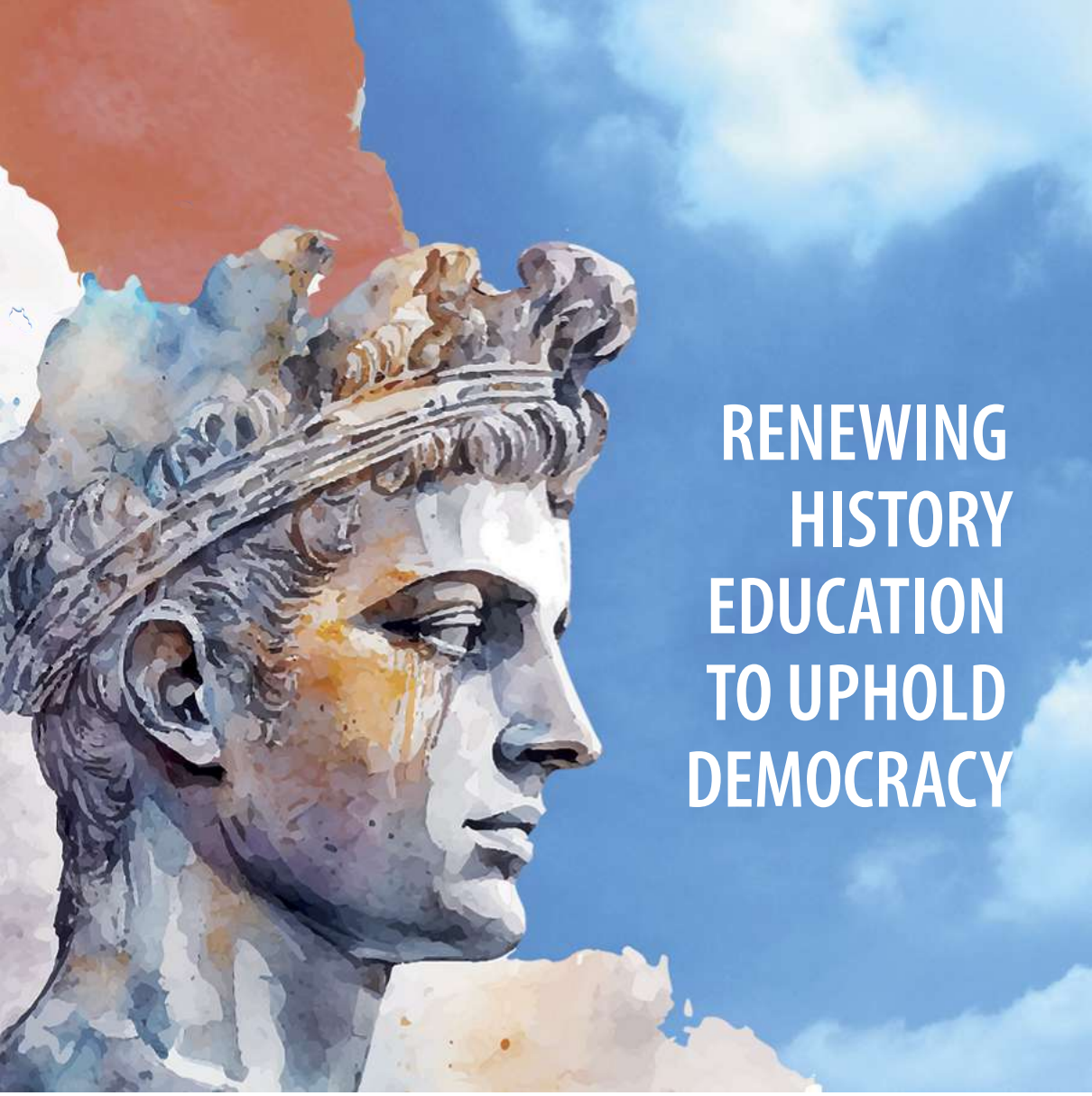

RENEWING HISTORY EDUCATION TO UPHOLD DEMOCRACY

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RENEWING HISTORY EDUCATION TO UPHOLD DEMOCRACY

Enhancing innovation in history education to strengthen democratic culture in Europe

Part of the European Union–Council of Europe joint project Transnational History Education and Co-operation Laboratory/HISTOLAB

In co-operation with:
Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (Council of Europe)
House of European History
Leibniz Institute for Educational Media/Georg Eckert Institute
International Society of History Didactics (ISHD)
EuroClio – European Association of History Educators
Federation for European Education (FEDE)

Council of Europe

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Aurora Ailincai and Fynn-Morten Heckert

History education is a double-edged sword. It can serve as a tool to transmit narratives that sow hatred and justify undemocratic practices, discrimination and exclusion, even war. One significant example of such misuse is the Russian Government's crafting of a distorted narrative that denies the existence of Ukraine as an independent country, with the aim of justifying its war of aggression against the country. Such narratives are also widely promoted through history teaching in schools, as evident in the new generation of school textbooks (Amacher et al. 2021; Safronova 2023). The problem of one-sided historical narratives that foster discord and division instead of unity and peace has itself a long history, having often served nation- and state-building processes and aimed to support political decisions, including waging wars, by providing historical arguments (Anderson 2016; Foster 2012; Gellner 1997; Giddens 1991; Smith 1991).

On the other hand, history education can also be used to teach multiple perspectives, to foster critical thinking and mutual understanding, seeking to unite people around their historic experiences rather than dividing them. In the wake of the horrors of the Second World War, the European governments that were committed to liberal democracy understood the crucial importance that history, remembrance and history teaching play in building trust and preserving peace on the continent. At the time, history teaching focused predominantly on political and military history, often conveying elite-centred narratives and presenting only a single view on history. It became clear that history education was in need of a profound review and innovation. In order to achieve such change, the Council of Europe member states launched a series of intergovernmental programmes and projects over the following decades (Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTE) 2024).

New forms of co-operation to address contemporary challenges

Soon after the Council of Europe was founded in 1949, its member states launched two multiannual programmes. While one was dedicated to the revision of history textbooks (1953-91) and was realised in close co-operation with the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, the other was dedicated to the improvement of history teaching practice in Europe (1965-91). The aims of such programmes were to introduce and develop the idea of Europe in history education based on facts and to complement the hitherto predominant focus on

political and military history. This was to be achieved by diversifying the topics and approaches in curricula to include cultural, economic and social history, all the while avoiding the use of history as a propaganda tool for European unity. Furthermore, through these programmes, the member states recognised the role history education could play in developing learners' critical thinking skills. Consequently, the programmes encouraged governments to introduce school students to scientific methods in history education, to offer multiple perspectives on historical questions and to create links to other curricular areas, especially citizenship education (Committee of Ministers 1983; Council of Europe 1953, 1965, n.d.a, n.d.b). As a result of these efforts, most member states were engaging in curricular reforms by the late 1980s.

Multiperspectivity was one of the main concepts in the Council of Europe's history education programme, and aspects of it were further developed over the years. Multiperspectivity is defined 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" (Council of Europe 2003: 14). It involves viewing historical events from several perspectives and acknowledging that historical actors, irrespective of how close they might be to a certain event, have only partial and limited views of it, and that, consequently, different – and often contrasting – interpretations of any historical event (co)exist. This is reflected in historical sources, which often present us with diverging narratives of the same events or historical processes, depending on the actors' role in them; their personal biases, political views, cultural backgrounds and social status; and the relative importance they attach to each respective event. While this is often taken for granted by most historians from their exposure to a variety of primary sources, it can be obscured in history teaching where it seeks to convey an uncontroversial, authoritative narrative account of historical facts.

In this light, the New Europe programme (1989-98) was launched to provide support for the reform of history teaching in central and eastern European countries in their transition from communism to liberal democracy. The development of democratic citizenship education was a prominent aim here, including how history teaching can reflect the positive values of liberal democratic societies. A set of criteria was developed to evaluate curricula, teaching resources and teaching practices in this light. This sparked several bilateral and regional co-operation programmes aimed at supporting history teaching in line with the standards and values of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe n.d.c).

After the conclusion of these programmes, shorter-term intergovernmental projects, which aligned with the basic principles outlined above and were closely connected with the political developments at the time, explored certain aspects in more depth. In the context of the War of Yugoslav Succession, for instance, war propaganda featuring narratives of hatred were used to legitimise gross violations of human rights of the civilian population. This led to the mass killing of more than 8 000 Bosnian Muslim boys and men and the expulsion of women and

children from the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, which the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (n.d.) classified as genocide. These events demonstrated the need to strengthen the civic component of history teaching, with a view to developing a historical understanding of and appreciation for the diversity of European societies (Council of Europe 2002) and to furthering its potential to contribute to the prevention of crimes against humanity in the present. This ethos became an integral part of the Committee of Ministers' (2001) Recommendation on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe, which stresses, for example, the importance of teaching about the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity to prevent such events in the future. The special emphasis on the Holocaust can also be seen in the Council of Europe's programme on Remembrance of the Holocaust and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity (Council of Europe n.d.d), which resulted in the recent adoption of the Committee of Ministers' (2022) Recommendation on passing on remembrance of the Holocaust and preventing crimes against humanity.

Other intergovernmental projects that were explicitly aimed at promoting intercultural tolerance and appreciation of societies' diversity through history teaching were The Image of the Other in History Teaching (2006-2009) (Council of Europe n.d.e), which led to the Committee of Ministers' 2011 Recommendation on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching, and the current project Educating for Diversity and Democracy: Teaching History in Contemporary Europe (2019) (Council of Europe n.d.f). Furthermore, the Committee of Ministers (2020) has adopted the Recommendation on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials.[1] The second big thematic focus of such co-operation programmes has been to strengthen "the European dimension in history teaching", through the identically named project (2002-06) (Council of Europe n.d.g) and Shared Histories for a Europe without Dividing Lines (2010-14) (Council of Europe 2014). Both projects used key events as a basis for developing activities and materials to demonstrate their European impact, while at the same time acknowledging and appreciating the diversity of perspectives in relation to the identified topics.

The close connection between history teaching and the development of learners' critical thinking skills, based on critically questioning historical narratives by engaging with historical evidence from multiple perspectives, strengthens learners' capacities to act as responsible democratic citizens and serves as a common thread connecting the mentioned projects. This relationship has been expressed in the Council of Europe's (2018a) Reference

1. The term "Roma and Travellers" is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, in which history forms part of the competences related to "knowledge and critical understanding of the world".[2]

Contemporary challenges to history education

Alongside the constant challenge of bridging the gaps between academia and classroom teaching, history educators and curriculum developers are also confronted with the need to adapt to rapid technological advances. For instance, learners encounter historical content in entirely new ways due to the advent of social media and their instant accessibility via smartphones, as well as the increased importance of visual content (especially on Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok) over written content (such as on Facebook or Twitter/X) especially for users under 30 years of age (Anderson et al. 2023; Auxier and Anderson 2021; Haydn and Ribbens 2017). Here disinformation campaigns run by several governments (such as the Russian one) pose a new threat to undermine citizens' trust in each other, their neighbouring states, democratic structures and European unity (e.g. European Council/Council of the European Union 2023; Sarts 2020).

The use of video games for educational purposes is another interesting point of debate. As with social media, they are preferred by a significant number of learners. While educational games might be a way to encourage learners' interest in history, the selection of games and how they should be used are still a matter of ongoing debate (Biaggi 2020; McCall 2023).

Finally, the widespread accessibility of generative artificial intelligence (AI) poses new questions for history teaching: while the extraordinary capacities of programmes such as ChatGPT to summarise complex topics are praised by many, educators also need to consider issues related to accountability and false information (Fostikov 2023; Hickey 2024).

In light of these challenges, history education remains a relevant factor for developing citizens' critical thinking skills and supporting them in building greater resilience to attempts to distort history and undermine peace and democracy. The potential for innovation in history education therefore needs to be seriously addressed. Alongside an appreciation of shared European core values, it is paramount to combine the traditional and new modes of instruction in ways that are best suited to strengthening critical and historical thinking skills. In exploring such solutions, it is important to have solid empirical data to inform policies and teaching practices, in addition to fostering exchanges and knowledge sharing between key stakeholders in the field of history education. These are key to the successful adaptation of history education to the most important recent developments.

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2. This overview was published in the OHTE general report (2024).

The legacy of the Council of Europe's work in history education

Recognising the central role that history education can play in countering the contemporary challenges described above, the Council of Europe scaled up its commitment to democratic history education through the establishment of a new mechanism, the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe, in 2020. This Observatory aims to create a snapshot of how history education is taught in its member states through a series of general and thematic reports. The general reports, the first of which was published in December 2023, provide an overview of the general state of history teaching in Observatory member states in relation to a wide range of issues, for example: hours of teaching, curricula creation procedures, textbooks and other resources, teaching practices, assessments and teacher training (OHTE 2024). The thematic reports complement this picture by providing in-depth analyses of how specific topics are taught in the member states. The first thematic report published in December 2022 – with the Covid-19 pandemic still ongoing – focuses on how teaching about pandemics and natural disasters is reflected in history teaching (OHTE 2022). The second thematic report, due to be published in December 2024, will analyse how the histories of economic crises are taught in the Observatory's member states.

Through its reports, the Observatory actively contributes to the creation of the previously mentioned dataset, which can inform the improvement and adaptation of policies related to history education. At the same time, the European Union has acknowledged the need to invest in innovation in the field of history education and, in 2022, joined forces with the Council of Europe to establish the joint project HISTOLAB – Transnational History Education and Co-operation Laboratory. The project is dedicated to exploring and promoting innovation in history education and is in practice closely connected to the work of the Observatory. It also functions as its co-operation and outreach platform. While the reports of the Observatory look into how history is taught in member states today, HISTOLAB explores how history could be taught tomorrow. It does so by bringing together key stakeholders in the field of history education from different fields. On the Advisory Board, educators are represented via the European Association of History Educators (EuroClio). Academic perspectives are included in the Advisory Board membership via the Leibniz Institute for Educational Media/Georg Eckert Institute, focusing on resources and educational media, and the International Society of History Didactics (ISHD), focusing on teaching practices. Besides researchers and teachers, public history stakeholders are also actively engaged in HISTOLAB. For instance, the House of European History brings expertise related to museums to the table, while the Federation for European Education (FEDE) enriches the project with its work in adult and non-formal education. The inclusion of two members of the Observatory's Scientific Advisory Council ensures close co-ordination and fruitful co-operation between these two mechanisms. In all its activities, HISTOLAB reaches out to a wide range of stakeholders beyond the members of the Advisory Board to maximise its inclusiveness.

HISTOLAB seeks to advance the debate on innovation in history education and to drive innovation in history teaching throughout Europe through a set of activities. These activities centre around pooling, sharing and multiplying existing knowledge, as well as generating new knowledge. First, HISTOLAB has created a digital hub,[3] which is a platform where information related to history education is centralised. This is a direct response to the difficulties expressed by many stakeholders in navigating the vast amount of initiatives, projects and resources that are available online but scattered all over the internet (OHTE 2024). Through the HIST-CONNECT database, users can find experts and organisations active in history education directly matching specific search criteria such as fields of expertise. They can also be contacted directly via the platform. On this interactive platform, users and organisations can apply for membership based on specific criteria. Furthermore, it offers an interactive calendar and bulletin board through which registered users can share their project experiences, events and opportunities with the community of stakeholders.

The Resource Hub provides a unique collection of resources related to history education, including documents from international organisations (e.g. reports or recommendations), databases with official information (e.g. curricula and textbooks via the services of partners such as the Leibniz Institute for Educational Media), teaching materials from civil society organisations (e.g. EuroClio), or sources related to the history of history education, such as historical textbooks. The Resource Hub is a "living database" that grows organically, as every visitor can submit proposals for resources to be included. Thus, researchers, policy makers and history educators alike can find relevant resources for their work via the Hub, which provides a unique space for accessing recommendations at international level, regulations at governmental level, scientific data, and materials from civil society organisations. Documents, projects and databases can be found based on specific criteria, helping users to navigate the vast number of materials and resources related to history education available online.

The annually organised European Innovation Days in History Education conferences are a major component of the project, as they allow history educators to present their work and to exchange good practices and experiences in person. Bringing together academics, policy makers and practitioners, they provide a unique opportunity for educators and researchers to widen their networks and perspectives. Through these pan-European exchanges, gaps between academic history and history teaching can be discussed and addressed. The HISTOLAB Award for Innovative School Projects in History Education takes place within the framework of the Innovation Days. Here, in line with the Learners First strategy of the Council of Europe (2023), the learner takes centre stage and is given the opportunity to communicate their ideas and needs by showcasing their learner-led history education projects as good practices to the community of history educators. The awarded projects are made publicly visible each year on the digital hub. The key takeaways of these events are included at the end of this volume in Chapter 6.

3. https://histolab.coe.int.

The HISTOLAB tutorial series explores an innovative format by offering video tutorials for teachers to learn about possibilities to enhance their teaching practice. Each tutorial is dedicated to a specific topic, such as the Holocaust, histories of conflict, Roma history or gender history. They offer specific guidance to teachers on putting the principle of multiperspectivity into practice and utilising new technologies for history teaching in meaningful ways. Each video is professionally recorded and edited to provide a pleasant user experience that encourages engagement. One significant benefit of this format is the constant availability of the tutorials online and low barriers of access (for instance, they do not require registration for a webinar).

Finally, the HISTOLAB Toolkit to debunk fake news in history classes is a clear reaction to the challenge described in the previous section: the prevalence of distorted historical information in online spaces that aims to undermine trust in democracy and to sow discord in Europe. The toolkit aims at strengthening learners' critical and historical thinking skills, enabling them to critically question and analyse the historical content they encounter online. It contains 11 learning activities and can be used both in classrooms and autonomously by learners (Council of Europe, forthcoming).

Through the HISTOLAB Fellowship, the project supports the work of young researchers focusing on innovation in history education. It does so by offering a financial grant, as well as access to the resources and expertise of its partner organisations, notably the Leibniz Institute for Educational Media/Georg Eckert Institute, EuroClio and the House of European History. Each fellowship has resulted in the creation and publication of a scientific article related to innovation in history education. Through the supported articles, HISTOLAB seeks to encourage young researchers to build expertise in this field and to contribute to meeting their academic needs in these thematic areas. All articles included in this book were presented at the European Innovation Days in History Education conference on 5 April 2024 in Strasbourg and are available on the HISTOLAB Digital Hub. The articles intend to benefit policy makers and history educators alike by offering reflections on how innovation in history education can be approached meaningfully in relation to both digital and non-digital tools and methods.

Presentation of the articles supported by the HISTOLAB Fellowship

This volume presents the research findings of the HISTOLAB Fellows 2023/24. All research projects are firmly rooted in the Council of Europe value system, in promoting history education that supports democratic culture in its member states, and connect to several relevant instruments, such as the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (Council of Europe 2018a) and the Principles and Guidelines for Quality History Teaching in the 21st Century (Council of Europe 2018b). The authors locate these documents in the context of the work of other international stakeholders, such as the European Commission and the United Nations system, as well as international professional associations like EuroClio.

By incorporating a wide range of history education stakeholders in their analyses, they underline the importance of collaboration between different sectors to improve history education.

The chapters draw on a wide range of source material. They analyse policy documents, textbooks and curricula, utilising a wide range of methods. The authors develop theoretical models further and propose practical approaches that could support the creation of innovative forms of history education, contributing to bringing policy recommendations to life in creative ways and to developing them further.

The research findings of the HISTOLAB fellows shine a light on the central challenges of current and future history education within and beyond the classrooms of schools in Europe. Their research explores successes and obstacles in the democratisation of history teaching and in relation to public history formats, as well as to curriculum and textbook development. In their studies, the fellows emphasise the need for disciplinary skills in identifying, critically questioning and analysing historical sources for an education for democracy. Such skills are especially important for strengthening learners' resilience to historical distortions and disinformation campaigns more generally. They further explore opportunities and limitations of utilising digital tools and digital formats for historical learning.

The HISTOLAB fellows emphasise the growing significance of learning locations outside of schools, such as museums and historical sites, which connect to the life world of the students and offer a laboratory for new didactic approaches that bridge the digital with the material culture of history. They offer concrete examples to dispel the fears of some of their colleagues that defining history education as an integral part of education for democracy, inclusion and sustainability might weaken the academic quality of history education.

Ana Radaković's chapter examines success factors and obstacles to curricular reform aimed at strengthening the European dimension in history teaching in Serbia. In doing so, she offers an insightful overview of different ways that "Europe" is constructed in the recommendations and resolutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe, and she locates the curricular reform in Serbia in this context. In her chapter, Radaković combines curriculum and textbook analysis with an analysis of teachers' and university students' perspectives on teaching European history in Serbia. Radaković identifies a growing recognition among Serbian students that European history is not an opposite dimension to national history and emphasises the continued need to train all stakeholders in the history teaching process on perceiving and incorporating the European dimension in their teaching practice.

Foteini Venieri's chapter focuses on "Mapping the digital transition of museum theatre as an enrichment tool for virtual museum education". After introducing theatre and performance-based engagement in museum contexts, a well-suited method to combine cognitive with emotional learning, Venieri explores the potential for their transposition to digital environments. Based on a thorough evaluation of different digital museum theatre projects, Venieri identifies good

practices in this field, as well as factors that positively affect the impact of digital museum theatre projects. These contain technological, conceptual, social and contextual aspects, such as the availability of infrastructures, the authenticity of spaces, trust between participants and actors, as well as the abilities to adapt to time constraints and leverage primary sources in these particular contexts.

Jan-Christian Wilkening's chapter, "More than accessibility – Including people with (intellectual) disabilities in public history" calls for people with intellectual disabilities to be actively included in the shaping of history teaching and historical culture. Such participation would raise awareness in society of the need to overcome perceptions related to medical pathology and would help to visualise and potentially resolve socially conditioned segregation, or even exclusion. In doing so, he links two important processes through which history education opens up and becomes more inclusive, namely by including learning activities beyond the classroom and by giving persons with intellectual disabilities the possibility to actively engage in the creation of historical narratives.

In his chapter "Exploring the potential of emerging digital technologies for history education" Miljenko Hajdarović analyses the ways in which new digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality or video games can enhance history teaching and pinpoints the limitations of such technologies. By drawing on a wide range of studies, expert interviews and a teacher survey, he creates a snapshot of the ways in which such technologies are already used and also makes predictions on their use in European classrooms in the future.

The chapters not only complement one another but also stimulate and inspire each other. While Hajdarović analyses the potential that digital transformation offers for history teaching, Venieri focuses on museum theatre as a specific mode of instruction and provides proposals for interactive and sensory learning in digital environments. Wilkening on the other hand, pays attention to the inclusivity of the process of developing such offers. These fellows bring to light the need for interactive pedagogies that are responsive to the sociocultural diversity and interests of students. They emphasise that these can contribute to a greater understanding of members belonging to different communities, maximise the potential benefits offered by the combination of digital and analogue forms of history education, as well as enhance the inclusivity of history education. The studies further show that history education should equally consider the cognitive, emotive and ethical dimension of history. Bringing together new digital tools with forms of living history that are not confined to military history, but which explicitly include social and cultural history, is seen as an appropriate way of avoiding polarising emotionalism and politicisation of history education.

While covering different subject matters, the chapters all share a common thread – an innovative perspective on the future of history education for democratic societies in Europe. Supported by their research, the authors compellingly demonstrate that actively shaping the future of history education involves placing the learner at the centre by experimenting with different innovative forms of history education.

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Chapter 2
Strengthening the European dimension through curriculum reform in Serbia

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Introduction

History is compulsory within Serbia's educational framework, spanning both primary and secondary levels. In primary education, history is typically introduced in the upper grades, encompassing the fifth to eighth years, while in secondary education it extends over varying durations depending on the department: four years in the general and social-linguistic department, three years in the natural science department, and one or two years in vocational secondary schools (OHTE 2024: 109). Since 2000, Serbia has been making efforts to align its education system more closely with European standards. This included opening the textbook market to private publishers in 2003 and refining educational standards across subjects. A significant reform occurred in 2017, introducing new history curricula for grammar schools. These changes shifted the focus towards thematic learning, long-term historical study and critical thinking skills. Rather than just memorising content, the new curricula emphasise outcomes and competencies aligned with lifelong learning and democratic values, as recommended by the Council of Europe.

This chapter explores how the European dimension is integrated into the new history curricula and its impact on teachers and students in Serbia. The aim is to identify challenges in incorporating European perspectives into history education. Alongside examining existing interpretations of the European dimension in history teaching, the study seeks to identify aspects of Europeanisation that fit Serbia's unique societal and educational context. Methodologically, the research involves analysing curricula, educational standards and textbooks, conducting teacher interviews, and surveying university students and high-school pupils.

The chapter provides a theoretical background on conceptualisations of Europe and Serbia's positioning therein, followed by an exploration of different interpretations of the European dimension in education, particularly history teaching. It then outlines the research methods employed before presenting the findings from each analysis and concluding with reflections on the study's implications.

Europe – and Serbia within Europe

Defining Europe is a multifaceted challenge, entwined with geographical, historical, cultural, political, economic and social dimensions. As Guy Neave articulated in 1984, the concept of Europe is deeply contested, with interpretations as varied as the interests vying for its definition (Convery et al. 1997: 2). Similarly, Peter Burke's reflection in 1980 underscores Europe not merely as a geographical entity but as a concept – an idea shaped by perceptions and narratives (Burke 1980: 21).

J. G. A. Pocock delves into the historical journey of Europe, tracing its evolution from a geographic term to a symbol of civilisation, a process marked by linguistic manipulation and cultural representation (Pocock 1997: 12). From the epochs of Hellenic and Roman dominance to the Christian and modern eras, Europe has been continually transformed, shaped by historical forces and ideological currents (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2023: 16-44).

Enlightenment thinkers played a pivotal role in shaping Europe's identity, associating it with notions of progress, scientific rationality and religious tolerance. This intellectual ferment laid the groundwork for a cohesive understanding of Europe, transcending geographical boundaries and embracing a shared cultural heritage (Pocock 1997; Stock 2017; Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2023). Pocock argues that economic imperatives, particularly the desire to end religious conflicts, drove Europe towards institutional unification, which accelerated after the devastation of the Second World War. This era saw the birth of the European Union – a bold experiment in supranational governance aimed at fostering peace, prosperity and co-operation among its member states (Pocock 1997: 18).

Despite its tumultuous history marked by dissent and division, Europe has come to embody ideals of peace, democracy and human rights. The Council of Europe articulated a collective vision for a united Europe grounded in shared values and aspirations. The European Union, through its advocacy of the "four freedoms", seeks to promote the free movement of goods, people, services and capital, fostering deeper integration and solidarity among its diverse members (Stock 2017: 27).

In essence, the discourse on Europe reflects an ongoing quest to reconcile its diverse past, confront its present challenges and envision a shared future. Triandafyllidou and Gropas distil this narrative into three core tenets guiding Europe's political project: the regeneration of European identity and culture, the defence of its ideals against external threats and the collective endeavour to forge a more prosperous and inclusive future (ibid.: 69).

Borders and boundaries remain central to conceptualisations of Europe, prompting questions about their authority and criteria for inclusion. The issue of identity may play a role in this process. Identity, shaped by historical, socio-economic and cultural factors, fuels intense debate – is European identity primarily political or cultural? Does it constitute a supranational "umbrella"

identity or clash with national identities? Prevailing narratives emphasise diversity, yet historical evolution sheds light on its formation.

In the late 17th century, the Age of Discovery sparked a shift in European identity from a dichotomy of Western Christian Europe versus Eastern Islam to a Western European cultural identity shaped by encounters in the New World (ibid.: 43).[4] However, defining Europe's borders, especially its eastern frontier, has long perplexed intellectuals. The concept of Europe originally applied to the Balkans, gradually shifted westward during Byzantine times, leaving the region on the periphery. The Byzantines, seeing themselves as Romans, ceded the term "Europe" to Western powers, complicating delineation (Pocock 1997: 17-19). The lack of clear frontiers between Europe and Asia further complicates the issue (ibid.: 19). The Ottoman conquest and the presence of Tatars eroded Eastern Europe's European cultural ties, leaving its eastern frontier ambiguous until the Cold War era. The Iron Curtain, perceived as Europe's eastern boundary, divided Europe politically despite shared geographical and cultural traits (Shennan 1991: 22). However, with its fall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the question of Europe's new eastern boundary resurfaced.

Serbia's historical journey on the Balkan Peninsula encompasses transitions from a Byzantine province to a medieval state under Ottoman rule, followed by reclaiming independence in the 19th century. Despite its active participation in both world wars, Serbia found itself behind the Iron Curtain in 1945, maintaining a marginal status within Europe throughout its history. The late 20th century saw the institutionalisation of European unity through the European Union's formation juxtaposed with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, leading to devastating conflicts. Maria Todorova's analysis in *Imagining the Balkans* underscores the global impact of these events, epitomised by the term "balkanisation" (Todorova 2009).

Today, Serbia remains a society marked by the legacy of conflict, with various ethnic and religious minorities coexisting alongside the Serbian Orthodox Christian majority. While constitutionally guaranteed minority rights are in place, Serbia's relationship with Europe remains complex. Despite being a Council of Europe member and having engaged in EU accession talks since 2014, Serbia's integration faces challenges influenced by enduring negative perceptions stemming from the Yugoslav Wars (Šuica and Radaković 2023). Tanja Petrović's observations highlight Balkan societies' active negotiation of "Europeanness" and ongoing debates about the implications of Europeanisation for European periphery countries perceived to be on the periphery (Petrović 2014: 13). Despite obstacles, Serbia's engagement with the concept of Europe continues to evolve, reflecting broader narratives of identity and belonging in the region.

4. The terms "discovery" and "New World" are used to express a Eurocentric perspective that enhanced the constitution of the European identity.

The European dimension in education

Having explored the numerous aspects and perceptions of Europe for the purpose of this research, I will now examine the European dimension in education and in history teaching specifically. The study *Pupils' perceptions of Europe* presented two approaches were presented to locate and reflect the European dimension and its educational implications – prescriptive and explorative (Convery et al. 1997). The first is contained in official documents and local, national and European policy statements. It shows how the European dimension and its implementation are institutionally prescribed. The explorative approach, on the other hand, focuses on academic exploration of the meaning, applications and implications of the European dimension (ibid.: 3). I will maintain this classification for the purposes of explaining the phenomenon.

Prescriptive approach

The prescriptive approach to integrating the European dimension in education involves recommendations from the European Union and the Council of Europe, along with member states' responses. Education, viewed as a nation-building mechanism, posed challenges when introducing the European dimension. Initially, the European Community focused on the economic aspects of education during the 1960s and 1970s. The term "European dimension" emerged officially in 1976 (Council of the European Communities 1976), with subsequent aspirations for cultural, social and political integration in the 1980s (Philippou 2005: 344).

A pivotal moment came with the 1988 Resolution of the Council and Ministers of Education, which aimed to strengthen European identity and promote democratic values (Resolution 1988: 1). Strategies included incorporating the European dimension into educational systems and fostering international contacts among students and teachers. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 expanded this integration to general education and emphasised strategies such as language teaching, technology exchange and mobility programmes (Treaty on European Union 1992).

Subsequent documents like the Green Paper on the European Dimension of Education (1993) and the White Paper on Education and Training (1995) emphasised shared values and civic responsibilities alongside economic outcomes (Commission of the European Communities 1993, 1995). Although the White Paper focused on vocational needs, it also stressed the importance of personal development and cultural heritage (Commission of the European Communities 1995: 3). The Council of Europe has also prioritised promoting the European dimension in education, aligning with efforts at the EU level.

Explorative approach

The explorative approach to understanding the European dimension in education involves scientific research, as categorised by Stavroula Philippou into celebratory, sceptic and combinatory views (Philippou 2005: 346-7). These perspectives critique legislative documents and advocate for change.

In the report on the 4th International Symposium in the Netherlands "The European Dimension in Education", Margaret McGhie distinguishes between the European perspective and the European dimension, highlighting the importance of European citizenship in fostering unity amid diversity (McGhie 1993). Similarly, Brock and Tulaswiecz define the European dimension as encompassing knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable engagement with Europe's complexities and promote European identity and consciousness (Brock and Tulaswiecz 1994). Overall, the European dimension is viewed as a dynamic process aimed at fostering understanding, participation and commitment to Europe among young people (Convery et al. 1997: 4-5).

Studies from the early 1990s highlight concerns about nationalistic interpretations of history and the focus on information over awareness or active participation (Ryba 1992). Additionally, there is criticism of using the European dimension for economic efficiency and promoting European cultural unity and citizenship. Hansen (1998) argues that the definition of European culture excludes many EU citizens, as it is based on specific cultural and historical legacies. This exclusionary approach contradicts principles like democracy and human rights outlined in the 1988 Resolution (Hansen 1998: 14). However, improvements have been made in citizenship access and participation, as reflected in the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue in 2008 (Council of Europe 2008: 28).

Faced with challenges such as migrations, antisemitism and right-wing ideologies, incorporating a European dimension into education becomes crucial. It can foster positive attitudes towards diversity, pluralism and equality, which are essential for successful coexistence and collaboration within local and global communities. This significance is underscored by the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union in 2018 on promoting shared values and inclusive education (Council of the European Union 2018).

The European dimension in history teaching

The concept of "Europe" in history education gained official recognition after the 1953 Council of Europe conference in Calw entitled "The European idea in history teaching". This conference emphasised using history to combat traditional prejudices among European people and to establish factual foundations for their development in modern states. It stressed the importance of teaching the past to enhance understanding of the present, particularly recent history, which is often omitted from school curricula. The introduction of the European dimension aimed to cultivate critical thinking by presenting diverse perspectives on historical issues and making students aware of their rights and responsibilities within the European

community (Council of Europe 1995). This conference paved the way for adopting the Council of Europe's Cultural Convention, which promoted cultural co-operation and understanding between European countries. The convention aimed to transcend national affiliations and nurture a shared regional cultural identity (Council of Europe 1954).

In the academic realm, debates surrounding the inclusion of the European dimension in history education have been abundant. Robert Stradling raises a significant question regarding what defines Europe better: its common cultural and historical heritage or its diversity. Both approaches have merits and limitations. Presenting European history as rooted in a common heritage, such as the Graeco-Roman philosophical tradition and Judaeo-Christian beliefs, has its drawbacks. This approach may overlook pivotal elements like non-European influences (such as Arabic or Ottoman politics, economy and philosophy) and regions not directly impacted by this heritage (e.g. tribes and people that lived in the northern part of the Roman Empire), as noted in Frederic Delouche's 1993 European history textbook. His textbook missed the history of Russia and Eastern Europe, European multiculturality, the history of women and scientific and technological impact (Stradling 2001: 25-6).

Conversely, the alternative approach emphasises Europe's diversity in languages, religions, ethnic groups and cultures. It acknowledges conflicts, tensions, political and economic dynamism, and creativity, including the global impact of European colonisation. However, this approach risks presenting a fragmented view of European history and neglecting broader contextual causal relations (ibid.: 27).

If we recognise the complexity of integrating the European dimension into national history curricula,[5] the essential initial step would be to foster an active approach to learning history, emphasising independent thinking, assessment, reasoning and action. The aim is to make history lessons relevant for 21st-century students, equipping them with the skills necessary for participation in a transforming European community. Rona Bušljeta identifies key skills for this purpose, including open-mindedness, awareness of differences, conflict resolution, curiosity and civic responsibility (Bušljeta 2015: 8-9).

The Council of Europe has played a significant role in promoting the European dimension in history education, offering recommendations on History and the learning of history in Europe (1996); History teaching in twenty-first-century Europe (2001);[6] History teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas (2009); and

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5. Stradling mentions the main requirements for introducing the European dimension into history programmes: 1) a content-rich syllabus focused on national history; 2) a degree of autonomy enjoyed by the history teacher different in every country; 3) limited educational resources; 4) a number of hours of history teaching in schools.

6. There is a whole subchapter (appendix, Section 3) dedicated to the European dimension in history teaching, focusing on presenting historical relationships between local, regional, national and European levels to underpin European awareness and identity. Stradling's study and other teaching materials cited in Rec(2001)15 were all outcomes of the project "Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century" (1997-2001).

Intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching (2011). All this work eventually resulted in the publication "Quality history education in the 21st century: principles and guidelines" (Council of Europe 2018), which outlines competencies for democratic culture and suggests strategies for developing flexible curricula and interactive pedagogies (Ibid.: 3).

Since the 1990s, various institutions and organisations, including EuroClio and the International Society for History Didactics, have conducted projects to promote multiple perspectives into European history. Publications like *Crossroads of European histories* and *Shared histories for a Europe without dividing lines* have contributed to this effort (Council of Europe 2009, 2014). The establishment of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe in 2020 represents a recent step towards promoting good-quality history education and understanding democratic culture.

Achieving the European dimension in history teaching

Nicola Savvides emphasises four key areas that are crucial for realising the objectives of the European dimension in education. These are imparting knowledge about Europe, developing skills essential for life and work within Europe, fostering specific attitudes like respect and tolerance, and promoting core European values such as democracy and human rights (Savvides 2008: 306-8). Complementing this perspective, Maitland Stobart suggests a three-fold approach to the European dimension in history teaching: content, attitudes and abilities. This framework aims to cultivate interactive history education that nurtures enquiry and critical thinking among students (Stobart 2003, cited in Dinç 2022).

In addressing the implementation of the European dimension within the history curriculum, Marchand and Joke van der Leeuw-Roord (1993) advocate for a thematic approach introduced in 1993. This method encourages exploring and analysing diverse viewpoints by focusing on carefully planned topics, thereby overcoming the challenge of comprehensive chronological coverage (Dinç 2022).

Moreover, Stavroula Philippou's curriculum principles offer a comprehensive framework for integrating the European dimension into history education. Philippou emphasises rethinking the definition of Europe, highlighting its constructed nature and focusing on diversity to mitigate Eurocentrism (Philippou 2005: 353-6). Pedagogical principles include fostering a critical approach to knowledge, language development and active learning through co-operation and experience (Ibid.: 357-9).

Building on these principles, Robert Stradling advocates for a selective approach to syllabus content in history education. He underscores the importance of choosing historically significant events while maintaining balance between particular and general aspects. Stradling also stresses incorporating horizontal and vertical historical perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of European history (Stradling 2001: 29-33).

Research and methodology

Taking into account all previously mentioned ideas regarding the European dimension into history education and suggestions for its implementation in the teaching and learning process, a new question arises – what does introducing the European dimension in history teaching in Serbia entail? I have situated it within the latest history curriculum reform for secondary schools. Considering that Serbia is a member state of some European institutions dealing with education (such as the Council of Europe and OHTE), but is still not a member of the EU, my research does not focus on the presentation of EU policies or methods for shaping and strengthening ideas of European citizenship. Instead, I addressed three additional points. First, achieving the European dimension can be better accomplished by shifting the focus from mere historical facts to the concepts of historical thinking, as proposed by Seixas and Morton (2013). These conceptual frameworks emphasise the methodological rigour inherent in historical enquiry and familiarise students with the complex processes involved in historical research and reconstruction. Secondly, considering diverse content and perspectives, greater emphasis should be placed on the history of ordinary people's daily lives. Similarly, the European dimension encompasses both regional and global perspectives. Therefore, there should be more opportunities to explore the histories of neighbouring countries as well as local regions, which have been impacted by their populations as well as other peoples and cultures. Eventually, I focused on these five aspects:

1. development of historical skills, including the inclusion and development of historical thinking concepts;
2. acquisition of historical knowledge about local, regional, European and global past events;
3. identity and memory – examining how many European phenomena are taught as "ours" in Serbian schools and how many are considered to be "European", and what the interpretation of these phenomena in the local context is;
4. recognition of the "others" (understanding and inclusion/tolerance/rejections) and examining to what extent multiperspectivity has been adopted;
5. participation of ordinary people in historical processes and democratisation.

These five aspects have been analysed in new curricula and updated history textbooks for secondary schools. Feedback has been gathered from secondary school history teachers, pupils and first-year history students, as they represent the first generation to be taught according to the reformed history curricula. During the examination of textbooks and feedback, attention was given to the extent to which curriculum recommendations and guidelines had been implemented in the text, teaching materials and classroom practice. An overview

of the current educational standards will be provided. The state is moving towards the introduction of a comprehensive final national state exam, known as the "great matura", at the conclusion of secondary schooling. Educational standards, transitioning from existing to new ones, will play a crucial role in this examination. Finally, an attempt will be made to ascertain whether notions of European identity exist among pupils in Serbia, and if so what form(s) they take.

The importance of textbooks as the primary educational resource is emphasised in several sections of the OHTE general report from 2024. This is particularly significant in Serbia, where the use of textbooks is mandated by education authorities. Results indicate that 91% of surveyed teachers use a textbook in every lesson (OHTE 2024: 105).

For the textbook analysis in this chapter, all textbooks written according to the latest curriculum reform were used. These include three textbooks for the 1st grade: *History textbook for the 1st grade of grammar school*, *History textbook for the 1st grade of grammar school* and *History textbook for the 1st grade of grammar school*.

Similarly, three textbooks for the 2nd grade were examined: *History textbook for the 2nd grade of grammar school*; *History textbook for the 2nd grade of grammar school* and *History textbook for the 2nd grade of grammar school*.

Additionally, two textbooks each were analysed for the 3rd grade of the general and sociolinguistic department: *History textbook for the 3rd grade of grammar school* and *History textbook for the 3rd grade of grammar school*.

Similarly, two textbooks each were examined for the 4th grade of the general and sociolinguistic department: *History textbook for the 4th grade of grammar school* and *History textbook for the 4th grade of grammar school*.

Textbooks for the 3rd grade of the natural science department were excluded as they are nearly identical to those for the 4th grade of sociolinguistics. The following criteria were evaluated:

1. development of historical thinking concepts – how the historical concepts and methods are explained, what historical sources are presented with the specific task or question, and how the didactical apparatus is developed;
2. grade topic, or the long-term phenomena – how it is explained, and to what extent it is covered at local, regional, national, European and global levels;
3. inclusion of "others" – national and religious minorities, women, LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities;
4. perspective of the "European" phenomena of the epoch.

Research commenced in 2019 for which teachers were asked about the new history curriculum reform. Secondary school teachers were interviewed

about the new curricula and their practical implementation, which was still ongoing at that time. The study expanded in 2020 with plans for continued research. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it had to be postponed. During this phase, five interviews were conducted with teachers from various municipalities in Belgrade. The questionnaire consisted of eight questions covering aspects such as the innovativeness of the curricula, differences from previous curricula, teaching methods, challenges faced, utilisation of prior knowledge, comparison of experiences with old and new curricula, students' reactions and competences developed. This research is published in Šuica and Radaković (2020: 50-53).

The research continued for the purpose of this chapter. When curricula reform was officially concluded, six new secondary school history teachers were interviewed. Interviews were conducted between 10 October and 8 November 2023. The teachers were invited to express their opinions about the latest reform, explain how they implemented it in practice and to what extent some aspects of the European dimension had been included in their classes (for a sample of the questionnaire, see Appendix 2.1).

In terms of university students' perspectives, a questionnaire was distributed among first-year bachelor students of the History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, in Belgrade. This cohort, which enrolled at the faculty in the 2023/2024 academic year, was the first to complete all four years of secondary schooling under the newly reformed history curricula for grammar schools. While not all the surveyed students had completed grammar school,[7] this chapter seeks to explore whether the European dimension was integrated into their secondary education and to gauge their current attitudes towards this aspect (see Appendix 2.2). The primary aim of these enquiries is to evaluate the extent to which the new history curricula were implemented in grammar school history lessons. Additionally, a secondary analysis delves into how these novel approaches to history teaching impact students' self-perceptions, including their views on regional and European similarities and a re-evaluation of European identity as one of their own identities.

Of the first-year bachelor students at the History Department, 24 responded to the survey administered on 18 October 2023 at the Faculty of Philosophy. These respondents represent various cities and towns across Serbia. Among them, the majority had completed grammar school (14), while the remaining students had attended different vocational schools, including medical (2), technical (4)and economic (4) institutions.[8]

A similar questionnaire, which included questions specifically about textbooks, was distributed among high school students in Belgrade and Niš in October and November 2023. All these students were in the 3rd or 4th grade

7. In Serbian *gimnazija*.

8. History as a special course is taught for one or two years in vocational secondary schools (OHTE 2024: 109).

at grammar school, where the newly reformed curricula were expected to be implemented. A total of 239 students from nine different schools participated in the study for the purposes of this chapter.

New history curricula and educational standards

In 2018 and 2019, the Institute for the Development of Education assembled a team of experts, including secondary school teachers, to design history curricula for secondary education. Aligning with the established pattern for all school subjects, the reformed history curricula introduce novel approaches to history instruction. They blend the traditionally used chronological model with a thematic approach, emphasising historical phenomena corresponding to Stradling's first-order concepts. Notably, these historical phenomena are structured according to the methodological concept of synchrony.

The initial topic/theme introduced in the 1st-grade curricula, implemented across three grades for science and mathematics programmes, and across four grades for general and sociolinguistic programmes, is entitled "Basics of historical enquiry". It delves into various aspects of methodology, establishing specific concepts of historical thinking in each grade. The 1st grade focuses on evidence as a historical thinking concept involving working with historical sources. This becomes a recurring theme in subsequent grades. Examining defined outcomes for each school year, it is evident that concepts like causation, continuity and change have also been integrated into the history curricula. For instance, students must analyse the cause–consequence concept and identify it in concrete examples (Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development 2020).

The 2nd-grade history curricula highlight the concept of continuity and change, instructing teachers to describe and practise elementary historical research and to explain the construct of interpreting the past. The 3rd grade curricula emphasis (multiple) historical perspectives, exercising the didactical concept of multiperspectivity in addition to evidence, causation and historical significance. The 4th grade, the final stage in this educational cycle, covers historical content crucial for understanding history's role in constructing collective and individual identities with the aim of fostering a critical attitude towards contemporary social, political and cultural phenomena using historical dimensions and of promoting historical consciousness among pupils.

At the age of 18 or 19, when pupils become adults fully responsible for their attitudes through to societal actions, the curricula address the state of different political, social and cultural phenomena within defined historical time frames. Mainly, the syllabi for each grade are divided into six or seven chapters dedicated to some aspect of the historical period taught. Besides "Basis of historical enquiry", there are "Key phenomena, processes, figures" (or something similar), "State and institutions", "Social and economic relations",

"Culture and daily life" and "Long-term phenomena" (sometimes packed with the civilisation heritage of the epoch). Introducing selected historical phenomena belonging to long-term processes or those classified as "first-order concepts" presents an innovative aspect of the curricula. Courses in secondary education (general and sociolinguistic) offer a four-year opportunity to explore different historical thinking concepts within these processes and diverse exemplary historical phenomena (Programme for Grammar Schools 2020).

The topics/themes of long-term processes introduced in the new history curricula serve as an educational vehicle to bridge the chronological gap, covering the development of historical phenomena from the early stages of civilisation to modern times. They tackle historical issues with contemporary significance that are easily recognisable in everyday situations or milieux. The 1st grade focuses on migrations, exploring the historical dimension, causes and consequences of migrations from prehistoric times to the present day, with a particular emphasis on the most significant migration waves, including those related to modern migrations, including ethnic displacements that could be placed in the wider European context. The 2nd-grade theme, "Myth, legend, and history as humanity", delves into the meaning and role of myths and legends in the past, with specific insight into modern political, ethnic, national or racial myths that initiated complex historical phenomena. The 3rd-grade theme, "Communication – past and present", instructs pupils to explore the historical context and significance of communication in the past, emphasising intercultural relations, geopolitical and economic consequences, transformations and ecological impact that are part of the European framework. The 4th-grade theme, "The rights of individuals and groups – past and present", raises awareness of the rights of individuals and social groups in different historical periods, with a particular focus on the development of human rights from the 19th century to today, including minority rights, violation of human rights, discrimination and international mechanisms of prevention and protection (Programme for Grammar Schools 2020).

The open-concept curricula allow teachers to choose the most suitable didactic and pedagogical approach for each phenomenon in the classroom. However, pupils are expected to analyse long-term phenomena from different perspectives, implementing historical thinking concepts such as historical significance, causation, continuity and change, evidence, historical perspectives and an ethical dimension (Šuica and Radaković 2020). Along the same lines, these new curricula lean on general subject competence, as well as specific subject competences – "Understanding history and developing a critical attitude towards the past and present" and "Understanding history and contemporary identities as the basis for active participation in modern society". General competence for history as a school subject has the goal not only of gaining knowledge about the past but also of developing different skills of critical thinking and maintaining and fostering democratic values that "include the respect of human rights development of intercultural dialogue and responsible attitude toward cultural-historical heritage" (Programme for

Grammar Schools 2020). Together with the subject-based competences, it is also necessary to refer to the Law on Education in the Republic of Serbia (2017) which prescribes at cross-curricular level the key competences for lifelong learning. Some of them are incorporated into the history curriculum for secondary education (Programme for Grammar Schools 2020).

After a thorough analysis of the new history curricula for secondary schools in Serbia, the pivotal step was taken towards inclusion of the European dimension. Putting the focus on educational outcomes and the learning process, together with introducing the concepts of historical thinking and long-term historical phenomena, the new history curricula are most certainly in accordance with some of the principles suggested by Stradling and Philippou. Some aspects need to be elaborated and deepened, particularly the selection of topics. Content ordered in this way might cause confusion among teachers. Nevertheless, this transformation of the educational aims for history teaching and the concrete steps for achieving them have led to the integration of the European dimension.

Educational standards and preparations for the final national state exam

The reform of history programmes in Serbian secondary schools has concluded, but other aspects of secondary education await change. The National State Exam project, funded by the European Union to enhance education quality and align Serbia's education system with those of EU member states, is a significant factor in this transformation. Implementation began in 2019 but was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. A monitoring committee oversees project preparation and execution, with two pilot sessions involving over 500 schools and 50 000 students. The first national exam was scheduled for 2023 but faced postponement due to ongoing challenges. Key issues include negotiations with universities regarding the exam's role in admissions and eligibility criteria. The regulations define exam types based on school type: general, artistic or vocational. Students on three-year vocational programmes take a different final exam. The national state exam includes tests in one's first language, literature and two elective subjects, with history among the general education options. Consequently, educational authorities are revisiting the standards for history as a school subject (Đorđević 2023).

Educational standards have been officially used in history teaching in Serbia since 2011. They are precise and fixed descriptions of knowledge, skills and abilities that students are expected to attain in a specific school subject by the conclusion of a particular educational phase. These standards are pivotal in shaping history curricula during the reform process and in creating questions for the national state exams.

For the subject of history, educational standards are specifically tailored for both primary and secondary education, and are primarily constructed based on the revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001). These standards are further divided into three subdomains: historical knowledge; research, interpretation and presentation of history; and historical foundations of modern

society. These subdomains encompass key concepts of historical thinking such as continuity and change, causation, historical significance, evidence and multiple perspectives. Additionally, they include elements of specific cross-curricular competences. Each subdomain comprises numerous descriptors representing knowledge, skills or abilities that students must be able to demonstrate after the educational cycle. The third subdomain on historical foundations of modern society aims to help students understand the historical origins of major features, phenomena and processes in their contemporary surroundings. It also aligns with the ethical dimension of historical thinking, fostering the culture of remembrance and addressing sensitive issues from the past (Standards for the subject of history 2015).

The following are some of the educational standards for history as a subject in high school, which are a step towards acquiring the European dimension.

- **IS.1.2.2.** The pupil perceives that there are different views of the same historical phenomenon based on the comparison of several historical sources.
- **IS.1.2.3.** The pupil recognises prejudices, stereotypes, propaganda and other types of bias in the interpretation of historical phenomena in historical and contemporary sources of information.
- **IS.1.3.1.** The pupil recognises the historical dimension of contemporary social phenomena and processes.
- **IS.1.3.3.** The pupil understands the importance and demonstrates a responsible attitude towards the cultural and historical heritage of their own and other nations.

These standards represent the basic level of knowledge and are expected to be achieved by 80% of pupils by the end of secondary schooling (Standards for the subject of history 2015: 59-60).

Challenges in implementing these educational standards in secondary schools include assessing values and attitudes. This overarching challenge has been recognised by Council of Europe experts in *Quality history education in the 21st century: principles and guidelines* (2018), and many other academic papers (Šuica and Radaković 2020: 46). It remains the main problem in the current preparations for the national state exam.

Secondly, besides the assessment, the current educational standards were written before the reflections and introduction of key competences for democratic culture. Considering that new history programmes for grammar schools depend on them as well, and with the principal goal of organising the great matura in the years to come, it is necessary to reform the current educational standards. For the European dimension to be adequately integrated into the standards would be a significant achievement.

New history textbooks for secondary schools in Serbia

One of the main observations from an analysis of secondary school history textbooks is that the methodological introduction, referred to in the curriculum as "Basics of historical enquiry", varies depending on the authors of the textbook. A notable example is the textbook for the 2nd grade published by Zavod za udžbenike (Mitrović and Vasin 2021). The authors of this textbook meticulously cover concepts such as chronology, space, historical sources, reconstruction of the past, interpretation, continuity and change.

In terms of the textbook structure, publishing house editors play a pivotal role. For instance, a significant number and variety of sources are included in all publications by Novi Logos. However, these sources do not accurately represent a multiperspective approach, nor do they aim to develop higher levels of cognitive skills, such as independent problem solving. Textbooks published by Zavod za udžbenike lack exercises or questions after presenting historical sources. An interesting exception is found in the textbooks mentioned for the 2nd grade, where tasks such as topics for reflection are included. For example, project assignments about the Huns and Slavs, according to sources, prompt students to consider how these peoples would have presented themselves based on their historical sources (Mitrović and Vasin 2021).

In terms of the topics covered in each grade, historical and geographical aspects are typically well explained. However, there is a notable absence of local and regional perspectives. The lack of a local perspective can be attributed to the fact that textbooks are written and published at the national level. However, the omission of regional perspectives is more concerning. The history of neighbouring countries is often presented only in the context of Serbia and as either enemies or allies. Dubravka Stojanović (2023) reaches similar conclusions in her latest study, *The past is coming: changes in interpretations of the past in Serbian history textbooks, 1913-1921*. Through a thorough examination of textbook narratives, she observes how the role of "enemies" has primarily been assigned to neighbouring peoples and countries, especially those formed after the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Stojanović 2023: 273-307). As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the European dimension should encompass more than just knowledge of historical facts about other European countries. While the historical phenomena emphasised in each grade are well developed, they are not explored from a regional perspective or in direct connection to neighbouring countries and their peoples. Incorporating regional perspectives would facilitate intercultural dialogue and foster a better understanding of neighbouring countries, particularly those that share similar historical and present-day experiences.

In line with the motto "Unity in diversity" and the concept of European identity, the inclusion of past national and religious minorities, and an emphasis on gender issues, are crucial for incorporating the European dimension into history teaching (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2023: 21-22). While narratives about women in the past, from prominent female figures to their societal roles

and emancipation, do exist (Rajić and Leovac 2023), the portrayal of women in the 4th-grade textbooks with a focus on individual and group rights is notably scarce. LGBTQ+ communities and people with disabilities are almost absent in Serbian history textbooks, except for a brief mention in the 4th-grade textbook by Zavod za udžbenike regarding their victimisation under the Nazi regime and its impact on human rights regulations (Pavlović 2023: 348). While national and religious minorities have gained some representation in the new textbooks, their portrayal still lacks the necessary multiple perspectives. These findings are consistent with the OHTE general report, which indicates that, while the history of minorities is covered in most courses, gender history is addressed in only some (OHTE 2024: 103).

The research findings regarding the presence and treatment of first-order concepts with potential European dimensions in all analysed textbooks are as follows.

- **1st grade:** Cultural heritage of antiquity (architecture, drama, poetry), political and social heritage of antiquity (democracy), script (alphabet), Christianity. These are presented as the Roman heritage within the territory of the modern Serbian state.

- **2nd grade:** Church, literacy, geographical "discoveries", technical discoveries, feudalism, absolutism, cities, manufacture, merchants and markets, revolutions. Geographical "discoveries" and absolutism are attributed exclusively to western Europe. While there are extensive chapters on cities, manufacture and markets, the national context is missing.

- **3rd grade:** Imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, parliamentarianism, industrial and technological revolution, liberalism and capitalism. Imperialism and colonialism are solely associated with Western European countries, while liberalism and capitalism lack clear connections to Serbian society at that time. The other phenomena are visible in the Serbian national context.

- **4th grade:** Communism, fascism, antisemitism, Holocaust, racism, antifascism, collaboration, terrorism, totalitarianism, globalisation, war crimes, decolonisation, human rights, European Union. Fascism, antisemitism, racism, Holocaust and totalitarianism are depicted as highly negative phenomena, with only the Holocaust acknowledged within the national context. Communism is objectively presented, but there are indications of bias in the selection of topics and commentary by the authors (in both examined books). Antifascism is portrayed as a central value of Serbian society in the 20th century, while collaboration is acknowledged but attributed only to Serbian politicians during the occupation in the Second World War as a necessary evil. Terrorism, war crimes, human rights and the European Union are terms relevant to both "European" and "Serbian" contexts.

The overarching takeaway is that there is a willingness to incorporate the European dimension into history textbooks in Serbia. However, it is evident that not all authors or editors fully grasp its implications.

Behind the classroom doors

Teachers' views

Analysis of the teachers' responses from 2019 reveals common themes. Most respondents expressed scepticism regarding the innovativeness of the reform, attributing it more to the teacher's approach than to a change in content. Innovativeness was seen as dependent on the teacher's enthusiasm. The study suggests that innovativeness should be viewed in terms of curriculum content rather than of a conceptual approach to developing historical thinking concepts influenced by the education system's longstanding nature. Adapting to advanced teaching approaches is constrained by educational traditions and pedagogic approaches from the teachers' initial training. Regarding the challenges, a lack of pupils' prior knowledge was identified as a primary issue, as the new curricula expect standards to have been covered in primary schooling. Teachers also cited problems with history textbooks, finding them inappropriate and confusing, emphasising the need for additional educational resources (Šuica and Radaković 2020: 50-3).

These outcomes align with the results of the regional EuroClio project ePACT from 2016 and 2017, which surveyed history teachers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,[9] Montenegro and Serbia. Results clearly showed the teachers' need for greater democracy within schools and increased involvement of teachers in decision-making processes. Such involvement could lead to more informed educational policies and foster a sense of ownership among educators (Marić and Jovanović 2017).

In contrast, teachers reported varied responses to students' reactions to new teaching methods. While some observed general disinterest among students, others noted positive changes, attributing these to enquiry-based and active learning methods. The study suggests a generational divide, with more experienced teachers displaying reluctance while younger teachers are more open to new approaches (Šuica and Radaković 2020: 50-53).

Teachers interviewed in October and November 2023 were asked about four main areas: their autonomy in lesson planning and teaching, representations of

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* All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

9. As of 12 February 2019, the official name of this country has changed to North Macedonia.

marginalised groups, use of sources and historical thinking concepts, and their perceptions of the latest curricular reform (see Appendix 2.1).

Regarding their autonomy, all teachers agreed that the reformed curricula provide them with sufficient freedom to create content and teaching methods tailored to their students' needs. They appreciated the flexibility in achieving educational goals and outcomes, emphasising the importance of critical thinking development among students. All respondents marked "developing critical thinking (analysis, comparison, evaluation of sources)" as the educational outcome they focus on, but the other answers also got at least four out of five positive responses (contents, student activities, building attitudes and value systems, developing key competences). However, some expressed challenges in balancing the prescribed educational standards with their teaching practices, particularly in incorporating diverse perspectives and historical thinking concepts effectively.

In terms of the representation of marginalised groups, most teachers mentioned discussing women and national and religious minorities in their lessons, albeit often in the context of war or common life. Women are also mentioned either as heroines or as part of the population affected by the same historical circumstances. However, they noted that the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities were less visible, with only a few teachers incorporating them into their teaching materials.

When it comes to the use of digital tools and historical sources, opinions vary among teachers. Some utilised these resources significantly to enhance their lessons, while others relied less on them or did not use them at all. Those who did utilise digital tools and sources emphasised their importance in engaging students and promoting a deeper understanding of historical concepts.

Teachers expressed challenges in encouraging students' understanding of second-order concepts and adapting to the new curricula. While they appreciated the focus on long-term historical phenomena and comparative analysis, they also noted discrepancies between prescribed standards and textbook-suggested sources. Some teachers found it challenging to effectively align their teaching practices with the prescribed standards. Four out of six teachers interviewed said they implemented the new reform in their work, while the other two marked their answer as "partially implemented". Those who chose "partially" elaborated by explaining how they adapted the new programme to their lessons, often changing the prescribed order of topics.[10] The general consensus is that the introduction of topics could be clearer, especially for students without prior experience of this approach.[11] As the teachers stressed, it can be difficult to explain solely the political aspects of one period without considering its cultural or economic background, and vice versa. They all identified this as a major challenge.

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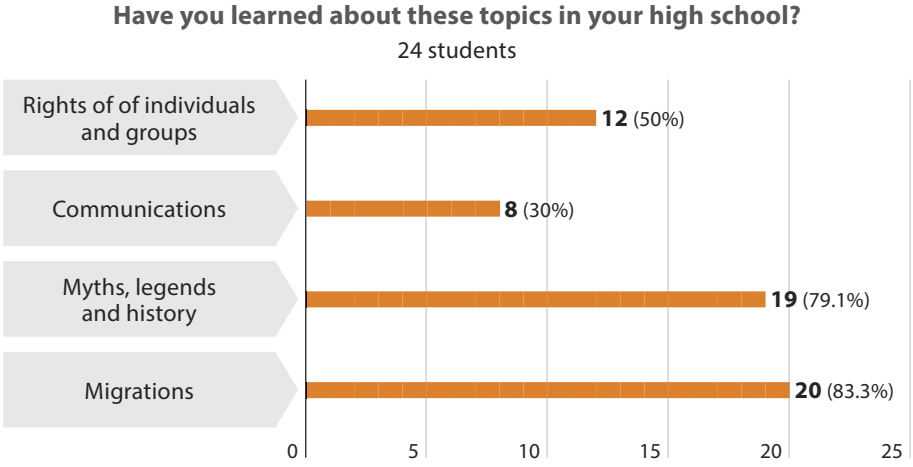
10. Teachers have full autonomy to implement the curricula in a way they find most suitable for pupils and to the way they teach or achieve learning outcomes, such as creating their own teaching agenda for topics or subject content.
11. The chronological approach is dominant in primary schools, while the thematic approach is also introduced in grammar school.

While teachers generally agreed that the textbooks aligned with the curriculum, they expressed concerns about the lack of multiperspectivity and one-sided perspectives in the sources provided. Additionally, there were discrepancies in the interpretation of reform principles among different authors, leading to divergent representations in textbooks. This inconsistency in textbook content and approach underscored the need for clearer guidelines and more comprehensive training for teachers to effectively implement the reformed curricula.

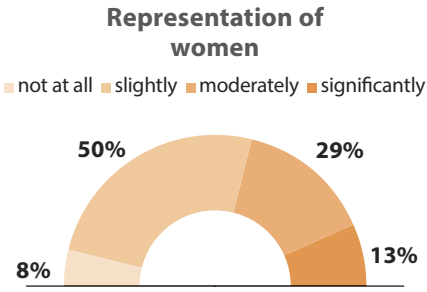
University students' view

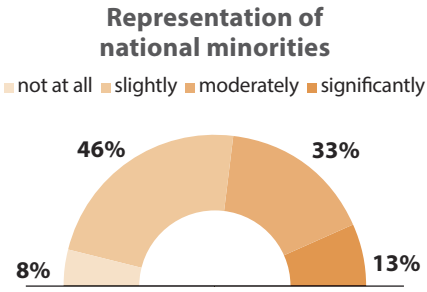
An initial question asks whether, throughout their secondary education, students learned about migrations, myths and legends as opposed to history as a science, communications and the rights of individuals and groups.[12] The majority (20) of the 24 students had learned about migrations, 19 had learned about myths and legends as opposed to history as a science, 8 had learned about communications and 12 had learned about rights.

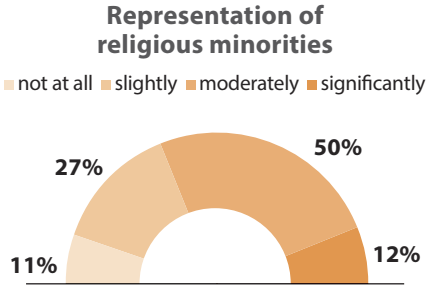


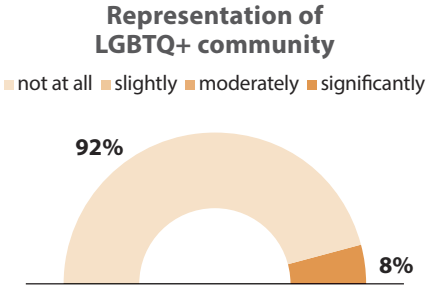
The next question was whether students had learned about certain groups – women, national minorities, religious minorities, the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities – and in what context. Women and national and religious minorities were usually included in the curricula, while the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities were mostly excluded. Women were mainly presented as heroines, or in the "learn more" part of the lesson, and national and religious minorities were usually presented in the context of war, everyday lives and respect for national minority and religious human rights and respect in society. When the LGBTQ+ community or people with disabilities were mentioned, it was usually presented in the context of "learn more" or respect for human rights.

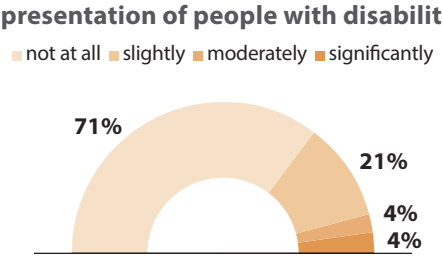
12. These long-term topics prescribed to be taught in grammar schools.



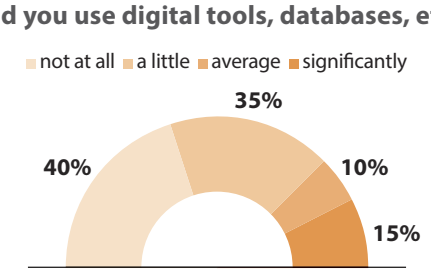




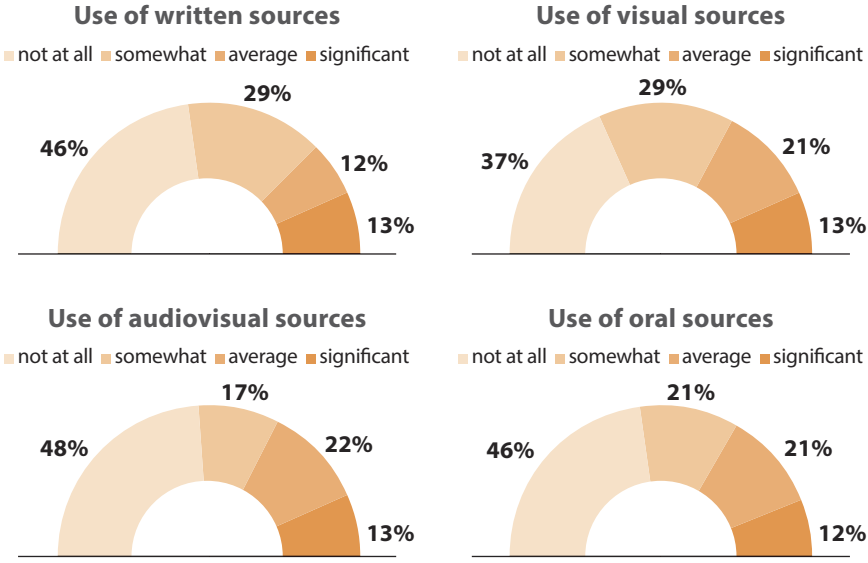




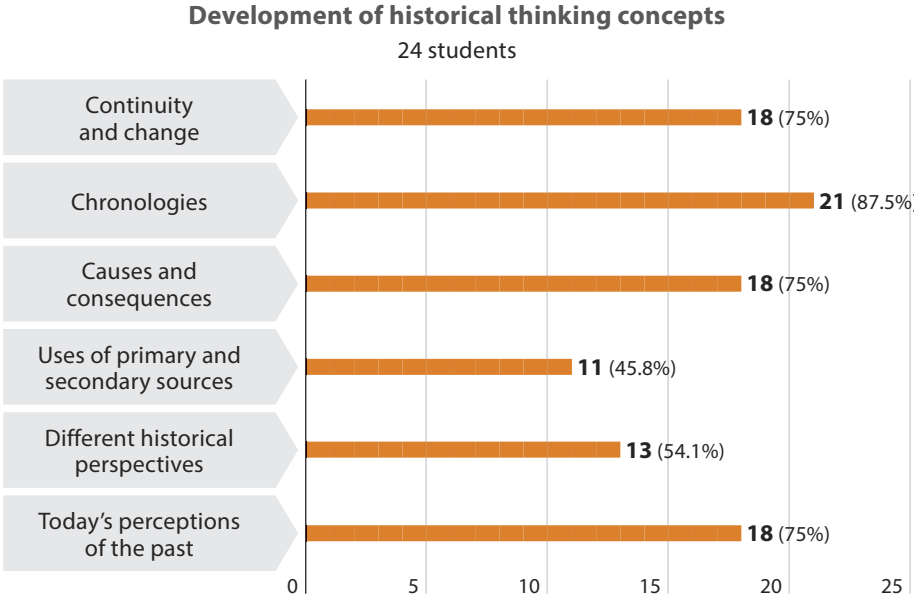
Answers to whether and how much students learned about individuals and groups who did not hold political power but influenced social trends in the 19th and 20th centuries were mostly negative. Just seven students said they had studied these historical actors. Most of the students interviewed (10) responded that they did not use digital tools, databases and means of communication for the needs of their classes. "A little" was the answer marked by seven students, "average" by two students and "significantly" by three students.



Regarding the use of historical sources during high school lessons, most respondents answered negatively to all four categories of sources: written, visual, audiovisual and oral.

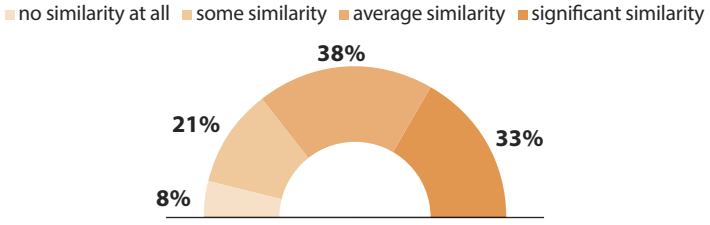


As for developing historical thinking concepts in their secondary education, most students answered "yes" for all categories: continuity and change in the past; chronologies; causes and consequences; different historical perspectives; today's perceptions of processes and events from the past, with the exception of the uses of primary and secondary sources.

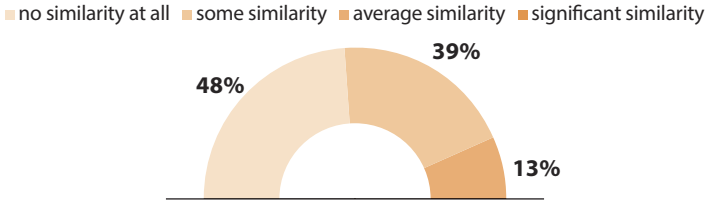


The following two questions aim to examine to what extent students find similarities in the political and social circumstances of the national past compared to the past in the Balkan states and the past in Europe. The majority believe that similarities with the countries of the Balkans are strong, while similarities with Europe are existent but not so strong.

How similar are the history and culture of the country you live in to other countries in the Balkans?



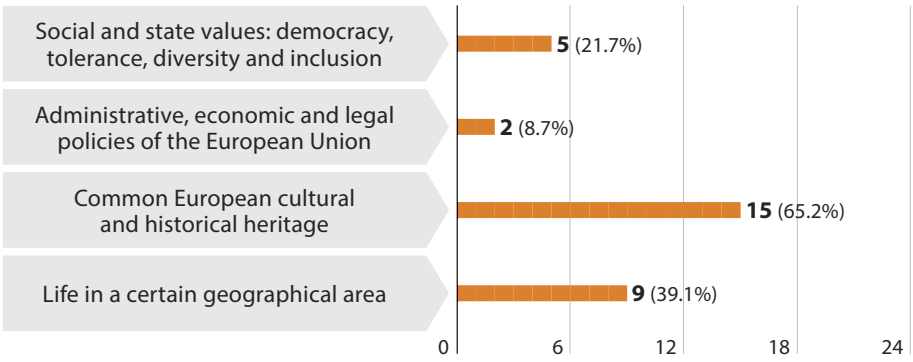
How similar are the history and culture of the country you live in to other countries in Europe?



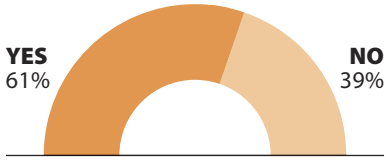
For the students interviewed, European identity mostly represents: common European cultural and historical heritage (15 answers), life in a certain geographical area, and social and state values – democracy, tolerance, diversity and inclusion (5 answers), while administrative, economic and legal policies of the European Union had just two responses. Finally, the majority (14 out of 23 students) answered that they considered the European identity as one of their own identities.

What does European identity mostly represent?

23 students



Do you consider the European identity as one of your identities?

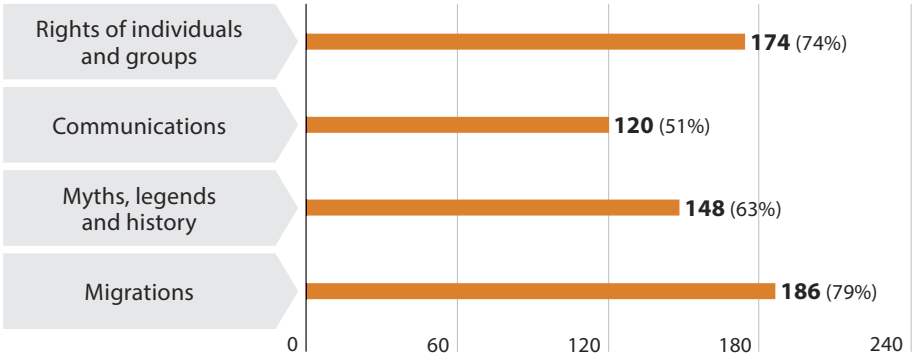


High-school students' view

In total, 239 high-school pupils filled in the questionnaire. On the question of whether they had learned about the topics prescribed for each grade, pupils responded "yes" to the following: migrations (79%); myths, legends and history (63%); communications (51%); and the rights of individuals and groups (74%). Notably, human rights are much more frequently taught in schools now than just a few years ago.

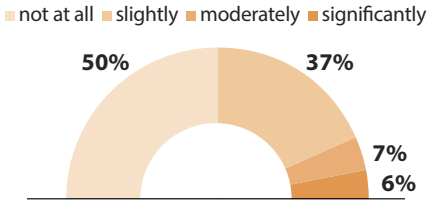
Have you learned about these topics in your high school?

239 high school pupils



Regarding the presence of women in history education, 50.2% of pupils responded that they were slightly present, 37% that they were moderately present, 7% that they were significantly present and fewer than 6% that they were not present at all.

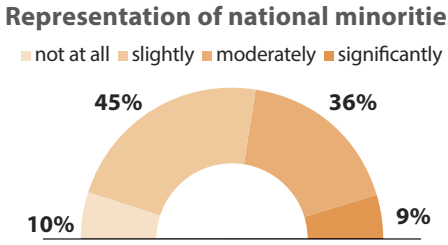
Representation of women



On the question, "How are women represented?" they responded accordingly: presented as an integral part of society (66%); additional "learn more" knowledge (61.4%); heroes (46%); and only in the context of war (32.6%).

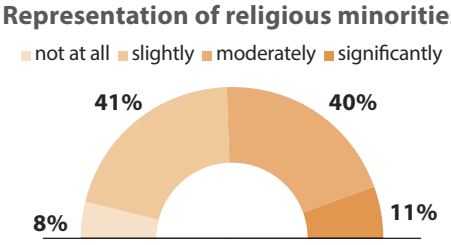
On the same question in relation to national minorities, they answered: slightly present (44.8%); moderately present (36%); not present at all (10%); and significantly present (8.4%).

On the question of the context of representation of national minorities, they responded: context of war (66.8%); joint living and intercultural exchange (57.8%); respecting national minority rights (53.8%); additional "learn more" information (26%).

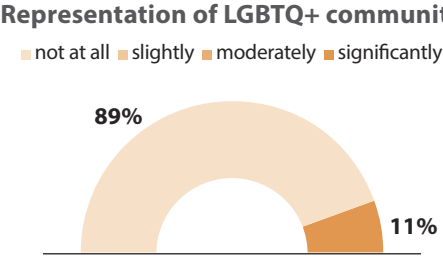


In respect of the representation of religious minorities the responses were: slightly present (41.2%); moderately present (39.9%); significantly present (11.3%); and not present at all (7.6%).

And in relation to context: war (62.4%); respecting religious rights (60.3%); joint living and intercultural exchange (57.2%); additional "learn more" information (29.3%).

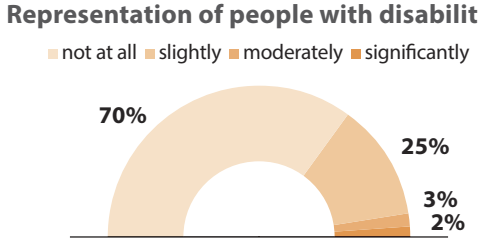


Regarding the same questions for the LGBTQ+ community and persons with disabilities, the answers were less diverse. For the LGBTQ+ community, 89.1% of students responded that they were not present at all and 10.9% that they were slightly present.



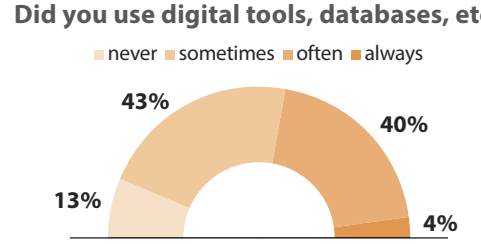
When the LGBTQ+ community is represented, it is in the context of respecting human rights (47.3%); additional "learn more" information (32.4%); war (23%); joint living (14.9%).

According to pupils, persons with disabilities are usually not present at all (70%); slightly present (25%); with the remaining answers at less than 5%. When they are present, it is either in the context of respecting human rights or additional "learn more" information.



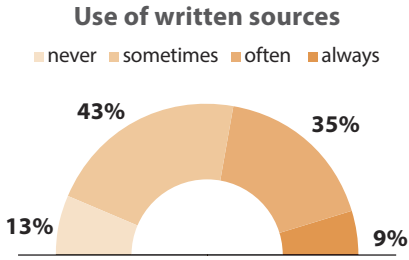
A majority (more than 60%) of pupils answered affirmatively to the question of whether they had learned about individuals and groups who did not rule politically but who had influenced social trends in the 19th and 20th centuries. They could name some of the individuals or groups in the comments section. Here are some of the answers: suffragettes, Karl Marx, Gavrilo Princip,[13] Martin Luther King and scientists of Serbian origin Nikola Tesla and Mihajlo Pupin. Some of them, however, missed out these centuries and mentioned Columbus, Joan of Arc or politicians who were in power at some point.

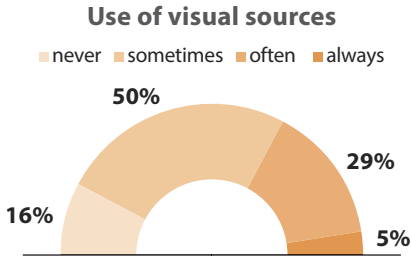
On the question of digital tools and databases and their use in history lessons, pupils answered sometimes (43.5%); often (40.5%); never (13.1%); and always – less than 4%. In other words, high school pupils use many more digital tools than previously, compared to the responses of history students who mostly marked them as "never used".

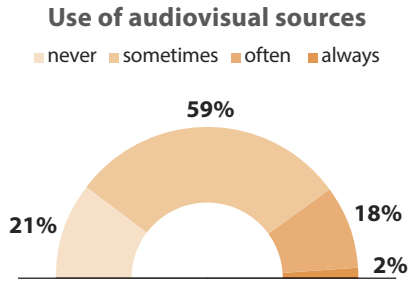


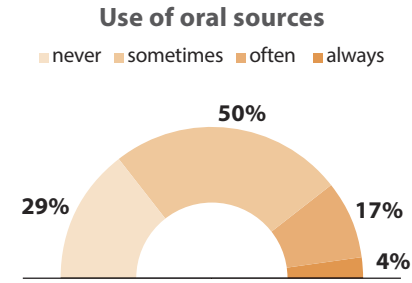
13. Gavrilo Princip was a Bosnian Serb student who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir presumptive to the throne of Austria–Hungary, and his wife Sophie in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. The assassinations triggered the July Crisis, a chain of events that, within one month, led to the outbreak of the First World War.

