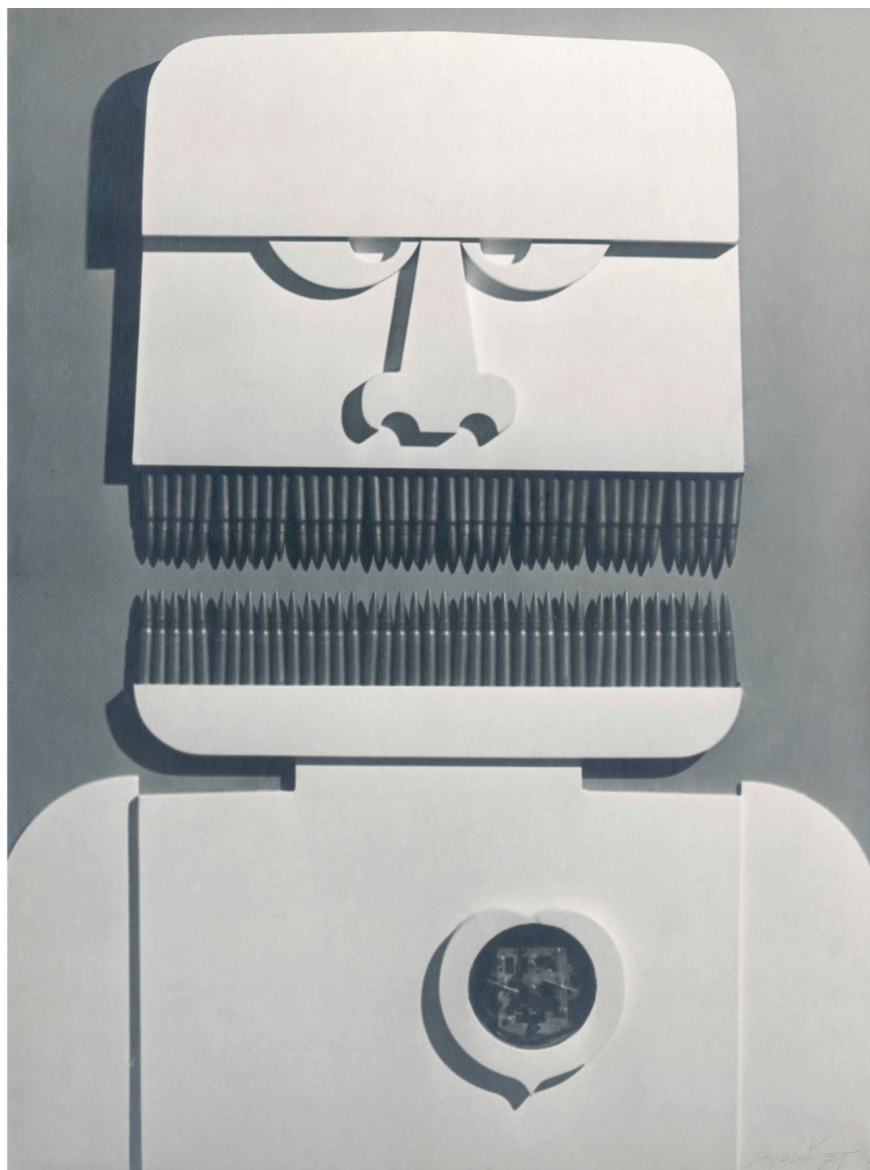


Peace Policies and Practices in Yugoslavia and Beyond



PEACE, UNCONDITIONAL!

Edited by
Sanja Petrović Todosijević and Martin Pogačar

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UNCONDITIONAL!



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Belgrade, Ljubljana
2025

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Nataša Kostić*

Teaching History and Learning about the Dissolution and Wars of the 1990s in Reconciliation Processes

Abstract This paper provides an overview of various projects that brought together history teachers from the former Yugoslavia with the aim of strengthening their professional competencies in the area of learning about the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the wars of the 1990s, as well as other themes that, following the dissolution and the “erasure” of the Yugoslav context, have become controversial and sensitive topics in history teaching. Through years of collaborative work (in practice) on these projects, history teachers from the countries of the former Yugoslavia contribute to responsible engagement with the past, advocating for peace, dialogue and reconciliation.

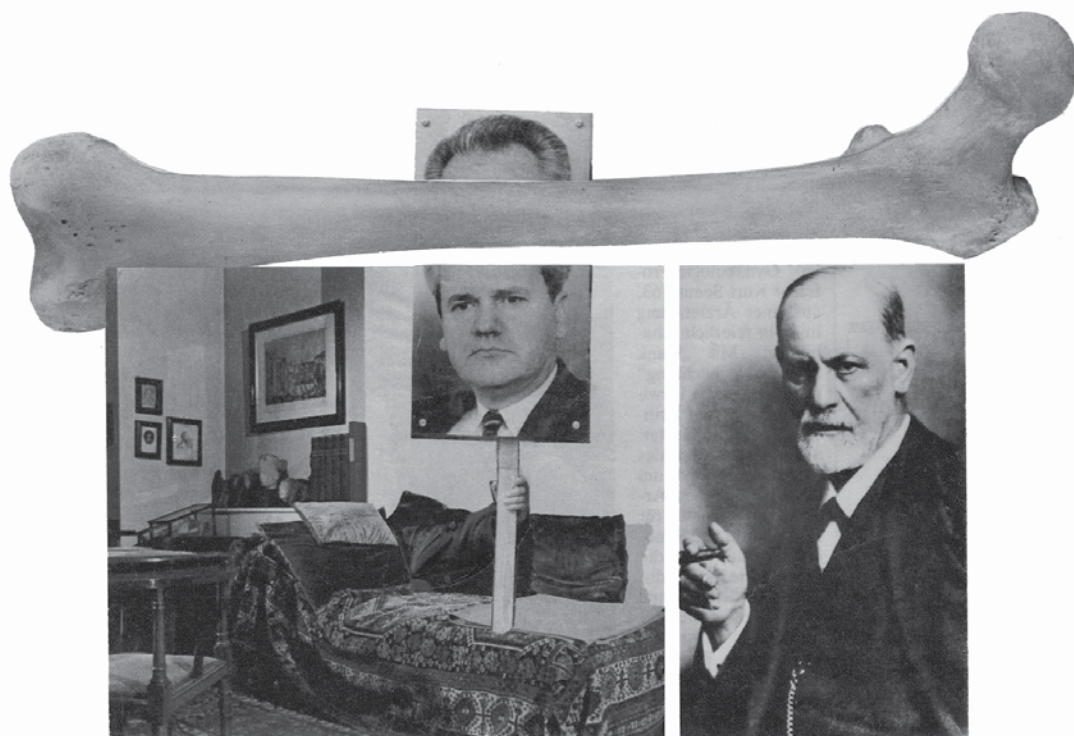
Keywords history education, wars of the 1990s, former Yugoslavia, confronting the past, EuroClio

