Participants

Helena Ruuska (Otava Publishing Company); e-mail: helena.ruuska@otava.fi
Vija Kilbloka (Zvaigzne ABC Publishers); e-mail: vija.kilbloka@zvaigzne.lv
Odisejs Kostanda (Zvaigzne ABC Publishers); e-mail: dace.rudzite@zvaigzne.lv
Tanja Horvat (Profil International); e-mail: tanja.horvat@profil.hr
Václav Fronk (Fraus Publishing House); e-mail: fronk@fraus.cz
Kärt Jänes-Kapp (Koolibri Publishers); e-mail: kart@koolibri.ee
Evaldas Bakonis (Alma Littera/Sviesa); e-mail: e.bakonis@sviesa.lt
Götz Schwarzrock (Cornelsen Verlag); e-mail: goetz.schwarzrock@cornelsen.de
Ralf Kasper (Cornelsen Verlag); e-mail: ralf.kasper@cornelsen.de
Mechthilde Fuhrer (DG IV, Council of Europe); e-mail: mechthilde.fuhrer@coe.int
Falk Pingel (Georg Eckert Institut); e-mail: pingel@gei.de
Preben Späth (EEPG Central Office); e-mail: eepg@adr.dk

Wednesday 21.02: welcome dinner in the evening

Thursday 22.02

Morning session

Mechthilde Fuhrer from the Council of Europe presented the organisation of the Council of Europe including a short historical survey since its start right after World War II. Aims among others were that history teaching should be free from national prejudice and that a dialogue between all the member states should be promoted. Furthermore there was a request for more objective textbooks showing the European dimension in history teaching. The reason for Mechthilde Fuhrer’s visit to this network meeting was that one of the Council of Europe’s history projects is getting near the end now. The title of this project is ‘The European Dimension in History Teaching’. The final products include a CD-ROM and a teacher’s handbook describing the research of European historians on the 5 selected key years 1848, 1912/13, 1919, 1945 and 1989/90, the book also presents a series of different teaching methods in history. The book has the title “Crossroads of European histories. Multiple
outlooks on five key moments in the history of Europe” and has been published in English and French.

A multiperspective approach is the key concept; there is no single official objective approach to teach and learn history. Thereby the conflict of views inside a population is taken into account – tolerance towards other perspectives and the wish to understand how the others think and why.

Mutual confidence and understanding, reading and evaluating information in a critical manner are among the important aspects of the way that the material and documents have been presented on the CD-ROM.

Mechthilde Fuhrer gave a guided tour through the CD-ROM, and in the following discussion it was pointed out by some of the participants that the whole structure and in some respects even the content was presented in a rather old fashioned way. Among the main drawbacks was the lack of a search engine which could allow a user to look for the history of a specific country. It was also argued that the CD-ROM might be a good collection of sources for the teacher, whereas the pupils would hardly be impressed and motivated by the way the software has been implemented. Finally it was mentioned that one was missing multimedia ingredients like audio and video clips.

Finally Mechthilde Fuhrer promised to send the existing version of the CD-ROM to all participants including information on how they can obtain the right to translate whatever they would want from the CD-ROM into their own languages. The Council of Europe is now launching a new three year project called “The image of the other in history teaching”. Among the themes to be dealt with are “Multiple images, shared destinies? – Learning about history in a multicultural society”, “Images of others and ourselves in the context of globalisation” and “The image of the other in conflict situations: learning different histories as a means of rebuilding trust”.

Mechthilde Fuhrer welcomes very much if the members of the EEPG would be interested in helping the Council of Europe to distribute the material in their respective countries. She underlined that it will also be possible for publishers to select only those documents they find relevant and then leave the rest untouched.

Falk Pingel (Georg Eckert Institute) presented the history of the Georg Eckert Institute, which was founded shortly after the Second World War. Georg Eckert himself started by organising meeting and conferences for history teachers from all over Europe to evaluate their own history textbooks and those of the other countries. Until the 1990 most of the work of the Institute was bilateral projects like the Polish-German textbook commission, Soviet-German and the Israeli-German textbook commissions. The conflict during the cold war also changed the work of the Institute and increased
the number of projects – especially due to the conflicts in south Eastern Europe and also the Israel Palestine conflict.

