

# Historiana: An Online Resource Designed to Promote Multi-Perspective and Transnational History Teaching



Maren Tribukait  and Steven Stegers

**Abstract** This chapter explores how Historiana, an online platform made by EuroClio for and with history educators, helps educators to teach history in a way that is transnational and multiperspective. It asks how the multiperspective and transnational approach was shaped, implemented, and developed by looking at the conceptual, organisational, and infrastructural levels. First, it outlines the background to this initiative in 2007, when the development of Historiana started as an alternative to the idea of a European textbook, and in response to the need of history teachers who were committed to the concept of multiperspectivity but lacked the source materials. Then, it explains why the first design of the platform was changed and how Historiana was transformed by a participatory approach involving the EuroClio community of history educators. The contribution and collaboration of over 250 people from more than 40 countries resulted in an online resource that offers access to thousands of historical sources, more than a hundred learning activities, and enables its users to create and share their own eLearning Activities online. Furthermore, the participatory process put forth student-orientation, curricula-orientation, and the adaptability as principles of tool and content development resulted in new tools that help students analyse texts, compare sources and contextualise sources and that allow teachers to implement transnational perspectives. The development of content and new functionalities is mostly done in the context of projects. One of those projects is ‘Learning to Disagree’ which is aimed at rethinking and strengthening the concept of multiperspectivity in times of political polarisation. The project responded to the revival of nationalism and the rise of populism and extremism by supporting teachers to conduct discussion, dialogue, and debate on controversial issues in the classroom. The resources developed in this project are designed to enable students to understand different points of view, think about the limits of multiperspectivity, and develop the capability and willingness to discuss in a constructive manner. Finally, the chapter will conclude what lessons can be learned from the development of Historiana for

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M. Tribukait (✉)

Leibniz Institute for Educational Media | Georg Eckert Institute, Brunswick, Germany  
e-mail: [tribukait@gei.de](mailto:tribukait@gei.de)

S. Stegers

EuroClio, The European Association of History Educators, The Hague, Netherlands  
e-mail: [steven@euroclio.eu](mailto:steven@euroclio.eu)

other digital projects in the field of history education, which also aim to be transnational, multiperspective and inclusive. We will also reflect on recent developments and share what is next in terms of further development.

**Keywords** History teaching · Multiperspectivity · Online learning · Transnational approaches · Digital tools

## Introduction

The role of school history education in today's democratic societies has often been described as a conundrum: on the one hand, since its origins in the nineteenth century, it has been designed to form loyal citizens and has thus played a significant role in nation-building processes, yet on the other hand it has, more recently, been dedicated to the tradition of Enlightenment and of encouraging students to question this framework and to form their own points of view based on evidence and arguments (Van Nieuwenhuysse & Wils, 2012). Liberal democracies in Europe have tried to reconcile these two functions within school history education by attempting to raise critical, democratic citizens; in practice, this has meant transcending a one-dimensional national master narrative and giving students analytical tools enabling them to study a variety of perspectives of the past instead (Bergmann, 2000; Carretero, 2017; Grever, 2009). However, in many European countries, history teaching remains rooted in national history (Carrier, 2013; Stradling, 2019). Against the backdrop of increasing globalisation since 1989 and, more specifically, the extension of the European Union the question arose of whether the nation is still the most suitable framework for history teaching or whether students if they are to become competent citizens, should learn more about the interconnectedness of the world from a historical perspective. Since the 1990s, many organisations and initiatives, including EuroClio, the European Association of History Educators, and the Georg Eckert Institute, have promoted transnational multiperspective approaches to history education (Stradling, 2001).

The development of *Historiana*, which was started in 2007 by EuroClio, is one prominent participatory initiative dedicated to this approach (EuroClio, n.d.). The main idea was to give history teachers across Europe access to sources from different national contexts in order to enable them to teach European history from a variety of angles. The concept of multiperspectivity in history teaching takes the principle of history as an interpretational discipline and translates it into school practice (Bergmann, 2000; Chapman, 2011; Wansink et al., 2018). In *Historiana*, it has been combined from the beginning with a transnational approach that emphasises the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity of individual countries and Europe (Stradling, 2003). As it will be shown, the development of *Historiana* was guided by the idea that history is not only about the dominant groups and those in power, but also about ordinary people, of all genders and economic and cultural and minority backgrounds.

As *Historiana* seeks to inspire and explore new ways of history teaching, this paper asks how the multiperspective and transnational approach was shaped, implemented

and developed by the EuroClio community and two companies, Webtic and Use Media, who have led the concept, design and development of the technical aspects of Historiana as an online educational tool, including the user experience and interface.<sup>1</sup> While this paper is obviously a project presentation by two people instrumental in creating and executing the project we seek to reflect on our practices when examining this question. We will look at the conceptual, organisational, and infrastructural levels with the help of three snapshots: The first is a flashback to the year 2007 that outlines the ambitions and the working modes of the founding team as well as the first version of Historiana which was launched in 2012 and redesigned in 2017. Then we use a broader picture of the year 2020, which will illustrate how Historiana has transformed into a flexible tool enabling innovation and collaboration within a transnational community of history teachers. The last snapshot is also taken in 2020 but is a close-up of the project 'Learning to Disagree' that focuses on the specific challenges of transnational and multiperspective history education in a time of political polarisation.

In conclusion, we will sum up what can be learned from the development of Historiana in terms of transnational, inclusive and multiperspective approaches, explain why we think such a resource is necessary and reflect on the challenges that still need to be removed in order for it to enter mainstream use.

## **Flashback to 2007: Historiana as an Alternative to a European Textbook**

The idea of developing Historiana was first discussed in 2007 and was triggered by a proposal of Annette Schavan, the German Minister of Education and Research, during a meeting of the EU Ministers of Education in Heidelberg to make a common history textbook from the EU. There were previous proposals for such a textbook, and up till then EuroClio had always opposed this idea, but now that new technologies made it possible to add more and more diverse content, and offer more flexible pathways to this content, it had changed its opinion (Van der Leeuw-Roord, 2008).

Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, the Founder of EuroClio, and Maria Grever, an Honorary Board Member of EuroClio, observed in a memorandum that '*the future of students in the different European Nations is tied to larger European and global currents that must be grasped historically*' and added that '*it is important that students are able to understand these currents and the effects on the world they live in*'. They proposed an initiative that aimed '*to make young people aware of the current impact of Europe on their personal lives and the historical backgrounds of modern Europe*' and found that '*understanding the history of the European continent and its rich and controversial heritage implicates the creation of tools to exchange ideas and to argue from different angles on the past, based on solid information and arguments*' (Van der Leeuw-Roord & Grever, 2007, p. 1). This description implies an understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://webtic.eu/> and <https://use.media/>.

multiperspectivity that is rooted in historical thinking and thus corresponds with the definition of multiperspectivity as ‘a way of viewing, and a predisposition to view, historical events, personalities, developments, cultures and societies from different perspectives through drawing on procedures and processes which are fundamental to history as a discipline’ (Stradling, 2003, p. 14).

The initiative came in response to several developments that the authors identified as factors that had changed the conditions of history education: (1) Most nations in Europe at the time had large numbers of students from immigrant or minority families who did not share a common historical experience and history teachers needed to deal with this diversity. (2) The perception was that historical ‘knowledge’ had become fragmented and diversified, sapping the authority of monologic narratives. (3) There was a need for young people to learn how to acquire historical information and to assess the information they encountered not only at school but also on the internet or elsewhere. (4) There was a strong tendency towards reasserting national identity through history, heritage and citizenship education, in response to worries about deepening European integration and the enlargement of the European Union (Van der Leeuw-Roord & Grever, 2007, p. 1).

Van der Leeuw-Roord and Grever were supported by Richard Hermans, the Director of the former Netherlands Institute for Heritage, and together they identified experts and other European organisations who worked on the promotion of multiperspective and transnational history, and heritage and/or citizenship education.<sup>2</sup> The Advisory Board aimed to share existing examples of good practice, to address and fine-tune the goals and content, to identify challenges and solutions, to map organisations that needed to be involved, and to discuss and agree on the format, structure and development process. Robert Stradling, who had been a champion for a European approach to teaching History in his work for the Council of Europe since 1991, shared his then-recent experience in developing the Council of Europe CD-ROM ‘*Crossroads of European Histories - Multiple Outlooks on Five Key Moments in the History of Europe*’ (2009), and supported Van der Leeuw-Roord and Grever’s idea of developing a website rather than a textbook. He did this because (1) this would make it possible to add new sources and perspectives over time, (2) a website is more accessible for users and (3) there is no limitation to the number of sources that can be added. Furthermore, he proposed a thematic approach, because it enables students to trace back long-term developments, see and analyse turning points in history and identify similarities and differences between events and locations.

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<sup>2</sup> The members of the Advisory Board were: B. v. Borries (Hamburg University), J. Cousins (European), K. Donert (Eurogeo—European Association of Geographers), R. Fisher (National Maritime Museum), H. Geiss (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung), M. Grever (Centre for Historical Culture), C. Hageman (Netherlands Institute for Heritage), R. Hermans (Netherlands Institute for Heritage), J. van der Leeuw-Roord (EuroClio, the European Association of History Educators), R. Maier (Georg Eckert Institute), B. Morgescu (EUSTORY), L. Neale (Europa Nostra), M. Sani (Network of European Museum Organisations), D. Smart (EuroClio, the European Association of History Educators), S. Stegers (EuroClio, the European Association of History Educators), R. Stradling (Council of Europe) and A. Weij (Netherlands Institute for Heritage).

After two meetings, the working title ‘Past, the Future of Europe’, was dismissed because it was incompatible with difficult histories. Instead, the board agreed on the name ‘Historiana’<sup>3</sup> for the initiative and a description of what Historiana should be:

*Historiana is [...] an online, multimedia tool [...] on the learning and teaching of common themes in history and heritage as alternative to a European Textbook.*

*The website can be used for educational purposes in classrooms, museums and heritage settings and will provide a plurality of perspectives with respect for inter- and intra-state diversity. This will be realized by the inclusion of multiple perspectives which will help to adequately comprehend the complexity in history and heritage and work towards increased historical awareness.*

*Historiana does not aim to be encyclopaedic or to be a comprehensive digital history textbook, but will create opportunities to compare the history and heritage across time and regions, which will allow them to see connections, differences and similarities. The material is designed in such a way that stimulates users to think critically on issues related to history and heritage and to acquire key competences and simultaneously gain knowledge on specific events and long-term developments in history.*<sup>4</sup>

This definition shows that the board refrained from highlighting a common European heritage that aimed to promote a coherent European identity, which had been proposed by the German Minister of Education and Research Annette Schavan in 2007 (Deutsche Welle, 2007).

The actual development of Historiana started in 2009 when EuroClio was successful in winning funding for two projects: ‘Discovering Diversity, an Integrative Approach to the History of Migrants (2009–2011)’, funded by the Anna Lindh Foundation, and ‘Exploring European History and Heritage (2009–2012)’, funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. In these projects, history educators and researchers from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Morocco, The Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom worked together on the development of thematic case studies, structured around a set of key questions proposed by Robert Stradling, who agreed to be the editor-in-chief of Historiana (Image 1).

The first version of Historiana, designed and developed by Webtic, was launched in 2012. This version was structured around the historical themes: Conflict and Cooperation, Ideas and Ideologies, Life and Leisure, People on the Move, Rights and Responsibilities, The Environment, and Work and Technologies. Each theme included introductory texts, case studies, collections of source material, and timelines. Some of these themes clearly entailed a shift of focus from ‘official’ national histories to stories of ordinary people and included marginalised voices that are often overlooked by mainstream historical writing.

Even at this early stage, Historiana received recognition by the Council of Europe North South Centre in the form of the World Aware Education Award and the Special Prize for European Collaboration in the creation of Educational Media from the

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the *Historiana Advisory Group*, 13 November 2010 (EuroClio Archive).

<sup>4</sup> *An introduction to Historiana*, 2010 (EuroClio Archive).

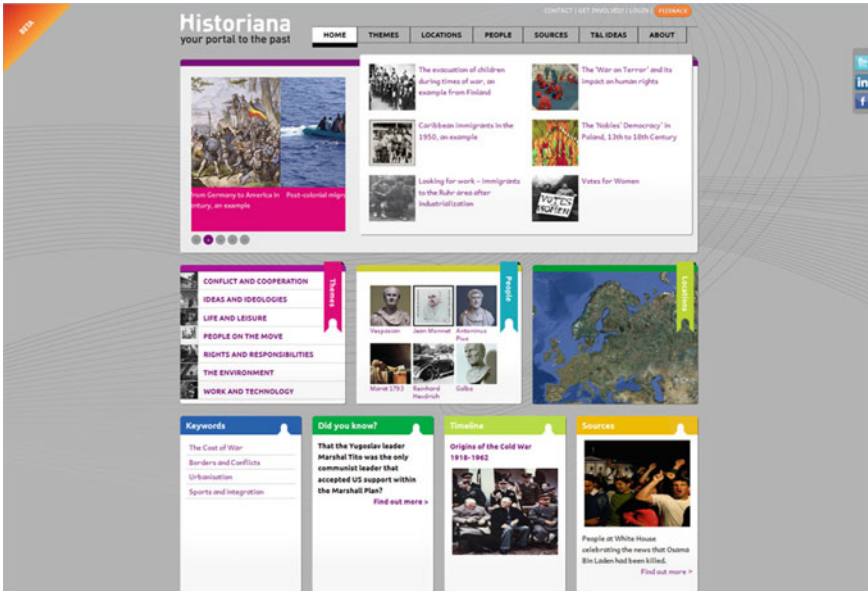


Image 1 The homepage of Historiana, when it was launched in 2012

MEDEA Awards. The awards indicated the idea’s potential and the value of a collaborative development process that used transnational teams, a process that contrasted with the production of national textbooks. However, there were several issues that prevented Historiana from fulfilling its potential: (1) The thematic case studies were still national. Each case study had a ‘bigger picture’ section which showed what the case study was a part of (such as other fights for independence, or other groups migrating for economic reasons), but this did not provide enough support for teachers. (2) Ideas for teaching and learning were lacking. (3) The design of the website did not enable easy comparisons between case studies. (4) It was difficult for teachers to link the case studies to the curricula. (5) The language barrier was reduced, but not overcome. The limited budget for concept, design, testing and development and the limited capacity of the editing team proved to be additional challenges.

## Broader Picture 2020: A Flexible Tool for Innovation and Transnational Collaboration

To address the needs expressed by the history, heritage and citizenship educators from the EuroClio network, the development of Historiana changed direction. EuroClio started to develop teaching and learning resources in addition to historical content in order to help teachers tailor multiperspective and transnational approaches to their individual classroom situations. The historical content team decided to shift focus

from themes to key moments, as these were easier to link to the different history curricula across Europe (Jasik et al., 2016).

Another key development was the move towards eLearning, which was accelerated through cooperation with Europeana, a digital platform for cultural heritage that provides access to the online collections of European museums, archives and libraries.<sup>5</sup> EuroClio became a partner in EuropeanaCreative, a project that aimed to stimulate the re-use in different fields of the cultural heritage resources provided by Europeana, including in the field of education. In this project, EuroClio and Webtic made it possible for educators to search and select sources from cultural heritage institutes, and to use these sources to create online learning activities. Many sources on Historiana are visual, which are easier to use as language barriers are smaller compared to textual sources.

EuroClio decided it was worthwhile developing tools for online history education because most tools used by history teachers at the time only helped students to present historical information in new ways (such as videos) or were designed to test knowledge (mainly quizzes). There were few tools that helped students to ‘think like historians’ and interpret the sources by themselves. Notable exceptions were ClassTools developed by Russel Tarr<sup>6</sup> and DocsTeach, the online tool for teaching with documents from the US National Archive.<sup>7</sup>

The rationale behind the development of these tools was that students are confronted with online source material that is not self-explanatory. An important step to multiperspective learning was considered to be the use of scaffolding strategies to support students’ understanding of sources. The tools should also be intuitive and transferable to a range of different sources. The first tool was designed by Use Media, and helps students analyse visual sources. With the help of this tool, students can select parts of a visual source and explain why they made this selection. The purpose is to help students deconstruct the message of a source, but it can also be used by students to apply their historical knowledge or to annotate questions. Students and teachers can use their own language and script for annotations, which is an important step towards reducing language barriers. Similar tools were created for sorting and prioritising sources as well as for text analysis in follow-up projects.<sup>8</sup> The use of blocks and canvas in which students interact with the sources in the tools that was designed for this first tool, has been the basis of all the tools that followed (Image 2).

One example of the use of the Visual Analysis tool, proposed by Robert Stradling, shows both the potential and the limitation of this first tool. This example makes use of one source: A satirical map that was published in the UK before the outbreak of

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.europeana.eu/en/about-us> (Accessed 4 May 2020).

<sup>6</sup> <https://classtools.net/> (Accessed 4 May 2020).

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.docsteach.org/> (Accessed 4 May 2020).

<sup>8</sup> The Sorting and Prioritising Tools were developed in the Innovating History Education for All project (2014–2017) funded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union. The Comparing, Highlighting and Discovering Tools were developed in the Opening Up Historiana project (2018–2020) funded by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) of the European Union.



**Image 2** The student view of the Visual Analysis tool

World War 1, and later republished in Germany by W. Nolting of Hamburg and used by the Germans as counter-propaganda.

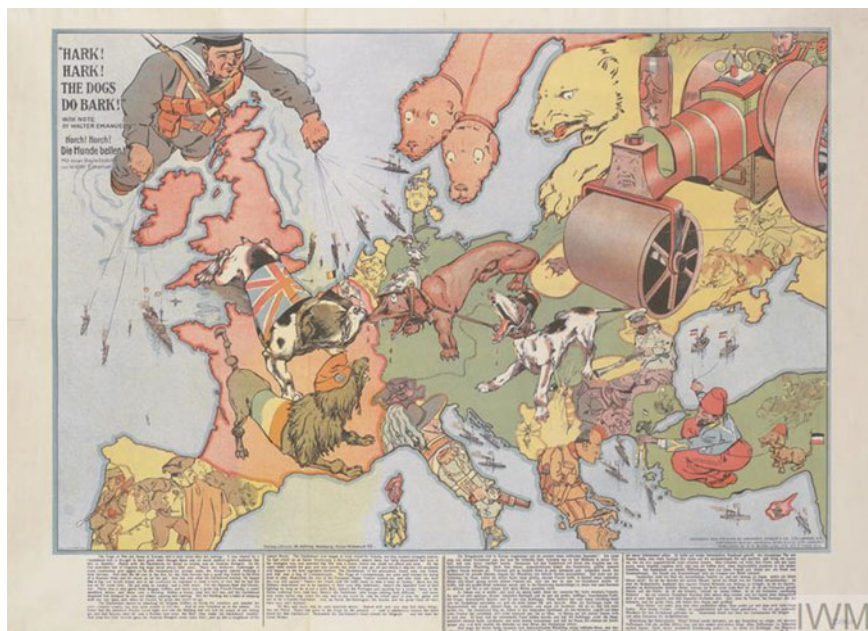
Stradling wanted to ask students first from a British perspective ‘*What, if anything, makes them effective propaganda for persuading the British public to support the war effort?*’ and then explain to the students that the map was used as counter-propaganda, and ask the students to look at the map from a German perspective ‘*Why might the German government think these would make good propaganda for persuading the German public to support the war effort?*’. Since the questions may need to be formulated differently in a British, German or Belgian history classroom—given the different national historical contexts that the students are familiar with—this exercise in perspective-taking shows how the online tools can be used to adapt a multiperspective teaching strategy to an individual history classroom anywhere in Europe (Image 3).

In the first design of the Visual Analysis tool, it was possible for students to do this analysis from one perspective, but in order to do the analysis again, they had to open two different links in their emails, which would be too confusing.

The reactions to the first online tool from educators in the EuroClio network were promising, but again there were some key challenges that needed to be resolved before Historiana could fulfil its potential. The main challenges were that teachers (1) could not easily invite students to use the tool or review their answers, (2) could not ask an overarching question that students should answer after they had completed their analysis and (3) were not able to ask students to analyse multiple sources in one sequence.

The analysis of multiple sources in one sequence was made possible when Webtic realised the concept, design and development of the eActivity Builder. To present learning activities in a sequence had been part of Webtic’s thinking since 2013, but there were no suitable technologies to make this possible, and resources were



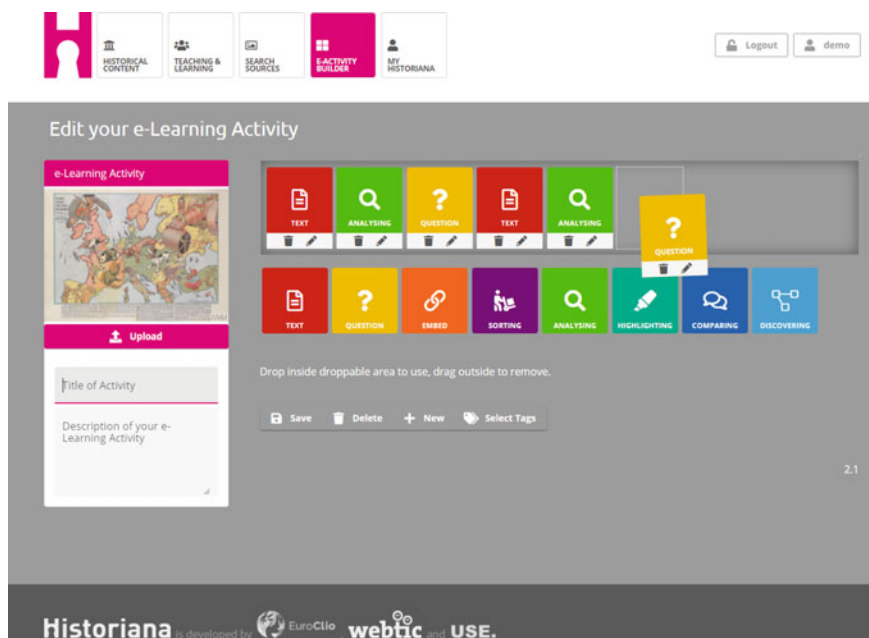


**Image 3** Hark hark the dogs do bark. © IWM Art.IWM PST 6964

also lacking. When suitable open source software became available with JQuery-UI, which made it possible to drag and drop items in a sequence, Webtic made the concept reality. They coined the terms ‘eActivity Builder’ and ‘Building Blocks’ in 2016, and further developed the concept until it was integrated in the live version of Historiana in 2017 (Image 4).

The creation and use of sketches, click models and prototypes with ‘mock content’ facilitated the cooperation between the different teams (working on historical content, teaching and learning, and concept, design and development). This participatory and cooperative approach helped to ‘proof the concept’, to identify issues in an early development stage (which is important because making changes is much easier compared to the later development stages), to test assumptions, and to avoid miscommunication. The approach also helped to create ownership of the people involved, who then became Ambassadors for the project.

In each step of the design process, history teachers and history teacher trainers from across Europe were asked for feedback. To gain insights in the teachers’ workflow Webtic asked them to provide a step-by-step description of how they create a year’s curriculum, how they develop lesson plans, how they prepare for the use with students, and what they do during and after the lessons. They also did literature research about online teaching in general. A team of history educators who were involved in one of the projects contributing to Historiana identified and reviewed



**Image 4** The eActivity builder on Historiana

online tools that history educators could use and indicated how desirable the design of the different tools was.<sup>9</sup>

In 2021, Historiana provided access to over 50 source collections, 5 multistranded timelines, 14 variety of viewpoints, 50 eLearning Activities, 100 learning activities and 3 modules centred around key moments, and enabled teachers to search for source material in Europeana's digital collections. Historiana has become the main platform through which EuroClio shares resources with its community.

Registered users can also upload and curate their own sources and add, create, and share eLearning Activities, using the eActivity Builder. When they share a link to the eLearning Activities with their students, the students can complete the activity and submit their answers for review by the teacher. The Historiana tools that are part of the eActivity Builder enable teachers to help students sort source material, compare sources, highlight texts and discover connections. There are also other tools for presenting information to students and asking questions. When other educators open the link, they can create their own copy of the eLearning Activity, which they can edit and share with their students. Since 2020, it is possible for partners to create

<sup>9</sup> The core team was an international group of history teacher and history teacher trainers comprising: M. Hajdarovic (Croatia), S. M. Gestsdóttir (Iceland), R. Kennett (United Kingdom), N. Pirtskhalava (Georgia), H. Snelson (United Kingdom) and P. Tak (the Netherlands). The reviews of the tools are published on the Historiana blog.

and publish their own resources on Historiana. These partners are responsible for the curation, quality control, and copyright clearance of their resources.

By opening up sources on European history, inspiring multiperspective and transnational teaching approaches and developing an online learning environment Historiana has moved successfully towards its initial aim, which was ‘the creation of tools to exchange ideas and to argue from different angles on the past, based on solid information and arguments’ (Van der Leeuw-Roord & Grever, 2007) in a European context. The participation of a transnational community of history teachers was key to overcoming abstract ideas of multiperspectivity and design content, teaching strategies and tools in a way that can be applied in and adapted to different classrooms across Europe.

## **Close-Up 2020: Learning to disagree—A Response to Polarisation**

Because projects have been such an important part of the development of Historiana, we will have a closer look at one of these projects: Learning to Disagree. This project was initiated when, after the Brexit referendum in 2016, wider political trends had changed, not only in Britain, but in many places in Europe and beyond. The revival of nationalism and the rise of populism and extremism currently pose new challenges to the provision of history education that is dedicated to multiperspectivity, mutual understanding, and a transnational framework. When the liberal, post-1989 consensus is contested in a public climate of polarisation teachers are also often confronted with new situations (McAvoy & Hess, 2013; Van Alstein, 2019): students may question settled issues or generally accepted points of view more often, sometimes bringing populist opinions or false claims picked up on the internet to the classroom. This makes the discussion of controversial issues more difficult but perhaps also more necessary since research has shown that if students are given the opportunity to discuss controversial issues it helps them to open their minds, to acknowledge other perspectives, and to argue for their own point of view; in short to develop social and civic competencies (Goldberg et al., 2011; Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015).

Acting upon these insights, EuroClio launched the ‘Learning to disagree’ project in 2017, which responded to the new challenges and addressed the impact of students’ own online practices on history education. It offers a counter-strategy that aims to strengthen students’ social and civic competencies through discussion, dialogue, and debate in the classroom. This means that students should learn to understand different points of view, develop the capability and willingness to discuss issues in a constructive manner, and implicitly reflect on their own online practices. Focusing specifically on controversial issues such as ‘problems and disputes which divide society and for which significant groups within society offer conflicting explanations and solutions based on alternative values’ (Stradling et al., 1984, p. 2), the

project underscored that disagreement is normal in pluralistic societies, but in order to be constructive, discussions have to be based on facts and arguments. It made use of *Historiana*, as an established online resource for multiperspective history education, to present and share teaching materials. Furthermore, the project design lays emphasis on face-to-face interactions in the classroom, following an understanding of postdigital education according to which the design and practice of learning activities should be decided upon carefully, but irrespective of the degree to which digital technologies are used (Fawns, 2018).

As obvious as it may sound, controversial issues are not often discussed in the classroom—neither in history nor in other subjects (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Goldberg & Savenije, 2018; Journell, 2013; McAvoy & Hess, 2013; Kello, 2016). A team of researchers and history educators<sup>10</sup> from 16 European countries therefore developed teaching materials, based on research into teachers' needs that included focus group discussions and a survey (Christophe & Tribukait, 2019). These materials consisted of sets of viewpoints on certain controversial issues as well as teaching and assessment strategies suitable for discussion, dialogue, and debate. Additionally, ready-to-use lesson plans were designed for short interventions that give teachers the opportunity to try out fresh approaches to difficult historical topics and new discussion formats in only one or two lessons (Image 5).

Three challenges, that had accompanied the work on developing resources for *Historiana* since it began, had to be addressed by the project team:

1. *How to choose topics:* Since controversial issues are only controversial in specific societal contexts, the project team faced the challenge of picking topics that were relevant in more than one country. To solve this problem, it returned to the thematic approach that had already shaped *Historiana* and decided upon four overarching themes, for which two to four case studies per theme were developed. Three of the chosen themes corresponded with clusters of topics that had been identified as controversial in a survey of European history educators conducted in 2018 as part of the needs assessment (Christophe & Tribukait, 2019, p. 4f.): (1) 'Borders' addresses a central aspect of (historical) national conflicts that was frequently mentioned by participants (see also Carretero, 2017); (2) 'People on the move' takes up the topic of migration that was the contemporary political issue most often mentioned; (3) 'Surviving under pressure' deals with the historical experience of totalitarian regimes, the Holocaust or wars in the twentieth century that were also frequently referred to as controversial. (4) The last theme 'Cultural Heritage' represents a different approach; it focused on street names, monuments, and buildings which often involve one of the aforementioned themes. These themes provide a framework for lessons that represent different types of controversial issues (cf. Council of Europe, 2015, p. 14): while border disputes often present long-standing issues in which teachers need to challenge students' deep-rooted beliefs, the main challenge with contemporary political

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<sup>10</sup> The Project partners were: M. Dempsey and A. Malone (Maynooth University), H. Snelson (University of York), B. Christophe and M. Tribukait (Georg Eckert Institute), M. Šuica and L. Šuica (Education for the twenty-first century).



### People on the Move: How are migrants perceived?

Migrants are perceived in both positive and negative ways. The viewpoints below present both ways, and they are selected to cover a variety of countries, and a variety of voices as well. Official documents are represented, and so are views of citizens, migrants and authors of fiction.

People have always been on the move, and migration has often been a political issue of great importance. The viewpoints selected here mostly cover the years after 2000. This is in order to make it easier for educators to select viewpoints to compare and contrast. Also, we believe that quality history education must take its starting point in the contentious issues of today, of which migration is a major one.

This project will focus on 'Learning to Disagree' classroom strategies, when teaching sensitive topics. Viewpoints on migration, represented here, or coming up in the classroom, are essential elements in history education today.

This viewpoints collection has been developed by Aysle Bilgic, Benny Christensen, Bistra Stoimenova, Matej Matkovic, and Valerio Bernardi as part of the Learning to Disagree project which is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

Source of the image: Migrants in Hungary near the Serbian border (Gémes Sándor/Szomszéd, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Viewpoint	Viewpoint	Viewpoint	Viewpoint
From an interview with a teacher in a primary school in Turkey The teacher recognises that many refugees arrive and stay in Turkey for good reasons, and that there must be good opportunities for education and	An extract from an email interview with Ms. Isabelle Jahn, the co-president of JugendStil e.V.Plauen, Germany (NGO) Ms Jahn, who works as an NGO in Germany, describes the problems connected to a lack of	An extract from a personal interview with Ms. Mevliye who lives and works in Germany. Ms Mevliye migrated to Germany many years ago to seek a better life. She is critical towards the refugees now living close to her,	An extract from an online interview with Mr. Ivan who was an asylum seeker in America 20 years ago. Mr Ivan left Yugoslavia during the war in the 1990s. He welcomes refugees, because he

Image 5 An example of a viewpoint on Historiana

questions such as migration is rather the lack of up-to-date information and adequate resources; as for experiences related to totalitarian regimes, the Holocaust or wars, teachers need to consider the sensitivity of the issues and enhance their students' empathy but also their understanding of the complexities of the events (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 2019).

2. *How to teach a topic with a transnational perspective:* As mentioned above, a thematic structuring of historical content often goes hand in hand with a case study approach that can, to a greater or lesser extent, be the basis for a comparison (Stradling, 2001, p. 27). This can be illustrated by the theme 'People on the move', which includes a collection of viewpoints on the question 'How are migrants perceived?'. The lesson plan 'Can immigration be seen in both negative and positive ways?' uses the Danish case to explore a question that is posed in many European societies. Firstly, students are tasked with collecting images and opinions relating to refugees in their own society which they should group according to the media from which they were taken and then examine; secondly, they should analyse two letters written to the editor of a Danish newspaper that present opposing opinions and then apply the results to their own country; thus, students are encouraged to reflect on their own stereotypes and those of others in two countries. A stronger transnational comparative approach is chosen in the lesson plan 'How similar are refugees' stories over time?' which deals with the experiences of refugees from different parts of the world who have entered various

countries, e.g. a Bosnian refugee who went to Slovenia in 1994, an Iraqi refugee who went to the UK in 2012, or an African refugee who went to Italy around 2012. Consistent with migration as a global phenomenon, the lesson moves away from national frameworks and focuses instead on individual agency and suffering in similar situations in order to encourage empathy. Students are tasked to read and comprehend a refugee's story in small groups and then stage a panel discussion with some students playing the refugees' roles while the other students listen and analyse similarities and differences in the refugees' experiences.

While the issue of migration proved to be well suited to a transnational perspective, comparative approaches were more difficult to apply to the themes 'Borders' and 'Surviving under Pressure'. For the borders theme, case studies of conflicts in Catalonia, Northern Ireland, Crimea and Kosovo were compiled and several levels of comparison—self-determination versus imperial rule, democratic procedures such as referendums, nationalism and diversity, violation of human rights, violation of international law—were identified. However, as each case already displayed a high degree of complexity the project group refrained from designing a comparative lesson plan—thus repeating the editors' experience with the historical themes approach. Even though a direct comparison was not realised, the collection of case studies still enables teachers from conflict regions to work with their students on a similar but different case. This can make students think about the conflict at home with more analytical distance, which may be helpful when talking openly about the conflict that involves social, emotional, and cognitive risks for students (King, 2009, p. 230f.).

3. *How to create source collections with multiple perspectives*: The idea of the project is to allow a high degree of multiperspectivity and to tolerate viewpoints that are not one's own but, as one focus group participant put it, 'we should be careful not to accept everything'. History educators agree that historical accounts can be judged by their empirical, narrative and ethical plausibility (Rüsen, 2008). In practice, it is, however, not that easy to decide which kind of viewpoints can be presented to students and which should be excluded. In the Crimean case study, for example, the project team underscored that viewpoints have to be based on facts because students are unable to deconstruct false claims in this context which meant, for example, that all *Russia Today* sources had to be excluded. This however carries the risk that students who regularly watch *Russia Today* at home would not contribute to the discussion because they would assume that only a Western viewpoint is likely to be tolerated (cf. Barton & McCully, 2007; McCully, 2005). The way out of this dilemma was to collect nuanced viewpoints from both the Ukrainian and Russian sides and eventually convey the message that there is more political diversity on both sides than external spectators expect at first sight (cf. Barton & McCully, 2007; Hess, 2009). This was also a way of dealing with the difficulty of finding 'authentic' voices of 'ordinary people' in the media of an autocratic system where people may be afraid to speak their mind, especially in a tense situation of violent conflict such as in Crimea following the Russian invasion. Here it should be considered that multiperspective approaches to history are always challenging since few people from the past have left behind

sources. It is therefore always important not to lose sight of this lack of voices when constructing stories about the past (Bergmann, 2000).

The objective of the Learning to Disagree project was to rethink and enhance multiperspective and transnational history education at a time when these approaches were increasingly encountering resistance in European societies. A few lessons could be learnt from the project: (1) First, the decision to focus on classroom discussions and not on online tools for source analysis reflected the fact that controversial issues cannot be dealt with by relying on disciplinary thinking alone. (2) Some themes could be successfully developed with a transnational approach and fine-tuned into working lesson plans thanks to the rich experience of the EuroClio community but this approach remains difficult, though desirable, for other controversial issues that are closely tied to a specific societal context. (3) The focus on controversial issues forces us to think more deeply about the limits of multiperspectivity, which are theoretically agreed upon among history educators but have to be tailored to each controversial issue—and also to each classroom—in practice.

## Conclusions

The exploration of Historiana's development has given insights into the challenges and opportunities of promoting history education that is multiperspective, inclusive and transnational through digital means. The development of Historiana presents an instructive contribution to the debate about multiperspective and transnational history education because (1) it brings in the perspective of an international NGO which contrasts with the view of commercial national producer of educational material and (2) it has used early on a participatory approach which is about to become more mainstream in education research and practice.

Through our work on Historiana, we the authors—as a manager of and a contributor to Historiana, respectively—have learned that multiperspective and transnational teaching approaches are crucial to further develop history education in pluralistic, interconnected, and also polarised societies, but have to be adapted to the political and societal contexts of every classroom. The direct involvement of a transnational community of history teachers in the process of conception and design, the different perspectives concerning historical content, teaching approaches, and societal contexts from across the continent could be taken into account. Thanks to this participatory approach, teachers could bring in their own angles and needs, for example that learning resources need to be easy to use, that they need to be able to review the answers given by students, that they want to give feedback, etc.

We have also learned that different educators have different needs and preferences. Some expect ready to use teaching and learning ideas, others are looking for historical sources that they are not yet familiar with or historical information that is easy to access and reliable. To meet all these needs, Historiana has to offer choices. As a result, it now presents different types of resources: Case studies, viewpoints,

timelines, learning activities, and digital tools. In all cases, educators prefer to have resources that are adaptable and shareable. Historiana also offers learning activities that can be done online and offline. Regardless of all these efforts, it is important to realise that only those educators who are willing to make the effort to find and adapt resources to the needs of their students will use them.

For the development of historical content, the multiperspective approach helped to take a first step away from ‘official’ national histories by looking at the life of ordinary and marginalised people and thus enable student to perceive diversity in past societies. In terms of transnationality, we realise that nations are important levels of comparison, but need better ways to facilitate this online. We have used multistranded timelines and animated maps to present history in a transnational way, but need a good way of comparing and connecting different stories.

For the development of digital tools, Historiana promotes key aspects of historical thinking—such as comparing, connecting, highlighting, analysing and questioning—as a starting point for their development. We found that in order to support complex thinking, it is helpful to put these activities in a sequence. It is also important that the design is intuitive and easy to use and to reserve time and resources to make improvements after user research.

The process through which these needs were translated into a functioning product turned out to be a steep learning curve. In order to pool the knowledge and experience of experts in history education and experts in concept, design, and development, user research with sketches, prototypes, and mock content proved to be the most promising way to bridge both worlds and develop an online resource that can be used in practice. A key factor in this process is the long-term commitment of EuroClio to further develop Historiana. EuroClio is developing Historiana as a way to implement its mission and uses this process as a way to enable cross-border cooperation between its members. It has now worked on Historiana for over a decade and there are still things to improve. This commitment, of EuroClio, and its partners, Webtic and Use Media, is also needed to cover the costs of maintenance (to ensure the site continues to work) and to build and support a community of users.

It is important for EuroClio to work further on development, because the reasons why EuroClio started the project, have not changed. Diversity has only increased; historical knowledge is still fragmented and diversified; young people still need to learn how to acquire and assess historical information at school, on the internet and elsewhere; and efforts to reassert national identity through history, heritage and citizenship education still need to be countered. With the revival of nationalism, we find it especially important to open up alternative transnational perspectives. We are encouraged by the fact that the concept of multiperspectivity has gained prominence in history education and is now established in many curricula across Europe (Tribukait et al., 2017; Wansink et al., 2018), but are concerned that it is not always implemented in practice. In order to for this to happen, flexible curricula, and opportunities for continued professional development and assessment that support these approaches are needed.

Educators are increasingly searching for resources that they can use online and more of them are developing and sharing resources online. The same is true for



publishers of educational resources, such as archives, museums, and libraries. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated these trends. In response to this, EuroClio will enable more people and organisations to share resources via Historiana, make it easy to make and publish translations and adaptations, and focus on better means of curation and quality control. EuroClio considers the fact that educators have limited time, and realise that in order for them to use resources, they need to be able to find what they need quickly. For this it is planned to enable users to browse, filter, sort resources, and provide overviews of the resources that are there.

At present, the development team is working on a more flexible, less linear way of creating, combining, and presenting content. This should make it easier to compare case studies, to show that something is part of long-term development, that something happening at the same time as something else, and to present ideas to teach and learn with the content that users are reading. In parallel, a support page where teachers can find inspiring examples of the use of the digital tools and resources will be created.

It is encouraging that Historiana is increasingly able to meet the demands of history teachers working under different conditions by using a variety of formats. In terms of promoting Historiana in future, it is also promising that EuroClio has been able to involve more organisations in the development process. To date, relatively small but international teams of committed historians and history educators have worked on the development. Now that the platform is maturing, the plan is to focus more on user research, providing opportunities for professional development, and enabling partners to create content in different languages.

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**Maren Tribukait** holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Bielefeld, has joined the Leibniz Institute for Educational Media in 2013 and has specialised in history education. She leads the Teaching in a Mediatized World research team and is the academic manager of ‘The Basement’, a digital lab, where researchers, educators and media developers analyse digital practices and test innovative didactic approaches.

**Steven Stegers** is the Executive Director of EuroClio, the European Association of History Educators, where he works since 2006. He got his MSc degree in Social and Organisational Psychology in 2009 at Leiden University and did research at the History Department of Georgetown University. Within EuroClio, he is responsible for fundraising and for the management of three long-term programmes (Sharing History, Cultural Dialogues—Innovating History in the Black Sea Region, Mediterranean Dialogues in the Euro-Med region, and the international programme Historiana—Your Portal to the Past).