Introduction

The wars of the 1990s, which took place between 1991 and 2001¹ in the region of former Yugoslavia, left deep and long-lasting consequences that are still felt today. It is estimated that more than 130,000 people died during the armed conflict. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to leave their homes, which caused one of the gravest humanitarian crises in Europe after the Second World War. During the wars, various war crimes were committed, leading to the founding of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former

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¹ The wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia were armed conflicts that took place in Slovenia (1991), Croatia (1991–1995), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995), Kosovo* (1998–1999) and North Macedonia (2001).



Stane Jagodič, *Freud's Couch*, photomontage, 1991

Yugoslavia (ICTY).² The wars also caused severe economic consequences that still pose problems for the countries that were part of the conflict. In a broader sense, the economic recovery of the countries of the former Yugoslavia after the war has been uneven. Some countries, like Slovenia, recovered economically more quickly than those that had suffered more destruction, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, which faced significant challenges in rebuilding. The traumatising of the populace of the war-stricken region had psychological consequences and resulted in divisions along ethnic and national lines, which made cooperation after the conflict very difficult.

The wars of the 1990s left deep and lasting consequences on education in the former Yugoslavia. They interrupted the normal flow of the educational process, leading to the closure of schools and the destruction of educational infrastructure. Many people were forced to leave their homes, resulting in overcrowded schools in refugee centres and making it difficult for refugee children to access education. The war experience left deep scars on the mental health of both children and teachers. War destruction and economic devastation led to reduced investment in education, resulting in a lack of teaching materials, poor school conditions and low salaries for educators. The educational system became susceptible to political influence, which distorted history teaching and promoted nationalist ideas. Recovery and the establishment of quality educational systems is a long-term process that requires significant investment and reform efforts. In this recovery process, the international community has played an important role in the countries that emerged from the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Since the end of the Second World War, influenced primarily by policies developed under the auspices of UNESCO, history teaching began to be framed as a means to promote anti-fascist ideals and ideas that would contribute to coexistence among peoples embroiled in conflict until recently. The subject of history has great potential to contribute to peacemaking and reconciliation, but only if it is taught in a responsible and professional manner. History education is an important tool for addressing controversial and sensitive issues, promoting peace, tolerance, respect for diversity and building just and sustainable communities, which is crucial for any post-conflict society, including the former Yugoslavia.

The wars of the 1990s as a controversial and sensitive issue in history education

In history teaching, there is no clear definition of controversial and sensitive issues. Controversial issues can be considered disagreements and/or differences in opinions that cause varied emotional reactions. Controversial issues in history education are those that are open to interpretation, have several perspectives or can elicit an emotional response in students. Most often, the controversies in history education are deeply rooted in national, social, ethnic or gender identities.³ Teaching controversial and sensitive issues in history as a school subject, where the question is not whether we should teach them but how we should teach them,⁴ helps students develop critical thinking, analytical skills and a better understanding of the world they live in.⁵ These sensitive (delicate) issues can broadly be defined as those that are likely to trigger a strong emotional response in a person, especially discomfort and agitation. Sensitive issues in history education refer to particularly painful, tragic and humiliating periods and times of strife in a country's past; therefore, there is fear and worry that mentioning them in history lessons could open old wounds and antagonisms, bringing many painful memories to life. The issues that deal with controversial topics or traumatic events can indeed be hard to process for teachers and students alike. When students face difficult topics, teachers should help students overcome them, not only as information providers but also as guides through complex and often emotionally charged topics. It is important for teachers to prepare and carefully consider how they will process a controversial and sensitive issue in the classroom. The goal is to create a safe environment in which students feel comfortable asking questions, exploring a topic and expressing opinions while respecting the sensitivity of the topic. Setting up a safe environment for discussion about a controversial or sensitive issue during class requires a set of skills that teachers acquire through practice and continuous professional development and support. Like everyone else, teachers have their own opinions about a certain controversial issue. However, that does not necessarily mean that they should vocalise, share or impose them upon students.

The history of the wars of the 1990s in the region of former Yugoslavia is a complex, painful and exceedingly controversial topic, especially when it comes to teaching. Even 30 years after the start of the wars of the 1990s in the region of former Yugoslavia, this subject is a part of history education in some countries, in others partially, while some have not included them in the curriculum at all. For example, in Serbia, lessons about

2 On 25 May 1993, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 827, formally establishing the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The mandate of the ICTY ended on 31 December 2017.

3 Fredrik Alvé, "Controversial Issues in History Teaching," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 56, no. 5 (2024): 1–17.

4 Robert Stradling, *Teaching 20th-century European history* (Council of Europe Publishing, 2001), ch. 7, 92. <https://rm.coe.int/1680494235>.

