The workshops which have been organized within the Southeast European Joint History Project by the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in the last two years show the following essential characteristics:
1. A very diverse state of affairs in regarding this field in different countries.
2. The existence of national myths.
3. A discrepancy between the academic sphere and the actual conditions in the sphere of writing textbooks and teaching of history,
4. A relatively insignificant influence of the textbooks on formation of historic consciousness.

The school (educational) policy differs a great deal in different countries, consequently there are also different approaches to preparing and publishing of textbooks. In some countries there is only one textbook for each year (grade), its contents and extend are defined by the authorities. In other countries textbooks are subject to market competition, curriculum has to be observed. The role of the authorities is only to examine whether the textbooks meet the basic standard requirements and thereafter to allow their use.

Another sphere of difference lies within methodological
approaches. In some countries the textbooks are "open" and allow the teacher more freedom in choosing the subjects treated in the classroom, whereas in other countries the subject matter is more strictly defined and the teachers are expected to treat the contents as presented in the textbooks. A similar approach can be observed to other teaching resources (exercises, transparencies, collections of resources, computer programs, the film and the multimedia materials, teacher's manuals). In some countries they represent an inevitable part of classroom work, in others they are hardly or not used at all.

All the analyses show a strong presence of national myths, stereotypes and prejudices against other nations in the curricula and in the textbooks. One of the basic aims in teaching history is to strengthen the national consciousness and promote the growth of patriotism; however, they frequently overgrow into glorification of one's own history; further into the search for national roots where they in reality do not exist and the emphasis on the greatness of former state formations, an unconscious or conscious linkage of contemporary nations with the ancient nations, cultures and states which formerly existed on the territories of the present states, although such linkages have not been historically proved.

The smaller nations, which did not have their own state in the past, tend to emphasize the suffering which was caused to them by bigger nations and to prove that they have been always attempting to gain their own state, which was allegedly prevented by the others.

The workshop discussions which have been held so far showed a relatively high level of criticism and self-criticism towards such account of history, a tolerance and understanding for different viewpoints and a wish to overcome stereotypes and myths. It has to be mentioned however, that such approach is characteristic for a relatively small number of people, who are concerned with educational policy, writing curricula and textbooks and teaching in schools. The discrepancy between the "school/educational intellectual elite" and the average situation in different countries is huge. A fundamental question that arises is therefore how to overcome such situation. A reflection over reform attempts in teaching history only has a weak echo even in countries where teams of experts were able to work relatively freely and independently from politics over several years.

The reasons for that are quite varied, from external (the influence of politics) to self-censorship and captivity within one's own patterns, too little interest, insufficient education of teachers, working according to the line of least resistance, shortcomings of in-service education... One of the more important reasons is also the rootedness in the so-called "oral history", that is the transfer of knowledge from generation to generation on the grounds of personal and family experience. Such image of the past is certainly most persistent and exercises a strong influence which cannot be overcome by the school history and school textbooks in particular. They can only have a limited influence. Apart from "oral history", the teacher is probably the person, who can exercise the strongest influence on pupils, however, teachers often do not teach in the way textbooks present certain subjects.

What to do to improve the situation?
The experiences gained so far within the Southeast European Joint History Project as well as within numerous other projects carried out by the Council of Europe and other institutions show that there is little sense in preparing common curricula and common textbooks. The essential and
the most important issue is working with the teachers: both, on the national and international levels. The greatest practical outcome comes from confrontation of opinions, exchange of experiences, presentation of particularly successful treatments of certain sensitive issues in a way which allowed pupils to hear more truths and which consequently made it possible for them to form their own opinion. The future lies in the organization of practical seminars which would be attended by as many teachers from different regions as possible, further in gradual formation of international network of "teacher trainers", in setting up a strong internet database, which would have to be critically selected and professionally supervised, in collections of resources and other materials which would also present documents from "the other side" in national languages. To implement such a project the History Education Committee should become a permanent, adequately funded body. It would be necessary to gain support of the respective Ministries of Education as well as other institutions concerned with education in respective countries. This is the only way to guarantee a larger number of teachers to participate in seminars and the use of teaching resources in the classroom. And last but not least, the activities of the Committee should be made known to the broader pedagogic as well as general public. Without an adequate media image and support in the countries of Southeast Europe it will be hard for the Committee to gain the authority required for the implementation of the set goals.

