People in an extraordinary Country’ is not just methodological, pedagogical and didactic innovation – it is a project that returns dignity of the historical science in the schools, because it presents to the students its essence: continuous seeking and questioning. We can hope that soon similar projects will be dedicated to the other controversial historical issues in Bosnia-Herzegovina and wider.”*

### Ordinary People in an extraordinary Country



English version

Bosnian version

Serbian version

Croatian version

Next to this, the third project organized three regional training seminars, five regional workshops, a variety of national and regional working sessions and two editing meetings. Thirteen national teacher training seminars were organized in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to disseminate and implement the concepts and materials of the projects. Furthermore, six History Teachers' Association Annual Meetings and General Assemblies took place, two in each country. Membership of History Teachers' Associations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia increased and the associations' relations with for example UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Union and OSCE were improved. During this second phase, more than 500 history educators and academics became involved in the project.

A new regional website, [www.cliohip.com](http://www.cliohip.com), was realised and national outreach and use of ICT in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia was increased. The international outreach was amplified through international lectures and workshops about the project, with an outreach as varied as Brussels, Sofia, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Braunschweig, Malta, Leiden, Utrecht, Oslo and Warrenton. Furthermore, active participation in international conferences and seminars took place in cities such as Sarajevo, Sofia, Plovdiv, Leeds, Liverpool, Nottingham, Skopje, Bitola and Veles, Malta, The Hague and Suzdal. EUROCLIO took care for wide dissemination of information about the project via its channels: the EUROCLIO website ([www.euroclio.eu](http://www.euroclio.eu)), the two monthly Newsletters and the regular EUROCLIO Bulletins, the magazine on European History education.

Furthermore, the project led to increased access for the History Teachers' Associations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to local authorities, local authors and international authors. Also, the organizational and financial management skills of the History Teachers' Associations were reinforced through organizational meetings. Finally, the project generated many positive reviews and press reactions.

*“Working on the project was a very rewarding experience for me. The first phase in which all participants had to learn about themselves, each other and the innovative didactics was a very testing one for us all, but good will, mutual respect and the development of a democratic dialogue carried the day. The next phase where materials were collected, sorted and transformed into workshop elements was most interesting, and I got to know a lot about everyday life situations in the region. The final phase of turning the ideas into didactic use via the workshop format of the book showed me how much my regional colleagues had grasped and how much they were now able to rely on themselves and stand out as role models for colleagues, also during the training courses that were the follow-ups of the publication of the book. They certainly made it, and I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to support them in this.”*

**Benny Christensen, International Expert from Denmark**



Zagreb, April 2008



## Untouched matters and further issues for consideration

Despite the success of the three projects, some important matters were left untouched and need future attention. The work on history education in the Former Yugoslavia region is not yet finished. Now that these first hurdles have been taken, and a pool of local and active professionals has been established, the road towards an even better history education system lays wide open. A good team of authors and experts is however in place to accomplish future goals.

Although an innovative textbook on the history of everyday life has been created during the project, sensitive and controversial historical episodes and issues could not yet be addressed properly because the environment was not ready for this. Therefore issues such as war, the causes of divisions in societies and forced Islamization were not touched during the projects, while these are important issues that have been misused in history education often. This also raises the question of how to address such difficult topics. Methodologies used in the classroom could still use a lot of improvement; especially the teaching methodology that focuses on the development of skills and reflective and critical attitudes.

Last but not least, one of the further issues for consideration that needs to be mentioned here is that the projects could not be implemented – due to budget and time frame – in Balkan countries other than Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. This really is a missed opportunity, seeing that countries such as Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo encounter similar problems and could really benefit from eventual future projects. Although a lot of progress in the right direction has been made in the Balkan region, this journey is far from over. Right now, focusing on the solution instead of the problem is key. In light of what already has been accomplished via the projects, the untouched matters should be seen as a challenge. A difficult one, for sure, but a challenge nevertheless.