5 "Teaching sensitive and controversial issues in divided societies," The Embassy of Good Science, accessed 30 July 2024, <https://embassy.science/wiki/Theme:3b671eaf-b69d-40a7-825b-71babb4699fe>.

the wars of the 1990s were introduced in 1993 while the hostilities were still ongoing. The history textbook published in 1993⁶ discusses the dissolution of the country and the ensuing wars in the chapters “Disintegration of Yugoslavia”, “Disintegration of Serbia (Autonomy in Vojvodina and Albanian separatism)”, “Contemporary Problems of Yugoslav Society”, “Gradual Breakup of SFRY” and “Founding the Statehood of Serbia, in the teaching topic Yugoslavia’s Contemporary Problems”.⁷ In the book *“The Past is Coming. The Changes in Interpretation of the Past in Serbian History Books”* (*Prošlost dolazi. Promene u tumačenju prošlosti u srpskim udžbenicima istorije 1913–2021*), historian Dubravka Stojanović describes this approach as “wars described in a biased language, almost like in contemporary war tabloids, making these books one of the best sources for studying Milošević’s war propaganda”.⁸ In the present, more than 30 years since the topic of the country’s dissolution and wars of the 1990s was introduced into the history education curriculum, there are still critics in Serbia who believe that not enough time has passed to study this period. With the new, reformed history education curricula in Serbia introduced in the 2021/2022 school year, more emphasis has been placed on learning about the post-war world and Yugoslavia, including the dissolution and the wars of the 1990s. For the first time, a question related to the wars of the 1990s was included in the combined test for the final exam at the end of primary education in the 2023/2024 school year.⁹

The Council of Europe (CoE), the leading European organisation for the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, has a prominent role in shaping history curricula across Europe. Its work on history education rests on the premise that understanding the past is essential for building a shared future, fostering European democracies and strengthening active democratic citizenship.¹⁰ Since 1954, the CoE has worked on improving the quality of history education and providing a series of recommendations and teacher guidelines, among other materials. However, there is a knowledge gap about the extent to which the Member States have been able to implement the recommendations in practice. The CoE also published various documents containing recommendations for history education in modern society. In 1996, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe published recommendations encouraging the teaching

of history in democratic Europe – *History and the learning of history in Europe*¹¹ pointing out that “history also has a key political role to play in today’s Europe. It can contribute to greater understanding, tolerance and confidence between individuals and between the peoples of Europe – or it can become a force for division, violence and intolerance”.¹² In the Recommendations adopted in 2001, it is pointed out that history education in the 21st century should be the determining factor in reconciliation, acceptance, understanding and trust among nations; it should promote values like tolerance, mutual understanding, human rights.¹³ Dealing with history education from 2006 to 2009, the CoE implemented the project “The Image of the Other in History Teaching (2006–2009)”.¹⁴ The project focused on three main issues: history education in a multicultural society, history education and globalisation and history education in post-conflict societies, that is, societies that went through a period of violence. To take its activities in this area forward, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation 1880 (2009)¹⁵ on history teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas, which encouraged states to continue implementing the project, and the Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (2011)6¹⁶ on intercultural dialogue and the image of the “other” in history teaching. In 2015, the CeO published *Living with Controversy – Teaching Controversial Issues*,¹⁷ designed to support and promote the teaching of controversial issues in schools in Europe, and the *Quality History Education in the 21st Century Principles and Guidelines in 2015*,¹⁸ which contains guidelines for everyone in history education and points out that the biggest obstacle in teaching history is raising controversial issues that cause strong emotional responses in students inside and outside the classroom.

The degree to which these recommendations are applied in history education in the region of former Yugoslavia is a complex issue and requires more detailed analysis for each country. Every country of former Yugoslavia has specific historical, cultural and

6 Nikola Gašević, Ljiljana Mladenović-Maksimović, Dušan Živković, *Istorija za 8. razred osnovne škole* (Београд: Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, 1993).

7 Ibid., 154–158.

8 Dubravka Stojanović, *Prošlost dolazi. Promene u tumačenju prošlosti u srpskim udžbenicima istorije 1913–2021*. (Београд: Библиотека XX vek, 2024), 145.

9 “Тест историја. Завршни испит на крају основног образовања и васпитања,” 19/4 (Београд: Завод за вредновање квалитета образовања и васпитања, 2023/2024), https://ceo.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024_ZI_Istorija_Srpski_Jun.pdf; “Спецификација теста из историје за ученике 8. разреда,” 19/1 (Београд: Завод за вредновање квалитета образовања и васпитања, 2023/2024), https://ceo.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024_ZI_Specifikacija-testa_Istorija.pdf.

10 “Democracy and Human Dignity, History Education, History Education and the Council of Europe,” Council of Europe, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/history-education>, accessed 10 July 2024.

11 “History and the learning of history in Europe – Recommendation 1283 of the Parliamentary Assembly,” (Council of Europe, 1996), <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/15317/html>, accessed 16 October 2024.

12 “Recommendation 1283” (1996), 2.

13 “History teaching in twenty-first-century Europe, Recommendation Rec(2001)15 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe” (Council of Europe, 2001), <https://rm.coe.int/16804ec22c>, accessed 16 October 2024.

14 “Democracy and Human Dignity, History Education, The Image of the Other in History Teaching,” (Council of Europe, 2006–2009), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/history-education/the-image-of-the-other-in-history-teaching>, accessed 16 October 2024.

15 “History teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas, Recommendation 1880, Parliamentary Assembly,” (Council of Europe, 2009), <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/17765/html>, accessed 16 October 2024.

16 “Intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching, Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)6,” (Council of Europe, 2011), <https://search.coe.int/cm?i=09000016805cc8e1>, accessed 16 October 2024.

17 “Living with Controversy – Teaching Controversial Issues: Through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE) – Training Pack for Teachers” (Council of Europe, 2015), <https://edoc.coe.int/en/human-rights-democratic-citizenship-and-interculturalism/7738-teaching-controversial-issues.html>, accessed 16 October 2024.

18 “Quality history education in the 21st century Principles and Guidelines” (Council of Europe, 2018), ch. 7, <https://tinyurl.com/6uwh2t8u>, accessed 16 October 2024.

social circumstances that affect the implementation of the recommendations. Successful implementation is a long road with many endeavours to achieve desired results, requiring joint effort from all participants in the educational system.

Dialogue about the past: platforms for history teacher cooperation in the region of former Yugoslavia

The dissolution of Yugoslavia and the ensuing political shifts and wars led to profound social, political and economic changes in the region of former Yugoslavia. These changes were inevitably reflected in educational systems, especially in history education. History teachers in the newly formed states faced numerous challenges, including the formation of new professional associations of history teachers. In the process of forming these associations,¹⁹ history teachers in the countries of the former Yugoslavia received support from the European Association of History Educators – EuroClio. Since its establishment in 1992, at the proposal of the CoE, EuroClio has supported the development of responsible and innovative history, heritage and citizenship education by promoting critical thinking, mutual respect, peace, stability and democracy.²⁰ Through its numerous activities, EuroClio has been present since 1998,²¹ collaborating with local partners and associations of history teachers from the former Yugoslavia to contribute to a better future in the region. In 1999, EuroClio helped found the Association of History Teachers in Slovenia. EuroClio initiated the establishment of history teacher associations in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and connected them with the History Teachers Association in Serbia, officially constituted at the founding assembly in Belgrade on 8 December 2001, with Bojan Vučković elected its first president.²²

In 2003, EuroClio started the first comprehensive project connecting three projects (2003: the first Stability Pact Project; 2005–2008: the third project: History in Action; 2004–2005: The second Stability Pact Project) with a total duration of five years,

connecting teachers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia for the first time since the dissolution of Yugoslavia.²³ The countries involved in EuroClio – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia – had practically the same problems in history education during and after the war. Specifically, the quality and content of history teaching were often inadequate and heavily influenced by nationalist and ethnocentric narratives, while educational authorities relied on political agreements and operated on a territorial basis. There was also a complete breakdown in communication among teachers, historians and experts in the region.

During the projects, EuroClio organised 10 regional training seminars and 18 national teaching seminars. On top of this, 25 workshops and working sessions enabled the involvement of a growing group of historians, trainers and ordinary history teachers in the three countries. Six Annual Meetings of the newly established History Teachers Association were organised, and two editing sessions finalised the process of developing an exemplary cross-border textbook. Altogether 500 history professionals in the three countries benefited from the five-year initiative in the region.²⁴ As a result of this project, additional and innovative teaching material was published for history education in the 21st century – *Yugoslavia Between East and West – Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Country*, *Yugoslavia between East and West: Every-Day Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia 1945–1990*.²⁵ The dissemination of the project included many seminars, workshops, study trips and lectures, and many teachers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia received training to improve their teaching practices in history education based on democratic principles.²⁶

Acting as an umbrella organisation, EuroClio, joined by teachers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Serbia, started a new project in 2011 called *History that Connects: How to Teach Sensitive Topics in the Countries of Former Yugoslavia*, to support mutual understanding and promote peace, stability and democracy in the region. The project lasted for three years, engaged more than 260 participants and gave history teachers an opportunity to acquire, develop and enhance teaching practices through various activities, while providing assistance to the history teachers' associations from the countries of former Yugoslavia to strengthen their

19 The associations of history teachers within the EuroClio network in the countries of the former Yugoslavia are: History Teachers' Association of Slovenia (est. 1999); ANIM – History Teachers Association of North Macedonia (est. 2000); Association for Social History – Euroclio (UDI EUROCLIO) (est. 2001); Croatian Association of History Teachers (est. 2003); History Teachers Association in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Euroclio HIP BiH (est. 2003); Shoqata e Mësimdhënësve të Historisë së Kosovës (SHMHK) – (History Teachers' Association of Kosovo*) (est. 2008); Association of History Educators of Montenegro (HIPMONT), (est. 2011).

20 In the first years of its activity, the members of the EuroClio network were professional associations of history teachers in Europe; over time, the EuroClio network was joined by professional associations of history and civics teachers from all over the world. "Members EuroClio," 2019, EuroClio, accessed 30 July 2024, <https://euroclio.eu/association/members/full-membership-2/>.

21 "Вести: Сарадња са међународном организацијом EUROCLIO," *Хеподом* 1, no. 2 (2002): 10, UDI EUROCLIO, <https://tinyurl.com/5emb25sd>, accessed 7 July 2024.

22 "О Удружњу," UDI EUROCLIO, <https://tinyurl.com/3nzre6u9>, accessed 28 September 2024, .

23 Marleen Brouwer and Westerling Lienneke, *Special report. European Association of History Educators. Five years of projects in the Former Yugoslavia*, Issue 3 (The Hague: EuroClio, 2009), <https://www.euroclio.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Special-Report-Former-Yugoslavia.pdf>.

24 Brouwer and Lienneke, *Special report*, 5.

25 *Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Country – Yugoslavia Between East and West*, EuroClio, 2019, <https://euroclio.eu/resource/ordinary-people-in-an-extraordinary-country-2/>.

26 "Seminar Istorijau akciji u Gimnaziji Svetozar Marković," Subotica: 17 May 2008, Subotica.INFO, <https://www.subotica.info/2008/05/17/seminar-istorija-u-akciji-u-gimnaziji-svetozar-markovic>, accessed 26 July 2024.

* In this paper, Kosovo* is attributed an asterisk. This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

capacities. One of the project results is the additional teaching material “Once Upon a Time...We Lived Together”,²⁷ which can be used by history teachers in the final years of primary and secondary schools. This material contains 23 workshops (teaching lessons) encompassing the period from 1900 to 1945, and it shows the results of the contributing authors in a multiperspective approach. In this additional teaching material, EuroClio and its partner organisations chose controversial topics in history education in the region of former Yugoslavia for the first time, believing that, by doing so, they could encourage critical thinking and develop awareness that others may not have the same interpretation of “our glorious past”.²⁸ Some of the offered controversial topic workshops based on historical sources and research in the classroom are workshops about the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (*Sarajevo Assassination*),²⁹ the assembly assassination of 1928 (*Shots in the Parliament*),³⁰ *Balkan Wars*,³¹ and the challenges that Kosovo* Albanians faced (*The Resistance of the Minorities*).³²

EuroClio and the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE),³³ based in Thessaloniki, launched the “Joint History Project”,³⁴ which included hundreds of expert historians and history teachers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Kosovo*, Romania, North Macedonia, Slovenia, Serbia and Turkey, designed to compile alternative teaching material for history education in Southeast Europe. After organising seminars with history teachers from the aforementioned countries, who discussed the problems and needs of history teachers, the first four history readers appeared in 2004. The main topics covered included the themes of the collective past, which are taught and interpreted differently in schools in Southeast Europe, mostly from an ethnocentric perspective, and are particularly important in the region even today: The Ottoman Empire, Nations and States in Southeast Europe, The Balkan Wars, The Second World War. The second, revised edition (2016) encompasses two books: *The Cold War (1944–1990)* and *Wars, Divisions, Integration (1990–2008)*.³⁵

27 Download individual learning activities from: “Joint Work in a Multiperspective Approach, Once Upon a Time...We Lived Together 1900–1945,” 2008, EuroClio, <https://euroclio.eu/resource/29666-2/>, accessed 16 October 2024.

