



# Teaching remembrance

Education for the prevention  
of crimes against humanity

## **A twofold challenge**

The idea is that schools in the 48 States Parties to the Cultural convention should organise a “Day of Remembrance”, in various forms, in memory of the Holocaust and crimes against humanity. The European project will respect the various dates and themes chosen by the countries concerned, which are often linked to their own history. The Day of Remembrance should also cover the other genocides and crimes against humanity that the 20th century witnessed.

How can we pass on an objective knowledge of these tragedies without disregarding the stricken memories they have left? Schools are ideal places for educating and training people in citizenship and must educate their pupils in the prevention of crimes against humanity. Even though history and civic education are key subjects for the purposes of introducing the two essential features of remembrance and prevention, other subjects must also contribute to the achievement of these objectives.

## **Objectives**

- to help schoolchildren to find out about and exhibit an awareness of the events that cast a shadow over European and world history and recognise the uniqueness of the Holocaust as the first deliberate attempt to exterminate a people worldwide;
- to take account of all the genocides and crimes against humanity that left their mark on the 20th century;
- to educate pupils in the prevention of crimes against humanity;
- to reflect on the ideologies that brought about these tragedies and ways of preventing their resurgence;
- to train teachers for the task by setting up and co-ordinating in-service training schemes in the member states;
- to produce the teaching material they will need to perform this task;
- to set up a European network linking memorial sites, foundations and all other relevant bodies.

## Declaration by the Ministers of Education

Meeting in Strasbourg on 18 October 2002 at the invitation of the French authorities on the occasion of the French chairmanship of the International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance, the Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe member states decided to set aside a "Day of Remembrance" as from 2003 in all schools in their respective countries to commemorate the Holocaust and give thought to ways of preventing such events from recurring.

The idea of a Day of Remembrance was suggested by Council of Europe Secretary General Walter Schwimmer in Stockholm in January 2000. The European Ministers of Education came out in favour of the idea in Cracow in October 2000 and confirmed and elaborated on their commitment at their Strasbourg meeting.

Referring to section 6 (Teaching and remembrance) of the Appendix to Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2001) 15 on history teaching in twenty-first century Europe, adopted on 31 October 2001, and anxious to contribute to remembrance efforts and to ensure that all the devastating events that marked the 20th century – the Holocaust, other genocides and crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and massive human rights violations - were taught to the young generations, asked the Council of Europe to help to train teachers and prepare the teaching material they would need to perform this task. They also instructed it to set up a European network of places of remembrance, foundations and other relevant bodies.

### What date ?

Since 2000, several countries have already set aside a "Day of Remembrance" in various forms, either in schools or more widely, to commemorate the events of the Holocaust. The European project will respect the various dates and themes chosen by the countries concerned, which are often linked to their own history.

Some countries, including Germany, France, Sweden and the Czech Republic, decided to hold this day on 27 January, in memory of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp by the Red Army, on 27 January 1945.

Others have chosen a date directly relating to an event on their soil: Hungary chose 16 April, in memory of the establishment of the first Jewish ghetto in the eastern part of the country, while Lithuania opted for 23 September, the anniversary of the genocide of Lithuanian Jews. Austria, for its part, commemorates the Holocaust on 5 May, the date on which the Mauthausen camp was liberated.

The Flemish part of Belgium has chosen "V" Day (8 May) to commemorate history and think about human rights. In Dutch, "V" is the first letter of the words "victory", "freedom" and "peace". In the United Kingdom, Holocaust education is compulsory for pupils aged 13 to 14: teachers have special educational material at their disposal and organise museum visits as well as meetings with survivors.

## **Objectives of the project**

- to arrange for a **Day of Remembrance** to be set aside to **commemorate the Holocaust and prevent crimes against humanity**;
- to produce teaching material to enable teachers to prepare for the Day of Remembrance;
- to train teachers in the subjects to be broached during the Day of Remembrance and how to teach them;
- once the Day of Remembrance has been introduced in schools in the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe (48 countries), to monitor it and publicise what it has achieved.

## **Which schools ?**

All levels of education and all schools are concerned by this "Day of Remembrance". Account will have to be taken of the age of the pupils concerned, and appropriate teaching material will need to be produced. A teaching of history based on written, iconographic or audiovisual material and on survivors' accounts rather than on lectures alone seems the most appropriate method of passing on the memory of the Holocaust to present and future pupils.