A very difficult project now is the support of Israeli teachers working together with Palestinian history teachers about the long conflict – trying to present both versions of that same history – an agreement on one version has been impossible to achieve. The main focus of the Georg Eckert Institute is still collecting and comparing textbooks from all over the world, including doing and organising research on textbooks covering subjects like history, social science and geography. Falk Pingel also mentioned the possibility of setting up a common project for the Georg Eckert Institute and the EEPG to produce a textbook on the History of Europe, maybe using the inspiration of the so called Virtual Classroom project which has been ‘sleeping’ for some time now. The Georg Eckert Institute has actually made a CD-ROM with a demo version of the 9 contributions on the Potsdam Conference from the history textbooks from 9 members of the EEPG. He showed how the user may compare e.g. the Finnish and the Croatian presentations of the Potsdam Conference in their own textbooks. The texts (and pictures) are available on the CD-ROM both in the original language and in English.

Ms Depner (Georg Eckert Institute) talked about the textbook collection, praising those EEPG members who always send one free
copy of their books for history, geography and civics to the institute. She also sent her request to the remaining members of the EEPG to do the same. The library now contains more than 225,000 volumes (textbooks) from over 100 countries, and the research literature comprises more than 50,000 books and periodicals. It was furthermore underlined that the members of the EEPG are very welcome to send their authors (or editors) to work and do research in the library. Every year there are 30 scholarships available for teachers and authors to stay for two or three weeks and work in the Institute. More information about the Georg Eckert Institute can be accessed on the web site www.gei.de.

Afternoon session

Ralf Kasper (Cornelsen Verlag) gave a short description of ‘Satellite Earth’, a potential EU project to be applied for from the so called ‘e-content plus’ programme. The idea is to build the European answer to Google Earth; the plan is to use data/pictures from the Canadian World Sat Company who produces pictures of a much higher quality than Google. These data will form the basis of the project; and all these digital geographical data will be linked to many other types of digital information related to different places on the Earth. The partners of the project can add these corpora of data for themselves and then make use of the linkages between the geographical data and the other data.
At present there are three companies interested, but there should be at least 6 countries represented in the project. Ralf Kasper promised to make a short description of the idea, and Preben Spåth will then publish this description as part of the coming issue of the EEPG e-newsletter.

Helena Ruuska (Otava Publishing Company) gave a presentation of the idea behind and the practice of drama in history teaching. In many of Otava’s history textbooks there are exercises and tasks involving dramatisation of history in different ways. The reasons to integrate drama in history teaching include the concept of learning by doing; the promotion of emotional life in the classroom; and the fact that all senses are activated with drama whereby (very important!) the empathy for people who lived in the past is activated. In general this leads to higher motivation for learning about history and also ensures a higher level of learning. Helena Ruuska presented a number of different ways to introduce drama in history teaching, among other things the role play, interviews, hot seating (the class ask questions to the pupil who is impersonating e.g. Napoleon and who is sitting on the ‘hot seat’). The presentation included many inspiring ideas to enhance and improve the teaching of history with drama and empathy.

Friday 23.02
New trends in the pedagogy of social science; presentation and discussion of the different approaches to social science in the schools of Europe.

Evaldas Bakonis (Alma Littera/Sviesa) presented a new issue in educational publishing in Lithuania. The last few years thousands of Lithuanians have migrated to countries like Great Britain, Ireland, and Germany. For these groups of children and youngsters living abroad there is a need for textbooks in their so called Sunday schools. In this context there has been a specific need for textbooks that integrate geography, social science, history, and Lithuanian literature. The age groups correspond to normal schools, i.e. from grade 1 to grade 12. The new trend is therefore how to integrate these subjects into one textbook. It is also difficult for the teachers to integrate because they have their degrees in either history or in geography, never in both subjects (different faculties at university!).