However, we indulge in illusions: this will be a long and demanding process which can only bring success after several years or even decades.

Beyond National Narratives. The Role of History Textbooks

by HANNA SCHISSLER
Georg Eckert Institute, Braunschweig

Historians have a tendency to follow the logic of nation states. Since academic history was established in the 19th century, the writing of history in general and the writing of history textbooks in particular has been closely connected with the nation state. But does the research and teaching of history automatically have to follow national agendas? With the excesses of nationalistic movements in the 20th century, an uncritical identification of history writing with the nation state has become more and more problematic. In a number of western countries this insight has lead to a veritable epistemological crisis, the discovery of new methods, topics and particularly of new agents in history. The traditional "great men" - usually statesmen, war heroes or mythical figures previously used to represent a common past, present and future have been replaced on the one hand by social groups, on the other hand by individuals who were not rich, famous and influential, in other words: by ordinary men and women. Hand in hand with this shift in historical interest went a new focus on processes and historical structures and a moving away from political decision making as a determining force. This is still an ongoing process in the historiography of western countries, but not exclusively there. Since the 1970s there has been a myriad of new topics and concepts - too numerous and too complex to discuss in this short text. In the
West, the deconstruction of master narratives was directed in the first place against the dominance of national narratives. In post-Soviet societies the situation was different, because the master narrative had been transnational to begin with. To construct new national narratives thus went hand in hand with a liberation process from Soviet hegemony. We can thus not apply Western experiences uncritically to the situation in Eastern Europe. But one thing can be said, nevertheless: The deconstruction of master narratives, be these of the national or the transnational kind, continues to be closely connected to social change itself.

Teaching materials used in schools have an important function in socializing the next generation. For many people it is only during their time in school that they are actively exposed to historical knowledge. Textbooks used in schools basically convey canonized knowledge - knowledge that has a certain validity and can claim a certain authority. Decision makers have an interest in the content of teaching materials, because schools are one important institution, if not the most important institution, in which the next generation is being socialized into the value system and the loyalties of a given society. It is because of their centrality in the process of education that states and governments usually control the content of textbooks used in the compulsory educational system. Social and political values are mirrored in textbooks - and might also be changed through textbooks. That is at least the optimistic assumption on which many attempts at conflict management in crisis regions rest.

Historically, textbooks have played an important role in conveying images of others as well as constructing self-images and forming social as well as national loyalties. Thus, it is worth investigating what textbooks convey about other countries, but also about groups within a given society. Whom do textbooks grant agency? What role do groups of people play? How are women portrayed? Do they play a role at all in "history"? What about minorities? What images of neighbors are painted, are neighbors portrayed in an exaggerated, stereotypical and hostile manner or is a perspective encouraged that acknowledges differences, alternating perspectives and the legitimacy of different interests? Because textbooks contribute to form social as well as national identities, they have for a long time been at the center of interest for those who want to contribute to a more peaceful co-existence of people.

Already after the World War I, the League of Nations has promoted the revision of such textbooks which adhered to exaggerated nationalisms and relied on the formation of a national self-image by mechanisms bound to discredit others. Politicians and educators realized for example what detrimental role not only teachers, but also textbooks had played in nurturing hostilities between the French and the Germans before the World War I. Other examples could easily be quoted as well. If children hear nothing but that one's neighbor is one's arch enemy at an age when their view of the world is being shaped, it is easier to eventually send young men to war. If that is so, so went the reasoning, it should also be possible to take another route. If children are inspired to respect their neighbors, to be curious about them, and to develop a benign and tolerant attitude, it would be more difficult to instrumentalize people for violent strife. This basic assumption continues to be valid even today.

After the World War II, peace education in schools has been promoted under the auspices of the United Nations. For fifty years, the Braunschweig based Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research has worked in the field of textbooks on an international level. It has acquired considerable expertise in the field of analyzing nationalistic stereotyping, and of monitoring textbooks in
regions of conflict. It is for this experience that the Eckert Institute has something to contribute also to the attempt of countries in Southeastern Europe to write new textbooks in the post-Soviet era and to help educators, teachers and textbook authors as well as decision makers, to go beyond old nationalistic and ethnic animosities.

After 1989, lots of new initiatives have been launched to support a process of rewriting textbooks in the countries of the former Soviet bloc. This has not been an easy task and continues to be challenging. New teaching materials needed to be developed, and the challenge not to fall into the nationalistic trap continues to be considerable, particularly in Southeastern Europe. With the emergence of new nation states - a liberation of the former oppressive structures of the Soviet system - old hostilities emerged as well. These hostilities frequently were and continue to be tied to ethnicity. The building of new post-Soviet societies, of liberalizing these societies, of overcoming authoritarian structures, and of an emergence or reemergence of ethnic group conflicts has posed tremendous problems for the "transformation countries". These ongoing restructuring processes take place at a time when there is a general tendency for the weakening of national boundaries, for the establishment of transnational and sometimes even global structures replacing national ones. To give the young an orientation in a world of such rapid change has become more and more of a challenge. The work on textbooks mirrors those struggles between old hostilities between nations and ethnic groups on the one hand and the new challenge of a world with increasingly transnational, European or even global structures on the other. Textbooks remain central in this endeavor, because it is through textbooks that young people acquire knowledge and an attitude towards the world that sometimes has to carry them through their whole life.

General Problems in the History Textbooks of the Balkans

by EMILIJA SIMOSKA
Institute for Sociological, Political and Legal Research,
Center for Ethnic Relations, Skopje

One of the biggest problems in most of the Balkan countries is the increasing (negative) politicization of the citizens, which unfortunately, especially refers to the younger generations. Regardless of the fact that the complex political context in this region actually produces this phenomenon, it is quite certain that very few efforts are made in order to neutralize its negative implications. It is also a fact that the most efficient way to approach it, with long-term effects, is undoubtedly through the system of education, having in mind the powerful impact it may have over a wide population.

However, the paradox appears when we take a deeper insight into it, since it is exactly the process of education which can not only generate negative political energy but can be a source of an enormous dose of prejudices, xenophobia, even a certain hostility. This affects the Balkan countries in a very specific way, having in mind that, in their political reality, it is difficult to find at least two of them, which do not have an open, unsolved political question. The richest source for such prejudices or intolerance, is often located in the textbooks in use in those countries, and undoubtedly, most of all - in the history ones.
It would not be exaggerated to say that all Balkan countries suffer from "an overdose of history", where most of their mutual problems originate from. Reproducing them constantly, in a same manner, through different curricula, does not help the present political solutions at all. On the contrary, it can only contribute to the negative relations among peoples.

Any initiative targeted towards creating more constructive approaches, must before all locate those basic negative sources. For this purpose, looking at the findings of different analyses of the content of the history textbooks, conducted in the Balkan countries, we could summarize the main problems as the following:

**Predominance of pure, one-sided factography**

Most analyses confirm that the history programs are nothing but a "collection of described historical events", which basically has two negative dimensions:

- the historical events are interpreted only from one's own position, rarely or never opening the question of the "other sides", which does not contribute to a rational, critical evaluation of the historical processes.
- the textbooks devote very little, or no space, for a presentation of some more general, common, present values, using the historical events as illustrations. This prevents the teaching of history from being a valuable source for political socialization.

