Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 16090
08 January 2025

Multiperspectivity in remembrance and history education for democratic citizenship

Report[1]
Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media
Rapporteur: Ms Luz MARTINEZ SEIJO, Spain, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group

Summary

Societies in Europe are diverse, face democratic erosion and increased polarisation. To fight these phenomena, young people should learn to explore the past without biases, and to connect it with contemporary challenges.

This report focuses on history teaching and its relevance for democratic citizenship education. The inclusion of sensitive and controversial parts of history in school curricula, the consideration of multiple perspectives and the analysis of historical sources can play a key role in fostering respect for different opinions, pluralism and diversity. Moreover, this would strengthen young people's ability to distinguish between facts, memories, interpretations and perspectives, and to detect and analyse distortions and propaganda.

The report calls for support and assistance to member States in reviewing their education policies and integrating the Council of Europe's guiding principles for history education and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture in national curricula. It also recommends building synergies between formal and non-formal education; and facilitating partnerships between schools, cultural institutions, and other relevant stakeholders, such as sites of remembrance, museums, archives, civil society and artists, to co-create history lessons and "safe learning spaces for democracy".

1. Reference to Committee: Doc. 15471, Reference 4640 of 25 April 2022.

Contents **Page**

A. Draft resolution 3
B. Draft recommendation 5
C. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Luz Martínez Seijo, rapporteur 6
1. Introduction 6
2. Education for democratic citizenship 6
3. Addressing memory, difficult and sensitive pasts 7
4. Remembrance as a tool for democratic citizenship 8
5. Bridging the gap between formal and non-formal education 9
5.1. Remembrance sites 9
5.2. Museums 11
5.3. European cultural routes 12
5.4. European Network Remembrance and Solidarity 13
6. Remembrance and education in Spain 13
6.1. Federal Laws 14
6.2. Regional implementation: the example of Navarra 14
7. Multiperspectivity in history teaching of sensitive pasts 15
8. Conclusion 15

A. Draft resolution[2]

1. The importance of history teaching has been affirmed by the Council of Europe Summits of Heads of State and Government in 1993, 1997 and 2005, and its relevance for democratic citizenship and stability is well captured in the motto of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe: "Teaching History, Grounding Democracy". A well-designed history education is essential to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the past and apply it to evaluate with a critical eye the present, as it develops the capacity to differentiate between facts, memories, interpretations and perspectives, and to detect and analyse distortion and propaganda.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly holds that the inclusion of sensitive and controversial parts of history in school curricula, the consideration of multiple perspectives and the analysis of historical sources can play a role in reinforcing democratic culture within a society and fostering respect for different opinions, pluralism, tolerance and diversity. Taking students out of the classroom to learn *in situ* from historical places and sites of remembrance should be part of this process. The Assembly firmly believes that history education should be a key part of human rights education and a foundation for young people to develop democratic citizenship.

3. However, delivering quality history education in schools can be very challenging due to overloaded curricula, traditional teaching practices and, in many instances, highly centralised education systems. History teachers may struggle with addressing multiple coexisting perspectives; they may lack adequate training and even though they may have deep knowledge of their discipline they often have limited time to work on the overall historical context with students, and limited access to teaching and financial resources. Moreover, in many countries, initial teacher training does not include the development of competences in delivering citizenship education.

4. The Assembly values the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture developed by the Council of Europe and welcomes the political momentum provided by the 2023 Standing Conference of Ministers of Education for the renewal of the civic mission of education. The Education Strategy 2024-2030 "Learners First – Education for Today's and Tomorrow's Democratic Societies" aims to establish a European Space for Citizenship Education to exchange good practices and implement existing Council of Europe instruments and tools.

5. Education systems must adapt to social changes and respond with new curricula and interactive methodologies to new demands – not only to meet emerging job requirements but also respond effectively to the growing diversity of societies. They should also contribute to countering the erosion of democratic values, particularly among young people in Europe. For these reasons education for democratic citizenship should be provided as a distinct compulsory subject, be included in other relevant subjects, such as history teaching, during all stages of formal education (primary, secondary, and higher education), and form a constituent part of vocational training and non-formal education.

6. With all these considerations in mind, the Assembly calls on member States of the Council of Europe to undertake a strategic policy review aiming to incorporate the Council of Europe guiding principles for history education and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture throughout their education policies, and in particular:

6.1. concerning curricula, to:

6.1.1. introduce education for democratic citizenship as a distinct compulsory subject and incorporate competences for democratic culture in other relevant subjects such as history teaching during all stages of formal education;

6.1.2. provide for more flexibility of history curricula to enable teachers to develop a learner-centred and competence-based approach alongside chronological and knowledge-based teaching;

6.1.3. allow sufficient space and time to properly consider the complexities and implications of the 19th and 20th century history, aiming to deepen students' understanding of the challenges of the present time, including as regards sensitive history and remembrance;

6.1.4. include in history curricula the study of different forms of totalitarian regimes as well as other violent ideological movements which have devastated Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries, as serious violations of human rights that people in Europe have suffered;

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 3 December 2024.

6.2. concerning methodologies, to:

6.2.1. stimulate critical thinking through learning how to evaluate historical sources and make well-informed judgments;

6.2.2. develop human rights-based analysis of historical events, multiperspectivity in history education, and critical consideration of different standpoints;

6.2.3. foster interactive pedagogies and co-operative learning in small groups, acknowledging cultural differences and multiple identities among learners in a class;

6.3. concerning measures to create a supportive and enabling environment for teachers and learners, to:

6.3.1. include the competences for democratic culture in teacher education and vocational training, multiply teachers' opportunities for professional exchange and development and provide a range of different teaching resources and guidance – including the Council of Europe guiding principles – available in local languages;

6.3.2. guarantee free access to virtual learning environments and to open educational resources;

6.3.3. promote collaborative learning projects, for instance to facilitate contacts between students and survivors of totalitarian regimes and violent ideological movements, and transnational networking and co-operation in the field of education for democratic culture and history teaching;

6.4. concerning synergies between formal and non-formal education, to:

6.4.1. facilitate partnerships between schools, cultural institutions and other relevant stakeholders, such as sites of remembrance, museums, archives, civil society and artists, to co-create history lessons; this requires time and financial resources for visits and joint projects, as well as training and curricular support for teachers to prepare for the wider historical context this will involve;

6.4.2. grant funding and autonomy to museums and remembrance sites to develop as "safe learning spaces for democracy", co-creating educational projects based on thorough academic research, a human rights-based analysis and multiple perspectives, aiming *inter alia* to foster intergenerational dialogue within local communities and accompany visitors towards fresh perspectives and a more nuanced understanding of the past.