Václav Fronk (Fraus Publishing House) explained that from a Czech perspective the new curriculum requires integration of social science and history (and in the Czech Republic the teachers fear that history will disappear or at least become heavily downgraded). In the history text books from Fraus Publishing House you find on most pages hints and connections to interdisciplinary issues, e.g. in a chapter about the pyramids there are connections to mathematics (geometry). The Ministry of Education requires that history and civics should be integrated. In addition Václav Fronk gave a detailed presentation of two chapters from the brand new history textbook for grade 6 in the Czech Republic. The many links and interdisciplinary connections were discussed, and also the fact that more than 700 pictures and illustrations have been put into the book was an interesting point. An English translation of one chapter can be inspected if you click here.

Helena Ruuska (Otava Publishing Company) mentioned the problem in that for example in Finland in one year the pupils learn about Asia's history and the next year they learn about the geography of Asia. This seems to be rather problematic, but these are actually requirements in the official curriculum. It is also important to integrate literature into subjects like history and social science, for example by reading stories from China while you study the history and geography of China.

Tanja Horvat (Profil International) described the new curriculum in Croatia and underlined that the teachers in primary schools must work together with a specific theme for example the topic immigration which is then discussed in all relevant subjects (lessons) at the same time. Furthermore Tanja Horvat gave a
presentation of the situation of textbooks for history and social science books in Croatia.

Vija Kilbloka (Zvaigzne ABC Publishers) explained that in Latvia work in school is in general very subject oriented. In the past a big collection (almost chaotic!) of notebooks (containing the contributions of each subject to the common themes) has been published. However, it has not been a success so now the teachers want to go back to the old times with not so integrated topics. It was also very expensive with all these ‘integration’ notebooks. The politicians love integration in the curriculum, but obviously it can also be exaggerated.

Kärt Jänes-Kapp (Koolibri Publishers) also warned that integration of subjects should not be too strong. In Estonia history will remain one subject, not so tightly connected to other subjects. Also geography will remain a subject in its own right; the problem is social science. In grade 4 the pupils learn about how society works, in grade 5 about health, no drugs etc. In other grades there are other headlines. Civics and critical life skills are to be combined into one subject. The problem is that one teacher has to teach about society but also about what the children should eat in order to keep their health (so the teachers need expertise in history, civics, biology psychology etc – this is impossible).
It was suggested from the participants that integration really means the teacher has to teach something he/she actually knows nothing (or hardly anything) about! And this is clearly one of the dangers if integration is forced upon the school system in a substantial way.

Finally there were the following suggestions for topics to be worked with in the coming meeting(s) of the History & Geography & Social Science network:

- A debate on the special pedagogical and psychological requirements needed to work with aspects like Holocaust, genocide and similar areas in history teaching
- The planning activities in the concept phase of the development of a history textbook (e.g. avoid stereotypes, which values should form the basis, which level of language to use)
- The concept of European History based on empathy – how should such a textbook (or CD-ROM?) be structured; what kinds of elements can promote empathy and tolerance etc.
- The integration of geography, social science and history – what are the advantages and the disadvantages/problems in this approach?
- How to use atlases in history – discussion of Putzger ‘Historischer Weltatlas’ and the alternatives
- Maps in history and in geography. How can we teach children to read and understand maps? Should there be specific exercises in how to work with maps? What role will digital maps play in the school of the future?
- How can you organise a team of authors? How do you select the individual authors? What is a good author (quality criteria)? Guidelines for authors who are going to develop textbooks.
- The role of (and the idea behind) the different types of activities in the concept and structure of a history textbook

It was agreed to welcome the offer from Götz Schwarzrock (Cornelsen Verlag) to organise the next meeting of this network in March 2007 in Berlin.
On behalf of all participants I wish to thank Falk Pingel and his staff for helping us to organise this network meeting on the premises of the Georg Eckert Institute.

9th March 2007

Preben Späth