## **A multidisciplinary approach**

One way of passing on the memory of the Holocaust to present and future pupils is through literary and artistic works. Teachers will choose the most appropriate means of bringing to life these particularly important events. Co-operation between teachers, artists, writers, film-makers and museum curators will be needed. The project group will take steps to facilitate contacts between these professions. This approach can also be used to find out about other genocides and crimes against humanity.

## **Examples of experiments carried out**

All teachers will be able to find out about experiments carried out in schools in different countries, particularly through the website. For example, a Luxembourg secondary school set up a travelling exhibition four years ago on the Struthof concentration camp (France) and organises round tables and other meetings. Its pupils have just produced a video, which is to be distributed in all the country's schools. Italy has organised competitions for secondary school pupils, who are asked to produce written or audiovisual projects based, in particular, on concentration camp survivors' testimonies. In Liechtenstein, secondary school pupils discuss the "economic complicity" between certain countries and Nazi Germany. In June 2000 they organised an exhibition devoted to Anne Frank, whose diary was studied in class.

## **Education in the prevention of crimes against humanity**

Crimes against humanity are a category of criminal offences encompassing murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and any other inhuman act perpetrated against any civilian population. They also cover persecution on political, racial or religious grounds.

All teaching must be designed to promote respect for human rights and seek to prevent such atrocities.

## Four approaches for the period 2003-2005

1. An annual conference: organised in one of the 48 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention, this will bring together teachers and teacher trainers in the subjects concerned – history, sociology, the arts, language, literature, etc. – to discuss appropriate approaches to teaching remembrance and educating young people in the prevention of crimes against humanity.

The conference will draw its participants locally, nationally and from other countries. It will be organised in conjunction with the Council of Europe and the education authorities in the host country.

The delegates will propose examples of the most suitable methods and means of passing on the memory of the events concerned. The most recent work of the international academic community will also be presented to them.

2. National seminars: such meetings serve several purposes. They allow the participants to meet one another, exchange views and share experiences; they can provide guidelines for action and act as a spring-board for new activities; they provide training for those who attend and a means of obtaining information. The theme of each seminar should be specific and have a European perspective. Consolidated reports will be published after the meetings.

3. A website <http://www.coe.int/memory>: under the supervision of the Council of Europe, the website provides comprehensive information about “Teaching Remembrance – Education for the Prevention of Crimes against Humanity” project. It provides teachers and pupils with the educational tools they need, a calendar of European and national events connected with the project and the addresses of national websites. It will also serve as a discussion forum for its users. A national website should be set up in each country. The national education authorities could entrust its management to a teacher or teacher trainer.

4. Educational tools: a series of educational tools for teachers will provide both recent academic information on the subject and examples of teaching approaches.

They will include a history of genocides and crimes against humanity in the 20th century, a series of educational fact sheets on documentary and fiction films, a presentation of memorial sites in Europe and their use, and information about the use of testimonies from survivors of the Holocaust and other genocides.

## **Project Manager**

Claude-Alain Clerc (Switzerland)

Longschamps 11

CH-2014 Bôle

Tél/fax +41 (0) 32 842 59 15

E-mail:

[claude-alain.clerc@net2000.ch](mailto:claude-alain.clerc@net2000.ch)

## **For further information about the project**

Dr. Carole Reich

Council of Europe

F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Secretary to the Steering Committee for Education

Directorate General IV

(Education, culture and heritage, youth and sport)

Tel: +33(0)3 88 41 22 45

Fax: +33(0)3 88 41 27 06

E-mail: [carole.reich@coe.int](mailto:carole.reich@coe.int)

Marie-Laure Lambour

Council of Europe

F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Directorate General IV

(Education, culture and heritage, youth and sport)

Tel: +33(0)3 88 41 35 64

Fax: +33(0)3 88 41 27 06

E-mail: [marie-laure.lambour@coe.int](mailto:marie-laure.lambour@coe.int)

*erleiriver*  
**Memor**  
*noire*  
**re** *Mémo*  
**R** *Remem*  
*moire* *Ren*