B. Draft recommendation[3]

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its Resolution … (2025) "Multiperspectivity in remembrance and history education for democratic citizenship", underscores that history education is key to enabling democratic debate and sustaining and strengthening pluralism and democratic values in society. Moreover, multiperspectivity and the appropriate handling of controversial and sensitive issues in history lessons can be a powerful tool to support peace and reconciliation in societies. By learning about difficult history from the angle of human rights and democracy, using interactive and co-operative learning methodologies, young people will gain confidence and competency in discussing complex and controversial historical events affecting their communities and societies from a multi-perspective and nuanced point of view.

2. The Assembly welcomes the political momentum provided by the 2023 Standing Conference of Ministers of Education for the renewal of the civic mission of education, and emphasises that the Council of Europe guiding principles for quality history education and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture are excellent tools to be further promoted and broadly implemented in member States as part of the new Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030 "Learners First – Education for Today's and Tomorrow's Democratic Societies" and the European Space for Citizenship Education.

3. The Assembly considers that education for democratic citizenship should be part of school curricula both as a distinct compulsory subject, and as part and parcel of other relevant subjects, such as history teaching, during all stages of formal education (primary, secondary, and higher education), as well as in vocational training and non-formal education. Partnerships between formal and non-formal education – including sites of remembrance, museums, archives, audio-visual sector, civil society, and artists – can provide valuable opportunities for teachers and learners to co-create history lessons and exercise competences for democratic culture outside a formal setting.

4. The Assembly accordingly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

4.1. support the different Council of Europe activities relating to history education, ensuring synergies between the different strands of the intergovernmental programme and the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe; and encourage all member States which have not yet done so to join the Observatory;

4.2. encourage creating further links and transversality between the Council of Europe activities on culture, heritage, education and youth;

4.3. provide support and assistance to member States in reviewing their education policies and integrating in national education curricula the Council of Europe guiding principles for history education and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.

3. Draft recommendation adopted unanimously by the committee on 3 December 2024.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Luz Martínez Seijo, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. In today's increasingly multicultural and complex societies, faced with emerging challenges to democracy, this report aims to explore how the positive use of remembrance within education can provide a valuable tool to deepen a nuanced understanding of events. By providing multiple historical perspectives from a human rights and democracy approach, education can support young people in evaluating historical events in a constructive and open manner and develop the competences needed for democratic citizenship. For in today's Europe, where every May the defeat of fascism is celebrated, the ghosts of neo-fascism are nevertheless gaining ground, entering mainstream politics and undoubtedly affecting the climate of our societies.

2. The importance of history teaching has been affirmed by the Council of Europe Summits of Heads of State and Government in 1993, 1997 and 2005, and is today reflected in the work of the Council of Europe under the motto of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe: "Teaching History, Grounding Democracy". History education is essential: it is only by knowing and understanding the past that we can critically evaluate the present. And history teaching deals inevitably with complex and sensitive issues, requiring diverse methodologies and multidisciplinary perspectives.

3. An appropriate inclusion of and approach to sensitive and controversial parts of history in academic curricula reinforces democratic culture and fosters respect for different opinions, pluralism, tolerance, and diversity. Taking students out of the classroom to learn *in situ* from historical places and sites of remembrance should be part of this process of enabling young people to learn about difficult history, to discuss it taking into account different points of view, and to develop a nuanced understanding of complex historical events. History education should be a key part of human rights education and a foundation for young people to develop democratic citizenship.

4. I wish to thank Ms Luisa de Bivar Black, consultant and expert in history teaching from Portugal, who assisted us with key ideas on history teaching and sensitive pasts in her expert report,[4] and all other experts who took part in committee hearings for sharing their knowledge, experience, and thoughts.[5]

2. Education for democratic citizenship

5. Since the Declaration of the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government in October 1997, the Council of Europe has developed its work on education for democratic citizenship and human rights through a series of declarations, recommendations, and agreements. In 2002, the Committee of Ministers adopted its Recommendation (Rec(2002)12) to member States on education for democratic citizenship affirming that education for democratic citizenship should be seen as embracing any formal, non-formal or informal educational activity and that it should be at the heart of the reform and implementation of educational policies. This initiative was followed by the European Year of Citizenship through Education in 2005.

6. The Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, adopted in 2010, highlights the role of human rights education in countering the threats of violence, racism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance, and in contributing to the development of a human rights culture in Europe. The Charter sets out definitions of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education and provides policy guidelines for member States. It recognises the contribution of civil society, and especially youth organisations, in this field, encouraging all State actors (from governments to schools) to make every use of civil society actors and initiatives.

7. The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), which was unanimously approved by the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in April 2016, provides a model of 20 competences, grouped into values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding. The identified set of values upholds human dignity and human rights, cultural diversity, democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law. Attitudes embrace openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices; respect; civic mindedness; responsibility; self-efficacy; and tolerance of ambiguity.

---

4. AS/Cult/Inf(2024)07.

5. Mr Diego Blázquez Martin, Director General for Democratic Memory, Spain; Mr Rafal Rogulski, Director of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS), Poland; Mr Carlos Gimeno Gurpegui, Minister of Education of Navarra, Spain; Ms Ana Ollo Hualde, 2nd Vice-President and Minister for Memory and Living Together, Navarra, Spain; and Ms Almasa Salihović, Public Relations Officer, Memorial Center Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In terms of skills, the RFCDC promotes autonomous learning; analytical and critical thinking; empathy; listening and observing; communication and knowledge of languages; flexibility and adaptability; co-operation and capacity for conflict-resolution. The last category embodies knowledge and critical understanding of self, society, and the world.[6]

8. The Standing Conference of Ministers of Education[7] held in September 2023, provided political impetus for the renewal of education's civic mission and launched the new Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030 "Learners First – Education for Today's and Tomorrow's Democratic Societies".This was followed by a conference held in Berlin in October 2024, to promote a European vision of shared democratic values and principles through citizenship education. As chairperson of the Assembly's Sub-committee on culture, education, and democratic values, I took part in the opening round table, discussing challenges and most pressing issues in citizenship education in Europe.

9. Overloaded curricula, traditional teaching, and highly centralised education systems are indeed very challenging as they create discrepancies between curriculum prescriptions and actual practice in schools. Additionally, in many countries, initial teacher education does not consider citizenship education competences. Education systems should be designed to adapt to social changes and respond with new curricula and interactive methodologies to new demands concerning not only the need to match emerging job profiles (new technologies and green jobs for example) but also the growing diversity of societies.

10. Valuing diversity embraces not only cultural, ethnic, or religious diversity, but many other aspects including social and gender diversity, including that of student capabilities. It creates a basis for quality education which is inclusive and prepares young people to exercise active citizenship and democracy, with respect and tolerance. Education for democratic citizenship should be provided as a distinct compulsory subject and also be incorporated in other relevant subjects, such as history teaching, during all stages of formal education (primary, secondary, and higher education), as well as in vocational training and non-formal education.

3. Addressing memory, difficult and sensitive pasts

11. The appropriate and well-managed inclusion of controversial and sensitive issues in history lessons enhances democratic culture, as the critical understanding of controversy facilitates respect for different opinions, the acceptance of disagreement promotes tolerance of ambiguity, and the confirmation that heterogeneity is part of the world we live in.

12. The objective of historical study is the investigation of what happened; when and where it happened; why it happened; and what consequences it had. No subject other than history addresses these questions. Through the study of history, students gain not only an understanding of historical phenomena but also an appreciation of the importance of the historical dimension in any issue they come to consider throughout their lives.

13. However, the question of whether difficult pasts should be included in the curricula usually raises heated disputes in all sectors of society. The omission or one-sided presentation of painful, controversial, and sensitive questions in the curriculum is a political decision related to the content of the historical narrative, rooted in the questionable political convictions that the past belongs to those who control the present.

14. To teach and learn difficult pasts, the first precondition is a willingness to accept that there are ways of viewing the world other than one's own, and the second precondition is a willingness to step in someone else's shoes and try to see the world as they see it. These two preconditions have been shown to pose significant challenges for both educators and students: This is especially true in post-conflict societies where teachers or students may already strongly identify with the historical narrative of their own group or may want to censor narratives that pose a threat to the narrative of their group.[8]

> *Memory is often owned, history interpreted. Memory is passed down through generations; history is revised.*
>
> *David W. Blight*

---

6. https://rm.coe.int/prems-004721-the-reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-cul/1680a27f24.
7. 26th session of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education – Education (coe.int).
8. Devon Abbey & Bjorn G. J. Wansink, "Brokers of multiperspectivity in history education in post-conflict societies", *Journal of Peace Education*, (2022). DOI: 10.1080/17400201.2022.2051002, or pdf p. 69.

15. Historical memory, sometimes named collective memory or social memory, refers to the way in which groups of people create and then identify with specific narratives about historical periods or events. History education makes it possible to organise different information and to process it in a systematic way, hence learning to differentiate between what are facts, memories, interpretations, perspectives and, importantly, how to detect propaganda. This learning is neither linear nor fast and benefits from active pedagogy.

16. Memory studies were fuelled in part by the world's post-Holocaust and post-Cold War need to assess the stories of survivors of genocide, trauma, or totalitarian control over historical consciousness. It is a fact that there is an abundance of memory, often disseminated in an uncritical manner via the internet, which makes the study of historical memory all the more crucial.

17. History education that deals with memory is therefore complicated. Memory is a highly selective and multi-layered experience, developed and justified by ideals and expectations that collide with difficult realities. Today's uncertainty and perplexity in the face of increased complexity is addressed by a populist discourse that puts forward "memories" that have power over a confusing reality and uphold the strength and power of tradition. Memory is owned – individually or collectively – and often synthesised in objects, sites, and monuments.

18. From the didactic point of view, memory should not be explained, but must be worked on, questioned, analysed, and finally constructed. This requires multiperspectivity and a sound participatory approach in the classroom, in constant interaction with students. Academic history which provides a base for school history is not an exact science, given that it depends on the research, references, and different cultural experiences of the historians. History is an interpretation of the past that seeks to understand contexts in all their complexity.

4. Remembrance as a tool for democratic citizenship

19. In 2010, Thomas Hammarberg, former Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner, stated that "Historical controversies should not hold human rights hostage. One-sided interpretations or distortions of historical events should not be allowed to lead to discrimination of minorities, xenophobia, or renewal of conflict. New generations should not be blamed for what some of their forefathers did".

20. History teaching can be a tool to support peace and reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict areas. In its Recommendation 1880 (2009) "History teaching in post conflict and post-conflict areas",[9] the Parliamentary Assembly underlined that there can be many views and interpretations of the same historical events and that there is validity in a multi-perspective approach that assists and encourages students to respect diversity and cultural difference, instead of conventional history teaching, which "can reinforce the more negative aspects of nationalism".

21. Remembrance can help those who have been affected by a terrible past event to feel that society as a whole recognises their pain, condemns the actions which led to that pain, honours the victims and provides some reassurance that such actions will not be repeated in the future. Hence, remembrance can help give a sense of closure to victims, to enable them to move on from the past.

22. Remembrance can also promote inclusion. It finds a meaning in history for phenomena of the magnitude of Hiroshima or Auschwitz, and this meaning is educational: not to forget so that it does not happen again. Furthermore, if the dominant group in society is not exposed to the history and sufferings of groups outside the majority, that dominant group is denied meaningful learning opportunities, specifically those addressing how human rights should protect and preserve every individual's humanity and human dignity, regardless of "race", gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.

23. If grounded in the analysis of multiple perspectives, taking into consideration what is not taught in schools (the null curriculum), remembrance that restores the historical significance of groups that were marginalised and/or affected by terrible past events recognises their suffering and their right to historical existence. Remembrance is thereby a tool to deepen a nuanced understanding of events, to re-contextualise them by providing multiple historical perspectives and to enable young people to consider these events from the angle of human rights and democracy.

24. For the Council of Europe, remembrance is about keeping a memory alive, preventing denial or loss of memory about horrors that have happened in the past. When remembrance is organised officially by governments, it is often the case that people are being asked to remember something they did not directly

9. History teaching in post conflict and post-conflict areas.

experience themselves. Victims or those who were affected do not need reminders: they are generally unable to forget. Official remembrance allows those who were not directly affected to become aware of events and publicly acknowledges the suffering of the victims.

25. The Holocaust is generally regarded as a paradigm for every kind of human rights violation and crime against humanity; all victims (Jews, Roma, Resistance members, political opponents, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, disabled persons) of the Nazi regime are taken into consideration.[10] Many other terrible human rights violations are also remembrance events; atrocities such as the slave trade, genocide, wars and ethnic cleansing, are not easily forgotten or forgiven by those who were affected.

5. Bridging the gap between formal and non-formal education

26. The world outside the classroom – whether real or virtual – can restore the historical significance of the many victims of past atrocities, allow for their recognition, and send powerful messages of inclusion and respect for diversity. Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices helps young people to make sense of the world they live in.

27. Across Europe, young people visit museums where they can deepen aspects of history that have already been dealt with in the classroom. Usually, mediators and teachers plan visits to enhance specific learning aspects. However, history lessons can also be "co-created" in partnership with remembrance sites, museums, NGOs and/or individual artists. A lot of potential lies in developing such innovative partnerships that provide a new learning environment and a key resource for teachers and students.

5.1. Remembrance sites

28. The Council of Europe Education Department organised the first annual Forum for History Education "Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy"[11]in November 2022 in Belgrade, Serbia, to discuss and reflect on the potential and on the challenges of using sites of remembrance as learning spaces for democracy. A key question raised was whether sites of remembrance, memorials and museums can alone carry the work of remembrance without a sufficient political will and appropriate context in society to acknowledge difficult past and/or contested histories. It was emphasised that such sites of remembrance must be contextualised within a larger historical narrative in order to be successfully introduced into school programmes. The safety of teachers who deal with sensitive or contested histories and the availability of historical sources (archives) may also be an issue. Maintaining respect for the local community that is affected by sensitive and contested history is crucial. Uncovering the hidden, absent, and silenced memories requires a democratic dialogue and safety.

29. Many questions were raised at the Forum: are sites of remembrance and memorials impartial? Who is responsible for sites of remembrance (issue of governance and financing to ensure impartiality)? Who has the power to decide on the creation of memorials in a democratic society? Who should/could use the sites of remembrance as a learning space for democracy and how? How can local communities be engaged? Is there enough time given to teachers to work on the overall historical context with students in the classroom prior to visits (flexible curriculum)? Are teachers sufficiently trained/competent to undertake teaching of sensitive and controversial histories? What form of support do teachers need (freedom and autonomy in teaching, training on methodologies for interactive teaching to enhance learners' competences for democratic culture; access to available teaching resources to provide multiperspectivity; financial resources for field visits, etc.)?

30. Remembrance sites often contain many layers of history, memory, and meaning. Simultaneously the same site can have different meanings for different groups in society, and different ways to commemorate events. Certain sites of remembrance hold great importance for national identity and may accordingly be subject to misuse of history for political purposes (distorted narratives). It is therefore fundamental to seek coherence between government policies and initiatives of local authorities, the education sector, civil society, and the media, using the principle of multiperspectivity as a way to navigate differences in viewpoints and to engage in a critical and human rights-based analysis of difficult and sensitive past events, drawing upon rigorous academic research and wide-ranging historical sources.

---

10. The Holocaust is a European heritage which has common roots in the European nations, and there is a European responsibility that should be accepted. Remembrance of the Holocaust (accessed 12 October 2022).
11. The Council of Europe first annual Forum for History Education "Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy".

5.1.1. The Holocaust sites

31. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution 60/7 (2005) established the International Holocaust Remembrance Day to commemorate the millions of Jewish and other victims of the Holocaust. The date of 27 January was chosen as marking the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1945. The UN resolution calls for the development of educational programmes about Holocaust history to help prevent future acts of genocide and condemns all manifestations of religious intolerance, incitement to hatred, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief. It also calls for the active preservation of the Nazi death camps, concentration camps, forced labour camps and prisons, as sites of the Holocaust. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)[12], which unites 35 governments and numerous experts to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, remembrance, and research worldwide, adopted in 2023 the IHRA Charter for Safeguarding Sites[13] to preserve them, counter distortion and safeguard the historical record.

5.1.2. Srebrenica Memorial

32. Srebrenica Memorial Centre,[14] also known as the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide, serves as a place of remembrance and education about the atrocities committed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Memorial includes the cemetery, as a sacred place, where thousands of victims of the Srebrenica genocide are buried. The Centre provides educational programmes and resources for students, researchers, and the public. It co-operates with numerous organisations and institutions to broaden its impact and outreach, namely numerous Holocaust museums worldwide, sharing expertise and resources to enhance mutual understanding and education about genocides. On 23 May 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted the Resolution on the genocide in Srebrenica, designating 11 July as the “International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica”, to be observed annually.[15]

33. The Srebrenica Memorial Centre is run by survivors themselves and the descendants of the victims. Women play a key role in the remembrance process through their involvement in the identification of victims and their final (decent) burial. The education system in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina includes mandatory visits to the Memorial for secondary schools and universities. However, the Memorial Centre is located in Republika Srpska (RS) where the crime of genocide is denied, relativising the victims and honouring the war criminals and perpetrators who committed genocide. Since schools in RS do not organise visits to the Memorial, children are denied the opportunity to learn about it. Furthermore, media in RS either do not report on the Memorial and its activities or spread disinformation, despite the law in Bosnia and Herzegovina which prohibits denial of genocide in the media.

5.1.3. Mass graves from the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship

34. Since October 2000, mass graves from the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship have become the most visible issue of the process of recovery of historical memory in Spain. Mass graves have been the subject of different interventions: they have been located, marked, and honoured, in some cases opened and the human remains exhumed. With the first four-year exhumations plan (2020-2024), more than 600 actions have been carried out. To date, and although many actions are still in progress, the number of exhumed bodies amounts to some 5 738. A recent study estimates that it would be possible to recover approximately 20 000 individuals. So far, only 0.2% of the estimated 130 199 individuals killed have been genetically identified.

35. The graves, previously symbols of silence and oblivion, are now sites of mourning and memory. In addition, many forgotten memories have been recovered. The victims of the war and the dictatorship have returned to the heart of the public debate, although not without controversy. Examples of good practice include the Pico Reja grave in the San Fernando cemetery in Seville, where 10 051 bodies have been exhumed, 1 786 of which were victims of Franco's reprisals. This is the largest mass grave opened in Western Europe since Srebrenica.

12. IHRA (holocaustremembrance.com).
13. IHRA Charter for Safeguarding Sites.
14. Srebrenica Memorial Center.
15. UN General Assembly Resolution on Srebrenica Genocide.

5.2. Museums

36. The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media selects each year the winner of the Council of Europe Museum Prize, awarded since 1977 to a museum judged to have made a significant contribution to the understanding of European cultural heritage, the promotion of respect for human rights and democracy, bridging cultures, overcoming social and political borders, broadening visitors' knowledge and understanding of contemporary societal issues and exploring ideas of democratic citizenship. Many recent winners of the Council of Europe Museum Prize,[16] and the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) scheme[17] are addressing difficult aspects of history and have developed innovative educational programs and partnerships with schools.

37. The Sybir Memorial Museum, in Bialystok, Poland[18](EMYA winner 2024), combines a museum, a research centre and the memorial site which conveys the story of successive deportations of people from Poland to Siberia, northern Russia and Kazakhstan during the Soviet occupation and division of Poland in the 1940-41 period, and deportation from Poland during the communist period of the Soviet Union after the Second World War until 1952. The museum pursues a research-based, dynamic strategy in conveying history through workshops, events, media, publications, and new formats to reach out to a broad audience.

38. As a human rights museum, The Gulag History Museum, in Moscow, Russian Federation[19](Council of Europe Museum Prize winner 2021), has a dual focus on the crimes of the State and the fate of its citizens, with an emphasis on how the victims maintained their dignity under dehumanising conditions. The museum's programmes are designed to expose history and activate memory, with the goal of strengthening the resilience of civil society and its resistance to political repression and violation of human rights. While focusing on a dark period in Soviet history, this museum's European perspective is expressed in its commitment to European democratic values: political freedom, freedom of expression, the rule of law, the defence of human rights, and the role of civil society. However, the Gulag History Museum has been closed since 14 November 2024, marking an unprecedented setback in an era of growing authoritarianism in the Russian Federation.[20]

39. The House of Leaves in Tirana, Albania,[21] is the Museum of Secret Surveillance (Council of Europe Museum Prize winner 2020). It commemorates the psychological violence and total control of citizens during the communist regime in Albania (1944-1991) during which 18 000 people were prosecuted and charged and 5 000 executed. It is located in the building that housed Gestapo during the occupation of Albania in Second World War and later the Central Directorate of the Sigurimi, the secret police and State intelligence service of the communist regime in Albania. The building has remained virtually intact with original equipment and recordings which are now stored in archives. The museum is run by enthusiastic staff who have developed outreach programmes for schools involving discussions and exchanges with former victims.

40. The Museum of Communication in Bern, Switzerland[22] (Council of Europe Museum Prize winner 2019), is a museum that takes up innovations in technology and communication and actively plays a part in promoting media literacy. It is a very interactive, multisensory, participatory, accessible, playful, open, and democratic museum acting as a lab for social interaction, relationships, and processes. The museum addresses emerging issues related to present-day communication: the value of truth; the impact of lying, privacy, hacking secrets, (mis)understanding and communication in a culturally diverse society. These themes clearly echo the on going work of the committee related to media freedom; disinformation and propaganda; social media and threats to fundamental freedoms; internet governance; and media education.

41. The War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina[23] (Council of Europe Museum Prize winner 2018), is a grassroots initiative led by young people who endured the four-year war siege of Sarajevo as children. Through powerful personal stories and objects associated with each story, this museum advocates peace, reconciliation, and the value of cultural diversity. The museum is deliberately apolitical – which transpires through the presentation of stories, through its social and outreach activities and in the way it was conceived and crowdfunded. The museum has expanded its activities to contemporary conflict, post-

16. https://assembly.coe.int/Museum/PrixMuseeCE/PrizeWinners.asp.
17. European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA).
18. THE MUSEUM – Muzeum Pamięci Sybiru.
19. https://gmig.ru/en/.
20. Press release, Parliamentary Assembly: "Closure of the Gulag History Museum in Moscow".
21. Welcome to Museum of Secret Surveillance: "House of Leaves" (muzeugjethi.gov.al).
22. www.mfk.ch.
23. https://warchildhood.org.

conflict, and resettlement zones. With projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Lebanon, Ukraine, and the United States, the War Childhood Museum is becoming an international platform that gives a voice to current and former war children.

42. L'ETNO, Museu Valencià d'Etnologia[24] (EMYA winner 2023) proposes universal reflections based on local cultural traits. Its educational programme aims at making memory, recovering it and confronting it with forgotten stories. There are multiple activities designed for schools about the Paterna cemetery, one of the scenes of Francoist repression regime that lasted from 1939 until the death of the dictator in 1975. Between 1939 and 1956 there were 2 238 people shot and thrown into more than 100 common graves, almost half of all reprisals in Valencian territory. The El Terrer wall, very close to the cemetery, was the place where people from 191 Valencian municipalities were shot, as well as from other parts of the Spanish territory.

5.3. European cultural routes[25]

43. Since the creation of the Council of Europe Cultural Routes Programme in 1987, the number of routes has expanded to 48, covering a range of different themes.[26] The routes bring people and places together in networks of shared history and heritage. In the context of difficult and sensitive history, the ATRIUM, the Liberation Route Europe, and the European Route of Jewish Heritage share political difficulties inherent in their contested subject and offer innovative approaches and possibilities for non-formal education and partnerships with schools.

44. The ATRIUM Route[27] acknowledges these difficulties through its use of an acronym to designate its subject: Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century in Europe's Urban Memory. The routes extend from formerly fascist Italy to formerly communist Eastern Europe. The ATRIUM Route encourages the participation of universities and secondary schools to allow students both physically and digitally to explore the complexities of dissonant heritage and enable them critically to analyse fascism and the communist and socialist regimes of Eastern Europe, and to understand how architecture became an instrument of education and propaganda as well as State-fostered local development. However, it is not easy to depoliticise a fundamentally politicised heritage. This is particularly important with sites such as Mussolini's birthplace Predappio in the province of Forli which is a site of neo-Fascist nostalgic tourism.

45. The Liberation Route Europe[28] deals with sensitive political issues, starting from the question of the use of the contested word "liberation" on the Eastern front; the problematic reluctance of Second World War museums to acknowledge different points of view; the risk of distorting the past through failing to reflect nuances and varying interpretations: histories are not clear-cut. The Route presents different aspects of war, not just "liberation" and seeks to address diametrically opposed views non-judgmentally and with respect. It is particularly important to engage students in visiting sites. The organisers of the Route are working on the design of its educational strategy which includes specific projects and activities, for example a touring "History through their Eyes" project which is also available online,[29] telling the history of Second World War. Other activities include long distance hiking trails, linking existing trails, Second World War locations and tourism sites which may be accompanied by online presentations and packages as well as more traditional publications.

46. The European Route of Jewish Heritage[30] has the primary objective of promoting a better knowledge and understanding of European history and changing the mentality of society about the importance of Jewish heritage. This is a challenging heritage which is surprisingly little understood by the public. However, the work of the Route is not solely devoted to Jewish heritage: it encourages both Jewish and non-Jewish collaboration, giving visibility to the positive elements, rather than concentrating on antisemitism. The Route also promotes cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans, involving schools and universities in the exploration of Jewish heritage as European heritage, to support the social integration of young people, both Jewish and non-Jewish, from different social backgrounds and regions. In line with the Council of Europe Faro Convention[31], the route looks at heritage as plural and diverse.

---

24. https://letno.dival.es/en/pagina/museum.
25. This section refers to the Assembly report "The Cultural Routes: a platform for intercultural dialogue", March 2023, rapporteur: Mr Andries Gryffroy, Belgium, Doc. 15710.
26. www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/by-theme.
27. www.atriumroute.eu.
28. www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/liberation-route-europe.
29. www.liberationroute.com.
30. www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/the-european-route-of-jewish-heritage.
31. Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, 2005 "Faro Convention").

5.4. European Network Remembrance and Solidarity

47. The European Network on Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS)[32] promotes a dialogue about history in Europe and establishes partnerships between research centres, public institutions, and non-governmental organisations to commemorate sensitive historical events. The ENRS organises various activities such as artistic workshops, study visits, webinars, exhibitions, educational campaigns, and publication series. The activities cover for example the history of Central Europe after the First World War, the Holocaust and Second World War remembrance, and the totalitarian regimes in 20th century Europe. A travelling exhibition "Between life and Death during the Holocaust" was organised in 18 cities in 9 European countries and in Japan.

48. The educational activities are developed to suit new methodologies of history teaching and are based on the curricula of seven European countries as well as on teachers' experiences and needs. The ENRS collects feedback from teachers in two-year intervals. The ENRS also organises an educational campaign for the European day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes "Remember August 23" and provides diverse opportunities for co-operation and exchanges such as the "European Remembrance Symposium", an annual event aimed at facilitating and creating new areas of co-operation between different actors concerned with 20th Century European history and its education, or "Genealogies of Memory", an annual international conference on methodologies of memory studies. In 2023, over 50 000 people had used the portal "Hi-Story Lessons". The educational project "In Between?" is developed to explore the history of the 20th century and its legacy in border regions, focusing on oral history research.

6. Remembrance and education in Spain

49. Spain's contemporary history has been marked by the coup d'état of 1936, the following civil war and General Franco's dictatorship. After Franco's death in 1975, the arrival of democracy was a milestone in the country's history. In this respect, the promulgation of the Constitution in 1978,[33] which is still in force, played an important role. This legal document undertook to repair the damage caused by the war and during the years of dictatorship.