**Ethnocentrism**

Judging not only by the space devoted to the national history or mythology, but by the contents as well, it seems that the basic approach in the history textbooks in the Balkan countries, is highly ethnocentric. It appears that the general logo in the curricula is that "everything which is ours is good". Its most negative implication is undoubtedly related to the fact that this attitude can be easily transformed into an intolerant or even hostile attitude towards "the others". In such a way, instead of the "strengthening of patriotism" as it is often called, we can end up with a complex xenophobic value matrix.

**Militarization**

The biggest part of the history textbooks is devoted to describing different wars, with special emphasis on the wars in the part of the national history. It should not be questioned that those facts have to be a part of the curriculum, just as they are included anywhere in the world. However, if they are glorified to an extent that the war-myths become an instrument for a "rational" explanation, the product is definitely contradictory to any present, generally adopted value within the aspired and often spoken of "education for peace". Furthermore, all of those wars in contemporary history, affect the neighboring countries, or the countries in the region, especially the recent ones. This additionally complicates the situation, requiring a careful approach, having in mind that all of those countries are in a process of establishing mutual cooperation as a necessary condition for their further integration.

**Absence of common heritage**

One of the ways in which history can be helpful (or at least not be destructive) for the cooperation in this region, is undoubtedly by exploring the common heritage, as a starting point for improvement of relations, rather than treating it as a reason for a conflict. Unfortunately, a small space in the textbooks is devoted to such issues, especially to aspects of
common culture, values and mentality, which can be used - with a bit of imagination of the authors - as an instrument for contribution to the processes of cooperation.

Absence of wider, European values
One way to de-stimulate the ethnocentrism and the intolerance which originate from the history in this region, is certainly through introducing more texts on contemporary processes of integration as well as more European or universal, commonly accepted values. Those issues, unfortunately, are to a large extent missing in the textbooks; often deliberately, due to a thesis that "they do not belong to history programs". Mostly, such values are included in other courses: sociology or civic education (which is not even taught everywhere). However, if those courses are not accompanied by an equal approach in the teaching of history, the effects are negative for both, having as a final product a divergent and contradictory political socialization.

Locating those problems is by no doubt, the easiest part of any initiative dealing with new approaches in the history curriculum development. The difficulties appear when one attempts to outline specific proposals, which regard common approaches to be practiced in more countries in a region, especially if it is a complicated one as the Balkans.

It is an illusion to believe that history can be written in the same manner or from the same point of view. It would be difficult even if we were talking about countries which have no historical or present disputes, and the Balkans ones definitely do not belong to this category. The issue is so delicate, that sometimes, even the mentioning of the phrase "rewriting history", is considered as a "national treason", especially having in mind that in most countries (not only in the Balkans), the history curricula are revised and approved by the state.

However, the rewriting does not need to relate to changing history, as it is often misinterpreted. What can be an effective start, may include:

- Establishing common methodology, which means, more emphasis on the rational, critical evaluation of the historical processes, from different perspectives. The inclusion of "the view of the others", will in a long run, certainly contribute towards a more tolerant attitude, and help future generations not to judge the contemporary political relations with the eyes of "the enemies from the past".

- Common approach in the interpretation of the historical processes. Generally, it refers to curricula with less space devoted to wars and the always accompanying mythology, which is based on the "winners and victims" relation, and more texts referring to culture, education or science development through history. It also includes an emphasis on common cultural interaction and mutual influences, as well as an introduction to the other cultures and values, as opposed to the ethnocentric approach.

- A future-oriented history, with more contemporary contents and with an emphasis on the necessity for cooperation between the countries. It should only be based on the "lessons from the past", rather than having the past as a main determinant of the future.

An only way to begin such an initiative at this moment, would be through the civil sector activities and projects in all those countries, without a pessimism or a skepticism, since it seems that in a foreseeable time, the governmental policies would have to adopt this approach as a necessity.