

It is a great honour for me to speak, on behalf of EUROCLIO, at the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Association of History Teachers.

The title of the event *Commemorating the Events of 1989*, made me think about my personal experiences with Hungary in the Nineteen Eighties.

I had the good fortune to travel several times to Hungary in those years: with my gymnasium students under the inspiring guidance of Tibor Toth, a 1956 refugee working in our school in The Hague; As President of the Dutch History and Citizenship Educators Association in a cultural Dutch- Hungarian exchange programme, assisted by a young András Láncki and finally for a family holiday.

During all these visits, there were many, mostly open, talks, but I never could have anticipated the radical changes that would take place in the end of this decade. I remember my delight, when I heard, that the electricity in the barbed-wire border fence was turned off; Heard about the *PanEuropean Picnic* near Sopron in August 1989 and heard the government declaration, ending the 40 years communist rule on October 23rd. The news about the end of Europe's Iron split continued to make me happy for many years that followed these events. And they changed my life.

The radical changes in Central and Eastern Europe, affected directly the working of the Council of Europe, the intergovernmental organization founded shortly after the Second World Warⁱ. From its very first start, the Council was convinced, that history and history teaching were key words for building the new Post-War Europe. If this new Europe could not come to terms with its past, Europe would never learn to live in peace.

The Council of Europe consequently organised many events on history/history education with civil servants, inspectors, university professors, however rarely with classroom practitioners. These highly appreciated meetings had consequently little impact on the level of average class-room practice.

The changed circumstances in Europe enabled the Council of Europe to bring together in December 1991, in Bruges, Belgium, professional representatives in history and school history from all over Europe. Under the title '*History Teaching in the New Europe*' became this memorable meeting the starting point for a long period of intensive international cooperation on the learning and teaching of history.

Maitland Stobart, the Council of Europe's Deputy Head of Education, Sports and Culture was the inspiring leader, amongst others calling for a European Association for history educators. Such Association was since long his desire, a tool to improve the grassroots impact of the Councils' work on history education. This event became the game changer in my life.

Although there were hardly any history teachers among the more than 100 participants in Brugges, those who were present felt their responsibility towards history teaching in this new Europe and were conscious of the necessity to reach out to their fellow classroom teachers. I was representing the Netherlands in this meeting, as President of the Dutch History Teachers Association and I returned home determined to set up a European History Teachers Association.

In a world without internet, the support of Maitland Stobart, Helene Bude-Janssens, Vice-President of the Dutch Association and the colleagues present in Brugge was invaluable. Together with the indispensable fax machine, we were, within a year, able to create in Strasbourg EUROCLIO, the European Association

of History Educators. Among the 17 Founding Organisations was TTE, the Hungarian Association.

TTE was the first of the former Soviet bloc countries to establish a history teachers' organization. When it was established, it represented not only Hungarians living in Hungary but also living beyond the borders of the country. During the intensive period of the '90s, TTE not only had a relationship with EUROCLIO but also a high-profile representation in the activities of EUROCLIO through the hard work of with Eszter Glavinicsné Jáhner, Vilmos Vass and László Beró.

It is important to have participatory civilians and it is important to organise themselves in Non-Governmental Organisations fulfilling their tasks in the region. And TTE, led by László Miklósi, has been performing this important responsibility for 30 years, representing professionalism and freedom in education not only for the narrower profession but also for the public to be able to understand these values better.

In the 1992 meeting in Strasbourg it became clear that Associations felt that their subject was misused for political purposes. Colleagues from Central and Eastern European Countries as well as from Spain and Portugal, all recently established democracies, had such experiences in their recent past. However, also Associations from the older democracies, recognized political influence on their history education. The example at that time was England, where the Conservative Government was pushing for a strict National Curriculum. Since then, we could see many comparable experiences, among them political influence on the curriculum change in Denmark, Italy and The Netherlands. Politics and history education were and are clearly intertwined.