28 Ibid.

29 Melisa Forić, “Sarajevo Assassination (14), Once Upon a Time...We Lived Together 1900–1945” (EuroClio, 2008), <https://euroclio.eu/resource/29666-2/>, accessed 24 October 2024.

30 Kiti Jurica – Korda, “Shots in the Parliament (15), Once Upon a Time...We Lived Together 1900–1945” (EuroClio, 2008), <https://euroclio.eu/resource/29666-2/>, accessed 16 October 2024.

31 Mire Mladenovski, “Balkan Wars (18), Once Upon a Time...We Lived Together 1900–1945” (EuroClio, 2008), <https://euroclio.eu/resource/29666-2/>, accessed 16 October 2024.

32 Donika Xhemajli, “The Resistance of the Minorities. An example of Kosovo* Albanians in SHS Kingdom (20), Once Upon a Time...We Lived Together 1900–1945” (EuroClio, 2008), <https://euroclio.eu/resource/29666-2/>, accessed 16 October 2024.

33 The Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE) was a regional NGO based in Thessaloniki that sought to foster democratic, pluralistic and peaceful societies in Southeast Europe. The work of CDRSEE was started in 1998, and in 2019, CDRSEE was forced to close due to lack of funds.

34 “When and how,” 2021, Joint history books, <https://www.joinhistory.net/>, accessed 16 October 2024.

35 See: Joint history books, <https://www.joinhistory.net/index-eng.html#01>, accessed 16 October 2024.

The CDRESEE history readers are collections of historical sources from every country made for students/pupils and history teachers. In its history books, CDRESEE has developed a specific methodology for an innovative approach to learning history that focuses on multiple perspectives, developing critical thinking, intercultural dialogue and reconciliation. Both editions of the CDRESEE history reader project attracted a lot of attention from the public. In Serbia, the publication of the readers triggered a new discussion in a part of the professional community. The professional community is divided regarding the reach of the Collective History Project, as well as regarding the claims that the ethnocentric approach to the past is dominant in the textbooks – both locally and in every Balkan country.³⁶ Despite the criticism, the Institute for the Improvement of Education and Training of Serbia (Zavod za unapređivanje obrazovanja i vaspitanja, Srbija) gave accreditation to EUROCLIO’s (UDI-EUROCLIO) seminar “Teaching Modern History of Southeast Europe – Training Teachers for a Multiperspective Approach in History Education”³⁷ for using the CDRESEE readers in history education as a part of the Teacher Development Program in the catalogues of 2018–2022 and 2022–2025. The promotion of the second revised edition of CDRESEE’s History Readers was held in the offices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.³⁸

The 1990s in the classroom – How?

The idea that teachers from once warring countries could cooperate and deal with their collective wartime past through teaching history in order to promote peace and tolerance among nations has made EuroClio, a decade and a half since it started work in the former Yugoslavia region, the first organisation to help teachers answer the question: *1990s in the classroom – How?* How can we teach about a conflict whose legacy still affects individuals, communities and societies even several decades after the beginning of the wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia? The first extensive research about the current state of history education and the needs of the teachers in the Western Balkans (including the need to teach about the wars of the 1990s) was jointly conducted by EuroClio and CDRSEE in 2016 through the project “ePACT – Education Partnership for Advocacy, Capacity-

36 Vesna Andrić and Bojan Cvejić, “Mi i drugi u novom ključu. Povodom objavljivanja drugog izdanja zajedničkih istorijskih čitanki za dake Balkana,” *Danas*, 24 September 2010, <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/mi-i-drugi-u-novom-kljucu/>, accessed 28 July 2024.

37 “Настава модерне историје југоисточне Европе – оспособљавање наставника за мултиперспективни приступ настави историје,” Каталог број програма: 224, Каталог 2018–2021 (Београд: Завод за унапређивање образовања и васпитања 2018), ZUOV, accessed 16 October 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/3rx68rpk>; “Настава модерне историје југоисточне Европе – оспособљавање наставника за мултиперспективни приступ настави историје,” Каталог број програма: 286, Каталог 2022–2025 (Београд: Завод за унапређивање образовања и васпитања 2018), ZUOV, accessed 16 October 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/bddnryx3>.

38 “Промоција нових историјских читанки, Историја будућности – Промоција две нове историјске читанке,” 30 November 2016, УДИ – Euroclio, <https://tinyurl.com/4vj6sv2a>, accessed 16 October 2024.

Building and Transformation”,³⁹ partnered by Associations of History Teachers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo*, North Macedonia and Serbia. The overall objective of the project was to contribute to sustaining the democratisation process and enhancing conflict sensitivity in the Western Balkans through reforms and implementation of changes in the formal schooling system that will intensify democratic education.⁴⁰ The project tried to urge the education authorities and civil society to jointly reform education and schools in the region to enhance critical thinking and active citizenship. This goal rests on extensive research carried out (via questionnaire) among history and social sciences teachers from six countries of the Western Balkans in February 2017. The teachers had a chance to answer questions regarding the current state of history education and their views on the future of history education in the Western Balkans. The survey was conducted after the training with history teachers that EuroClio carried out with its local partners in these countries.⁴¹ Apart from history teachers, the trainings were attended by university experts, representatives of local authorities – ministries and institutes, textbook authors and international organisations. The research results were published in *Teachers on Teaching: How Practitioners See the Current State and Future Developments in History Education Across the Western Balkans*.⁴²

Preliminary results were presented to experts and teachers at the Third EUROCLIO Regional Summer School, held in Albania from 18 to 23 July 2017.⁴³ The results of the research showed that the wars of the 1990s stand out as the most difficult topic to address for history teachers in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, appearing as the most frequent answer in the sample of teachers coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina (11.4%), Montenegro (15.7%) and Serbia (13.5%).⁴⁴ In the case of North Macedonia, teachers reported “military conflict in Macedonia in 2001” as the most difficult non-curricular topic, with the most common answer in the sample of teachers coming from North Macedonia (6.2%) being the military insurgency in North Macedonia (then called FYR Macedonia) in 2001.⁴⁵



EuroClio's 3rd Annual Regional Summer School, Going Beyond Pride and Pain? History that Connects the Balkans, Vlorë, Albania, 22 July 2017. Photo: Nataša Kostić.

