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“Rewriting of history in school books in Russia”

Reply to Written question¹: Written question No. 537 (Doc. 11420)
Committee of Ministers

1. Since its inception, the Council of Europe has realised the need for history teaching to be freed from nationalistic prejudices and interpretations, for a less subjective presentation of past events and in order to make history an instrument of knowledge and of dialogue between countries. The Committee of Ministers attaches high importance to this question.

2. Two major programmes have been set up to help member states in their work of re-reading and rewriting school books. One deals with “The teaching of remembrance” and prevention of crimes against humanity, and the other with enhancement of the European dimension in history teaching. The knowledge gathered in this context, and the measures recommended specifically to make pupils aware of the risks of manipulation and falsification of history, have been compiled in Recommendation Rec(2001)15 on history teaching in 21st-century Europe, which the Committee of Ministers addressed to the member states and other parties signatories to the European Cultural Convention. This recommendation is, to date, an essential instrument for guiding member states in reforms to their history teaching.

3. Concurrently, the Council of Europe has pursued programmes of technical co-operation and assistance with regional scope in the Russian Federation, but also in the Caucasus, the Black Sea countries and in South-East Europe, each adjusted to the specificities and needs of the regions for which they are intended.

4. The Russian Federation has participated actively in these programmes. In particular, it has been involved in bilateral co-operation projects, allowing them to benefit from different forms of practical assistance for the process of reform to history teaching. It has also taken part in other regional projects bringing together specialists in history teaching from different geographic zones such as the Black Sea and the Caucasus, together with intergovernmental projects comprising the 49 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention.

5. Throughout this period of co-operation, numerous activities have been organised in the Russian Federation, giving Russian experts and teachers and their colleagues from many other member states the opportunity to exchange views on the use of the new history teaching methods such as multiperspectivity, intended to help the rising generations acquire skills in tolerance, mutual respect and critical sense, which are necessary to life in present-day multicultural society.

6. The new information technologies have an important role in this respect, as the widest-ranging instrument of documentation, research and communication. The Russian Federation informed the Committee of Ministers that it is working to introduce these new technologies into schools, in order to equip all pupils to develop their knowledge and give them access to multiple viewpoints.

1. adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 September 2008, at the 1034th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies