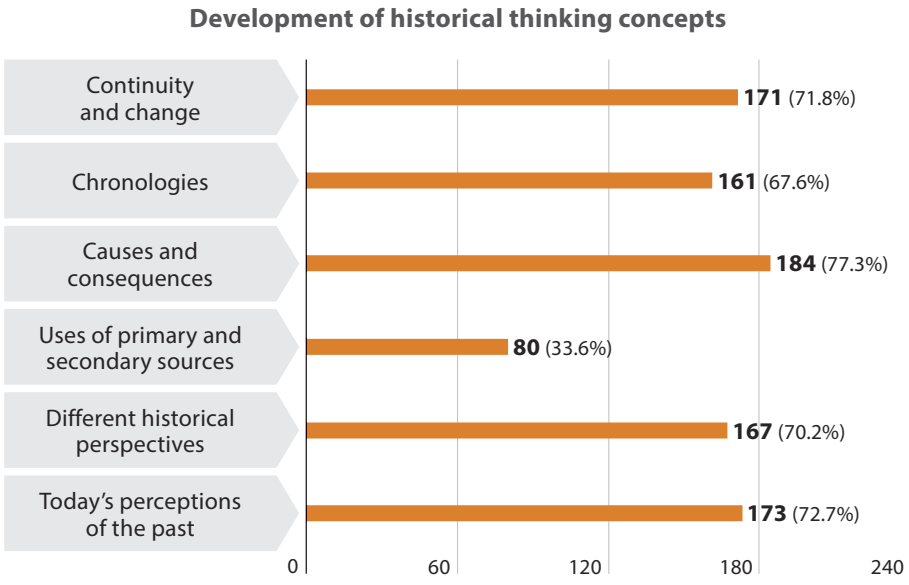
According to pupils, written sources are used: sometimes (43%); often (35%); never (13.1%); always (8.9%); visual sources: sometimes (49.6%); often (29%); never (16%); and always – less than 5%; audiovisual: sometimes (59.2%); never (21.4%); often (18.1%); and oral historical sources: sometimes (50.6%); never (28.7%); often (16.9%). A comparison of these results with those obtained from the survey of history students shows a significant change in the introduction of historical sources in history lessons over a couple of years. The dominant answer "sometimes" to the previous one, "not used at all", presents a vital step in developing the European dimension in history teaching in Serbian schools.







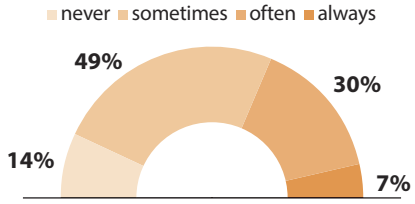




When it comes to the understanding of historical concepts, pupils answered "yes" to: continuity and change (71.8%); chronologies (67.6%); causes and consequences (77.3%); uses of primary and secondary sources (33.6%); multiperspectivity (70.2%); today's perceptions of historical processes and events (72.7%). Again, the use of primary and secondary sources comes last.

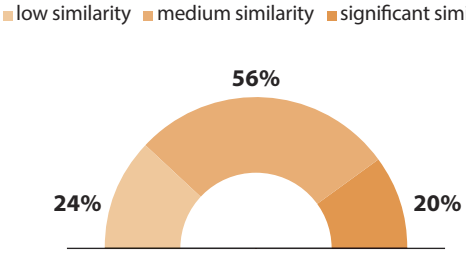
In regard to textbooks, there was a question on how often students use them. Pupils answered accordingly: sometimes (48.7%); often (29.8%); always (7.1%); and never (14.3%). Most students (71.7%) find the textbooks clear and easy to read.

How often do you use textbooks for your history lessons?

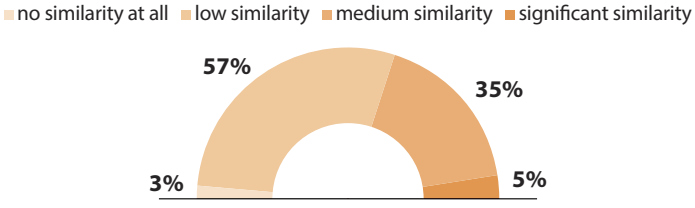


Pupils were also asked whether they noticed similarities in historical and cultural experiences and heritage with other countries in the region, and also in Europe, according to what they had learned in history lessons. For the region, they said: medium level of similarity (56%); low level of similarity (24%); and significant level of similarity (20%). In comparison to other European countries, the low level of similarity is 57.1% and the medium level 34.5%. The other answers were less than 8%.

How similar are the history and culture of the country you live in with other countries in the Balkans?



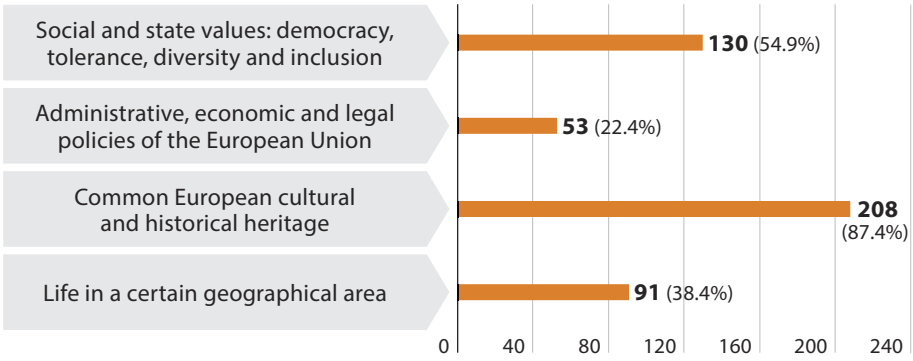
How similar are the history and culture of the country you live in with other countries in Europe?



On the question of what represents the European identity, in their opinion a majority of pupils said shared historical and cultural heritage (87.8%) followed by shared values of democracy, tolerance, diversity and inclusion (54.9%), geography (38.4%), with European Union policies and institutions the lowest at 22.4%.

What does European identity mostly represent?

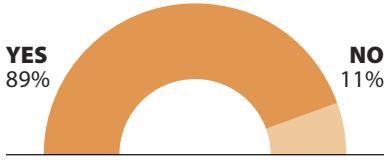
239 high school pupils



And finally, on the question of whether pupils recognise the European identity as one of their own identities, a majority of more than 89% said "yes".

Do you consider the European Identity as one of your identities?

239 high school pupils



Concluding remarks

Explaining and elaborating all the meanings of Europe was a daunting task, especially given the new challenges that European countries and societies face. Mass migrations, the Covid-19 pandemic, conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, and the emergence of new international relations have spurred the rise of extremism – both nationalistic and religious – as well as antisemitism, Islamophobia and the ascent of populist authoritarian leaders. These challenges have questioned not only the hegemony of neoliberalism but also the notion of European cultural, geographical, economic and political unity. The complex Balkan landscape and Serbian society, caught between transition and frozen conflict, with an ambivalent relationship to and perception of Europe, underscore the necessity of studying the European dimension in education, particularly in history teaching.

After reviewing the works of several experts in the field of education on methods and approaches to the European dimension, I aimed to highlight specific aspects that are essential for embracing this dimension in Serbian schools. These key aspects, which were presented and later examined, include the development of historical skills, encompassing the incorporation and advancement of historical thinking concepts; the acquisition of historical knowledge at local, regional, European and global levels; the exploration of identity and memory; and the interpretation of European phenomena within the local context.

This chapter emphasises the significance of the latest history curricula in secondary schools as a crucial step towards integrating the European dimension. The recent reform has incorporated many principles suggested for the implementation of the European dimension, such as the recognition of "others", the inclusion of diverse perspectives and the development of the basis of historical enquiry. Additionally, the participation of ordinary people in historical processes and their democratisation are considered.

The results of a survey conducted with history students and high school pupils reveal positive trends, such as increased utilisation of historical sources, digital tools and databases, along with improved inclusion of national and religious minorities and women. Moreover, there is a growing recognition of similarities between national and Balkan-European histories, with a substantial majority identifying with a European identity rooted in common cultural and historical heritage, democracy, tolerance, diversity and inclusion values rather than in the administrative and legal policies of the European Union. Therefore, European identity is increasingly perceived by young people in Serbia as cultural and is accepted as an integral part of their lives.

However, challenges remain, particularly for teachers who express difficulties in balancing political, cultural and economic aspects of different historical periods within prescribed educational standards. Discrepancies between recommended historical sources and the development of desired competencies are noted. Teachers also voice concerns about the lack of multiperspectivity in textbooks, citing one-sided perspectives that are reflective of authors' political and ideological positions.

Another takeaway from the curricula and textbook analysis is that most so-called European phenomena are considered Serbian, indicating that Serbian historical and cultural heritage is seen as European. Nonetheless, this heritage is shared primarily with Western European countries and neglects neighbouring countries and peoples. In conclusion, this study advocates for better implementation of the reform, emphasising the necessity of training all stakeholders in the history teaching process of perceiving and incorporating the European dimension. Additionally, it calls for societal efforts to embrace core values such as democracy, tolerance, diversity and inclusion beyond the classroom setting. These results are pivotal in identifying potential challenges in implementing the European dimension, which, if done correctly, can serve as a role model for local, regional and global co-operation.

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Appendix to Chapter 2

Appendix 2.1.

Questionnaire for teachers

1. **How long have you been working as a teacher at the school (in the current one but also since you first started working as a teacher)?**

2. **Do you think you have some freedom in creating content and designing teaching methods in your classes?**

3. **In your opinion, is the current goal of teaching and learning history appropriate? If not, how should it read?**

4. **When planning your lessons, the outcomes are aimed at:**
(multiple answers can be marked)
   - ☐ A. content (events, personalities, years);
   - ☐ B. student activities;
   - ☐ C. developing critical thinking (analysis, comparison, evaluation of sources);
   - ☐ D. building attitudes and value systems;
   - ☐ E. developing key competences;
   - ☐ F. other.

5. What is the representation of the following groups in your classes, and in what context?

1. not represented at all; 2. slightly represented; 3. moderately represented; 4. significantly represented

(To the question "In what context?" it is possible to circle more than one answer.)

A. Women	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: ☐ 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); ☐ 2. heroes; ☐ 3. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; ☐ 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

B. National minorities	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: ☐ 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); ☐ 2. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; ☐ 3. respect for minority rights and positions in society; ☐ 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

C. Religious minorities	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: ☐ 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); ☐ 2. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; ☐ 3. respect for religious rights and position in society; ☐ 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

D. LGBTQ+	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: ☐ 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); ☐ 2. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; ☐ 3. respect for human rights and position in society; ☐ 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

E. People with disabilities	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: ☐ 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); ☐ 2. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; ☐ 3. respect for human rights and position in society; ☐ 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

6. Do you use digital tools, databases and other digital means of communication for the needs of your classes?

☐ 1. not at all

☐ 2. a little

☐ 3. average

☐ 4. significant

7. Do you use and analyse historical sources in your classes?

1. not at all; 2. somewhat; 3. average; 4. significant

A. written sources	1 2 3 4
B. visual sources	1 2 3 4
C. audiovisual sources	1 2 3 4
D. oral sources	1 2 3 4

8. Do you think that during your lessons you successfully encourage understanding of:

A. continuity and change in the past	YES / NO
B. chronologies	YES / NO
C. cause and consequences	YES / NO
D. uses of primary and secondary sources	YES / NO
E. different historical perspectives	YES / NO
F. today's view of processes and events from the past	YES / NO

9. How do the new history teaching programmes for secondary schools adopted by the reform in the period between 2017 and 2020 differ from the previous ones?

10. Do you adhere to the reformed programme?

☐ A. no
☐ B. partly
☐ C. yes

11. If the answer is "no", why?

12. If the answer is "partly", explain how you combine both versions of the programme.

13. If the answer is "yes":

13.1. What do you consider to be the greatest advantage of the new teaching and learning programme?

13.2. What do you consider to be the biggest challenge in implementing the teaching and learning programme?

13.3. What is, for you personally, the most difficult challenge in working with students according to the new programme?

14. Which textbooks do you use and how often do you use them in class?

▸ **15. To what extent are the textbooks you use in accordance with the reformed programmes? Do you think students can use them independently? Do the textbooks contain appropriate sources and additional materials for classwork?**

Appendix 2.2.

Questionnaire for history students

▸ **1. Which high school did you graduate from?**

▸ **2. During your high-school education, were the following topics covered in history classes:**

A. migrations	YES / NO
B. myths, legends and history as humanity	YES / NO
C. communications – before and now	YES / NO
D. the rights of individuals and groups	YES / NO

3. What was the representation of the following groups in your classes and in what context?

1. not represented at all; 2. slightly represented; 3. moderately represented; 4. significantly represented

(For the question "In what context?" it is possible to circle more than one answer.)

A. Women	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); 2. heroes; 3. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

B. National minorities	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); 2. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; 3. respect for minority rights and positions in society; 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

C. Religious minorities	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); 2. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; 3. respect for religious rights and position in society; 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

D. LGBTQ+	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); 2. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; 3. respect for human rights and position in society; 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

E. People with disabilities	1 2 3 4
If they are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of: 1. war (enemies, allies, victims); 2. common life and the impact that certain historical processes and events had on that population; 3. respect for human rights and position in society; 4. learn more (such as additional information in the fields of science, art, culture, etc.).	

▸ **4.** In your opinion, what was the representation in history classes, during your high-school education, of individuals and groups who did not rule politically but had an influence on social trends in the 19th and 20th centuries?

☐ 1. they are not represented at all;

☐ 2. they are somewhat represented;

☐ 3. they are moderately represented;

☐ 4. they are significantly represented.

If the answer about representation is yes (2, 3 or 4), name some of these individuals or groups:

5. Did you use digital tools, databases and other digital means of communication for the needs of your classes?

☐ 1. not at all

☐ 2. a little

☐ 3. medium

☐ 4. significant

6. Did you use and analyse historical sources in your classes?

1. not at all; 2. somewhat; 3. medium; 4. significant

A. written sources	1 2 3 4
B. visual sources	1 2 3 4
C. audiovisual sources	1 2 3 4
D. oral sources	1 2 3 4

7. Do you think that during your lessons you successfully understood:

A. continuity and change in the past	YES / NO
B. chronologies	YES / NO
C. cause and consequences	YES / NO
D. uses of primary and secondary sources	YES / NO
E. different historical perspectives	YES / NO
F. today's view of processes and events from the past	YES / NO

8. Based on what you learned in high school history classes, how similar are the history and culture of the country you live in to other countries in the Balkans?

☐ 1. no similarity at all;

☐ 2. some similarities;

☐ 3. medium similarities;

☐ 4. significant similarities.

9. Based on what you learned in history class in high school, how many similarities are there between the history and culture of the country you live in and other countries in Europe?

- ☐ 1. no similarity at all
- ☐ 2. some similarities
- ☐ 3. medium similarities
- ☐ 4. significant similarities

10. What, in your opinion, represents the European identity?

(multiple answers may be circled.)

- ☐ A. life in a certain geographical area
- ☐ B. common European cultural and historical heritage
- ☐ C. administrative, economic and legal policies of the European Union
- ☐ D. social and state values: democracy, tolerance, diversity and inclusion

11. Do you consider the European identity as one of your identities? YES / NO

Chapter 3
Digital transition of museum theatre – An enrichment tool for history education

Foteini Venieri, Heterotopia, Greece

Introduction

Museums have played a vital role in history education by offering interactive, multisensory learning experiences that promote critical thinking and cultural and historical literacy. The digital transition of live person-led museum learning, accelerated by the pandemic, opened up significant opportunities for the creation of new and innovative museum learning approaches and posed numerous challenges both to museums themselves as content creators and to the learning communities they serve.

In this chapter, the aim is to navigate the evolving landscape of live online, person-led museum education addressed to school groups, with an emphasis on the use of museum theatre. The research objectives encompass mapping the current state of synchronous online museum learning, exploring best practices in the use of theatre and performance, understanding the challenges faced by museum professionals in the digital realm, examining perspectives of school teachers and students, determining strategies for meaningful learning experiences and providing practical recommendations to enhance online museum learning.

Theoretical framework: history education, museum learning, museum theatre and digital (public) history

History education in Europe and key initiatives

History has intrinsic value as a way of seeing the world. Since its inception, the Council of Europe has acknowledged history as "a basis for the education of the citizens of Europe" due to "its role in bridging differences and bringing people together by establishing mutual understanding and confidence between the peoples of Europe".[14] History education has a decisive role in the

14. www.coe.int/en/web/history-education.

promotion of democratic values and human rights and in the management of sociocultural differences, thus shaping the identities and values of European citizens. In 2018, building on some 70 years of work on the topic, the Council of Europe issued specific guidelines on "quality history teaching in the 21st century", embodying democracy, inclusivity and diversity as key concepts. The document highlights certain values, skills, attitudes, knowledge and critical understanding as essential competencies for a democratic culture. It also underlines the importance of interactive pedagogies (which acknowledge cultural differences); the need to incorporate social history as well as sensitive or difficult history; and the need to value multiple identities.[15]

In essence, the provision of tools "for evaluating historical sources and combating propaganda" is an essential aspect of a learning context because it is these tools that maintain a balance between the cognitive, emotional and ethical dimensions of history. Current research in the field of history and heritage learning focuses on issues of critical engagement, historical literacy, historical thinking and historical consciousness. In particular, there has been a theoretical focus on what is termed a "disciplinary approach", which aims to engage students critically in the processes of history as a science rather than to focus on the accumulation of knowledge about the past, and "second-degree concepts" (also referred to as "disciplinary knowledge"), which refers to an individual's understanding of:

- change and continuity;
- similarity and difference;
- historical perspective;
- causation and consequence;
- the ethical dimensions of historical interpretation; and
- the use of primary sources.

All of these are decisive in an individual's ability to grasp the historical significance of "first-degree concepts" (also referred to as "substantive knowledge") which includes dates, events and notions such as "the immigrants" or "the parliament", etc. (Lévesque and Clark 2018). Along with "disciplinary history", the concept of "transformative history" refers to the power of history to change the way we see the present and the future, and to transform our lives: "History can transform the simplicities of a world categorised in polarities, or organised in law-like generalisations, many of which have their origin in 'memories' of the past, but not history" (Lee 2011: 149).

Both the transformative and the disciplinary approach provide a theoretical and methodological framework for approaching history education today, aligned with the values of inclusivity, diversity and cultural democracy.

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15. https://edoc.coe.int/en/teaching-history/7754-quality-history-education-in-the-21st-century-principles-and-guidelines.html.

In this context, museums play a crucial role as primary contributors of learning resources and authentic material. Simultaneously, the creative and cultural industries have the potential to enhance and enrich museum offerings substantially, and this is of particular value to museums that lack the necessary skills and infrastructure to invest in the development of digital programmes. The field of museum theatre has the potential to provide valuable support in this regard.

History education within museum learning environments

Contemporary museums support history teaching through the provision of dynamic and often playful learning experiences that seek to "bring history to life" and contextualise information. At its best, this contextualisation involves multiple perspectives and provides chances for multisensory engagement with the subject matter, offering opportunities for not only intellectual but also emotional access to the museum narrative (Watson 2015; Witcomb 2015). In their seminal work on the subject of museum learning, Falk and Dierking noted that museums are commonly regarded as "reliable, authentic, and comprehensible" (2000: 2). This high level of public trust would seem to be unwavering, as subsequent research has revealed year by year, positioning trust in museums above that accorded to many other sources and media (Collins 2021; Rosenzweig 2000: 91; Wilkening Consulting and American Alliance of Museums 2021). This reputation for reliability is established and maintained within a complex landscape of competing influences and interests. Museums must balance social and political pressures as well as financial, ethical and legal considerations as they make choices about how to convey the narratives that are attached to the collections and places within their care. Schools are one of the many different audiences that museums serve through the design of specific, tailored programming, and trust is paramount to their success.

Public instruction has long been a feature of museums, and their strategies of interpretation and display have followed – perhaps not always synchronously – developments in thinking about how people learn and how meaning is constructed. Nowadays, the terms "museum learning" and "heritage learning" are used interchangeably to refer to a variety of learning processes that take place in a variety of heritage learning contexts, in relation to cultural sites and collections. There is now a strong body of evidence that attests to the educational and social value of culture (Earle 2013; Hooper-Greenhill 2007; Sandell 2003) and, as the sector has widely adopted holistic frameworks for the measurement of learning and engagement impact,[16] the field of museum learning has been able to define its particularities as a non-formal learning tool:

Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve an increase in

16. For a recent literature review concerning the measurement of impact in cultural learning see www.ukri.org/publications/ahrc-cultural-value-project-report/, and for an outline of the Generic Learning Outcomes measurement framework see https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/research-archive/generic-learning-outcomes.

or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, values, feelings, attitudes and the capacity to react. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more (Hooper-Greenhill 2002).

This kind of framework for understanding learning outcomes is in keeping with the increasingly audience – or learner-centred design of museum experiences, and it sets the terms for the disciplinary approach of historical literacy through museum learning. If "the examination of primary source evidence as traces of the past"[17] is a major aspect of the disciplinary approach of historical thinking, museums and archives are uniquely positioned to support schools in gaining access to them. Enquiry-based learning and student-centred approaches are also at the heart of the development of museum activities, as constructivism is the dominant learning theory in the sector (Hein 1998). Furthermore, as formally acknowledged since 2005 in the Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, good practice among institutions should involve encouraging "reflection on the ethics and methods of presentation of cultural heritage, as well as respect for diversity of interpretations" (Council of Europe 2005: 3) alongside developing "knowledge of cultural heritage as a resource to facilitate peaceful co-existence by promoting trust and mutual understanding with a view to resolution and prevention of conflicts" (Ibid.: 4).

Museum learning, characterised by an expanded framework that comprehends learning processes, possesses a distinctive capacity to leverage "authentic" spaces, narratives and artefacts, fostering reflection, enquiry and discussion. Schools express a keen interest in museums offering imaginative, play-based and arts-rich learning experiences as non-formal learning providers.

Museum theatre in museum learning

First-person interpretation is one of a range of theatre- and performance-based engagement approaches known collectively as museum theatre. It involves historical characters engaging with present-day audiences. Museum theatre is an interpretive strategy and a learning approach. Due to its hybrid nature as both a theatre genre and a way to communicate academic research, it also falls under the categories of "applied theatre" and "public history". The term "museum theatre" is used interchangeably with the terms "costumed interpretation", "living history", "live interpretation" and "interpretative theatre". In the heritage field, theatre as a learning medium was first introduced in 19th- and early 20th-century open-air museums (Venieri 2024).

Museum theatre, as it is now called, is a field of theatre practice born and developed in a heritage context. Museum theatre is defined as a specific kind of interpretation that employs fictional activity to communicate ideas, facts and concepts. A museum theatre performer assumes the role of a character (as a solo gallery character, as an interpreter or as part of a play or scenario) in order to

17. http://historicalthinking.ca/primary-source-evidence.

entertain and educate visitors. They take on the role of a particular character in a particular circumstance in order to help visitors appreciate and understand the story in hand and, through that, some aspect of the host museum or site.[18]

Today, museum theatre is applied as an interpretive strategy in a large number of museums, historic houses and heritage sites throughout the world in order to enliven collections, places and objects and reveal the hidden histories behind them (Jackson 2011; Jackson and Kidd 2008). It is performed by actors or interpreters; it can be designed for specific groups and/or independent visitors; and it adopts various forms: monologues, participatory events through first-person interpretation, promenade, fixed, on a stage or site specific, scripted or improvised, open or closed, devised or written, solo or ensemble and so on (Jones 2011: 53).

Research results regarding visitor experience indicate that it can enhance enjoyment in terms of learning (Litwak and Cutting 1996); improve the museum experience (Baum and Hughes 2001; Needham 1999; Rubenstein and Needham 1993: 121); aid recall and understanding regarding specific interpretive objectives (Munley 1993: 80-83; Sansom 2016: 122); foster involvement with the subject matter (Munley 1993) and thought-provoking connections to complex and abstract ideas (Baum and Hughes 2001: 361; Black and Goldowsky 1999); evoke empathy, emotional involvement and a sense of time travel (Baum and Hughes 2001; Munley 1993: 76); encourage connections to visitors' personal experience (Baum and Hughes 2001) and present-day issues (Baum and Hughes 2001; Munley 1993); make a subject real or relevant (Baum and Hughes 2001); promote "focused looking" at the exhibits (Jackson and Rees Leahy 2005); encourage historical thinking (Jones 2011); and create a space for interactive engagement and collaborative meaning-making through audience participation (Evans 2013).

A three-year research project implemented by the University of Manchester (Jackson and Kidd 2008) confirmed these results and revealed that museum theatre can also give voice to marginalised people or communities, inject an element of surprise and enjoyment which has "a value on its own", be very effective in dealing with difficult and challenging content and has a long-term impact on the visitor. It also highlighted that the quality of visitor engagement depends as much on the performance as on the framing of the event on "what happens before and after" (Jackson and Kidd 2008: 135). Furthermore the research identified four key functions of a museum theatre performance: "illustrative (demonstration of a skill or operation of a machine or tool, etc.), explanatory (information-giving, location, persons or objects in their specific social settings), revelatory (throw light on hidden stories, give voice to unseen or forgotten members of the society) and provocative (unsettling prior assumptions, offering alternative views of a subject, generating debate)" (Jackson and Kidd 2008: 73).

Moreover museum theatre is acknowledged as a field of practice used to interpret "intangible human remains" including the "behaviours, attitudes and

18. www.imtal-europe.org/what-interpretation.html.

prejudices" of a different era, and in a different social, ethical and economic context, affecting contemporary social relationships (Farthing 2011: 94). In contrast to the traditional museological perception of an object's intrinsic value, the characters attribute value to it through association and context; exhibits are contextualised intellectually, emotionally, socially, politically, spiritually and aesthetically (Jackson and Kidd 2008). A multi-level contextualisation may be able to fill some gaps in the decontextualisation of objects in contemporary museums by recontextualising them so as to examine contrasting values.

The migration of first-person interpretation into the digital realm underscores the notable potential of enriched and engaging digital learning experiences, especially in online live learning experiences that are implemented outside the regulated museum space.

Digital (public) history: impact on historical interpretation and accessibility in museum settings

Nowadays, the search is on – and this is not limited to the museum sector – for frameworks of content knowledge in the digital sphere within which learners can critically engage in a historical narrative and develop coherent images of the past (Boxtel and Drie 2017; Counsell 2000, 2011, 2017). These concerns fall into the field of digital history, which is broadly defined as the study, representation and dissemination of knowledge about the past through digital technologies. Digital history visually portrays historical events and constructs narratives that extend beyond reliance on text alone (Natale et al. 2015).

Recently, the development of the digital public history field has expanded on this description by defining itself as "a combination of academic knowledge of history with modern digital communication practices to engage the past while incorporating user-generated content and sharing authority with participating communities and publics" (Noiret et al. 2022: 3). Digital public history also underlines the need to assess existing frameworks and explore new ones.

The advent of digital public history has substantively influenced historical interpretation and accessibility within museum settings, marking a paradigmatic shift in the landscape of historical engagement. Within museum settings, the integration of digital public history manifests in diverse forms, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, online games and activities, virtual escape rooms, virtual tours, online digital archives and collections, and transmedia storytelling, thus revolutionising the traditional modes of historical interpretation. The utilisation of interactive technologies has facilitated immersive digital learning experiences, allowing for dynamic engagement with historical content. Particularly noteworthy is the incorporation of first-person narratives into digital history, a practice rooted in the established domain of museum theatre. This transition of theatre- and performance-based engagement approaches into the digital realm constitutes a notable departure from conventional methods, offering novel avenues for learning and historical interpretation.

The impact of digital history on historical interpretation is further accentuated by its role in providing unprecedented accessibility to historical materials. Digital repositories and online archives (such as Europeana)[19] have democratised access to primary sources, enabling scholars, educators and the public to engage with historical artefacts and documents remotely. The democratisation of access is particularly salient in the classroom, as teachers can transcend geographical constraints to explore and analyse historical materials with enhanced efficiency. The possibilities offered by social media sharing platforms enable stories and interpretation of heritage to reach well beyond the classroom itself (user-generated content and shared authority) and have democratised the construction of historical knowledge, inviting a plurality of voices into the discourse.

The impact of digital history on historical interpretation and accessibility within museum settings is profound and multifaceted. Its transformative influence extends beyond the mere digitisation of historical materials to encompass immersive learning experiences, democratise access to primary sources and create a paradigm shift in the collaborative construction of historical narratives. As museums continue to embrace the possibilities afforded by digital history, the discipline stands poised to redefine the contours of historical engagement and scholarly enquiry in the digital age.

The synergy between history education, museum learning and digital history is essential for deepening historical understanding and promoting democratic values. Rooted in the Council of Europe's recognition of history as a cornerstone for European citizens' education, history teaching guidelines prioritise inclusivity and interactive methods to cultivate critical thinking and historical consciousness. Museum learning enriches history education by providing immersive experiences that animate historical narratives. Museums serve as authentic venues for reflection and enquiry, and for enhancing historical literacy. The disciplinary approach of historical thinking is complemented by museum learning, where analysis of primary sources becomes tangible and interactive. By upholding ethical standards and promoting diverse interpretations, museums play a crucial role in presenting cultural heritage and fostering reflection, as emphasised in the Faro Convention.

Museum theatre, in both physical and digital settings, serves as a dynamic tool for contextualising historical content and interpreting intangible aspects of heritage. The addition of performative dimension makes historical events more tangible and relatable, bridging academic knowledge and public engagement. In the digital era, digital history expands historical interpretation and accessibility, offering remote learning and virtual mediation. This amalgamation of academic knowledge and contemporary communication practices fosters a more inclusive framework for comprehending history in our continually evolving world.

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19. www.europeana.eu/en.

Implications of digital technologies in museum learning

The digital transition of museum learning, influenced by the digitisation of collections, internet expansion and interactive technologies, now involves diverse cultural institutions. It redefines museum education by using web-based repositories like Europeana for dynamic and interpreted resources. Synchronous museum education, which is characterised by real-time interactions, and asynchronous museum education, which allows for flexible, self-paced engagement, represent two pivotal modes in the evolving spectrum of digital museum learning. Asynchronous learning introduces risks, requiring trained facilitators for controlled contextualisation (Marcus et al. 2022: 292). Despite challenges, the digital transition transforms museum education, enhancing accessibility and inclusivity and reimagining traditional learning paradigms.

The emergence of digital museum learning (in the form of livestream events, virtual workshops, online school sessions, etc.) was accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic restrictions: the new norm for cultural visits involves a shift away from prioritising physical presence and material experiences (Galani and Kidd 2020). However, physicality, sociality and modality are aspects that should be taken into consideration in the design of a mixed experience (Antoniou 2023). Physicality is usually addressed through loan boxes that provide multisensory material, and the inclusion of activities for social interaction promotes the social aspect of the experience.[20] Case study participants from a range of museums reported a surge in demand from teachers looking for creative and inspiring museum education experiences for their students, many of whom were away from the classroom because of lockdown measures.

What stands out across all of these reports is that, although many organisations have now turned their attention back to their on-site, face-to-face offer, many others, as a result of financial, capacity and workforce constraints, have made their digital/online offers permanent and are now experimenting with other new ways of delivering remote learning and engagement opportunities. There is particular interest in the extent to which digital means may help museums to connect with new and harder-to-reach audiences. It also allows for a multimodal interpretation of the museums' narratives, leading not only to the inclusion of digitised and audiovisual content but also to the production of new content that involves cross-sectoral collaboration and a common understanding of the issues at stake.

Recent noteworthy publications offering practical tools and methodologies for enhancing synchronous museum learning initiatives include the Virtual Museum

20. Examples of these trends were documented in reports from The GLAMers project (Erasmus+ programme partnership) and the European Museum Academy (Zourou and Pellegrini 2021). A year later, in 2022, the Network of European Museum Organisations' (NEMO) Learning Museum (LEM) Working Group published a wide-ranging report into the use of asynchronous digital approaches to content mediation, education, storytelling and engagement with remote museum visitors (NEMO 2022).

Mediation Toolkit (ICOM 2022), the Suggestions and Tools for Digital Cultural Mediation (Museum4punkt0 2023) and "Remote learning in museums, heritage and cultural settings" (Group for Education in Museums 2020). All three initiatives share a common focus on leveraging digital tools to enhance engagement and learning experiences. The Virtual Museum Mediation Toolkit, developed in Belgium, emphasises the exploration of virtual engagement approaches and recommends a flexible, trial-and-error approach to utilising digital platforms for programme delivery. Meanwhile, the Museum4punkt0 project in Germany, spanning six years, investigated the intersection of analogue and digital spaces to create visitor-centred hybrid experiences. Its toolkit offers guidelines for implementing new structures and formats, highlighting the importance of digital tools for cultural participation and visitor-generated content. Lastly, the Group for Education in Museums' publication "Remote learning in museums, heritage and cultural settings" showcases the sector's adaptability during the Covid-19 pandemic. It presents case studies illustrating how museums have embraced remote learning through webinars, videos, podcasts and physical resource packs, emphasising the vital role of creativity and culture as a lifeline, especially for vulnerable groups. These initiatives collectively underscore the transformative potential of digital strategies in shaping the future of museum education.

The current state of online synchronous museum learning

The current landscape of online live museum learning programmes for schools is characterised by a transformative shift in educational delivery, driven by the integration of digital tools and platforms. While during Covid-19 online sessions were used to replace museum visits, in the post-Covid era they are used to enrich learning in the classroom. They are not seen as replacements for on-site visits anymore but as a means of enhancing classroom teaching. Live online person-led learning offers results in a hybrid format, falling into the category of blended learning, "a generic term that describes different ways that online and on-site instruction can be blended" (Antoniou 2023: 5), where a museum educator or interpreter facilitates the session online and students are physically present in class. Students are encouraged to collaborate and interact with one another, thus engaging in social interaction and collaborative learning.

The expansion of online live programming and its outreach potential differs according to the museums' institutional size, structure and digital maturity, and their policy and priorities (Kidd et al. 2021). For example, The Museum of Ixelles in Belgium – one of the pilot museums of the Virtual Museum Mediation project – centres its public programming strategy on local audiences, and its their investment priority is focused on live offers. Any digital expansion of this activity aims above all to serve local audiences who are unable to visit the museum in person (for example, patients in hospitals). Furthermore, budget constraints and the absence of a specialised department or personnel limits the potential for digital expansion generally. For the Museum of Ixelles, live synchronous (that is, live delivery of their own guided tours, talks and workshops via teleconferencing

software) represents the cheapest, quickest and most logical step towards increased use of digital methods, and this is clearly the case for many museums of similar size and capacity, where the costs and complexities of commissioning new digital content are prohibitive.

Live online sessions for schools typically involve a museum educator or guide interacting with a class of students through live streaming from within the museum itself, utilising audiovisual material and digitised archives. Pre- or post-visit activities may include downloadable digital material that further supports learning. While smartboards are ideal, communication with the class often occurs through a projector and whiteboard. In some cases, like in Germany, tablet use is common, but in the interests of widening accessibility the design of these types of programmes must take minimal classroom technology and connectivity into consideration. Ideally, sessions are broadcast when the museum is closed to visitors, but if this is not possible dedicated spaces like a behind-the-scenes part of the museum (archives, a conservation room or an education room) or themed filters are utilised.

While museums usually turn to established live streaming platforms, such as Google Meet, Skype and Zoom, the Vimuki platform[21] in Germany and the Museotek[22] platform in Greece are two examples of platforms designed specifically around the needs of museums. They both offer a digital platform and software with appropriate integrated tools to enable a high degree of interactivity with school groups and a means by which facilitators/mediators can easily enrich their tours or workshops with multimedia assets and digitised archival material.

The Vimuki platform sought to allow museums in Germany to develop and communicate their digital offers to schools. With Vimuki, a museum guide leads the school class exclusively and live on site through the collection or exhibition. The online tour can be enriched with various digital media, including films, photographs, 3D models, objects in augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) and interactive elements such as chats, quizzes, surveys or whiteboard queries. In developing the platform, different target groups had to be taken into consideration: museums, teachers and students. A high priority was the integration of software that is open source, easy to use and data protection compliant, and whose server is ideally located in Germany or the EU. Tours were linked to the curriculum to offer more incentives for integration in the school class. Particular emphasis was put on students' interaction and providing guidelines for the creation of a customised persona, according to the needs of the specific school groups, that will interact with the students. In order to help museums design their own person-led live online programme, they developed guidelines and workflows for the design of guided tours and the technical process of a tour.

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21. The Vimuki platform was developed in the context of the Museum4punkt0 project by the Historical Museum of the Palatinate Speyer and the Saar Historical Museum in Germany in collaboration with two external technical partners.

22. https://museotek.net/en/.

The Vimuki platform was launched in pilot mode in January 2023. Its initial offers included live, non-costumed, person-led interpretation which was enriched with pre-recorded living history films. Teachers had been briefed very well in advance, especially on the technical requirements, an aspect that was considered of high importance for its successful delivery. The feedback was very positive: interactivity was highly valued and motivated school groups to visit the museum. However, when the interpreter revealed that some objects were replicas, the interest of the students immediately dropped off, indicating of the perceived value of authentic objects. On the museum's part, the delivery of the live programme required a gimbal and two persons on site: the interpreter and someone responsible for adding multimedia elements. However, the software used[23] proved to be very complex technically, so the Vimuki platform has not yet officially launched. Some important difficulties mentioned were the need for more personnel who are well informed, for training to be put in place for them, for tours to take place during opening hours and the time-consuming process of preparation for each live session. This was one day for each tour and included changing lights and preparation of objects. Ms Biasini, head of education at the Historical Museum of the Palatinate in Speyer, Germany, referred to the difficulty of prioritising the live tours without additional personnel and the delivery of the on-site offer. On the other hand, advantages from the use of the platform included:

- significant expansion of the museums' outreach activities;
- positive impact on the museums' reputation;
- option of connecting to other museum collections and content;
- greater online museum presence and visibility;
- ability to show objects and spaces that are not available or open to the public.

Regarding interactivity, the offers that were integrated into this pilot version of the platform addressed questions directly to students, included little games like quizzes, multiple-choice questions and made use of the chat. These modes of interaction were possible because of the use of one tablet per student. School groups engaged more easily with live sessions than with the recorded ones. The platform aimed at sustainability through a five-year state funding plan that offered two years of free hosting for museums, followed by a membership fee for hosting tours.

The Museotek platform is surprisingly similar to the intended functionalities of the Vimuki platform. It was designed in Greece by educational technology developers (EdTech) and museologists with the specific aim of supporting museums to shift to virtual public programming. Museotek is an app, platform and service provider that facilitates the promotion, booking and delivery of live-streamed tours and workshops. Social interaction, a crucial part of cultural experiences, is encouraged through collaborative activities among the students. While reassuringly similar to

23. BigBlueButton, an open source virtual classroom software, was used for the development of the Vimuki platform.

standard videoconferencing software, Museotek has been specially configured and adapted in response to on-the-ground needs of museum educators: it facilitates the exploration of physical space through the use of a gimbal and a mobile that has Museotek software preinstalled, and enables the direct sharing of digital assets (images, video, audio) in a very simple and reliable way.

The minimum technological requirement on the part of schools is internet connectivity and at least one laptop or PC and a projector set up in class. Furthermore, the Museotek platform provides a "shop window" through which customers (schools, families, groups, etc.) can search for book and pay for the programme they want, as well as receiving assistance and follow-up from the company's team of support staff. This team also helps museums to shape their live learning offers, overcome any technical difficulties they may encounter, communicate with the groups who book their sessions and gather feedback data. Museotek hosts the tours and workshops of many cultural institutions via various financial arrangements (share of sale, annual fee, etc.) which cover the costs of their service while providing a return to the content producers.

Pedagogical and technological considerations

In terms of pedagogical approaches, online live museum programmes showcase adaptability by leveraging interactive elements. Real-time engagement, virtual tours and interactive Q&A sessions contribute to a more dynamic and engaging learning experience compared to traditional static formats or even pre-recorded sessions. This adaptability allows educators to tailor content to different educational levels and subjects, promoting a more personalised and effective learning journey. Still, cultural institutions struggle with limitations in staff and resources as well as the maturity of digital content. Pedagogical hurdles, including educators and learners with insufficient digital skills and a dearth of structured content in spite of the abundance of online resources, are also apparent. These were reflected in the 2020 International Council of Museums report, which highlighted that the intensification of the production of digital offers brought to the surface "some structural weakness that have for a long time affected cultural institutions, in terms of resources and staff dedicated to digital activities and communication, and the level of maturity of the content produced" (ICOM 2020: 9). Adding to these limitations, budgetary constraints and the absence of established procedures, especially in local museums, are decisive for the development of digital offers.

The evolving technological infrastructure supporting online live museum learning programmes presents both advancements and challenges. While the potential is evident, hurdles such as in consistent connectivity and technical issues like sound transmission, and an insufficient number of electronic devices, as highlighted in a 2020 study on emergency remote teaching (Vavoula and Anastopoulou 2020), further hinder the implementation of these initiatives. The lack of resources and skills becomes a significant barrier and is particularly pronounced in underserved socio-economic communities where the absence of broadband access leads to the exclusion of certain groups, thus emphasising the necessity in both schools and museums for technical support during implementation. Digital poverty, poor internet connection

and digital illiteracy – which is also age related and thus poses a generational gap – raise concerns about the level of outreach and the persistent inequalities that digital education needs to address. Language barriers also pose significant restrictions on the potential geographical and cultural outreach of the museum.

Despite these challenges, the impact on student engagement and learning outcomes is promising. Interactive features foster a sense of immersion, allowing students to actively participate in the learning process. The outcomes of this chapter's research case study suggest that high-quality live online museum learning is as capable of positively influencing retention and comprehension of historical and cultural content as in-person museum learning is known to be capable of doing. These early findings underscore the need for ongoing evaluation and refinement to overcome challenges and further enhance the educational benefits of these programmes. As technology continues to advance, the potential for live online museum learning to become a staple in school curricula is significant, with the caveat that addressing technological limitations and ensuring pedagogical effectiveness remain key priorities for educators and administrators in this evolving landscape.

In conclusion, the digitisation of museum learning significantly expands audience reach geographically, making it accessible to remote or physically excluded individuals and promoting inclusivity. These programmes have the potential to reach students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, contributing to equitable educational resource distribution and serving as motivation for subsequent in-person visits (Antoniou 2023). Digital museum learning, while rooted in traditional principles, is characterised by its participatory and audience-centred nature, offering diverse modes of interaction and multisensory experiences and incorporating primary sources. At its zenith, it aligns with a disciplinary approach to history by fostering a comprehensive understanding of historical investigative processes. By leveraging web-based cultural repositories like Europeana, digital learning utilises narrative and transmedia storytelling techniques that restructure and reinterpret resources to present novel avenues for learning and enriching educational experiences in formal schooling and informal settings.

Building on the preceding discussion regarding the significance of enquiry-based, collaborative and interactive learning, a crucial consideration arises: how can these foundational elements be augmented in synchronous virtual learning experiences? This chapter contends that museum theatre serves as a pivotal avenue for enhancing and enriching these experiences. Here, three illustrative examples and a more focused presentation of a case study are presented.

Museum theatre for live museum e-learning experiences

Museum theatre within the realm of live online museum learning serves as an interactive vehicle for historical interpretation, employing digital platforms to effectively convey ideas, facts and concepts. Similar to its counterpart in physical museums, online museum theatre involves performers adopting historical personas, whether guiding visitors through virtual museum tours, delivering

interpretative content supported by primary materials or participating in scripted plays or scenarios. These performers may operate in museum spaces, heritage sites or specially designed settings with filtered backgrounds, engaging the audience through dialogue and activities in the digital or physical realm.

The primary objectives of entertainment and education remain consistent, with performers immersing themselves in historical characters to enhance visitor appreciation and understanding of the presented narrative. When integrated into live online museum learning, museum theatre inherits the advantages and disadvantages inherent in the broader context. Leveraging the capabilities of digital platforms transforms virtual stages into vibrant spaces where historical characters come to life, thereby fostering deeper and personalised engagement with the past. Interactive elements such as first-person narratives and multimedia enrich the audience's comprehension of historical events, establishing a sense of presence and emotional connection.

Depending on the script and structure, students may participate in mediating aspects of the encounter, encouraging a space for negotiating official narratives through multiple perspectives. In the museum's dialogical space, live online learning extends the institution's reach to diverse audiences, promoting engagement and exploration of the past while adhering to disciplinary approaches and exploring key concepts. However, time constraints and narrative control may lead to closed scenarios with predetermined "correct" answers during online sessions.

Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of museum theatre within live online museum learning, I shall now look at some successful examples that illustrate the effective application of this interactive form of historical interpretation.

Jorvik Viking Centre in York, England, and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York both offer immersive historical experiences through a combination of on-site and virtual programmes. The Jorvik Viking Centre provides a journey into the Viking age with interactive exhibits, archaeological finds and educational programmes. Using modern technology, the centre recreates the sights, sounds and smells of Viking-age York and offers guided tours with costumed interpreters. Their educational programmes cater to various audiences, aligning with the UK primary education curriculum. Outreach efforts, spanning 15 years, include loan boxes, costumes and live online museum sessions, which surged in popularity during the pandemic.

The Lower East Side Tenement Museum focuses on the immigrant experience during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Through guided tours of restored tenement buildings, actors in period-appropriate costumes bring historical characters to life, providing a vivid and interactive experience. Their virtual field trips or live online offers use archival images, videos, 3D tours and objects to explore history. Rooted in immigration and migration, the programmes are facilitated by museum educators and address themes of belonging, community building and cultural adaptation.

Zoom Through History, a digital historical events division, was established in response to the pandemic by Ceridwen Theatre Company in Wrexham, Wales.

Offering online heritage experiences for school students aged 5-16, it engages nearly 10 000 students through live historically costumed interpretation, events and workshops. Clients include renowned institutions like the Natural History Museum and the Museum of London. Workshops lasting 45-60 minutes feature personalised welcome letters, animated time-travelling hosts and comprehensive workbooks, enriching the educational experience. The company employs actors located in their own homes, using green screens or backdrops to create the illusion of time travel.

Case study: "I am Pilar!"[24]

A cross-sector partnership: In September 2023, drawing inspiration from the examples of emerging practice cited in this chapter, Athens-based creative research studio Heterotopia[25] brought together a cross-sector consortium around a common goal: the design and implementation of a remote virtual museum theatre programme. Taking inspiration from the live learning programmes of other museums that had been experimenting with the use of museum theatre (as cited earlier), this programme would include both a presenter-educator and a costumed museum theatre character; it would take place live within the museum gallery space itself (a 19th-century domestic interior with archival items on display), and it would include hands-on and enrichment content as part of a teacher resource pack.

This research endeavour sought to explore the needs and requirements of working in partnership to create this kind of work, as well as the technical and operational considerations of its delivery. It set out to understand, from the perspective of schoolteachers, what the perceived value and potential impact would be, and what adaptations and improvements to the technology, the provision of services and/or the content itself might further enhance the offer. Thanks to funding from the Greek Ministry of Culture, the resulting educational workshop was delivered free of charge to 24 Greek public secondary schools during the autumn and winter of the 2023/24 academic year.

The programme focused on the life and work of celebrated Greek stage and screen actress Katina Paxinou,[26] whose personal records and possessions – along with those of her equally renowned husband and creative partner, Alexis Minotis – are

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24. Project presentation video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UOXM5F3VjM.
25. Heterotopia is an Athens-based creative research studio working to raise the profile of theatre, performance and hybrid creative arts practice across the Greek heritage sector by promoting their value as research, interpretation and engagement tools for museums, archives, historic environments and sites of memory.
26. Katina Paxinou (1900-73) was a renowned Greek actress, acclaimed for her expressive performances in both Greek theatre and international cinema. Notably, she won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943), becoming the first Greek actor to receive an Oscar. Paxinou's success served as an inspiration for Greek artists and contributed to the global recognition of Greek talent in the entertainment industry.

stored, interpreted and displayed at the Eynardou Mansion in Athens. Available to visit by appointment only, the Paxinou-Minotis Museum and Archive are in the care of the Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, or MIET as it is generally known. MIET was established in 1974 after the fall of the military dictatorship in Greece and is a foundation with a publishing role. It operates bookstores and cultural centres in Athens and Thessaloniki, managing collections of Greek art and photography, including the ELIA archive.[27] MIET supports humanities, fine arts and sciences in Greece through various activities, including contributing over 100 000 items to platforms like Europeana for research and education. As part of a strategy to diversify its public engagement, MIET has been developing new partnerships across the creative and cultural industries in order to explore novel approaches to educational programming. The "I am Pilar!" project was conceived within the context of this strategy shift.

The Museotek platform, which was described in detail earlier, is the third partner of this consortium. The "I am Pilar!" project represented an opportunity for the consortium to explore new ways to enrich and present live learning content. The combination of government funding and the company's own investment in the work as a research and development opportunity meant that the programme could be offered free of charge to the participating schools.

As the instigator and project lead, Heterotopia ensured the distribution of the grant and the management of the project in accordance with the partnership agreement. As the creative producers of the work, they oversaw the recruitment, commissioning and direction of both the live and pre-recorded content. With the ongoing involvement of MIET's archivists and curators, Heterotopia worked with two actors and educational drama specialists to create a character, scenario and script that formed the basis of the live learning experience for school students. Together with Museotek, they finalised the details of a comprehensive teacher's pack, which introduced the programme, the platform and the exact content of the session. Participating schools were asked to print out four to five copies of a three-page "mini archive" that their class of students (divided into four or five working groups) would use during the live session. This mini archive was composed of a mixture of press clippings, correspondence and campaign communications from the period 1941-46 (all written in English) and arranged according to three themes that would enable the students to respond to questions during the workshop. The hands-on contact with the materials sought also to enhance the experience of immersion and time travelling, as has been previously shown (Venieri 2024).

Workshop structure: The only preliminary task required of the participants was that they watch a series of three short video clips[28] posted on social media. The clips introduce Sophia – the character that the students will meet during the live workshop – via a dramatised monologue. She sets the scene for the encounter

27. www.elia.org.gr/.

28. These clips are available to watch at www.youtube.com/@HeterotopiaMT.

by telling the viewers that it is 1950, that Katina Paxinou has just returned to Greece and that she, a news reporter and huge Paxinou fan, has been tasked with conducting the first interview. She gives a brief summary of Katina Paxinou's life and achievements up to that point but says that she feels incredibly anxious about and not at all sure of the exact details of the star's life during the years that she was away from Greece. She asks the viewers to help her research the facts, and she promises to send them the documents that they must study. In this context, the use of theatre – character, costume, set, script – establishes a specific historical setting for the encounter: post-war Athens, 1950. This, combined with the direct call to action ("please join me in the task of researching Katina Paxinou's history so that I do a good job of interviewing her"), enables the "suspension of disbelief"[29] that allows the audience, the participants, to confidently enter into the fiction – the game of make-believe – and make it a space for learning.

The live workshop itself was delivered in two time slots, on Tuesday mornings over the course of four months, to schools that were selected on the basis of being located in a remote rural or disadvantaged urban area. Once connected to the platform via a secure link, the class is welcomed by an educator-facilitator, who addresses them via a smartphone device that she holds in a gimbal-pivoted support device. She welcomes them to the Paxinou–Minotis Museum and explains what will happen. The students are reminded that they are about to "step back in time" to 1950 to meet the reporter Sofia, who needs their help to prepare for her interview. They are told that the mini-archives that their teacher has printed out for them hold the answers to Sofia's questions and that, when prompted to do so by Sofia, they will be able to search these documents and help her prepare to meet her idol. When the students are ready, the educator-facilitator pulls the camera back out to show the doors of the museum as she pushes them open and enters in search of Sofia …

This fictional character, with whom the students engage in their search for information from the archival sources, is pitched and played as slightly lower in status than themselves, making use of exaggerated mannerisms and physical comedy. This creates a context within which the students can pity Sofia, perhaps mockingly, but also help her. Sofia is nervous and intimidated by the prospect of meeting Katina Paxinou – the students can relate to this feeling but, having the advantage of living 70 years in the future, they in no way share her anxiety. Sofia lacks critical pieces of information, partly because she is not proficient in English, but also because she has not had enough time to research properly. The students have time to work in small groups to examine the English language texts in response to set questions. At no point during the interaction does Sofia acknowledge the fact that they are communicating via videoconferencing software, nor does she comment on where/when the students are and how they have accessed the information that she says she has sent them. Just as in-person,

29. The term refers to the audience's acceptance of implausible or fictional elements in theatre, setting aside their scepticism or critical judgment to fully engage with and enjoy the creative experience.

in situ museum theatre makes use of certain established theatrical devices (Farthing 2011; Jackson and Kidd 2008) to establish a bounded space for make-believe and play, so too will virtual museum theatre; and the exact nature of those new devices, tools and tricks are the subject of much current experimentation across the field as the transition to digital continues to gain pace.

Learning outcomes: Research conducted into performance and learning at museums and heritage sites in the UK (Jackson and Kidd 2008; Tzibazi 2009) revealed some useful observations about the ways in which people position themselves spatially in relation to a museum theatre event (according to how willing they are to participate), and the different "degrees of interactivity" that are usually involved in audience participation. In both cases, the question of "contracting in" became central and this contract – the unspoken rules on which everyone agrees in order to enter into play – is understood to be central to the participatory dynamic. The same research concluded that experience of being part of a social encounter in addition to the experience of being "inside" a performance contributed to learning outcomes, particularly regarding the participants' ability to recall events and information at a later date. This is backed up by the findings of this research inasmuch as the interviewed and surveyed teachers reported a noticeable enthusiasm among the class, both during the workshop and in recalling the event in the weeks that followed, as well as an ease in referring back to and discussing its content.

The survey regarding the programme indicated that 100% of the students learned something new and that the programme encouraged a better understanding of the notion and function of an archive for 71% of the students. Some initial findings suggest that 57% or more of the respondents anticipated that, when asked at a later date, students would be able to recall and contextualise some aspects of cultural heritage and some aspects of the interaction between Greece and the rest of the world during the Second World War. It also indicated that the use of primary material, authentic space, fictional content and interaction with the actor significantly motivated students to engage with the content provided and learn new things (85-100%).

Experience design: "Participants are engaged and motivated if they are part of an activity that has a goal that focuses their attention and orients participation; rules, that push them to seek less obvious ways of achieving the goal; a feedback system, which clearly indicates when the goal will be achieved and allows participants to track their progress; and lastly voluntary participation, which ensures a sense of trust by asking that all participants freely accept the terms of the game" (McGonigal 2011: 21). Without clarity about how an experience will unfold, what is expected of the participants and which aspects of the experience are open for genuine interactivity (versus those that are fixed), a group of students within the usually circumscribed environment of a school classroom are unlikely to open up enough to benefit from a 50-minute performance-based workshop. The "I am Pilar!" experience is designed in such a way as to balance two important factors: on one hand, spontaneous interactivity is a source of playfulness that makes live person-to-person interaction fun by giving it a sense of jeopardy; on

the other hand, trust must be established in order for participants to feel safe enough to take advantage of that invitation to play.

Referring back to McGonigal's (2011) criteria, the experience includes a goal in the form of helping Sofia and orients participation around the task of supporting her research efforts. The rules of play consist of a small variation on those already present within the classroom in that the students are given a reading and reporting task to complete, but it situates these within a playful, time-limited fictional setting where the students take on the role of advisers and "experts". This pushes them to seek less obvious ways of formulating the content and delivering their answers. The feedback system in this "game" is precisely that of live person-to-person feedback, facilitated by the improvisational and comedic skills of the performer who plays Sofia. Her panic provides a sense of urgency, as she reminds the students that time is short and indicates to them when the goal has been achieved (namely, when she feels she has enough information from them). The nature of her responses provides feedback on the students' progress. According to the terms established by Kidd, this dialogic framework constitutes "contextual interactivity", where the performance environment and content are in some way malleable and the audience – the students – are able to shape the proceedings by browsing, questioning, debating and so on (2011: 214). Finally, although the students' presence is not voluntary (again, this experience builds on and makes use of the predictable context of school classroom interaction), the degree to which they participate is. A system of group work and nominated spokespeople is used to allow various tiers of participation, including the options of passive observation and a quiet contribution to the research task for those who prefer (Jackson and Kidd 2008: 63).

Research methodology

For the complementary workshop, 24 teachers completed a survey, seven participated in interviews and all the sessions were observed through app recordings for programme evaluation. The survey[30] centred around four primary dimensions:

- the prior experience of teachers in utilising online tools, particularly online museum programmes or digitised primary sources, and the level of support they receive from museums;
- support and implementation of the educational programme;
- design and content;
- learning outcomes.

The participants consisted of secondary school teachers who participated with their students in the programme. They were predominantly educators specialising in history and Greek language/literature, accounting for 87% of the cohort.

30. https://drive.google.com/file/d/131bBo4ShARL1ZqLklQHrFw1_DK4Qj4fk/view?usp=sharing.

This mixed-methods approach involved collecting detailed quantitative and qualitative data on teachers' expectations. Furthermore, a comprehensive survey[31] was disseminated to educators through Europeana and EuroClio networks, augmenting the dataset with perspectives from a diverse range of educators dedicated to history teaching and digital learning. This survey garnered responses from 39 teachers across primary (28.2%), secondary (41%) and tertiary education (30.8%). The majority of respondents had over 20 years (46.2%) or 11-20 years (35.9%) of teaching experience, and rated their digital skills as excellent (33.3%) or very good (46.2%). The survey examined the extent to which these teachers utilise cultural and creative learning teaching methods and leverage virtual learning museum resources.

The collected data underwent analysis using both closed and open coding techniques and employing grounded theory methodology to facilitate the exploration of novel theoretical insights. Results were grouped under the following three thematic headings:

- 1. technology,
- 2. museum learning,
- 3. play and interactivity (as per Council of Europe guidelines).

Research results

Technology: The workshop participant teachers – whose data was gathered via a combination of surveys, interviews and observation – were all secondary school history teachers working in Greek state schools. These schools, which had been shortlisted for invitation, were fully briefed on the technical requirements of hosting the virtual learning programme in their classrooms and were able to verify their capacity in advance of accepting the offer. This meant that, apart from some issues concerning the reliability of their school's internet connection on the day itself, the teachers did not report any technical problems. Concerning the technological infrastructure and equipment available to teachers, minus a few exceptions where smartboards were available, the "I am Pilar!" workshops were enabled in class through the use of the teacher's laptop computer, its microphone and camera (turned outwards to face the classroom), in combination with a projector, speakers and whiteboard. While not ideal, this basic set-up satisfactorily provided the minimum requirements for live interaction, and the feedback from teachers and students has been overwhelmingly positive.

Set against the data gathered from the international mailing list respondents, these findings align with the wider trend of "PC, projector and internet connection" being the most commonly cited means available to schoolteachers to enable digital engagement in their classrooms. While neither survey gathered information about the prevalence of smartphone use and/or ownership among

31. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rcZTM4fVZW_CxlR4sqhK9d7lJg1zgdWs/view?usp=sharing.

the student body, they did ask teachers to share their perception of their students' level of digital skills. Here, around 80% reported this to be "good" to "excellent" and the observational data from the 24 workshops revealed a tendency on the part of students to actively use their own phones (when available) in order to: 1) conduct additional research online to help their group search for answers in the mini-archives provided, and 2) translate words and terminology from the English-language source material.

It is outside of the scope of this research, but the question of how best to integrate and manage smartphone use in classroom learning is still the subject of much enquiry and some debate (Anshari et al. 2017; Machmud 2018; Siebert 2019), and is worthy of further investigation in the context of virtual museum mediation. Although smartboard systems are understood to enable the best experience as far as collective and collaborative learning is outside of the scope of this research, but it is concerned, in cases where students are better equipped for videoconferencing-based interaction than their school classrooms (the majority of this project's participant schools), there is perhaps a case for further investigation into the challenges and opportunities of harnessing this to greater effect in support of live virtual learning experiences.

Museum learning: All survey and interview respondents reported that they take their students on school excursions to museums "sometimes" or "often". When asked to what extent they value the contribution of museums and heritage sites/collections, over 90% responded that they "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement that they are "an integral part of good history teaching". Whether this is indicative of an ideal or a reflection of how satisfied respondents are with museums, locally, nationally and so on is beyond the remit of this study. However, judging by the wide variation between levels and quality of school programming across the museum sector itself, it seems that there remains an inconsistency in understanding regarding what "good" provision looks like. As described earlier, the digital skills gap within the museums and heritage profession is likely to be exacerbating this variance in the shift to online and virtual engagement.

When asked about prior and existing use of virtual/remote digital heritage learning resources and experiences, data from the two surveyed groups revealed wider use (ranging between 55% and 85%) of resources such as recorded virtual tours, digital archives and exhibitions, online games and audiovisual content, compared to lower reported use of digital storytelling resources and webinars or talks (42-48%). Surprisingly, the reported use of downloadable/printable lesson plans and activities was almost as low as that of live person-led online workshops (both around 40%). Where the latter was expected due to its relative scarcity as an emerging area of practice, the former – a more established area of online learning provision – came as a surprise and is worthy of further investigation. It is worth mentioning that chatbots, avatars and other similar types of interaction design were reportedly used by fewer than 19% of respondents, but this is again thought to be due to their scarcity rather than being an indication of teacher interest per se.

Play and interactivity (experiential learning as per Council of Europe guidelines): The disadvantages of the PC and projector set-up, compared to the advantages of a smartboard, in this context relate to the limits placed on what is known as the performance feedback loop (Fischer-Lichte 2008) and the ability of the technology to substitute the bodily co-presence that facilitates subtle exchanges of perception and response between performer or presenter and spectator or audience. On the occasions when a smartboard was in use, the performer and presenter team of "I am Pilar!" reported feeling that, for them, those workshops had been "better" – higher in energy, more successful – on the basis of two phenomena:

1. richer, more playful interactions, with the students communicating with them more actively (via nods, shakes of the head, exaggerated facial expressions, etc.) because they can see the whole room more closely and because they know that they can all be clearly seen at all times; and

2. more varied and spontaneous conversation between the performer and presenter and also among the students, because each group spokesperson remained alongside and within their working group as they delivered their responses to the questions, as opposed to being sent to the front of class to address the presenter or performer directly while their group remained seated.

Nonetheless, even without the affordances of a smartboard, the teachers reported high levels of engagement and motivation among their students, who appreciated the introductory videos, the playful use of theatre to imagine a time travel type of encounter and the fact of being given a research task to perform quickly in small working groups. The fact that the selected archive items were authentic and varied (a mixture of correspondence, news clippings and campaign material from British and American sources) gave them not only a satisfyingly challenging experience in terms of putting their English language knowledge to the test but also a fascinating glimpse into mid-20th century media, celebrity and public discourse that contrasted greatly with their experience of such things today. Examining the survey and interview data on the topic of integrating creative or arts-based activities and play into classroom learning (discussed here not in the context of museum learning but as a general notion) appears to indicate a general openness to and interest in these types of approaches overall, acknowledging the perceived impact that they have on student motivation. However, this contrasts with recurring references to the lack of time available, especially at secondary level, to deviate from or expand upon the curriculum material.

Discussion

The interplay between history education, museum learning and digital history is crucial for shaping historical understanding and fostering democratic values. Initiatives like the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe actively bridge the gap between history education and the lived experiences of young people. In this intricate tapestry, museum learning emerges as a cornerstone, lifting historical literacy through engaging experiences in authentic spaces.

The significance of museum theatre, whether in person or online, is underscored for contextualising historical content effectively. Digital history and public history emerge as transformative forces, extending access and encouraging diverse perspectives. The digitisation of museum learning addresses geographical barriers but also raises challenges, including digital poverty.

Digital museum learning, while motivating in-person visits, is grounded in traditional principles, integrating participatory elements. The use of web-based cultural repositories, like Europeana enriches educational experiences through digital narratives. Virtual Museum Mediation and innovative approaches address challenges of synchronous virtual learning.

The "I am Pilar!" programme, which utilises primary materials, an authentic location, fictional content and actor interaction, motivated students and facilitated learning. The experience design, which was aligned with McGonigal's (2011) criteria, incorporated goals, rules, feedback and voluntary participation, creating a balanced and engaging atmosphere. The programme also offered a more comfortable way for teachers to integrate the museum visit in their lesson without having the responsibility for the delivery of the programme, as in the case of digital resources that have to be studied and organised adequately in order to support the learning process.

The research employed a combination of surveys, interviews and observations, collecting detailed quantitative and qualitative data from 24 Greek state school history teachers. The wider survey data from Europeana and EuroClio educator networks supported and contextualised the project's findings.

Technological infrastructure mainly involved laptops, projectors and whiteboards, with positive feedback on the virtual learning experience. Noteworthy is the prevalent use of digital resources like virtual tours and archives, with room for further investigation into the limited use of downloadable lesson plans. Museum learning remains highly valued, with over 90% agreement on its integral role in history teaching. The study suggests a digital-skills gap within the museum sector that impacts the quality and consistency of online engagement. The research also explores the play and interactivity aspect, highlighting the advantages of smartboards for richer interactions. Despite limitations, the PC+projector set-up demonstrated high student engagement and motivation, emphasising the positive impact of creative and arts-based activities on learning. However, time constraints at the secondary level were noted as a challenge to deviating from the curriculum.

In conclusion, the synthesis of diverse case studies and research on museum theatre and live online learning experiences underscore the dynamic interplay between immersive participatory educational strategies and technology. Exemplified by initiatives such as the Jorvik Viking Centre, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum and the innovative "I am Pilar!" programme, the convergence of historical interpretation, actor engagement and digital platforms enriches the learning environment. The success of these programmes hinges on well-crafted experiences, leveraging primary materials, authentic spaces and fictional

content to captivate audiences. Research findings emphasise the significance of spatial positioning, interactivity levels and the unspoken contract in shaping participatory dynamics. Additionally, the positive correlation between social encounters, performance immersion and enhanced learning outcomes aligns with the experiential learning principles. Technological considerations, such as the integration of smartboards and the prevalence of basic set-ups, contribute to successful virtual museum experiences. As museums navigate the evolving landscape of online education, understanding the balance between spontaneity and trust, as well as addressing time constraints, emerge as critical factors in optimising the impact of live learning experiences.

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Chapter 4
More than accessibility

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Including people with (intellectual) disabilities in public history

Disability has become an increasingly important issue in politics and society over the past decades. No other singular event illustrates this development as much as the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007, which lays out the procedural requirements for the implementation of human rights for persons with disabilities. A large number of countries have since attempted to implement the UNCRPD. This development is accompanied by an increasing interest in how to deal with disability in an educational context: signing nations are required to enforce Article 24 of the UNCRPD, which states that learners with disabilities must not be "excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability" and that "children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability" (UN General Assembly 2007, Article 24). Although the development and expansion of inclusive school systems is progressing slowly in many countries (United Nations 2023), the worldwide political will to enable all students with disabilities to receive a school education is difficult to deny.

The question of how education can be designed inclusively for people with disabilities is, however, not only for schools but also for the public space. Education outside of school is playing an increasingly bigger role in Europe as many policy makers believe that everyone "needs the opportunity and has the fundamental right to acquire new knowledge and skills, thereby safeguarding their opportunities in the labour market and allowing them to remain active, autonomous members of society" (European Education and Culture Executive Agency 2021: 13), as reported by the European Commission in 2021. In order to grant every European citizen the opportunity to participate in education outside of school, however inclusive practices must be developed to enable learning opportunities.

In many places, that aim to educate the public on history, this process has already commenced. Museums worldwide have started the process of thinking about how to make their exhibitions more inclusive. The International Council of Museums argues in this context that addressing exclusion "becomes essential for museums when fulfilling their mission to serving society" (International Council of Museums n.d.). However, it is not only museums that contribute to historical education outside of school but memorial sites, social media and

news outlets, among others, also do so. One discipline that attempts to focus on each of the aforementioned groups is public history. While there are still definitional ambiguities about what public history is and what its aims are (for example Cauvin 2022; Dean and Etges 2018; Demantowsky 2018), the discipline undeniably represents the most ambitious attempt to date to deal comprehensively with the multitude of actors in the field of out-of-school historical education.

In public history, inclusion has primarily been thought of as the reduction of barriers. Even though public history still lacks a systematic set of guidelines to create accessibility, there is no doubt that more and more "public historians strive for universal design and access in programs" (Clary and Dillian 2021: 42) to showcase history for a public audience. Yet, while accessibility considerations should generally be understood as a positive development regarding the inclusion of disabled people, another aspect of inclusion has hardly been discussed so far in the field of history education: the possibilities for participation in terms of constructing history. The UNCRPD characterises inclusion not merely as a reduction of reception barriers but also as a call for participation in social life. Article 2 states, among other things:

> "Discrimination on the basis of disability" means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (UN General Assembly 2007, Article 2)

Therefore, for research the question inevitably arises as to how it can involve people with disabilities in academic processes, especially in issues that affect them. Translated to public history, this means that the discipline must ask itself how it can contribute to ensuring that people with disabilities not only consume history but are involved in its construction.

This chapter argues that inclusion in public history has primarily been understood as the creation of accessibility and that questions of content-related participation have received too little attention thus far. Accordingly, the aim of the following remarks to present a model that enables people with disabilities to participate in historical research in public history. Special attention will be paid to the needs of people with intellectual disabilities, who are particularly threatened by exclusionary mechanisms in science. For this purpose, the theoretical considerations of Walmsley and Johnson (2003) on inclusive research will be taken into account. It will be shown how the ideas of these two authors can be transferred to the field of historical research in order to increase the level of participation of people with intellectual disabilities in public history. Before the model is presented, however, the term "disability" will first be discussed and its relationship to public history elaborated. Furthermore, the role that people with (intellectual) disabilities have played in research so far will also be examined.

What is disability?

Before examining the relationship between disability and public history, it is necessary to take a closer look at what disability actually means. Certainly, most people have heard the term "disability" before, but a closer look at the terminology raises questions: who belongs to the group of disabled people, and who does not? While categorising a wheelchair user as disabled would feel relatively natural for most people, it gets much more difficult when trying to do the same with a person with multiple sclerosis, a nervous disease that progresses in episodes. Is that person disabled? Does the stage of the disease affect the person´s disability status? Can a person affected by illness be understood as disabled at all? In order to understand who is considered disabled in a society, it is first necessary to realise that, in research, disability is no longer understood merely as a defect anchored in the individual. Disability is a category of inequality that is influenced by various parameters, such as time, place or even the social understanding of disability. Consequently, different models have been created that attempt to make disability conceptually comprehensible. This has resulted in a variety of models that may not have simplified the understanding of disability but have certainly broadened it (for an overview of models see Retief and Letšosa 2018). The following three models illustrate different possible readings of disability.

Seemingly, the oldest approach to describing disability is what has come to be known in disability research as the individual model. The individual model understands disability as a defect located in the individual on a physical, psychological or cognitive level, which must be prevented or remedied by means of preventive or corrective measures (Fine and Asch 1988; Olkin 1999). Criticism of this individualistic understanding of disability had already been voiced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, it was not until the 1980s that a competing model to the individual approach to describing disability emerged. This was known as the social model of disability (Oliver 1983). The social model does not understand disability as the result of a medical pathology, but as the result of socio-economic structures that let people with specific characteristics become disabled (Barnes et al. 2010). In the 1990s and early 2000s in particular, this focus on deconstructing social structures, just as in the 1980s in the context of the individual model, provoked renewed criticism. Above all, the dichotomisation of supposedly disabled and non-disabled people implied in the social model was criticised, as these attribution processes would create more problems than solutions as a result of the definitional vagueness of the term "disability" (Humphrey 2000: 69). Moreover, critics argued that the social model also perceives the existing health impairments as biological. As a consequence of this formulated criticism, the cultural model of disability was created (Michalko 2002; Titchkosky 2007). Analogous to the social model, the cultural model argues that discriminatory barriers limit people with disabilities. However, these barriers are declared to be of a cultural nature and are attributed to stereotypes and categorisations on the part of society (Lingelbach and Schlund 2014). Proponents of this model argue that disabilities arise through

processes of attribution, interpretation and naming, whereby the question of what exactly is to be understood by "normality" or "disability" is to be brought into the focus of disability research.

So, what do these different interpretations of disability mean for history education? On the one hand, history education must reflect on which group of people it wants to address and how, when designing inclusive learning opportunities for people with disabilities. As explained, the attribution process of disability is based not only on the individual but also on social and cultural factors. A memorial site, for example, that aims to provide access for people with various disabilities and openly articulates these risks may contribute to the stereotyping and categorisation described in the cultural model of disability. In this respect, inclusive history education must think about how it defines and communicates inclusion. On the other hand, new ways of approaching disability from a historical perspective are emerging for both schools and public learning spaces. In the field of disability history, an increasing number of works are emerging that deal with the history of disabled people from a social or cultural perspective (for an overview see Albrecht 2006; Burch 2009; Rembis et al. 2018). These emerging histories can help engage with previously under-received perspectives on history that may be of particular interest to people with disabilities. Also, the category "disability" opens up the possibility to reflect on and critically question historically developed norms, stereotypes and categorisations in both school and non-school contexts (for a more elaborate discussion of the content potentials of disability history for historical education see Barsch and Lingelbach 2020).

Disability and public history

Discussions revolving around disability in public history have mostly been one-dimensional thus far, with most debates focusing on questions of accessibility, namely how to make history accessible for people with and without disabilities alike in public spaces (for example Bucciantini 2019; Kudlick 2016; Sacco 2020). Representative of such ideas is the working group Making Public History Accessible: Exploring Best Practices for Disability Access, launched in 2016 by the National Council on Public History (NCPH), which aims "to address the challenges public historians face in creating fully inclusive sites and programmes for people with all types of disabilities" (National Council on Public History 2016). The fact that people working in public history are increasingly discussing the accessibility of historical exhibitions for people with disabilities is, just like the general idea itself, still a relatively new phenomenon, though. In 2005, Catherine Kudlick used the example of two people with severe visual impairments to vividly describe the problems that people with disabilities still faced in the early 2000s when they wanted to visit museums. Referring to an American local museum, she noted:

> Why is it that when America seems eager to open its civic places to the broadest possible audience, certain public institutions appear so ill-informed about people

> who require alternative ways to fully participate? Here we are, at a time when the ADA has been in effect for over a decade, people with disabilities have seen the promise of increased social awareness and powerful technology, and a generation of people like the women in the museum have grown up in large urban centres pouring money into their civic places. And yet in the early twenty-first century, two people still couldn't visit this museum on the spur of the moment or at the very least encounter employees sensitized enough to treat them with anything but contempt. Why is it that some people view visitors like us as problems rather than as opportunities to present exhibitions in new and interesting ways? (Kudlick 2005: 78)

Although museums where inclusion is not implemented as desired can still be found today, accessibility issues have now become a dominant theme both in museums themselves and in museum education and didactics (for example Catlin-Legutko et al. 2021; Cole and Lott 2019; Stringer 2014). Since the adoption of the UNCRDP museums all over the world have envisioned how content can be designed as inclusively as possible so that it can be received by different visitors with and without disabilities. In many places, these considerations are expressed in checklists or guides that can be accessed online and provide suggestions and ideas for the inclusive design of museum content (for example ADA National Network n.d.; Galla 2013; Garibay and Huerta Migus 2014). The German organisation Fachgruppenrat Inklusion des Landesverband der Museen zu Berlin, for example, has developed four different lists for people with impairments in the areas of moving, seeing, hearing and understanding, which are intended to facilitate the design of barrier-free exhibitions (Landesverband der Museen zu Berlin e.V. n.d.). In considerations of how to make historical content as accessible as possible, people with disabilities themselves are increasingly playing a role. As aforementioned, some publications refer to the usefulness and necessity of involving people with disabilities in issues regarding accessibility and point to their unique expertise on the topic. Ideas exist regarding the inclusion of disabled people in both physical and digital exhibition formats. For example, the physical exhibition from 2011 LeibEigenschaften held in Bremen, Germany, relied heavily on co-operation between people with and without disabilities (Nolte and Kinzler 2012). An example of a digital inclusive disability history exhibition is the project DisHist*:* Menschen mit Behinderungen in der DDR, which was made partly accessible to the public by means of a website largely determined by people with intellectual disabilities (Balling et al. 2021).

Accordingly, creating exhibition environments that are as accessible as possible has clearly been a point of emphasis for many historians working in public spaces ever since the worldwide adoption of the UNCRPD. Although questions on how to deal with disability are present in public history discourse with regards to accessibility, it seems as though the focus on making exhibitions more inclusive has overshadowed the potential discourse of other areas of disability in the field. This is maybe best illustrated with the metaphor of Thomas Cauvin's Public HisTree (Cauvin 2022: 14). Cauvin describes public history as the interplay of creating and managing sources (roots), interpreting history (trunk), communicating history (branches) and using history (leaves). In terms of how inclusion has been dealt with in public history to date, it can be said that the

branches have been in the focus thus far, while the roots, trunk and leaves have been largely neglected on a theoretical level.

The predominantly one-dimensional thematisation of inclusion in public history to date is hardly surprising. As already mentioned, the discussion of inclusion in public places has only gained momentum since the adoption of the UNCRPD and its legal implications. Therefore, relatively little time has passed for a multifaceted discussion of such a complex topic as inclusion. However, that other topics of interest to public history related to disability exist besides the questions of accessibility was already noted in 2005 by Katherine Ott, who referred to the "activist roots" (Ott 2005: 15) of public history regarding the question of inclusion of people with disabilities. While Ott does not specify her reflections on the "activist roots" of public history, she does point to the parallels with disability studies, which on a theoretical level should lead to a "marriage made in paradise" (ibid.) between the two disciplines. The term "disability studies" is commonly used to refer to all research that deals with the cultural, social and historical circumstances of people with disabilities (for an introduction to the field of disability studies see Watson and Vehmas 2020). Practically from the beginning, scholars in disability studies advocated for the inclusion of people with disabilities in research processes, expressed in the mantra Nothing About Us Without Us! theorised by James Charlton in the 1990s (Charlton 2000).

Sebastian Barsch, Anne Klein, Ylva Söderfeldt and Pieter Verstraete, four of the editors of the blog Public Disability History, have attempted to bring together the connections between public history and disability studies. They define four concrete possibilities for action to give disability more space in the public sphere:

> First making disability and disability history public refers to a process that transforms disability into a debatable thing, the subject of public debates. Second, making disability and disability history public also entails a process of translation that challenges disability historians to invent new ways to make the results of their work known to a broader audience. Third, the blog's understanding of public also has to do with the possibility of setting up and intensifying co-operation between people with and without disability. Fourth, this blog sees it as its duty to reflect on the different ways we can and should make not only the results, but above all the practices of doing disability history research accessible to everybody. (Barsch et al. n.d.)

In summary, this definition names three central pillars that should be considered in the interplay of public history and disability: co-operation, presentation and discussion. Co-operation between people with and without disabilities should be built up and intensified, the presentation should be designed in such a way that research within the framework of disability history is made accessible to all interested members of the public, and discussions should be initiated above all by making the phenomenon of disability a "debatable thing". Even if the demands are rather non-specific and more detailed explanations of the how and who are missing, the authors point out the importance of co-operation

between people with and without disabilities. This chapter argues that this approach should apply not only to the context of presenting history but also to research processes.

Thoughts on inclusive research processes in public history can draw on the much-discussed concept of "shared authority" that has been repeatedly mentioned in public history discourse. The term was first coined by Michael Frisch, who in his book *A shared authority: essays on the craft and meaning of oral and public history* argued that it is not only the historians who conduct interviews but also the interviewees who influence how history is written (Frisch 1990). Accordingly, not only historians have authority in the making of history, but also non-academic actors who are involved in the construction of history. In 2011, Frisch explained his idea in more detail by further elaborating on the chosen title of his book:

> The difference I had in mind was this: the construction "Sharing Authority" suggests this is something we do – that in some important sense "we" have authority, and that we need or ought to share it. "A Shared Authority", in contrast, suggests something that "is" – that in the nature of oral and public history, we are not the sole interpreters. (Frisch 2011: 127)

Frisch argued for understanding historical scholarship, at least in the context of oral history, as a co-production of historically trained and untrained people who, due to divergent perspectives, could contribute to establishing a "more broadly, democratic cultural practice" (Shopes 2003: 103) in historical scholarship. Frisch's arguments subsequently found increasing interest within public history. Over the course of the last 30 years, more and more practitioners in public history started to assume that "public history is by definition collaborative" (Cauvin 2022: 47), as Cauvin recently wrote. For Cauvin, the benefits of sharing authority in public history are obvious: "Sharing authority is predicated on the inclusion of multiple perspectives – especially from underrepresented groups – to produce richer and more diverse interpretations and narrations of the past that question and occasionally counter mainstream and dominant history" (Cauvin 2022: 48-9). Despite critical voices that question the legitimacy of academic practices that involve laypersons (for example Tosh 2022; Wilson et al. 2011), an increasing number of projects were started over recent years that aim to share authority in public history (for example Adair et al. 2011; Noiret 2022; Ridge 2016). But, while the concept of shared authority has unquestionably become a highly regarded theoretical approach to elaborate the relationship between the public and academia, shared authority has only sporadically been examined for its theoretical potential with regard to the inclusion of people with disabilities in public history (Barsch 2020a). This chapter argues that shared authority should be understood as the theoretical foundation of the co-operation between people with and without disabilities and aims to show how such shared authority could look like in practice. First, however, it is necessary to outline the status quo of co-operation between people with and without disabilities in the academic context in order to explain another critical concept for the inclusion of people with (intellectual) disabilities in public history: inclusive research.

People with (intellectual) disabilities in research

The idea that people with disabilities should participate in research is no longer important only in disability studies. Many academic disciplines have tried to adapt the motto Nothing About Us Without Us! and to advocate for increased inclusion of people with disabilities. A prominent example of this development is the project Disability Advocacy Research in Europe (DARE). The EU-funded project aims to make the "lived experiences of disabled persons the core of policy and legislative reform" (Horizon Magazine 2021) and explicitly describes the group of people studied as active actors in the research process. However, despite the efforts of projects like DARE to open up research, not all groups of people with disabilities benefit from this development to the same extent. Despite the calls of many scholars to include people with disabilities in research, people with intellectual disabilities have largely been ignored in attempts to implement a more inclusive research practice thus far (for a more detailed exploration of this see, among others, Keeley et al. 2019; Kenny et al. 2023; O'Brien et al. 2022). When looking for reasons for this, one argument is regularly brought up: it is widely assumed that people with intellectual disabilities lack "the cognitive ability to understand research methods" (O'Brien et al. 2022: 2), as O'Brien and colleagues recently pointed out.

