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Department of European Studies  
„ European Paradigm“ PhD School  
Field - International Relations and European Studies**

**A B S T R A C T  
P H D T H E S I S**

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Cluj Napoca  
2017

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## **COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND HISTORY TEACHING IN THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL**

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**Keywords:**

*The Parliamentary Assembly; Workshop; The European Common House; The Council of Europe; European Cultural Convention; Democracy; Curriculum designer; Didactician; Human rights; European history; multiperspectivity; New Europe; Controversial and sensitive issues; Bilateral project; Multilateral project; Propaganda; Work report; Resolution; Recommendation; Post-conflict Society; Case studies; Summit.*

## ABSTRACT

The activity of a European institution is usually seen in terms of its internal structure, its leaders, its success, and much less through a particular field, such as its influence on teaching school-history. A prominent European organization such as the Council of Europe, often confused with the European Council of the EU, especially since both organizations have their headquarters in Strasbourg, is distinguished by a large number of conferences, symposia, seminars, which often gather representatives of all the states Member States, financially supported by a budget coming from contributions from Member States<sup>1</sup>.

For 17 years - between 1997 and 2014, I had the privilege, but above all, the honor to work as an history teaching expert at the Council of Europe, the oldest pan-European organization, based in Strasbourg, France, whose work is mainly devoted to political dialogue, the promotion and defense of human rights, the consolidation of democracy, the unity and identity of Europe in diversity.

As an expert in history teaching, I took part in numerous meetings at the level of specialists and experts, participated in working groups, training seminars in most of the Council of Europe Member States, at workshops, devoted to the drafting of working papers and additional teaching materials. As a Rapporteur of the Council of Europe I have drafted many workshops reports. On this occasion, I was able to know about many good working practices with adults and students, and not only in the field of teaching history. I have also experienced and applied new pedagogical methods and practices, and I have seen various pedagogical and

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<sup>1</sup>Council of Europe budget for 2014 was 403 million Euros.  
[file:///C:/Users/bonaparte/Downloads/PREMS110314\\_MOL\\_1270\\_DépliantCoE\\_A5%20Web.pdf](file:///C:/Users/bonaparte/Downloads/PREMS110314_MOL_1270_DépliantCoE_A5%20Web.pdf).

educational realities in the Member States. In the same time, I have met many senior officials of the Council of Europe, made observations on the involvement of the Council of Europe in support of history educators, the Ministries of Education in the European Member States. I have also noticed how the Council of Europe documents' on history teaching are received and appreciated, even criticized and rejected. Last, but not the least, I have produced general reports on topics such as: studying the history of the 20th Century, Communism and the Holocaust, and so on.

History as a school-topic both in the pre - and post - secondary curriculum takes on a defined form in school curricula and textbooks, resulting in numerous discussions or debates, sometimes contradictory ones, in countries such as Croatia, South Korea, France, Italy, some German Länders, Great Britain, and even Romania.

The status and role of school-history in the contemporary world, and above all, the new approach to history has also been a concern for international organizations such as the Council of Europe or non-governmental and scientific organizations, many affiliated with the Palace of Europe institution and of the Agora building in Strasbourg, such as: the European Association of History Teachers - EUROCLIO, the International Institute for the Study of School Textbooks Georg Eckart from Braunschweig, Germany, the European Wergeland Center, various specialized institutions of the European Union<sup>2</sup>.

The topic of the role of the Council of Europe in supporting history education in the European school can not be approached in a specialized research without fully referring to the analysis of the place and the role history plays in the 20th and 21st Centuries.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org); [www.historyteaching.coe.int](http://www.historyteaching.coe.int); [www.euroclio.eu](http://www.euroclio.eu); [www.gei.de](http://www.gei.de); [www.theewc.org](http://www.theewc.org)

As such, the present PhD thesis seeks a research of the work carried out by a European institution, an expression of the unity process manifested on our Continent and where the emphasis is on the work carried out by the Council of Europe in the field of school history teaching from the foundation to the present day, on addressing and assessing the main documents published in this area - resolutions, recommendations, work reports and, possibly, difficult to decipher, and studying the consequences of this activity on the European school, in a period of more than half a century.

After World War II, the prospect of restoring Europe after the conflict-induced cataclysm necessitated an intense, common work to restore confidence among peoples and establish a climate of peace. Founded in 1949 as an important part of the process of laying the foundations for European unity, the Council of Europe has, from the outset, tried to respond to Sir Winston Churchill's desire in the already famous speech, held in Zurich in 1946: "We have to rebuild The European family in a regional structure, called, for example, the United States of Europe. And the first practical step would be to establish the Council of Europe "<sup>3</sup>.

The Council of Europe has even proposed from its Statute "to achieve greater unity among Europeans through joint action in economic, social, cultural, scientific, legal and administrative matters and by maintaining and then respecting their human rights and fundamental freedoms >> "<sup>4</sup>.

Calling through its specialized structures - including the History Teaching Section, to the tools of a genuine cultural diplomacy, the Council of Europe pursued its policy of supporting teaching history, according to Daniel Tarschys, General Secretary of the organization between

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<sup>3</sup> Birte Wassenberg, *History of the Council of Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2013, p.13; see, also <http://www.cfr.org/europe/churchills-untied-states-europe-speech-zurich/p32536>.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*; see, <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/001>.

1994-1999, touching upon important objectives, such as "the respect of the other, the development of the consciousness of a common inheritance, the free definition of a common future"<sup>5</sup>.

Since the beginning of its work, the Council of Europe has regarded history teaching as a priority<sup>6</sup>. This is because specialized research has shown that the history of Europe and of the world in general has not been, is not and will not be, a simple, quiet development, lacking any asperity, but on the contrary, encompasses numerous contradictions and extreme tensions, divergent and disturbing factors, which can give rise to vast contradictions, sometimes irreconcilable, on historical bases<sup>7</sup>. These are reflected in the different, sometimes irreconcilable, approaches to common topics of European history, fueled, for example, by some historical conflicts, older or recently emerging in Europe - for example, Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia or Soviet Union, Cyprus<sup>8</sup>.

Of course, at first glance it may be said that international organizations do what they have tried to do forever - to support, to engage, to issue opinions, to publish documents - statements, recommendations, reports, to try to influence the social, political, cultural and educational reality in the Member States of the Council of Europe. What is important, however, is how well these organizations succeed in influencing and even modifying the reality on the ground, in our case, the educational one, in the field of history teaching.

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<sup>5</sup> *Leçons d'histoire, Le Conseil de l'Europe et l'enseignement de l'histoire*, Conseil de la Coopération Culturelle, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 1999, p. 5; see also, Christine Counsell, Katherine Burn, Arthur Chapman, *Master Class in History Education, Rethinking Teaching and Learning*, Bloomsbury, London, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> See Ann Low-Ber, *Consiliul Europei și Istoria în Școală*, Traducere de Mihai Manea, Consiliul Europei, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> *Leçons d'histoire, Le Conseil de l'Europe et l'enseignement de l'histoire*, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Vezi pe larg *The use of sources in teaching and learning of history, The Council of Europe's activity in Cyprus*, Volume I, The Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2005; Luisa Black, *Manual for history teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Mag Plus, The Council of Europe, OSCE, Government of Canada, 2008; Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, *Predarea Istoriei în Secolul 20*, Selecția, traducerea și adaptarea textelor de Mihai Manea, București, 2000.

The theme of this PhD thesis can undoubtedly lead to the formulation of reflection themes, which can themselves be set up in future research. Thus, we could ask ourselves how consistent and durable the results of the work of the Council of Europe in the field of history teaching are, and can remain, in the present era, given the increasing rise of nationalisms, the extreme right, often radical populism, in contemporary European society. It is also interesting to reflect on the finality of the work done by the Council of Europe - for example, the concept of European history<sup>9</sup>, when the European idea is clearly in a strange period of its existence, and many of our continent's Member States states are massively refueled to strictly national history or simply to make simple references/quotations to a general European history framework. At the same time, the issue of the feedback from the work of the Council of Europe on the ongoing training activities of the Strasbourg forum is also irrelevant.

The subject of our research is about the multilateral work carried out under the aegis of the Council of Europe to support the teaching of history in the European school from its foundation to the present-day.

For the Romanian special literature, the topic addressed is a special novelty, because in general the Council of Europe has been strictly published, in particular, general works, many popularization and information for the general public, which have been translated into several languages of the Member States.

The analysis carried out in this thesis constitutes a plea for history as an instrument of knowledge and rapprochement among peoples, an argumentation about the evolution of the history education concept stated in the pre-university school, especially about Europe, about the

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<sup>9</sup> See Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, *A common textbook for Europe? Utopia or a Crucial Challenge?* in [www.culturahistorica.es/joke/textbook\\_for\\_europe.pdf](http://www.culturahistorica.es/joke/textbook_for_europe.pdf).

place and role of European history and its relationship with the national, regional and local history, about all methodical innovations.

The basis of the research concerns the documents published by the Council of Europe on its workshop meetings or the outcome of bilateral or multilateral projects, the Archives of History Teaching Section - partly available in online format, the conversations I had with the above-mentioned section members - about the internal evolution of the organization, the budgets of the various activities, the echoes of the activities in the Member States where they were organized. Massive statistics are missing in Strasbourg as well as impact studies on possible feedback from projects. The only clue in this respect are some sloppy questionnaires applied by Council experts and trainers.

The Introduction attempts to insist on a possible justification of the personal choice for such a topic, which is in a broader context, the history school teaching at a stage of substantial socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, educational changes of the society, amid a real diversification of the thematic register of history, new methodological approaches and clear affirmation of history as an instrument of bringing people together.

The research methodology captures the methods and tools used, the obstacles to documenting and carrying out a quality analysis in the scientific field, and a brief bibliographic look on the topic. The applied research methods were:

**The quantitative aspect** - programmatic documents, additional teaching materials - inductive approach;

- The Council of Europe produced, according to its own calculations, a number of 10 recommendations or resolutions on history teaching and related fields, a large number of reports,

most of the time as a result of the training, scientific and methodological meetings, or bi- and multilateral projects under the aegis of the organization.

**The qualitative aspect** - the effectiveness of applying and disseminating among history teachers, other decision-makers and, above all, the Ministries of Education of the Member States of the Council of Europe of the recommendations and official documents in the field of history teaching - a deductive approach;

- According to the analysis we have done, the Council of Europe, through the History Teaching section, has undertaken only limited internal and organizational research on the impact of its activities in Europe and has never officially disseminated it to the continent. These more surely appear in the internal archives of the above-mentioned section and will be available to the general public in accordance with the legislative provisions in the field of archives.

**Case Study** - Critical impact analysis of Council of Europe Recommendations No. 1283/1996 and 15/2001, respectively, on the history teaching;

**Comparison** - applies to the consequences and effectiveness of projects of various dimensions initiated by the Council of Europe in the field of history teaching since 1998.

The research approach within a very complex theme is intended to be interpretative and analytical, including critical aspects, own points of view. The research process of the topic covered the following stages, inspired by the Kulthau model<sup>10</sup>:

a) the initial task - understanding the task and establishing the link with one's own knowledge and work experience - involves knowledge, understanding, but also uncertainty;

b) selecting the topic - starting from the personal interest, the project requirements, the available information and the allocated time - requires uneasiness, sometimes confusion, anticipation of the work tasks;

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<sup>10</sup> [http://gavilan.edu/library/LIB99/whatisresearch\\_b.html](http://gavilan.edu/library/LIB99/whatisresearch_b.html).

- c) Exploring - accumulating information on the general theme - makes doubt, confusion even, uncertainty;
- d) formulation - formulating a goal based on the information gathered - implies optimism, trust in the ability to accomplish the task;
- e) collecting information that defines and supports the proposed theme - confers confidence in the ability to perform the task, an increasing interest; Data analysis - quantitative and qualitative; Deduction / deductions following analysis; Making observations on events and facts; Formulation of working hypotheses;
- f) operational;
- g) instrumentalization;
- h) research design;
- i) presentation - formulates conclusions; shares information through written and / or oral presentation - requires satisfaction or disappointment.

Chapter I aims first to address the foundation of the Council of Europe as an important step in the process of European unity, then the work of the organization on the place and role of history as a school topic in Europe during the Cold War, which turned from a perfect weapon of a political nature into an instrument of knowledge, understanding and rapprochement among peoples at a time of serious tension at the military, political and ideological level. All these are seen through the reports from the meetings of the mentioned period, from the documents adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly or the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

By the end of the Cold War, the Council of Europe had set up a system of action at the level of that part of the continent, which at that time knew the democratic regime. At a time when former World War II opponents were in irreconcilable opposing camps, the Strasbourg

Forum acted to make school history a tool for bringing people and peoples closer together. Of particular importance was the organization of the various meetings, bringing together secondary and higher education teachers/academicians, researchers. Soon these turned into real in-service training sessions, dealing with issues related to history textbooks - content, writing, chronology, terminology, and scientific content content, pedagogical methods, materials used in the classroom, the interdisciplinary approach - though shy, on using of geography, literature, artistic education, history as the knowledge of the past. The inner bodies of the Council of Europe - we mainly refer to the Consultative Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers, have adopted important working documents, which have also looked at the history education in the Member States.

It remains an extremely important task, but very difficult to achieve - that an inquiry should be carried out at the level of each European Member State - on the analysis of the Council's work, how the official documents on history teaching were received, applied and even implemented in the classroom.

Chapter II stops on the consequences of 1989 and the collapse of the Communist regimes on history teaching in schools on the European continent, including the promotion of innovative methodological and didactic approaches. It insists on the main working meetings initiated by the Council of Europe History Teaching Section - many in cooperation with non-governmental organizations: EUROCLIO, International Institute for the Study of School Textbooks Georg Eckart, on the discussions, the results and the way in which they have brought to the agenda topics such as: a) controversial and sensitive issues; b) manipulation through history; c) the role of the European Cultural Convention; d) imposing new teaching methods in class - see, for example, multiperspectivity or role play.

After 1989, the Council of Europe has stepped up its actions in favor of teaching history, especially since its geographic coverage has increased considerably. Many Western diplomats have launched the *New Europe* formula<sup>11</sup>. In the new historical context, the Council of Europe has seen a very important way of promoting its ideas on school history and its role in education and society. History has thus become an important tool for the establishment of democracy and respect for human rights, which has been reflected in numerous European documents drawn up by the organization in Strasbourg.

In particular, in the new historical stage marked by the events of 1989, the Council of Europe insisted on various ways on the important role of history in the education of the young generation, pointing out that no other discipline of study presents educational and formative valences, such as history . This was "a unique discipline, concerned with a certain type of mind and imagination training and a body of knowledge that makes students understand other points of view"<sup>12</sup> At all meetings held after 1990, the Council of Europe stressed that the history classes should be presented with the support of interactive methods and that it should cover all areas of its manifestation, encourage young people to understand the cause-effect relationship, evolution and regression, historical processes and phenomena<sup>13</sup>.

In the first decade since the collapse of Communist regimes after 1989, the work of the Council of Europe has evolved from what Daniel Tarschys of Sweden, the General Secretary of the Council of Europe in 1994-1999 called "better include than excludes" to what Walter Schwimmer of Austria, General Secretary of the Council of Europe in 1999-2004, has marked

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<sup>11</sup> See John Slater, *Teaching History in the New Europe*, Cassell, London, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Paliamentary Assembly, *History and its interpretation*, Preface by Marc Ferro, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 1997, intervențiile lui Maitland Stobart, *Towards a basic concept of historical knowledge*, pp.66-60; Joaquim Nadal i Farreras, *The uses of history*, p. 33-38; *History as a tool for progress, democracy, human rights and solidarity*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>13</sup> *Against Bias and Prejudice, The Council of Europe's work on history teaching and history textbooks*, Council for Cultural Cooperation, Strasbourg, 1995, p.10.

three main directions of action, namely by areas of activity, bending towards dedication and dialogue<sup>14</sup>. The reception of new members and the enlargement of the Council of Europe constituted one of the special challenges of its work, which repeatedly reaffirmed that its founding principles were absolutely valid for over half a century of existence. Practically, the Council of Europe has been orienting in this period to knowing the history of the former Communist states in Eastern and Southeast Europe, to history teachers training, supporting the publication of new history books and additional teaching materials, trying to impose new working tools within the didactic methodology. In 2000, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg remained fully attached to the European project at a time when the fundamental question was, according to the statement of the former European Commission representative in Moscow: "to deepen Europe deeply" or "to deepen Europe wide"<sup>15</sup>.

Chapter III aims to review the main projects and programs of different dimensions of the Council of Europe devoted to new research areas of history, new ways of teaching history, exchange of expertise and good practices.

In the past decade and a half, the Council of Europe has relied on its activities concerning history teaching on its internal structures, namely: Teaching History Section, the Steering Committee on Education, the Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research and the Steering Committee on Cultural Heritage. They all have acted to implement the *European Cultural Convention* and to disseminate the core values and principles of the Council in the Member States to promote new methodological approaches in the classroom.

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<sup>14</sup> Denis Huber, *A decade which made history, The Council of Europe 1989-1999*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 1999, p. 195

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*

Since 2000, Council of Europe bodies have adopted important programmatic documents, some of which directly target the teaching and learning of history<sup>16</sup>. The documents took the form of recommendations or resolutions that were made available to the Council of Europe Member States to be disseminated at the level of internal decision makers. The main European documents on history teaching over the last decade and a half have highlighted the fact that school history as an educational discipline was also, yet in many countries, a type of official history. At the same time, school history continues to manifest itself as primarily as a primordial political history, which expresses the history of the dominant majority and much less of the minority groups. As such, the Council of Europe has insisted on the importance of addressing both social and cultural history, the everyday life of national and religious minorities, women<sup>17</sup>.

The projects developed by the Council of Europe in the field of history teaching were important moments in the collaboration of the Member States, and brought into question the educational reality issues, laid the foundations for a wide and open space of the beneficial debates, offered to the history teachers many additional teaching materials.

The Annexes find attached to the thesis - in extenso or in a fragment – carries out relevant information on the topic and important programmatic papers on teaching history published on the initiative of the Council of Europe.

Over the last few years, a series of discussions have been increasingly called for on how the Council of Europe succeeds in persuading Member States to implement recommendations in different areas, including history teaching or to consolidate the political and diplomatic

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<sup>16</sup> Vezi și Mihai Manea, *Documente și tendințe în Europa cu privire la predarea istoriei în epoca contemporană*, în Felicia Adascăliței, Marilena Bercea, Doru Dumitrescu, Liviu Lazăr, Mirela Popescu, *Elemente de didactica istoriei*, Editura Nomina, București, 2010, pp. 273-278.

<sup>17</sup> Felicia Adascăliței, Marilena Bercea, Doru Dumitrescu, Liviu Lazăr, Mirela Popescu, *op.cit.*, pp. 275-276.

agreements that have been concluded. At the same time, there are political crises, populist accesses of some governments<sup>18</sup>, suspicions and even accusations of corruption and promotion of the "caviar diplomacy"<sup>19</sup>, with particular focus on the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Pedro Agramunt - elected in office in 2016. Next, are the accusations that the Council of Europe has long been behind the European Union, whose financial support is still being sought in the Palace of Europe for some projects, including on education<sup>20</sup>. In 2017, Russia's Foreign Ministry informed the General Secretary of the Council of Europe that the Russian Federation suspended its financial contribution to this European institution<sup>21</sup>.

The support of history teaching by the Council of Europe in the European school can not be seen separately from the organization's policy of education and culture, deeply anchored in the *European Cultural Convention* of 1954. The last chapter of a popular booklet on the support of the Council of Europe for history teaching is suggestively entitled *Council of Europe and history teaching: a permanent construction* ?<sup>22</sup>.

The Council of Europe has also encouraged a diverse approach to history, the link between past-present-future, since "education, more than any field of European knowledge, has a diversification [and] is an area in which national identity and sovereignty are expressed with great power ... [while] this diversity of history means already a common heritage"<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> See, the thematic issue of "Perspective Politice", SNSPA, Vol. X, Nr. 1, June, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.euractiv.com/section/all/news/the-brief-council-of-europe-in-hunt-for-relevance/>

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-suspends-council-europe-payments-lavrov-crimea/28588313.html>.

<sup>22</sup> *Lecons d'histoire, Le Conseil de l'Europe et l'enseignement de l'histoire...*, pp.35-37.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Low-Beer, *Consiliul European și istoria în școală*, p. 63; vezi și Thomas Ngyuen, *UNESCO and Council of Europe guidelines and history education in Sweden, c. 1960-2002*, în "Journal of Education Inquiry", Vol. 2, 2011, No. 1, în pp. 37-60 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.3402/edui.v2i1.21961>.

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### Oral History

- Discuții cu Alison Cardwell, Carole Reich, Jean-Pierre Titz, Mechtilde Fuhrer, Tatiana Minkino-Milko, Christianne Yiannakis de la Consiliul European.