With that in mind, in 2016 EuroClio launched a project intriguingly named *Learning a History that is 'not yet History'* (LHH).⁴⁶ In the second part of the LHH project,⁴⁷ Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro⁴⁸ were joined by associations of history teachers from Slovenia and North Macedonia. Building on the “LHH I” results, the “LHH II” project promotes a pluralistic approach to teaching the recent wars, thus contributing to stability and fostering mutual understanding in the region. In the first part of the LHH project, transnational teams from member countries comprised of experts from universities and history teachers created the “Repository of Recommended Teaching Materials”⁴⁹ to study this period, a pedagogical tool called “War(s) in pictures”,⁵⁰ as well as

39 “ePACT: Education Partnership for Advocacy, Capacity-Building and Transformation,” 31 October 2019, EuroClio, <https://tinyurl.com/3xw5xudu>, accessed 16 October 2024.

40 “The overall objective of the project, ePACT – Education Partnership for Advocacy, Capacity-Building and Transformation,” 31 October 2019, EuroClio, <https://tinyurl.com/5brapjp3>, accessed 16 October 2024.

41 “Report: National Peer-Training Events, ePACT – Education Partnership for Advocacy, Capacity-Building and Transformation,” 31 October 2019, EuroClio, <https://euroclio.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Final-Report-national-peer-training-events.pdf>, accessed 16 October 2024.

42 Dea Maric and Rodoljub Jovanovic, *Teachers on Teaching: How Practitioners See the Current State and Future Developments in History Education Across the Western Balkans* (The Hague: EuroClio, 2017), <https://euroclio.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Annexe-5-Teachers-On-Teaching-ePACT-Report.pdf>, accessed 28 July 2024.

43 “Going Beyond Pride and Pain? ‘History that Connects the Balkans’ – 3rd Annual Regional Summer School, EuroClio’s Summer School Albania (2017),” EuroClio, 31 October 2019, <https://euroclio.eu/event/3rd-regional-summer-school-albania/>.

44 Maric and Jovanovic, *Teachers on teaching*, Ch. 3.4./3.4.1., 31–32.

45 Ibid., 9.

46 “Learning a History that is ‘not yet History’ I,” 2016–2018, EuroClio, <https://tinyurl.com/63tknvd4>, accessed 16 October 2024.

47 “Learning a History that is ‘not yet History’ II,” 2020, EuroClio, <https://tinyurl.com/2bkff34e>, accessed 16 October 2024.

48 EuroClio aims to connect all associations of history teachers from the former Yugoslavia through its projects. However, there are often limitations, such as financial constraints and/or the (non-)membership of countries in the European Union, which can prevent full participation from all nations in these initiatives.

49 “Learning a History that is ‘not yet History’, Repozitorijum LHH,” 2018, EuroClio, <https://devedesete.net>, accessed 16 October 2024.

50 Bojana Dujković-Blagojević and Nataša Kostić, “War(s) in pictures. A pedagogical tool about teaching war conflicts in the area former Yugoslavia,” 2018, EuroClio HIP BiH, <https://cliohipbih.ba/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/srp-1.pdf>, accessed 16 October 2024.

“Recommendations for responsible teaching of the wars in Yugoslavia and its successor states”.⁵¹ The project attracted the attention of the general public and professional community in the countries of former Yugoslavia and elsewhere. The Global Centre for Pluralism, Ottawa, Canada,⁵² rewarded the LHH project in 2019 for its sustainable accomplishments in promoting appreciation rather than differences, and for building more inclusive societies that value and encourage human diversity. In the award rationale, it was pointed out that “LHH is giving students and teachers the tools to fight against the kind of division and narrow thinking that could lead to new conflicts. By stimulating discussion, reflection and the recognition of shared experience, LHH is using history as a powerful tool to build sustainable peace in their region”.⁵³

For the first time, independently, in 2018, the history teacher associations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Kosovo*, came together around the project *CLIO in the Balkans – Enhancing History Teachers Network and Improving the Practice of Teaching History as a Tool for Reconciliation in the Region*⁵⁴ financed by the Western Balkans Fund.⁵⁵ This collaboration demonstrated how empowered these associations had become through their long-term joint work under the umbrella organisation EuroClio. The focus of the project was the history of Yugoslavia. Teachers from the participating countries had the opportunity to prepare, share and practically implement teaching units on the topic “*Jugoslavija 100 godina poslije. Lekcije koje (ni)smo naučili*” (*Yugoslavia 100 Years Later: Lessons We (Haven’t) Learned*).⁵⁶

EuroClio is also a partner of a project run by the Mechanism Information Programme for Affected Communities (MIP) of the United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (Mechanism), the legal successor to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The project focuses on introducing