50. In 2006, an educational reform was approved.[34] The new curriculum included a subject called Education for Citizenship and Human Rights (Educación para la Ciudadanía y los Derechos Humanos). It aimed "to promote the consolidation of self-esteem, personal dignity, freedom and responsibility and the formation of future citizens with their own criteria, respectful, participatory, and supportive, who know their rights, assume their duties and develop civic habits so that they can exercise citizenship effectively and responsibly."

51. This was an assessable and compulsory subject in the last year of primary education and the first years of compulsory secondary education. The subject complied with a Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2002,[35] which states that education for democratic citizenship is essential for promoting a free, tolerant, and just society, and recommends that the governments of the member States make education for democratic citizenship a priority objective of their educational policies.

52. In 2007, a Law on Historical Memory[36] was approved, which recognised and expanded rights, and established measures for those who had suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and dictatorship. It also included the recognition of all the victims during this historical period. However, it did not cover any educational policies. In 2013, with the approval of the new educational reform, "Education for Citizenship and Human Rights" was suppressed as a full school subject.

53. In 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence visited Spain. In his report, due to the limited scope of the measures taken until then, a series of recommendations were made: to urgently address the demands of victims in terms of truth and resolve the excessive fragmentation in the construction of Spanish memory; to extend the recognition and coverage of reparation programmes to include all the categories of victims; to ensure that the Spanish justice system co-operates with judicial proceedings abroad; and to combat any weakening of the exercise of universal

32. European Network Remembrance and Solidarity | ENRS, Member countries of the ENRS are Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Slovak Republic. Its associated members are Albania, Austria, Czechia, Estonia, Georgia Latvia, and Lithuania.
33. Spanish Constitution.
34. Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May, on Education.
35. Rec(2002)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on education for democratic citizenship.
36. Law 52/2007 of 26 December, on Historical Memory.

jurisdiction by Spanish courts. The rapporteur also stressed the need to "continue consolidating the efforts made in terms of historical and human rights education and establish mechanisms for assessing the implementation of these programmes, with a view to ensuring consistency and effective implementation".[37]

54. Following the recommendations of the UN rapporteur, remembrance and memory were included in the curricula of various regional education systems, for example in Aragon, Asturias, the Balearic Islands, and the Community of Valencia. More recently two legal frameworks followed: the Organic Law on Education (*Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre*) and the Law on Democratic Memory (*Ley 20/2022, de 19 de octubre, de Memoria Democrática*).

6.1. Federal Laws

55. The Organic Law on Education 3/2020[38] points out "the need for the educational community to have a deep knowledge of the history of democracy in Spain from its origins to the present day". Attention should be paid to learning about democratic and human rights values and the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts all along the curriculum. Two measures were also adopted: a new subject entitled Civic and Ethical Values and a reshaping of history teaching.

56. In primary education, the curriculum includes the recognition of diversity and multiculturality, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the application of democratic mechanisms, the values of Europeanism and the process of building democracy in Spain. Recommended areas for secondary education include: crimes against humanity, terrorism, the rise of totalitarianism and the movements for freedom and human rights.

57. The Law of Democratic Memory[39] focuses on the recovery, safeguarding and dissemination of the democratic memory of Spain. Its main objective is to foster and promote the knowledge of Spanish democratic history and the struggle for democratic freedoms. In this sense, sites of remembrance play an important role as "a physical materialisation of the past" and help to rationalise and appease emotions and memories of the survivors and victims.

6.2. Regional implementation: the example of Navarra

58. Navarra is an autonomous community in Spain which represents an example to follow in terms of the management of historical memory. The Memory Institute of Navarra (Instituto Navarro de la Memoria)[40] was created in 2018 by the Government of Navarre within the Directorate General for Peace, Coexistence and Human Rights to promote public policies of memory that focus on the recognition of the victims of Franco's repression in co-ordination with the Directorate General for Education depending on the Ministry of Education. The Institute is dedicated to advancing a fairer, more ethical, and democratic society through the promotion of a culture of peace and respect and the remembrance of the traumatic reality of the past. Its aim is to promote the conservation of the heritage of memory in all its forms, to encourage research into historical and recent memory, to promote human rights and a culture of peace, to disseminate and provide citizens with the historical heritage of Navarra, and to commemorate those events and people who have contributed to and defended a democratic culture.

59. *Escuelas con memoria, por la paz y la convivencia* (Schools with memory, for peace and coexistence) is a programme of the Directorate General for Peace, Coexistence and Human Rights of the Government of Navarra. It is based on four main objectives: clarifying the past, repairing the damage caused, normalising social and political life, and promoting a culture of peace. Initiatives have been drawn up within the three main chapters: Historical Memory, Recent Memory, and Coexistence. The area of Historical Memory focuses on the violations of rights during the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent Francoist period. The area of Recent Memory highlights the importance of solidarity towards the victims. Finally, the area of Coexistence promotes the development of activities aimed at knowledge, training, and learning based on experiences related to human rights and their violations, peaceful conflict resolution, the eradication of violence and intercultural richness.[41] To achieve this, the project is based on teacher training, a programme of activities, the promotion of research and scientific dissemination projects, and the creation of a network of schools involved.[42]

37. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.
38. Organic Law 3/2020 of 29 December, amending Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May on Education.
39. Law 20/2022 of 19 October, on Democratic Memory.
40. Instituto Navarro de la Memoria.
41. Escuelas con memoria, por la paz y la convivencia Programme.
42. Escuelas con memoria 2023-2024 Programme.

60. Analogous to the schools of memory project, Espacios de memoria (Memory sites) was created as a network of sites of memory in Navarra. This project aims to take a critical look at those places in Navarra where violence was deployed by the rebels in the military coup of 1936.[43] A total of 13 itineraries are proposed, covering different points of the area of Navarra. The routes are grouped according to themes (graves, detention centres, forced labour, gender-based repression, exile, and other memorials) or areas (Bidasoa, Larraun-Leitzaran, Sakana, Arga, Pyrenees, Irati-Aragón, Ega, Vadizarbe-Novenera, Middle Zone, Upper Ribera, and Ribera).