Certainly, a limited cognitive ability in many people subsumed under the label "intellectually disabled" can hardly be denied if cognitive ability is understood as adaptive skills "to carry out age-appropriate daily life activities" (Boat and Wu 2015: 169). But the argument of academic exclusion based on a limited cognitive ability seems questionable for several reasons. First, defining a lack of cognitive ability is more difficult than one might think. Most often, the intelligence quotient (IQ) is used to define someone's intelligence, even though this measurement logic has been and continues to be criticised because of the definitional ambiguity of what IQ is and how it can be validly measured (for example Gardner 2005; Mensh and Mensh 1991). Moreover, the IQ boundary marking the transition between "intellectually disabled" and "not intellectually disabled" has historically been, and continues to be, more or less arbitrary. For example, a definition published in 1961 by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) defined all people who scored one standard deviation or more below the IQ norm as intellectually disabled (Heber 1961). In effect, this meant that all people with an IQ of 85 or less were considered intellectually disabled. In 1973, however, this definition was adjusted by the AAIDD such that people were declared intellectually disabled if they scored two standard deviations below the IQ norm (Polloway and Payne 1975). With the "stroke of a pen" (Bray 2003: 9), thousands of people were no longer considered intellectually disabled virtually overnight.

Secondly, the exclusion of a group of people on the basis of their cognitive abilities is subject to the idea of the individual model of disability and thus contradicts the legal requirements of the UNCRPD. The UNCRPD argues with the social model of disability and explains, among other things, that "disability is an

evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (UN General Assembly 2007, Preamble). Consequently, it is not the task of people with (intellectual) disabilities to adapt to conditions so that they can participate in research. According to the argument of the UNCRPD, it is the responsibility of academia to open up ways to enable participation.

Thirdly, the concept of inclusive research by Jan Walmsley and Kelley Johnson already provides theoretical indications of what inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities might look like. Walmsley and Johnson sought to develop a method "in which people with learning disabilities are active participants, not only as subjects but also as initiators, doers, writers and disseminators of research" (Walmsley and Johnson 2003: 9). The two authors laid out five principles of inclusive research practice that would enable people with intellectual disabilities to participate in academic research processes (Walmsley and Johnson 2003: 64):

- a. the research problem is owned by people with intellectual disabilities;
- b. the research focuses on the interests of people with intellectual disabilities;
- c. people with intellectual disabilities are involved in the research process;
- d. people with intellectual disabilities exercise some control over the process and outcomes;
- e. people with intellectual disabilities have access to questions, reports and outcomes.

The ideas of Walmsley and Johnson can now be found in various areas of science. For example, in the past 20 years, several inclusive research projects have been initiated to promote the participation of people with intellectual disabilities. To date, however, the total amount of research following this idea is still low. Two independent reviews identified about 50 studies each that have sought to adopt inclusive research practices since 2003 (Jones et al. 2020; Walmsley et al. 2018). In their review, Jones and colleagues were able to show that the "use of collaborative approaches dominated, and leadership and control by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities was rare" (Jones et al. 2020).

Another problem inclusive research faces is its potential financial burden. O'Brien and colleagues point to the persistent problems of funding inclusive research, a problem "that is barely addressed in the literature" (O'Brien et al. 2022: 9). This is especially true for projects that aim to pay the participating people with (intellectual) disabilities for their work, as is being advocated for by many institutions that are concerned with inclusive research. For example, the Disability Innovation Institute in Sydney argues: "People with disability must be paid for their work. If people with disability need support to do research, this must be paid for" (Disability Innovation Institute n.d.: 9). The problem, however, is that "there remains a view that 'doing research' is a way of providing an activity

for people with intellectual disabilities rather than it being seen as real work" (Strnadová et al. 2016: 60), as Iva Strnadová and colleagues noted. Until this changes and research by people with intellectual disabilities is truly understood as "real work", inclusive research projects are faced with the dilemma of either incurring a large portion of additional costs that can hardly be covered or counteracting the intended understanding of people with intellectual disabilities as equal partners due to the salary structure. Accordingly, efforts to allow people with intellectual disabilities to participate in science are still in the early stages, although the attempts already implemented demonstrate "that inclusive research as a paradigm has provided an alternative for people with intellectual disabilities from having *research done to them* to being involved in the *doing of it*" (O'Brien et al. 2022: 3).

The demand to give people with intellectual disabilities more access to research results has also been attempted in some areas of science. One example of this is the publication of books in easy-to-read language, which is intended to help people with intellectual disabilities to better understand content. In various European countries, such as Germany (*Leichte Sprache*), Spain (*Lectura Fácil*), France (*facile a lire et à comprendre*) and Italy (*linguaggio facie da leggere e da capire*), easy-to-read language has become established. There is increased focus on the potential and limitations of easy-to-read language for accessibility, which also include academic publications (for an overview of ongoing research on accessible communication research, see Deilen et al. 2023). Furthermore, a few academic journals have begun to instrumentalise easy-to-read language for comprehension purposes, as O'Brien and colleagues illustrate with examples from the *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* and *Disability & Society* (O'Brien et al. 2022: 7). Whether and to what extent easy-to-read language is actually suitable for optimising the comprehensibility of texts is controversial (for example Fajardo et al. 2014; Sutherland and Isherwood 2016), but the implementation attempts show that the needs of people with intellectual disabilities are at least reflected in some areas of science.

In historiography, ideas of inclusive research have sporadically been explored under the category of life history. Those projects stem from research regarding the deinstitutionalisation of people with intellectual disabilities, which started in the late 20th century. They aim to give intellectually disabled people a bigger opportunity not only to report on their personal experiences in the form of interviews but also to participate in the formulation of the histories that were written about the interviews (for example Atkinson 1997, 2004; Atkinson and Walmsley 2010). Although Frisch's remarks on shared authority have largely been ignored in life history, the projects represent initial attempts to operationalise oral history in an inclusive manner, as Corinne Manning explains: "My research also signified an important advancement in oral history methodology through its multifaceted approaches to inclusiveness and history production" (Manning 2010: 166).

In the field of history education, though, inclusive research approaches have played practically no role thus far. In the context of schools, issues of reception

have occasionally been addressed at national level, such as the German studies on the use and effectiveness of easy-to-read language in history teaching (Alavi 2015, 2016; Barsch 2019, 2022). In the field of public history, a few examples from the museum context can be cited as theoretical starting points for an inclusive research practice in which attempts have been made to explore history together with people with intellectual disabilities. Examples of joint design of history exhibitions have already been mentioned above. So far, however, there has been no theoretical groundwork that would allow for a systematic extension of these best-practice examples to a larger context. Accordingly, the next section will make a first attempt to fill this theoretical gap.

Modelling inclusive historical research

The goal of the model presented below is to enable historical research that is explicitly adapted to the needs of people with intellectual disabilities. It is intended that the proposed model can be used in general for the joint co-operation of people working in public history and disabled and non-disabled laypersons, but because of the already mentioned heterogeneity of the phenomenon of disability, it does not seem to make much sense to postulate a model that can be adapted to the needs of all people with disabilities. The fact that the model focuses explicitly on people with intellectual disabilities is related, on the one hand, to the above described fact that they are particularly affected by exclusion mechanisms in science and, on the other hand, to the fact that Walmsley and Johnson's idea of inclusive research offers a theoretical starting point that focuses explicitly on the needs of this group of people with disabilities. Certainly, people with intellectual disabilities can hardly be described as homogeneous, since they have "a high degree of variability in intellectual functioning" (Sajewicz-Radtke et al. 2022: 2). But the label "intellectual disability" allows at least a rough delimitation of the target group via their (allegedly) limited cognitive abilities and how they are perceived by society.

Article 3 of the UNCRPD calls for the "full and effective participation and inclusion in society" (UN General Assembly 2007, Article 3c) of all persons with disabilities. While this general demand makes sense in light of the goals of the UNCRPD, participation needs to be examined more closely in the context of enabling such. After all, participation is a multifaceted concept. The International Association of Public Participation distinguishes, for example, between five levels of participation: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering (International Association of Public Participation 2018). Vaughn and Jacquez have adapted these levels of participation to academic contexts and understand the terms as points of choice in the research process (Vaughn and Jacquez 2020). Informing means that the community is only informed about the research done but not included in the research process itself. Consulting means that the community is informed and consulted before research decisions are made, hence non-academics are granted a low level of involvement. Involving refers to an approach in which researchers work directly with the community, while collaborating subsumes research processes in which the non-academic

community is understood as an equal partner. Empowering, then, means that the community not only participates in the research but also has complete control over the research process. Research processes that aim to allow people with disabilities to participate in public history must first decide on the exact meaning of this participation.

The model of inclusive historical research presented here aims to enable different degrees of participation of people with intellectual disabilities. In view of the many factors influencing research processes (for example monetary means, logistics, personnel), it seems to be of little use to stipulate in advance that a participatory model is designed to achieve only a certain degree of participation. In addition, the heterogeneity of the affected group is taken into account by outlining different participation options that can be adapted to the respective needs of the people involved.

Figure 1: Inclusive historical research

Actor level

The model above is divided into two levels, an actor and an activity level (Figure 1). On the actor level, the model attempts to depict the interaction between practitioners and disability experts. Some years ago, Barsch pointed out that research in public history aiming at inclusion should always be understood as co-operation between experts and people with disabilities in order to be able to use the different perspectives and knowledge in a profitable way (Barsch 2020a). This interaction between multiple actors is emblematic of a shared authority approach in which different expertise is valued. Frisch describes the usefulness of such co-operation with the help of a kitchen metaphor:

> Professionals and "users" can together go "messin' in the kitchen", to quote an old blues song. We can find things in the cupboards and larders of oral history collections and mess around with the meanings we may find in them, seeing what, together, we can cook up for everyone who might come to be sitting out there in the dining room. (Frisch 2011: 130)

Practitioners

Practitioners in inclusive historical research can be people with different professional backgrounds. The experts mentioned by Barsch (historians, history educators, activists) are examples of such different backgrounds, but there are many more experts active in public history who could take on a role as practitioner. As mentioned earlier, public history is a broad field in which numerous institutions such as museums, memorial sites or universities play a role. It is therefore conceivable that museum educators, curators, memorial pedagogues or academic staff at universities, to name just a few examples of possible experts, could be involved in inclusive historical research as well. Depending on the research question and the planned activity, which will be elaborated in more depth in the next section, it is important to find fitting experts for the project. The goal must be to generate a "combined expertise" (Koloski 2011: 277), a term Laura Koloski used to describe potential co-operations between artists and museums, for research projects.

Disability experts

A large part of this necessary "combined expertise" for inclusive historical research is provided by disability experts. Disability experts can be people with (intellectual) disabilities on the one hand, and possible supporters on the other, on whom disabled people sometimes rely, depending on the severity of their disabilities. Both people with (intellectual) disabilities and their supporters bring their own forms of expertise, which are indispensable for inclusive historical research. People with (intellectual) disabilities, for example, can provide valuable ideas about the comprehensibility of constructed history in public history on the basis of their experiences. They can act as experts for their own needs in the formulating of history, as Barsch put it (Barsch 2020a). Supporters ideally bring a deeper understanding of possible physical or cognitive barriers that could prevent the participation of disabled people. Their role is to address barriers in a proper way, for example by removing physical barriers or adapting materials (for an overview of projects that illustrate different forms of support see Nind 2014: 33-82). However, supporters should always be understood as situational participants. They do not necessarily have to be included in inclusive historical research, but should be included when there is reason to do so due to certain disabilities. It is crucial to identify the potential support needs of people with (intellectual) disabilities involved in the research process and to ensure that such support is provided. The next section outlines how such support for people with intellectual disabilities in inclusive historical research in public history could look. Furthermore, it explores how practitioners and disability experts could work together by illustrating four different fields of activity for inclusive historical research.

Action level

The model is designed in such a way that each of the four fields can in principle be used as a starting point for an inclusive historical research project in public

history. Projects that attempt to cover all four areas would be desirable, but hardly feasible for financial and logistical reasons. The financial implications inclusive research poses have already been discussed, but the logistical effort should not be underestimated either. The following sections list several institutions that could be relevant for inclusive historical research. Utilising all these institutions in inclusive historical research projects is certainly possible, but requires a great logistical effort, which, depending on the size of the project, may not always be feasible. A middle ground might be to carry out the following activities separately and thus to limit the financial and logistical burden of joint projects. It is doubtful, however, whether such an approach would solve the general problem of remuneration and the general financial burden within inclusive research. In the following, the four different fields of activity are presented and illustrated by means of a current research project.

Enquiring

Enquiring is a procedure that every historical research project uses to generate new knowledge and that has already been extensively described (for example Schrag 2021; Trachtenberg 2009). Public history especially has a wide pool of material it can work with: archives, museums and private collections can be sources of information, as can blog posts, radio snippets or interviews (for a more detailed listing of available sources in public history see Cauvin 2022: 81-141). In inclusive historical research, there are primarily two things to consider when it comes to the enquiring process. First, it must be ensured that people with (intellectual) disabilities are involved in the collection process. According to the outlined different levels of participation (informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, empowering), people with disabilities can take different roles here. For example, it might be possible for practitioners to consult with disability experts beforehand to find out which topics, sources and representations of a particular topic are considered particularly interesting for them. The process could also be made collaborative or empowering, with practitioners and disability experts working together to find sources. Archives worldwide are increasingly concerned with accessibility (Archivo General de la Nación Colombia n.d.; Society of American Archivists 2020; Wohlfarth 2023), and in many countries research has been done or is going on that focuses on making the internet more accessible for disabled people (for example Ragnedda et al. 2018; Tsatsou 2022). Accordingly, there is (at least in theory) a multitude of potential accessible starting points for inclusive historical research.

Secondly, in inclusive historical research, the enquiry does not end with finding suitable sources but may need to be continued through an adaptation of the researched source material. The adaptation of sources can contribute to ensuring that sources that were previously inaccessible to certain groups of people can now be made accessible. The possibilities of inclusive adaptation of sources have already become the subject of German historical-didactic considerations (Barsch and Lücke 2020; Degner 2020; Degner and Seidenfuß 2020). It remains to be seen whether and to what extent this national discourse will be transferred

to other countries in the coming years. However, German history didactics, with its operationalisation of scaffolding, easy-to-read language and pictograms, draws on concepts that have already been discussed in the international special education discourse for a while and could therefore be adopted worldwide rather easily.

The dissertation project "Participatory Practices of an Inclusive History Education" provides an example of how sources could be adapted specifically to the needs of people with intellectual disabilities.[32] In the course of two field studies, sources were collected on two different topics (Special Olympics and soccer in the US in the 20th and 21st centuries), with the help of which students with intellectual disabilities were to work independently on history. The collected material was adapted by the project team, consisting of two history educators from the university, prior to the start of the field studies. Among other things, collected interviews were offered in written and auditory form, texts were written in plain language, pictograms were used for illustration, and video contributions were selected and shortened. The two different field studies are emblematic of different degrees of participation that could be used in inclusive historical research. While in the first field study, the topic Special Olympics was given by the project team and the students were only informed about it, the second field study used a collaborative approach. The students chose the topic they wanted to work on, before the project team then collected and adapted sources.

Formulating

Formulating a history out of sources is the core business of historiography. Traditionally, people with an academic historical background write monographs, anthologies or papers for this purpose. Inclusive historical research also aims to formulate history, albeit in a less academically centred way. In contrast to traditional historiography, inclusive historical research involves not only people with historical expertise, but also non-academic history laypersons. As with the above-mentioned life history projects, formulating history is understood here as the co-production by disabled and non-disabled actors who construct a joint history in processes of negotiation. The collaborative approach to formulating history is not a new demand, either in the context of school or in out-of-school historical education. With regards to history lessons, the joint formulation of history has been described as a meaningful way to include as many students as possible in classroom activities (Barsch 2020b, 2023; Kühberger and Barsch 2020).

In public history, the more than 30-year discourse on shared authority described above is representative of the ongoing attempts of many people working in public

32. For more detailed information regarding the project see https://histsem2.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/forschung/dissertationsprojekte#_ftn2. The German title of the research project is "Historisches Denken und Lernen von Schüler*innen mit Lernschwierigkeiten: Teilhabeorientierte Praktiken einer inklusiven Geschichtsdidaktik".

history to enable collaborative approaches and thus provide "a way for historians to reduce inequalities by making publications and teaching more relevant to broader audiences who are often excluded from higher education" (Cauvin 2022: 49). When it comes to the how of formulating joint history, though, more careful attention must be paid to the needs of people with disabilities. For example, many studies have shown the struggles of people with intellectual disabilities to read, comprehend and write texts (for example Nilsson et al. 2021; Ratz and Lenhard 2013; van den Bos et al. 2007). Despite the growing number of non-written sources that can now be used to formulate histories, history itself is still very much a text-based discipline. A meta-study by Cynthia M. Okolo and Ralph P. Ferretti showed how problematic this can be for people with intellectual disabilities. The authors report that students' text work can be improved through intervention studies, but that text work in general remains "less then desirable for students with and without disabilities, even after intervention" (Okolo and Ferretti 2014: 480). Therefore, when formulating history in inclusive history research projects, it makes sense not only to include texts but also to recognise other formats (such as podcasts, videos or images) as products of collaborative work.

The degree of participation of people with (intellectual) disabilities in a joint formulation of history within the framework of inclusive historical research in public history can vary. For example, practitioners consulting with disability experts to find out which content should be in a history is just as conceivable as the greater involvement, co-operation or empowerment of disability experts in decisions regarding the historical content. In the dissertation project mentioned above, I attempted to build on the ideas of life history research and to empower students with intellectual disabilities to formulate their own history. Working in groups, the students were asked to formulate histories that they themselves considered relevant. It was up to them whether they wanted to write texts or use other formats to present their history. As can be seen from the students' results, the creation of texts, the selection of suitable pictures and videos, as well as the audio recording of students' histories all played a role in the formulation of the students' histories, which were collected on websites specially prepared for the two field studies.[33]

Reviewing

Just as in any other academic discipline, reviewing plays a central role in historical research. Traditionally, after a history has been formulated, the following questions, among others, need to be answered before a history can be showcased to a broader audience: are there ambiguities and inaccuracies in the history that need to be resolved? Is there information that needs to be added to complete the history? To what extent have historiographical standards been considered? Questions like these are usually answered by people with an academic background, for example during peer review procedures for academic journals. The example of a special issue of the *British Journal of*

33. See for example the website of the first field study showcasing the history of Special Olympics: https://gemeinsam-geschichte-schreiben.jimdofree.com/.

Learning Disabilities in 2012 shows that such a review can theoretically also be carried out by people with intellectual disabilities. Here, people with intellectual disabilities "were breaking new ground" (Nind 2014: 28) and took on the roles of peer reviewers and editors. With regards to public history, Barsch sees great potential for the inclusion of people with disabilities by involving them in review processes. He argues that people with disabilities are well equipped to check formulated histories for their comprehensibility because of their own experiences (Barsch 2020a). Such an approach is already being tried out in Germany, even if not with direct reference to historical research. For example, the Institut für Inklusive Bildung (Kiel) employs people with intellectual disabilities to check, among other things, the comprehensibility of complex texts and, if necessary, translate them into easy-to-read language.[34]

While checking for comprehensibility is a practical way of making use of disability experts in inclusive historical research, other review formats are suitable as well. In the project Participatory Practices of an Inclusive History Education, for example, a consulting approach was used in which the histories formulated by the students were reviewed by the project team on the linguistic and legal level. The aim was not to change the content of the histories but merely to ensure that they were linguistically coherent and used material that was legal. The results of the review process were then presented to the students. Changes were explained and discussed to see if they were acceptable to the students.

Presenting

An important part of historiography is its presentation. Forms of presentation depend on the intended audience. For example, a journal article on inclusion aimed at an academic audience must use a different language from a museum exhibition with the same thematic focus aimed primarily at the general public. Even though it is difficult to narrow down all the possible forms of presentation most commonly used in public history because of the wide range of institutions and experts included, it is hard to argue against Cauvin who writes that public history encourages those working in the field "to communicate to large, often non-academic audiences through multiple media" (Cauvin 2022: 15). Of course, presented histories in the context of public history do not always aim at a non-academic audience. But a focus on a large, often non-academic, audience in public history can hardly be denied in view of the sometimes strong demarcation from academic historiography.

The fact that the presentation of history in public history has gradually become more inclusive has already been described in detail above. Inclusive historical research aims to make these existing concepts a subject of discussion between practitioners and disability experts, and to build on them. The goal of inclusive

34. A detailed overview of the work of the Institut für Inklusive Bildung can be found here www.uni-kiel.de/de/institute/iib.

historical research is to think about how to make content as inclusive as possible, to make it equally accessible to people with and without disabilities and to include the perspectives of people with (intellectual) disabilities in this process. The necessity of extending existing concepts can be illustrated by the example of the use of easy-to-read language in many museums. Certainly, the effort to present exhibition texts in a complexity-reduced variety makes sense and is the result of an inclusive thought process. However, by using easy-to-read language as a universal instrument to help people with intellectual disabilities had led to the language being characterised as a variety that helps all persons subsumed under this label equally. Yet, initial empirical work suggests that this not the case, that easy-to-read language does not help all people with intellectual disabilities in the same way and should be individualised (for example Bock 2019; Lasch 2017). Therefore, it seems to make sense to consider not only different forms of disability but also the diversity of disability when discussing the creation of accessibility for people with intellectual disabilities. In other words, although accessibility considerations have become more prominent in public history in recent years, there are still needs that could be filled through an exchange between practitioners and disability experts in inclusive historical research.

As in all other fields of activity, the level of participation of disability experts can vary here as well. As mentioned above, collaboration in the context of presenting history has already been tested in a couple of German research projects (Balling et al. 2021; Nolte and Kinzler 2012). In the project Participatory Practices of an Inclusive History Education, an attempt was made to go one step further and to empower students to decide which content they wanted to present and how. Once again, history educators acted only as supporters, helping the students to implement their ideas on the aforementioned website. Their job was merely to implement the students' instructions technically.

Inclusive historical research and its importance for history education

Finally, when looking at the model, there remains one obvious question: why all this? Why does history education need a model that enables people with (intellectual) disabilities to participate in public history? One goal is obvious and has been stated throughout this chapter: inclusion. To implement the legal objectives stipulated by the UNCRPD, history education, just like any other academic discipline, needs to find ways to include people with (intellectual) disabilities and their educational needs. Otherwise, history education runs the risk of further strengthening exclusion practices that have prevented (intellectually) disabled people from learning about history in the past (Rein 2021; Völkel 2017).

However, in addition to the goal of inclusion, two further reasons can be cited to stress the importance of inclusive historical research for history education. First, the desired co-operation between practitioners and disability experts presents a potential starting point for much-needed research regarding the implications of

the often mentioned mantra "Nothing about us without us!" in inclusive research contexts, especially when it comes to people with intellectual disabilities. In 2017, Mietola and colleagues noted that people with intellectual disabilities "are virtually missing from key theoretical and methodological discussions, as well as from empirical studies" in disability studies (Mietola et al. 2017: 264). During the last six years this has not changed, at least when it comes to the field of history education. Research questions of interest could include: in which histories people with (intellectual) disabilities are interested were they to be granted rights of participation. Are they really interested in researching history that has something to do with "their" disabilities, as many people in disability studies are advocating? How are histories told that involve the perspectives of people with (intellectual) disabilities? Which issues of accessibility are of importance for those affected and how are they addressed, if at all?

Second, inclusive historical research offers several opportunities to initiate what must be understood as the primary task of all history education: historical learning. As described above, inclusive historical research has the potential to make practitioners and disability experts work together in a product-oriented way, namely to come up with new (adapted) sources and histories, or to revise and present existing histories in an inclusive way. It would also be conceivable, though, to use inclusive historical research as a learning vehicle. For example, learning scenarios could be developed in different institutions of public history, such as museums or memorial sites, that follow the ideas of enquiry-based research. Although there is still some confusion about what exactly is meant by enquiry-based research, there is broad agreement that it is a didactic principle "that relies on student independence: learning by conducting their own research" (Mieg 2019: 1). In history education, the concept has received increased attention in recent years (Levstik and Barton 2023; van Boxtel et al. 2021; Voet 2017). So far, history education research has focused on "uncover[ing] the disciplinary reasoning and knowledge that underlies successful inquiry learning, students' ability and difficulties when engaging in such disciplinary reasoning, and ways in which inquiry learning in history can be facilitated" (van Boxtel et al. 2021: 297). Historical learning in school contexts has received most attention in enquiry-based learning so far, despite public history offering a golden opportunity to facilitate such learning. Bihrer and colleagues note:

> In terms of implementing inquiry-based learning approaches, the field of applied history/public history is of particular importance, as it places university research and education in direct relationships with public engagement with history, enters into and maintains collaborations with non-university institutions, reveals employment opportunities, and is dedicated to project acquisition. Thus institutional and – above all – subject-specific basic conditions are made available. (Bihrer et al. 2019: 295)

In particular, the "subject-specific framework conditions" mentioned by Bihrer and colleagues play a decisive role in learning settings that are specifically for people with disabilities. Such considerations can start by looking at the already sketched ideas on access and participation options for people with intellectual disabilities or the different museum guidelines on inclusion alluded to in this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to describe the understanding of inclusion in public history to date and to sketch out ideas for how people with (intellectual) disabilities can participate in public history practices. In particular, the concepts of shared authority and inclusive research were used to describe a joint approach by practitioners and disability experts in the fields of activity enquiring, formulating, reviewing and presenting. The future will show whether and to what extent the described model is practicable. It remains to be seen whether actors in public history are interested in working together with people with disabilities and have the financial resources to do so. This requires a new understanding of inclusion, one that does not understand accessibility as the only important aspect to measure for the success of inclusion. But practitioners in public history are not the only ones who will decide on whether inclusive historical research has been realised. It depends equally on people with disabilities themselves. The extent to which people with disabilities will be willing to participate voluntarily in historical research or educational projects cannot be predicted, nor can their willingness to have their work documented for the scholarly community.

Accordingly, the implementation of inclusive historical research faces a number of obstacles that must be gradually overcome. The implementation of projects along the lines of inclusive historical research would certainly be desirable in order to allow more people to participate in the creation and presentation of history. An example of such a project might be research on the history of the UNCRPD. Depending on the country one looks at, the UNCRPD has been in force for about 15 years now. Possible questions for inclusive historical research could be, but are not limited to: How has the implementation of the UNCRPD influenced the lives of people with intellectual disabilities? How do people with intellectual disabilities look at the implementation of the UNCRPD? Are there any country-specific practices in the implementation of the UNCRPD that have had or are having an impact on the lives of people with intellectual disabilities? Yet, even if this or similar projects are not implemented in the near future, public history will have to think differently about inclusion than it has in the past. Inclusion in public history must mean more than simply providing access. It must mean providing participation as well.

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Chapter 5
Exploring potential digital technologies for history education

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Introduction

In formal education, the primary responsibility of a history teacher is to meet the educational goals set by national subject curricula or similar regulations established by the country's educational authorities. Drawing on their expertise in historiography and pedagogical principles, educators interact with students using specific teaching techniques and aids to create an ideal environment for sustainable learning. Historical records of teaching methods reveal a historical preference for traditional frontal teaching, often with minimal use of aids (Hale 2020). The latest report from the Council of Europe's Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTE 2024) supports this, indicating that 68% of history teachers often rely on lectures or presentations. However, the latter part of the 20th century saw a significant shift towards constructivist approaches to education (An 2021; Bobryshov et al. 2022), leading to changes in teaching methods and a more welcoming attitude towards innovation. Yet, the integration of new educational tools has generally been cautious and gradual, with occasional bold initiatives by creative educators.

