
Council of Europe: report on the State of History Teaching in Europe. “Are young people prepared to understand pandemics and natural disasters?”

“Since the beginning of recorded human history, pandemics and natural disasters have highly impacted upon the historical narratives of mankind. Each time, they remind humans how fragile they are and how limited their knowledge is. Despite this impact, these events are given little attention in history education”, a report released today by the Council of Europe reads. “With the Covid-19 pandemic, and more recently the disastrous series of earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, children are faced with live and often raw information about events that seem exceptional and removed from our history. How well prepared are they to understand how such catastrophic events unfold and impact upon societies? What means do history teachers have to teach these topics to students?”. The first thematic report of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTe) analyses how pandemics and natural disasters are taught across different levels of education. “It gives a detailed overview of the teaching of the two topics in OHTe’s 16 member states, along with a cross country analysis – combining information provided by educational authorities and by history teachers themselves”. The report refers to important areas of concern such as the “inclusion of pandemics and natural disasters in history curricula, teachers’ pedagogical decisions about their teaching, multiperspectival approaches but also the use of scapegoating during these times of crises”. The results of the report are summarised in 15 key findings.

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