The main aims for the Association stipulated in 1992 were to strengthen the position of history in the curriculum of schools in Europe;

To strengthen the intellectual freedom of the teachers;

To promote the European dimension in teaching of history, without neglecting the global, national and regional dimensions.

And finally: to disseminate information on history education in Europe through national and international publications and other relevant materials.

In 1997, the Hungarian Association furthered its active European engagement as it made Hungary the first of the renewed democratic countries to organize the EUROCLIO Annual Training Conference. The event *'Preparing for the 21th Century, principles for the design of History syllabuses. Chronological or thematic? Depth or breath? Skills or Knowledge? 'Liberalism and Revolutions in the 19th century, 1848 as a case study,* brought 102 participants from 31 countries to Budapest. It had an outstanding opening through the speech of the Hungarian President at that time Árpád Göncz.

The Conference participants agreed on a set of Recommendations, basically confirming the EUROCLIO direction towards innovative and responsible history. The final Recommendation specifies that the topic The Changes in Europe since 1989 should be included in the European history curricula.

The EUROCLIO Bulletin nr 8 was devoted to the Conference.

Later that year, the Association was active again during the Conference *The Youth and History project. Challenges and Implications for the Teaching and Learning of History*, organised by the Koerber Foundation and EUROCLIO. It brought 70 participants from 37 countries to Pécs.

The current mission of EUROCLIO clearly shows the continuity from the early Ninety Nineties. It states that it aims to support the development of an innovative and inclusive approach to History and Citizenship Education. It promotes collaborative values, critical awareness and mutual respect, peace, stability and democracy in society, through history teaching. It wants to contribute to prevention and reconciliation of inter- and intrastate conflicts. It therefore focuses on improving the quality of history and history education and the quality of the professional group. And finally, it fosters History Educators organizations and national and international professional communication, networking and cooperation.

The Member organisations subscribe to an approach to the learning and teaching of history where concepts, such as mutual inclusiveness, interpretation, evidence and sources, multi-perspectivity, multiple narratives, complexity, objectivity, controversy, sensitivity and civic responsibility, are basic elements for good history education. A very recent example for work on such issues is the ongoing project *Learning to Disagree*, which has embraced a very important idea: how can we teach history, accepting different points of view. The Hungarian Association is also participating in this project.

History education had in most European countries, and quite often still has, an unmistakable national centric approach. The EUROCLIO Members recognized that there was indeed a need for increasing a trans-border approach but recoiled from the idea for a common text or resource book on the history of Europe. The EUROCLIO version of common history of Europe would be an on-line educational multimedia tool offering multi-perspective, cross-border and comparative

historical sourcesⁱⁱ. In 2019, this online tool is Historiana, which does not try to present a comprehensive story of Europe.

It is a work in progress, and is constantly working on its framework for comparing and contrasting the impact on and responses by Europe's nations and the wider world to a range of different events and developments.

It looks that the role of the teacher is under re-evaluation, after a long period of under-estimation. The need for high quality teachers is regularly nationally and internationally expressed, together with the requirement for high quality teacher education and lifelong professional development. The ability to trust excellent teachers, professional specialists upholding fundamental values, is a guarantee for sound future societies.

EUROCLIO and its members always have recognized their role as Volunteer Professional Civil Society Organisations raising and nurturing outstanding professional quality already for more than 25 years.

I am happy that you as Hungarian History Educators Association always has been with us on this journey for good, innovative and responsible history education.

I would like to congratulate you on behalf of the current Board, under the Presidency of Paolo Ceccoli, on behalf of the current Staff, led by Executive Director Steven Stegers, and on behalf of all those who joined our common endeavours.

Cheers, to the next 30 years!

ⁱ The website of the Council of Europe on history contains a wealth of information about its work.
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/history-teaching> . A report in 1995 summarizes its early work (1953-1995)
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680493c33>
ⁱⁱ historiana.eu