the archives of the ICTY and Mechanism to history teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia to enhance the skills and knowledge of history educators in the region of the former Yugoslavia so that they can educate their students about the events during the 1990s conflicts and the crimes committed. The ICTY Archive, digitised and publicly available, contains authentic sources and documents, audio, photo and video material, court records, victim testimonies, witness statements, expert reports, documentation on court proceedings and other materials on the wars in the region of former Yugoslavia. Once trained, teachers and educators are better equipped to develop fact-based and engaging lectures about the region’s recent past, using documents and judicially established facts from both the ICTY and Mechanism case files.⁵⁷ In order to provide additional support for teachers, the Mechanism Information Program for Affected Communities (MIP) prepared the *Guide for History Teachers: How to Use Archival Material of the ICTY and Mechanism in Teaching the History of the 1990s conflicts* (Guide)⁵⁸. The *Guide* is the result of cooperation between MIP, Associations of History Teachers from countries of former Yugoslavia and EuroClio, and was designed to be additional teaching material to help history teachers and other social sciences teachers with teaching about the wars of the 1990s and using the ICTY and Mechanism archives. The idea for the *Guide* emerged during workshops organised by the MIP in cooperation with national associations of history teachers to train history teachers from the former Yugoslavia to effectively incorporate judicially established facts into educational materials pertaining to the 1990s conflicts in the region. Since the project launched in January 2019, over 600 history teachers have attended its workshops. The *Guide* has two volumes. *Training and Methodology* gives a historical review of ICTY and Mechanism work and includes the chapter “How to teach about the wars in the 1990s using ICTY and Mechanism archives”, which handles the “Teaching to Understand” methodological approach applied in teacher training. The first volume includes an extensive guideline/manual for using the online database of the ICTY and Mechanism public court records to help teachers browse this digital resource. The second volume, *Topics and Practical Examples*, presents five topics most used by teachers to prepare lessons about the wars of the 1990s: “Heritage of the Hague Tribunal”, “Women in War”, “Migrations and Conflicts”, “Children in War” and “Culticide”. “*Dealing with the Past for a Better Future. Achieving Justice, Peace and Social*

51 “Making sense of the past that refuses to pass, Recommendations for responsible teaching of the wars in Yugoslavia and its successor states,” 2018, EuroClio, https://euroclio.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Making-sense-of-the-past-that-refuses-to-pass_final-English.pdf, accessed 16 October 2024.

52 Global Centre for Pluralism, Ottawa, Canada is an independent, charitable organisation founded by His Highness the Aga Khan and the Government of Canada. The Centre works with policy leaders, educators and community builders around the world to amplify and implement the transformative power of pluralism.

53 “Learning History that is not yet History” Team, 2019 Winner Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, Global pluralism award,” Canada, Ottawa, Global Centre for Pluralism: 2019, Global Centre for Pluralism, <https://award.pluralism.ca/laureate/the-learning-history-that-is-not-yet-history-team/>, accessed 16 October 2024.

54 “1st Call for Proposals,” Western Balkans Fund, <https://westernbalkansfund.org/1st-call-for-proposals/>, accessed 28 September 2024.

55 The Western Balkans Fund (WBF) is an international organisation located in Tirana, Albania, founded by the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. WBF aims to promote cooperation and the common values between citizens, civil society and people to people contacts by providing funding for small and medium projects.

56 “Jugoslavija 100 godina poslije. Lekcije koje (ni)smo naučili,” CLIO in the Balkans – Enhancing history teachers network and improving the practice of teaching history as a tool for reconciliation in the region, Udruženje nastavnika i profesora historije/istorije/povijesti – EUROCLIO HIP BiH, <https://cliohipbih.ba/jugoslavija-100-godina-poslije-lekcije-koje-nismo-naucili/>, accessed 28 September 2024.

57 “MIP holds follow-up workshops for history teachers from Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Program mehanizma za informisanje zajednice pogođenih sukobima (PMI) Ujedinjene nacije, Međunarodni rezidualni mehanizam za krivične sudove, 2022, <https://www.irmct.org/en/news/mip-holds-follow-workshops-history-teachers-bosnia-and-herzegovina>, accessed July 29, 2024.

58 *Priručnik za edukatore istorije/historije/povijesti o korišćenju arhive Međunarodnog krivičnog suda za bivšu Jugoslaviju i Međunarodnog rezidualnog mehanizma za krivične sudove. Obuka i metodologija*. Program mehanizma za informisanje zajednice pogođenih sukobima (PMI), 2023. <https://www.irmct.org/sites/default/files/publications/Handbook%20History%20Teachers-Vol%20I-BCS.pdf>; *Priručnik za edukatore istorije/historije/povijesti o korišćenju arhive Međunarodnog krivičnog suda za bivšu Jugoslaviju i Međunarodnog rezidualnog mehanizma za krivične sudove. Teme i praktični primeri*. Program mehanizma za informisanje zajednice pogođenih sukobima (PMI), 2023. <https://www.irmct.org/sites/default/files/publications/Handbook%20History%20Teachers-Vol%20II-BCS.pdf>.

Cohesion in the Region of the Former Yugoslavia”, the annual CoE Commissioner for Human Rights Report for 2023,⁵⁹ points out that teaching history is important for responsibly facing the wartime past of former Yugoslavia. The Report describes the efforts in informal education with a particular focus on the project EuroClio carries out with IRMCT, which trains history teachers to use the ICTY archives in teaching history. The Report states: “During 2020–2023, more than 300 lecture plans and corresponding teaching materials were prepared based on the ICTY archives to deal with the topics of the 1990s wars”.⁶⁰

Teacher professional development and the wars of the 1990s

Professional development for teachers is a continuous process of acquiring new knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for the successful realisation of the teaching vocation. The goal is to improve teaching practices, introduce innovations into instruction and keep up with contemporary trends in education. All the countries of the former Yugoslavia have developed their own methodologies for teachers’ professional development, including training for history teachers. In Serbia, state institutions have accredited programs for the continuous professional development of history teachers and other social sciences programs related to the dissolution and the wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia. Specifically, the Zavod za unapređivanje obrazovanja i vaspitanja (Institute for the Improvement of Education and Training) accredited the UDI - EUROCLIO programme “Learning about the Wars of the 1990s in the Former Yugoslavia” in 2018. The general aim of this programme is to equip history teachers to apply contemporary teaching methods when working with students on the topic of the 1990s wars. In the specific goals of the program, it is pointed out that “familiarising teachers with the emergence and impact of stereotypes throughout history and today, with particular attention to the wars of the 1990s, as well as enabling teachers to promote values such as human rights, multiculturalism, dialogue and reconciliation”.⁶¹ Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play an important role in teaching about the war history of the former Yugoslavia. Teachers participate in these programs independently or in collaboration with their schools. In Serbia, numerous NGOs are involved in implementing programs aimed at educating teachers on teaching the wars of the 1990s.

Many civil society organisations are uniquely and deeply immersed in the complex issue of the recent wartime past, aiming to build bridges between different communities and lay the ground for building a stable and democratic society in the Western Balkans. Some of these organisations are the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and the Inicijativa mladih za ljudska prava (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, YIHR), which promote reconciliation and cooperation among young people in the region. In 2024, the YIHR office in Serbia, together with the War Childhood Museum Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo) and the Forum Civil Peace Service – Serbia (ZDF Forum, Serbia), organised a study visit for pupils from “Dragiša Luković Španac” Elementary School from Kragujevac named “Peace is Future”.⁶² The students visited Sarajevo with their teachers and principal, where they were welcomed by pupils from “Alija Nametak” Elementary School, after which they visited the War Childhood Museum. It was an opportunity to learn, break stereotypes, facilitate multicultural learning, and foster regional cooperation among both pupils and school representatives.

Learning and teaching about the Holocaust and human rights is another topic that brings together history teachers of the former Yugoslavia. The topic of human suffering during the Second World War serves as a unifying theme for teachers in the region, bringing them together not only at the national level but also regionally. In the context of memory policies regarding human suffering during the Second World War teachers from the region address the Holocaust, genocide and the crimes committed in Yugoslavia during the war. A notable program that brings teachers together on the topic of human suffering during the Second World War is run by the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris, titled “Holokaust kao polazna tačka” (The Holocaust as a Starting Point).⁶³ During this multi-day seminar, teachers participate in theoretical lectures and workshops before having an opportunity to develop educational materials either independently or in collaboration with other teachers. The “Mémorial de la Shoah” programme is attended by teachers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia and Serbia. In Serbia, this program is implemented through the Ministry of Education. UDI EUROCLIO, in collaboration with the “Kragujevački Oktobar” Memorial Park, is implementing an accredited seminar for teachers in Serbia titled “*Srbija 1941–1944. Stradanje stanovništva i zločini okupacionih snaga i njihovih pomagača*” (*Serbia 1941–1944: The Suffering of the Population and Crimes of Occupying Forces and Their Collaborators*).⁶⁴

59 “Negative Trends Undermining Efforts to Deal with the Past, History teaching, Dealing with the Past for a Better Future, Achieving Justice, Peace and Social Cohesion in the Region of the Former Yugoslavia,” Ch. 3, 3.4.3, 78–79 (Council of Europe, Commissioner for Human Rights: 2023), <https://rm.coe.int/issue-paper-on-transitional-justice-dealing-with-the-past-for-a-better/1680ad5eb5>, accessed 16 October 2024.

60 “History teaching, Dealing with the Past for a Better Future, Achieving Justice, Peace and Social Cohesion in the Region of the Former Yugoslavia,” Ch. 3, 3.4.3, 79.

61 “Учење о ратовима 90-тих на простору бивше Југославије,” Каталог семинара 2018–2021, ZUOV, <https://arhiva.zuov-katalog.rs/index.php?action=page/catalog/view&id=167>, accessed 16 October 2024.

62 “Osnovna škola iz Srbije prvi put u poseti Muzeju ratnog djetinjstva,” YIHR RS, <https://yih.rs/bhs/osnovna-skola-iz-srbije-prvi-put-u-poseti-muzeju-ratnog-djetinjstva/>, accessed 29 July 2024.

63 “Обука за наставнике ‘Холокауст као полазна тачка’ од 22. до 24. маја 2024. године у Загребу,” Министарство просвете Србије, <https://prosveta.gov.rs/vesti/obuka-za-nastavnike-holokaust-ka-polazna-tacka-od-22-do-24-maja-2024-godine-u-zagrebu/>, accessed 16 October 2024, .

64 “Србија 1941–1944. Страдање становништва и злочини окупационих снага и њихових помагача,” Завод за унапређење образовања и васпитања, <https://zuov-katalog.rs/index.php?action=page/catalog/view&id=690>, accessed 16 October 2024.

Summary

The tragic consequences of the Second World War radically influenced changes in educational policies across Europe and the world. These changes were particularly felt in the approach to teaching history, which, unlike in the previous period, was assigned the role of “peacemaker” among the sciences and academic disciplines. In addition to upholding the anti-fascist ideal, history education was expected to contribute to the reconciliation of sides that had been in conflict “until yesterday”. This approach to learning about the past was shaped by relevant international institutions focusing on historical understanding. One such institution was the Council of Europe, which, as early as the 1950s, sought to promote a clearer profiling of education regarding particularly traumatic episodes from the past as a means to foster reconciliation and coexistence among peoples. The end of the wars in the former Yugoslavia (the first major conflict in Europe after the Second World War) and especially the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 quickly opened the question of teaching about the wars of the 1990s. In 1992, with the support of the Council of Europe, the European Association of History Teachers, EuroClio, was established with the goal of building bridges between history teachers in a newly united Europe. While the wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia were still ongoing, EuroClio began its work with history teachers, helping to establish the first association of history teachers in Slovenia – the Slovenian History Teachers’ Association (1999). After the establishment of the Slovenian association, similar organisations were formed in North Macedonia (2000), Serbia (2001), Croatia (2003), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2003), Kosovo (2008) and Montenegro (2011). The first joint project after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, titled “Improvement of Teaching History and Civil Society in the Region”, began in 2003 and brought together history teacher associations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. Over the four years of the project, more than 500 participants were actively involved in various activities such as seminars, workshops, study trips, lectures, international conferences and training sessions. EuroClio’s initial projects and the connections made among history teachers from the former Yugoslavia focused on political life in the former common state and cultural and social policies, thereby selecting “less painful topics”. History education is a powerful tool that can be used to foster peace and democracy. Learning about the wars of the 1990s is not easy, but it is essential. This process requires time, patience and honesty. In this context, the controversial and sensitive topic of the dissolution and the wars of the 1990s was raised by EuroClio in 2016 as an issue in history teaching. Since then, they have been conducting a project with associations of teachers from the former Yugoslavia titled “Learning a History that is ‘not yet History’” (LHH) aimed at

assisting history teachers in teaching the history of the 1990s wars. In Serbia, in 2018, the seminar “Learning about the Wars of the 90s” was accredited by the state institution Zavod za unapređivanje obrazovanja i vaspitanja (ZUOV), to present examples of good practices developed through collaborative work by teachers from the former Yugoslavia and training them to approach the teaching of contemporary history – the wars of the 1990s – in a responsible and sensitive manner.

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