7. Multiperspectivity in history teaching of sensitive pasts[44]

61. It is a difficult task to include in the curricula references to sensitive parts of history, relating for example to the Second World War, the Holocaust, and totalitarian regimes with a link to rising populist and nationalist political movements of today that challenge human rights and democracy.

62. Teachers interpret the official curriculum to adapt and organise their own lessons; therefore there are differences between the formal curriculum and the learned or experienced curriculum. Moreover, the notion of hidden curriculum includes all the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, behaviours and perspectives that learners learn in school that influence them above and beyond the official curriculum and learning activities. Finally, what is not taught in schools because it is omitted in the curriculum, constitutes the null curriculum.

63. A curriculum necessarily implies a selection, but this selection should be relevant to learners' educational and social experiences. What is not in the curriculum sends learners two subtle messages, one that states what is not important, and another that reveals what is to be valued. The existence of null curriculum, consciously or not, has inevitable consequences on the development of young people and for the arising controversies in society.

64. As societies become more ethnically and culturally diverse, the exploration of different perspectives is a valuable and necessary way for students to find mutual understanding of different cultures and become responsible democratic citizens. In Europe, the term multiperspectivity has been extensively disseminated. The Council of Europe recommends that history teaching should contribute to "the development of a multiple-perspective approach in the analysis of history, especially the history of the relationships between cultures."[45]

65. Multiperspectivity, like the analysis of sources, is also a vital aspect of understanding the historical dimension of any event. It entails distinguishing facts from opinions and understanding that there is no universal historical truth, but rather a number of diverse interpretations of a given event. Although multiperspectivity is increasingly emphasised as essential, research has shown that many history teachers struggle with addressing multiple coexisting perspectives. They need to possess deep knowledge of their discipline, and often have limited time and limited access to resources.

8. Conclusion

> *For history, as nearly no one seems to know, does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations.*
>
> *Adriano Moreira*

43. Espacios de Memoria.
44. This section refers to the findings in the expert report prepared by Ms Luisa de BIvar Black (As/Cult/inf(2024)07) and to the chapter 3 on "Guidance for quality history education that promotes diversity, multiperspectivity and tolerance" in the report of Mr Bertrand Bouyx (France, ALDE), entitled "The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe" (Parliamentary Assembly Doc.15423, 15 December 2021).
45. Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)6 for history teaching in European countries, with a view to strengthening intercultural dialogue, and having regard to the general aims of history teaching as embodied in Recommendation CM/Rec(2001)15.

66. History teaching and its relevance for democratic citizenship education are the focus of this report. It addresses the potential and constraints that history education faces today, alongside the need to update the content of the history that is taught. It builds on, and is a continuation of, previous Assembly work on history education, demonstrating its relevance to sustain pluralism, democratic debate, and to strengthen democratic values in society.[46]

67. The report provides examples of innovative partnerships and new methodologies to address difficult, controversial, and sensitive pasts. It emphasises that multiperspectivity is a vital aspect of understanding history. Classroom discussions about the significant milestones in the history of human rights will allow young people to process human rights perspectives while encouraging them to learn from one another and to practice discussing historical content in their own words. Practising respectful debate in this context provides experiential learning for respect for democracy and human rights.

68. Societies in Europe are diverse, face democratic erosion and increased polarisation. Efforts to promote cross-sectoral practices to support young people to explore the past and connect it with contemporary challenges would contribute to strengthening their competences for democratic culture. Bringing formal and non-formal education closer together, increasing learning opportunities in areas where the complementarity is clear and desirable, would benefit education, culture, and heritage sectors.

69. Projects related to exploring remembrance sites that bring together school classes, cultural institutions (museums, archives, audio-visual sector, etc.) and artists, would enable young people to address the challenge of “who we are”, and who “the others” are, to construct a complex and nuanced view of the past. By connecting the difficult past with present-day challenges, young people can gain a deeper understanding of their own lives, the lives of their families, and of their communities.

70. The committee could pursue this report with a more specific analysis of sites of remembrance and their important role in commemoration, truth seeking, evidence gathering, healing trauma, promoting peace and respect for human rights and human dignity. Recognising that sites of remembrance are many and varied, and sometimes contested, such a follow-up report would also require considerations from the angle of archaeology and its relevance for evidence gathering, heritage conservation principles to preserve sites and their meaning, and museology to apply rigour in research and reflect multiple perspectives in historic narratives.

71. The rapporteur welcomes the initiative of the Education Department of the Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity of the Council of Europe (DGII) and the Governing Board of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe to start a consultation process on challenges and review the state of history education in member States with a view to preparing a new recommendation of the Committee of Ministers during the 2025-2026 period. The Assembly as well as other relevant sectors of the Council of Europe are invited to contribute to this process.

72. This political initiative will be complementary to the follow-up given to the 26th session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in September 2023,[47] and the initiative to create the European Space for Citizenship Education[48] as an effective and collaborative means to implement the existing Council of Europe standards and tools in the area of education for democratic citizenship.[49] Both are coherent and timely political initiatives to assist the 46 member States in reinforcing democratic culture in society and acknowledge the relevance of history teaching and remembrance in this process. For democracy and human rights can never be taken for granted and need to be promoted continuously.

46. See in particular: “Guidance for quality history education that promotes diversity, multiperspectivity and tolerance”, Doc. 15423, op. cit.
47. https://coe.int/en/web/education/26th-session-of-the-standing-conference-of-ministers-of-education.
48. https://rm.coe.int/towards-a-framework-convention-on-a-european-space-for-citizenship-edu/1680ac3550.
49. For more information see chapter 2 of this report, and the website of the Council of Europe Education Department www.coe.int/en/web/edc.