*Dubrovnik 2006*

## Conclusions: evaluating success

What then, at the end of this special report, can be said about the success rate of the projects? In the beginning, the start of the first project was sensitive. All team members were scarred by the war, and some male project participants even had experiences of real warfare. But the contacts – and therefore the network – strengthened during the project, and in due course, the partner organizations managed cooperatively to organize Teacher Training Seminars, to create and improve upon each trial their project presentation skills and to find creative solutions to last-minute problems in many practical project coordination issues. In general, we can be extremely proud that the participants reached a very high level of trust and learned about common interests thanks to the project. Next to that, all involved stayed on during the project, and no harmful distrust could be signaled at all.

This of course led to great starting circumstances for the second and third projects. Both were concluded with an overall feeling of excitement and enthusiasm. Although the projects have not been able to receive the full political support that was aimed for, it has become extremely clear how the people that were invested in (varying from primary and secondary education teachers, to professors in history and history and citizenship teacher trainers) have all managed to grow their own and genuine awareness for the innovation of history education and the superregional perspective.

The way in which the societies in which these projects have functioned have changed is not easy to measure. Unfortunately there are still great movements in society which pull towards ethnic segregation and more one-sided historical narratives. Political elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia have not tipped any balance towards more support. However, the projects have at least created a step towards the right direction. Most of the project participants felt empowered to make career changes from teachers to textbook authors, policy advisors and teacher trainers.

Overall, still considerable improvement in history education in the region needs to be accomplished and with the formation of History Teachers' Associations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, we believe that there is strong potential for cooperation to take the projects' results to a higher level and make them sustainable.

*“The main conclusion of these days is that the project has started a very important process, and that much is achieved. However, the process is only half way. Although all seminar participants have stressed wholeheartedly the willingness to continue the cooperation, they cannot do that without help from others. [...] I congratulate all colleagues from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia with the very good results of their work but even more with their open and courageous attitude to break with the general feeling in the region that nothing can be done... You did it!”*

**Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, EUROCLIO  
Executive Director and manager of  
these projects.**

## Future follow-up projects

As mentioned before, the region could still use a lot of work. EUROCLIO intends to continue working in the region and is constantly brainstorming about new (project)-ideas and searching for donors in order to make sure that the development of the area continues. As part of this ongoing process, *'Bridging Histories in Bosnia-Herzegovina'* was launched in January 2009.

### *Bridging Histories in Bosnia-Herzegovina*



Bridging Histories has launched in January 2009 thanks to generous support from the Open Society Fund in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Bridging Histories* is a EUROCLIO project that connects Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian history educators in Bosnia-Herzegovina to contribute together to history education of higher quality, greater inclusiveness and diversity of perspectives. It also connects the past projects with the broad regional initiative that we envision for the post-Yugoslavia region.

Building upon the projects that EUROCLIO-HIP already participated in the past, this project will continue to train history educators in Bosnia-Herzegovina on a regional level. The local experts and authors also aim to conduct a thorough assessment of recent history curricula guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education and come forth with Recommendations for implementing them in curricula that are modern, inclusive, diverse and focus on delivering skills as much as facts.

The EUROCLIO HIP staff and members will undergo a capacity building workshop, empowering the organization for future independence and sustainability. The talented team of coordinators, authors, and experts will meanwhile continue to work on preparation for a wider regional project envisaged for the near future.

For more information concerning these and future projects, please visit either of the following websites:

- 🌐 [www.euroclio.eu](http://www.euroclio.eu) – EUROCLIO website
- 🌐 [www.cliohip.com](http://www.cliohip.com) – Website established during the projects
- 🌐 [www.bih.cliohip.com](http://www.bih.cliohip.com) – Bosnian History Teachers Association- EUROCLIO-HIP (Language: Bosnian)
- 🌐 <http://hunp.com> – Croatian History Teachers' Association website (Language: Croatian)
- 🌐 [www.udi.rs](http://www.udi.rs) – Association for Social History (Language: Serbian/English)



## Donors

Donors of *'Yugoslavia: Stability Pact Program'* and *'History in Action – Planning for the Future, a Regional Approach for the Learning and Teaching of History in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia'* 2003-2008:

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