The integration of technology in education has been a continuous process marked by significant milestones. For many years, printed textbooks, reference materials and physical resources were primary information sources, supplemented by field trips for hands-on learning. The introduction of personal computers in the 1980s brought significant changes, along with the proliferation of educational software, including games and productivity tools. By the 1990s, the internet had become fundamental to education, leading to computer labs and internet access in schools. Educational multimedia expanded with CD-ROMs and online resources, followed by interactive whiteboards and projectors in the early 2000s. The rise of smartphones and tablets in the subsequent decade introduced educational apps and mobile learning platforms, providing tailored learning experiences and easy access to resources. Concurrently, the idea of "bring your own device" (BYOD) policies gained popularity, allowing students to use their devices for learning. The transformative impact of technology in education was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, with online learning taking centre stage as institutions shifted to remote or hybrid models. Learning management systems (LMS) such as Moodle, Google Classroom and Canvas played vital roles in administering online

courses and managing assessments. Videoconferencing tools became essential for real-time virtual classrooms further reshaping education. Today, education continues to evolve with cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR),[35] augmented reality (AR)[36] and data analytics, marking a profound transformation in how students learn and educators teach.

The first general report by the Council of Europe Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTE 2024) highlights the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in history education. In 12 out of 16 OHTE member states, ICT incorporation is mandated. At the same time, the report shows a nuanced picture regarding teachers' use of digital resources in the classroom. While government-approved websites and databases are the third most-used resource type on OHTE average (51% of respondents use it often or in every lesson), search engines and websites not necessarily validated by governments rank sixth (42% of respondents use it often or in every lesson). On the other hand, video games are the least-used resources, according to teachers, and are rarely or never used by 75% of respondents, while only 9% use them often or in every lesson. Furthermore, according to the survey, teachers view the use of ICT as one of the top three training needs on OHTE average (56% of respondents selected this item). The HISTOLAB Digital Hub aims to meet the need for ongoing teacher education and research efforts by making the vast material available and navigable on the internet through the use of a sophisticated filtering system, and by offering a series of tutorials.[37]

Marc Prensky (2001) introduced the concepts of "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" to explain generational differences in technology use.[38] Prensky suggests that these differences impact learning preferences, with digital natives often showing greater ease and skill in using digital tools compared to digital immigrants. This framework has influenced public discourse and academic discussions for two decades. However, the idea of inherently tech-savvy natives is increasingly challenged. Contrary to the notion of a highly skilled digital generation, recent research shows that contemporary digital natives have limited software usage. They tend to use social media more for consuming information passively rather than for actively creating content, interacting socially or sharing resources. Studies indicate that educators are often as, if not more, tech-savvy than their students both inside and outside the classroom. Despite growing up in a digital world, this generation doesn't always demonstrate the expected proficiency with modern technologies. This highlights the importance for

35. Virtual reality (VR) immerses users in a fully simulated digital environment, disconnecting them from the real world.
36. Augmented reality (AR) enhances the real world by overlaying digital elements, allowing users to interact with both physical and virtual aspects simultaneously.
37. Available at https://histolab.coe.int/resource-hub and https://histolab.coe.int/activities/tutorials.
38. Digital natives denote individuals exposed to digital technology early in their development and who seamlessly integrate it into the fabric of their daily lives. Conversely, digital immigrants are characterised by their having adopted technology later in life.

educators to discern when to use specific devices, especially at a time when institutions advocate for tablets, laptops and BYOD policies (Kirschner and De Bruyckere 2017). Concerns over the negative effects of smartphone use have led policy makers increasingly to limit or ban their use in educational settings. UNESCO (2023) has reported bans on mobile phones in schools in one in four countries globally.[39]

Following the release of OpenAI's ChatGPT 3.5, the year 2023 saw a significant focus on AI in conferences and panels attended by historians, history educators and experts. The Council of Europe (2023) defines AI as a set of sciences and techniques aimed at replicating human cognitive abilities in machines. UNICEF (2023) defines AI as machines that, when given human-defined objectives, can make predictions, offer recommendations or make decisions impacting real or virtual environments. Generative AI, in its current form, uses statistical analysis to understand patterns in characters. Despite being a mechanised form of intellectual labour, it surpasses human capacity in computational power, enabling superhuman tasks such as summarisation, translation and planning to be performed. The complexities of generative AI challenge even the engineers who create them (Tzirides et al. 2023). Besides the benefits, recent research shows that generative AI's factual accuracy in texts is about two-thirds, with some parts of texts being entirely fabricated. Jimmy Wales, founder of the free online encyclopaedia Wikipedia, for instance, believes AI's current writing abilities are flawed for Wikipedia but that it could become superhuman in 50 years (Davies 2023).

The rapid integration of AI into political discussions has also affected debates on education. Here, conversations often revolve around AI's potential to streamline educators' responsibilities, with questions such as "Will AI replace the teacher?" A key point of discussion is the need to understand AI's nature, especially to distinguish between general AI and the current state of generative AI. The third pillar of the Education Strategy "The transformative power of education: universal values and civic renewal", which was adopted during the 26th session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in 2023, highlights the impact of digital transformation, particularly AI, on education. This shift involves using digital technologies to improve teaching, expand access to resources and promote digital literacy. Reforms include rethinking pedagogy, redesigning learning environments and emphasising digital citizenship education. While AI and data analytics can support diverse learners, they also present challenges such as automating suboptimal teaching practices. A human

39. In the European context, France banned them in 2018 with exceptions, Italy enforced a complete ban in December 2023, and the Netherlands will broadly restrict them from secondary school classrooms starting in 2024. England is set to join this movement to improve student behaviour, aligning itself with countries such as France and Italy. There are debates about smartphone bans in primary schools in Germany, but the German Teachers' Association opposes a comprehensive ban. Finland's government aims to reverse declining educational standards by passing a law prohibiting mobile phones in schools in 2023, and similar discussions are occurring in Spain.

rights-based approach is crucial to responsibly use digital technologies ensuring the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. Guided by democratic values, digital transformation can create inclusive, equitable and empowering learning environments.

In October 2023, the British Department of Education released a policy document outlining its stance on the use of generative AI, echoing similar sentiments from European politicians. The document emphasises AI's benefits in reducing teacher workload and enabling personalised instruction, while also raising concerns about the quality of AI-generated content and student data protection. While this category was not included in the OHTE general report, research suggests that educators are more likely to adopt AI when it reduces workload, offers user-friendly tools and upholds privacy standards (Cukurova et al. 2023). AI use among history teachers is limited and mainly focused on brainstorming for teaching ideas (Hajdarović 2023; Heckman 2023).

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the integration of emerging digital technologies stands out as a transformative force, carrying significant implications for learners, educators and institutions alike. This chapter delves into the potential of cutting-edge digital tools to enhance history education and explores their crucial role in modern educational approaches. These technologies have transcended being mere tools; they have become essential components of the educational environment. In an era marked by unprecedented connectivity, vast information access and rapid technological advancements, it is vital to explore how these emerging digital tools are reshaping education and why this shift is so crucial. In light of the predominant focus in scholarly investigations on utilising digital technology within the broader education field, there is a scarcity of research directly addressing the pedagogical aspects of digital technology and history education. Consequently, broadening the scope and distinguishing applicable research methodologies within the interdisciplinary domain has become imperative in undertaking this research endeavour. This study seeks a deep understanding of the impact of emerging digital technologies on history education, emphasising the necessity for educators, policy makers and stakeholders to recognise this transformative influence. By examining both the potential benefits and challenges of these technologies in history education, this research aims to provide insights for decision making and the development of effective strategies to fully harness these tools for educational purposes. Throughout history up to the present day, the integration of new educational technologies has been closely linked to the evolving methods of teaching history and the culture of learning.

Using technological forecasting through the Delphi and Futures Wheel methods, this study will make predictions about the future of history education, including the emergence and adoption of new educational technologies such as AI, virtual and augmented reality, and adaptive learning systems. By identifying potential applications for these technologies in the classroom, evaluating their effectiveness in enhancing student learning outcomes and weighing the costs and benefits of their implementation, educators and policy makers can make informed decisions on how best to utilise new technologies to enhance student learning.

Methodology

Futurology, also known as future studies, provides a repertoire of potential research approaches. The selected methodologies encompass technological forecasting, the Futures Wheel and the Delphi technique. These qualitative methods are subsequently triangulated with a survey during the final phase of the investigation. The technological forecast is focused on the general development of educational technology; the Futures Wheel and Delphi method direct questions towards teaching history; and the final survey complements the previous results on the population of teachers or direct practitioners in European classrooms.

Technological forecasting is a systematic process of predicting the development and adoption of technologies based on analysing historical trends, current data and various factors influencing technological evolution. Technological forecasting is a versatile tool that helps stakeholders across sectors prepare for technological changes, make informed decisions and adapt to a rapidly evolving world. Its diverse applications can be tailored to different organisations' and industries' specific needs and goals (Calleja-Sanz et al. 2020; Cho and Daim 2013). In business, technological forecasting is crucial for anticipating cutting-edge technologies and trends, guiding product development strategies. It empowers businesses to explore new markets driven by rapid technological progress, maintaining a competitive edge through precise innovation, research and development (Sun et al. 2023).

Technological forecasting begins with collecting and analysing data related to existing technologies and their evolution. This includes studying past technological advancements, examining the current state of technology and identifying key trends in innovation. Technological forecasting often involves creating scenarios based on various assumptions about how these driving forces might evolve. These scenarios represent different possible futures and help stakeholders understand potential outcomes. Forecasting also involves assessing the risks associated with various technological developments. This includes considering potential obstacles, uncertainties and external factors that could impact the trajectory of a technology. Technological forecasting can be short-term (predicting developments over the next few years), medium-term (predicting developments over the next decade) or long-term (anticipating developments over several decades).

Governments assume a pivotal role in harnessing the power of forecasting to formulate policies and regulations that either encourage or manage the adoption of specific technologies within their jurisdictions. Funding agencies and academic institutions employ forecasting as a discerning instrument for resource allocation, directing funding towards research areas that exhibit the most promise for future impact. Educational institutions adapt their curricula to align with emerging technologies and the burgeoning demand for specialised skills, ensuring their graduates are well prepared for the professions of tomorrow (Bousnguar et al. 2021; McMeen 1987).

Technological forecasting is not a standard tool or method for humanities or educational sciences research. However, as a consequence of significant challenges in the current development of technology that affects the educational system, both humanities and educational sciences must modify such research tools for their needs. The Futures Wheel, also known as idea wheels, is a creative and structured research method used to explore and visualise potential future scenarios, trends and consequences (Dubovicki 2017; Epp et al. 2022). They are often employed in futures studies, strategic planning and innovation processes to facilitate brainstorming and strategic thinking about future possibilities. The Futures Wheel is a method for identifying and packaging primary, secondary and tertiary consequences of trends, events, emerging issues and future possible decisions (Glenn 1972).

The scope and context must be defined to initiate the Futures Wheel method, ranging from technological advancements to societal changes or business strategies. A clear central idea at the Futures Wheel core serves as the focal point of the exercise. Spokes around the central idea represent a crucial factor or driver that influences the central idea, whether internal or external. Extending the spokes by adding sub-factors for each key factor that considers both positive and negative influences fosters critical thinking. Discussions and exploration of each Futures Wheel element promote a free flow of ideas, individually or in a group setting. The Futures Wheel can be expanded like a mind map, aiding the researcher in visualising interconnections between factors and consequences.

Completed Futures Wheel information can identify potential opportunities, challenges, risks and trends associated with the central idea. Futures Wheel can also accommodate new information, changing circumstances and emerging trends in the continually evolving future.

The Delphi method, originally conceived as a systematic and interactive forecasting technique, constitutes a structured communication approach reliant on the expertise of a designated panel. Its application extends across diverse research domains, encompassing the field of education (Skulmoski et al. 2007). In educational research, the Delphi method is instrumental in establishing guidelines, standards and anticipation of emerging trends. In higher education, notable applications of the Delphi method involve assessments of cost-effectiveness, cost–benefit analyses, curriculum and campus planning, and the formulation of university-wide educational objectives (Green 2014; Nworie 2011).

The Delphi method's procedural framework entails administering multiple rounds of questionnaires to a panel of subject experts. After collecting responses, a meticulous summarisation ensues and the outcomes are communicated back to the panel for additional input and refinement. This iterative process persists until a consensus among the experts is achieved (Dubovicki 2017). Due to the limited duration of this research, the Delphi method was conducted only in one round with a group of experts from leading European organisations, selected for their expertise in formal and informal education. Institutions and organisations

dedicated to research and improving historical science and the didactics of teaching history have been selected for study visits. These institutions include:

- Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (they cover contemporary historiographical topics that are not available to the researcher as a doctoral candidate in the region) – interviews were conducted with two experts;
- House of European History (museum with a modern interpretation of European history from the period of the French Revolution to the present with an innovative and digitally supported approach) – interviews were conducted with two experts;
- European Schoolnet (a non-profit international organisation supported by 34 European Ministries of Education that deals with effective pedagogical use of technology in schools) – interview was conducted with one expert;
- EuroClio (for three decades, a leading organisation in the field of improving history teaching in Europe, including innovations in teaching approaches and the use of digital technology) – interview was conducted with one expert;
- Anne Frank House (the world's leading heritage institution that, in addition to its permanent exhibition, also uses digital innovations to thematically approach the essential topics of human rights and the Holocaust) – interview was conducted with one expert;
- CREATE (Creative Amsterdam: An E-Humanities Perspective is a research programme and lab focusing on digital humanities within the University of Amsterdam) – interview was conducted with one expert;
- 7th International Conference of the IRAHSSE (International Research Association for History and Social Sciences Education) – interviews were conducted with five experts.

With the Delphi method, by analysing the opinions of 13 experts (from institutions, organisations and conference listed beforehand) and comparing similarities and differences, an additional narrowing of the list of technologies that could affect history teaching was observed. Interviews with experts were conducted in their institutions and organisations during August and September 2023. The use of the Delphi and Futures Wheel methods enabled individual experts to retain anonymity, encouraging greater freedom of opinion on the use and development of digital technologies. Experts pointed out additional advantages but also several possible disadvantages of each method.

Consequently, for this research, two versions of Futures Wheel were produced. Futures Wheel 1 was created based on literature and before interviewing the experts. In considering the impact of emerging technologies on basic (primary and secondary) education over the next five years, several trends stand out as

potentially transformative. The second version of Futures Wheel was created after finalising the Delphi method. It is based on version 1, from which *were excluded* technologies that were not considered necessary by experts or recognised as a prominent part of the techniques under development. In this version, positive and negative impacts recognised by experts were added. The researcher did not give the first version or the list of possible technologies to the expert before or during the interview. The guided interview followed the interviewee's technologies and thoughts.

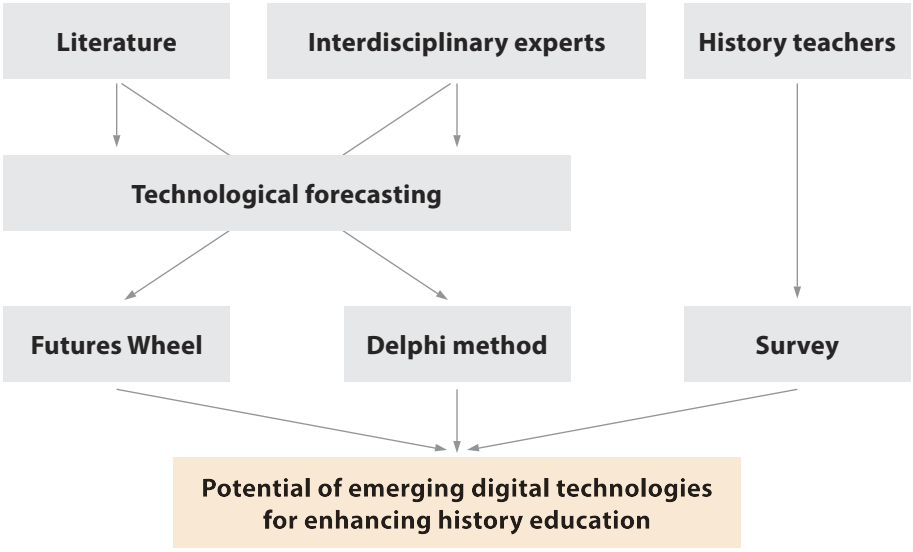
A survey was designed on the basis of outcomes of the Delphi method, which identified a select set of five emerging transformative technologies that could be applied to the teaching of history. This survey aimed to gather insights from educators regarding their familiarity with current utilisation of and prospective future applications for these technologies in educational settings. Additionally, as a means of research triangulation, the survey was administered among European history teachers. The survey can be accessed in Appendix 5.1. Respondents were asked questions based on the previous phases of this research. The survey was divided into five sections: AI, extended reality, 5G, natural language processing (NLP), and gamification and learning analytics. The responses contained evaluations on a five-point Likert scale. This exploratory survey was filled in by 42 respondents from different European countries. Descriptive statistics measuring mean, median and standard deviation were used to analyse the results.[40]

Several challenges were encountered during the research process. In communication with institutions and organisations, the researcher asked for co-operation in the research and for the subjects to propose experts who would be prepared to participate in the survey. The research was started during the summer season, when most institutions and organisations were working at a reduced capacity or the employees were on vacation. It was also shown that the size of the organisation reduces the possibility of direct contact with the person in charge. In almost all cases, the institutions responded to the request by contacting third parties, namely personal acquaintances. After communication was eventually established, another challenge proved to be the reluctance to express opinions on topics arising from the narrow specialisation of experts, especially if they had no direct contact with the teaching of history in schools. Respondents exhibited a focus on their particular interests, with few possessing a comprehensive perspective on the myriad possibilities or an extensive understanding of the prevailing landscape within the contemporary digital technology market. Some experts concentrate on the didactic aspects of employing digital tools in history education, while others focus on using specific tools but lack familiarity with didactic principles, and so forth. Furthermore, with only 42 responses, the teacher survey is explorative rather than representative. Thus, further research is needed to verify the trends identified in the survey.

40. Full results and analysis are available in Appendix 5.2.

This had a direct impact on the broader understanding of the influence of digital technologies on the teaching of history, as well as on the depth of understanding of current and future influences. As a result of various challenges, the study is of an exploratory nature, which means that its results need to be interpreted with caution and to be substantiated by further research.

Figure 5.1: Research implementation scheme



Analysis

Emerging technologies encompass transformative advancements and progressive developments across diverse domains, representing nascent integration phases. These technological innovations are distinguished by their latent capacity to unsettle established industries while simultaneously offering inventive resolutions to contemporary challenges. The dynamism inherent in emerging technologies stems from their capacity to redefine conventional paradigms and pave the way for unprecedented possibilities. These nascent advancements at the forefront of scientific and technological progress exhibit the potential to usher in groundbreaking shifts that resonate across multiple sectors. As they navigate the early stages of adoption, emerging technologies become focal points of exploration and investigation, catalysing the evolution of industries and fostering the creation of pioneering solutions that transcend existing boundaries.

Futures Wheel and Delphi results

The Futures Wheel was developed on the basis of a literature review. It features transformative technologies as depicted in Figure 5.2. Following interviews with

experts and the use of the Delphi method, five out of the initial 10 technologies were chosen unanimously. These are the technologies that the experts interviewed believe will have the greatest impact on history teaching: AI, extended reality, 5G and enhanced connectivity, NLP and gamification with learning analytics. All the technologies listed are explained below with further thoughts and comments from the experts interviewed.

Figure 5.2: Futures Wheel of emerging transformative technologies
(condensed version)[42]

41. Expanded version available at https://mm.tt/app/map/3064352215?t=r3fSL9wIiX.

1. Artificial intelligence and machine learning

AI-driven personalised learning platforms have the potential to tailor instructional approaches to the specific needs, strengths and areas of improvement unique to each student. This adaptation streamlines the learning process, enhancing the absorption of knowledge and skills. Through AI-powered educational tools, students benefit from immediate feedback on their work; this allows for timely error identification and correction. Moreover, AI systems can analyse student performance data to provide adaptive content, promoting more self-directed learning experiences (Gocen and Aydemir 2020; Seo et al. 2021; Shonubi 2023). The positive impact of AI on improving communication quality and quantity is notable. However, concerns arise regarding issues of responsibility, agency and surveillance. Integration of AI in education raises privacy issues and shifts in power dynamics. Training AI with existing data from the web introduces the potential challenge of "garbage in, garbage out". Additionally, there are prevalent concerns about AI "hallucinations", where it produces responses that, although plausible, are factually incorrect (Metz 2023; Ribeiro Neto 2023). Despite AI's ability to provide personalised learning and instant feedback, one must recognise its inability to replace the human and emotional support crucial for student success (Alasadi and Baiz 2023). Although incorporating AI systems into online learning environments offers the potential for more personalised interactions between learners and educators on a broader scale, it also raises concerns about blurring the social boundaries between these two groups. Hence, a nuanced and ethically informed approach is necessary when adopting AI in educational settings.

Historians, archaeologists and other researchers of the past are optimistic about artificial intelligence. The potential to read, decipher, connect and summarise primary sources opens avenues for new knowledge and historical interpretations. For instance, archaeologists recently utilised machine learning to decode passages from a previously unreadable Herculaneum scroll (Abbany 2024). AI can assist history teachers in designing lectures, lesson plans, quizzes, historical maps and presentations, thereby saving time. However, more complex uses such as grading assignments, grading history exams or adapting materials to students' abilities are still under exploration. Developing specialised AI tools for history education requires significant time and financial resources, as exemplified by a project at North Carolina State University (2022).

Tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Copilot are effective in major languages but face limitations in less widely spoken languages, especially when researching national histories. AI tools empower students to conduct independent research, honing the skills of asking pertinent historical questions and utilising such tools effectively. For instance, students can simplify historical concepts through prompts to aid understanding. Additional challenges of using the aforementioned chatbots are listed under point 7 below, since the bulk of the current use of AI is focused on the tools of NLP technologies.

Future AI-driven historical simulations hold promise, allowing students to actively engage in historical events and explore their consequences. These

simulations could leverage augmented reality and gamification, enhancing students' understanding of historical causation and critical thinking. The experts interviewed in this study underscore the advantages of customised instructional approaches for individual students. They also acknowledge the increased burden on teachers, particularly in the absence of AI systems explicitly tailored to history education. Automation with adaptation is expected in the next developmental phase, offering adaptive content based on students' demonstrated skills. Incorporating primary and secondary historical sources into AI programming poses challenges due to potential distortions or inaccuracies in the sources. Modifying historical sources during programming raises concerns about compromising their integrity, presenting a unique programming challenge. Experts question whether history teachers and students are prepared for these challenges, particularly in terms of AI literacy.[42]

2. Extended reality

Extended reality (XR) is an umbrella term encompassing a spectrum of experiences that blend the physical and digital realms, comprising VR, AR and mixed reality (MR) – powerful technologies fostering immersive learning environments and dynamic student–content interactions (Lee and Hu-Au 2021). These modalities introduce new learning paradigms, offering diverse experiential landscapes (Ziker et al. 2021). Research has linked XR with increased learning motivation, sustained interest, enhanced creativity and improved academic performance (Lee and Takenaka 2022). However, integrating XR into education faces challenges, particularly financial considerations. The adoption of XR can involve significant costs, raising questions about its feasibility and accessibility. Additionally, the potential for cybersickness, which is characterised by discomfort from perceived motion while stationary, poses a notable concern (Stanney et al. 2020). XR's ability to cultivate empathy and illuminate societal issues further highlights its educational value (Lee and Hu-Au 2021).

Issues arise around data preservation and content ownership, especially in collaborative XR platforms and materials derived from environmental scans (Magina 2021). These challenges encompass maintaining digital content (data persistence) and establishing ownership rights in collaborative XR environments, which affect the ethical, legal and practical dimensions of immersive technology content. An inherent concern is the potential negative impact on mental well-being and stresses associated with XR use, emphasising the need for careful consideration of potential harms. Furthermore, the design of XR applications runs the risk of exacerbating existing societal inequalities. This underscores the need for a thoughtful, principled approach, requiring the development of and adherence to ethical guidelines when integrating XR in

42. Interviews with experts from The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History, European Schoolnet, EuroClio, CREATE and IRAHSSE conference participants highlighted AI's potential in history education. However, effective AI applications in history education have not yet been widely identified in the market.

educational contexts. As the educational landscape evolves with technological advancements, the prudent and ethical deployment of XR becomes crucial to harness its transformative potential while managing associated challenges.

The utilisation and potential of VR in history education have been discussed for over two decades. Terms such as "virtual learning environments" (VLEs) and "virtual environments" (VEs) are often employed in this context (Carretero et al. 2022). VE encompasses digital historical games, 3D reconstructions and interactive storytelling. Like traditional written narratives, VEs serve as representations of the past, utilising not only words but also images, sounds and interactive elements. Encouraging students to evaluate the authenticity, accuracy and realism of VEs, or to immerse themselves in historical events from various perspectives, can enhance their understanding of history and reality, contributing to the development of historical thinking skills.

XR capabilities have found application in several historical teaching contexts. In recent years, history textbooks have included visualisations allowing students with smart devices to access 3D models of pyramids, the Panama Canal, Stephenson's Rocket or the Apollo Lunar Module by scanning specific codes. These examples have evolved with additional multimedia, enabling student interaction with the models. Platforms like Sketchfab host AR and VR models with contributions from individuals and heritage institutions.[43] Research institutes like CREATE (Creative Amsterdam: An E-Humanities Perspective) at the University of Amsterdam conduct historical research, visualising aspects of Amsterdam's past (The Amsterdam Time Machine project).[44] These visualisations serve as educational tools, providing insights into primary sources. The development of XR experiences extends beyond companies and academia. For instance, students from Rotterdam Hogeschool created the XR game Heritage Heist during a hackathon, raising awareness about stolen artefacts while offering an educational and enjoyable experience (Wuyts 2023). Within the Teaching with Europeana project, 17 implementations of Europeana materials using VR have been developed, mostly focusing on the interdisciplinary connection of history, heritage, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.[45] The impact of XR on history education is still under-researched because of its specialised nature, which requires significant financial resources and user education, limiting its penetration into educational systems. XR capabilities are also harnessed in video game development to enhance player experiences and immersion.

Experts interviewed in the study widely acknowledged the potential of XR in constructing immersive learning environments, emphasising the critical assessment of cost-effectiveness. The creation of high-quality XR content for history education often proves prohibitively expensive compared to expected

43. Available at https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/popular.

44. Available at www.amsterdamtimemachine.nl/.

45. Available at https://teachwitheuropeana.eun.org/tag/virtual-reality/.

benefits. Questions revolve around student engagement with XR content and its potential impacts on well-being. While crafting XR avatars of historical figures might seem appealing, it poses significant challenges, particularly for distant historical periods. The difficulty lies not only in the appearance or voice but also in programming avatars authentically within their historical context. Capturing emotions in XR environments, especially in relation to historical figures or events, raises questions about users' experiences and interpretations. Given the portrayal of violent historical events in XR, debates arise about whether history education should replicate events. Experts caution that XR could deepen social inequalities and particularly affect disadvantaged students. Additionally, the discrepancies in educational resource allocation between European countries are noted rather than the global north–south divide.[46]

3. 5G and improved connectivity

The advent of 5G networks is set to revolutionise connectivity within schools, offering faster data speeds and lower latency. These advancements promise seamless access to online educational resources, support collaborative projects and enable real-time communication in educational environments. Integrating 5G technology will enhance videoconferencing quality, introduce haptic response capabilities and enrich immersive learning with XR technologies, opening up new possibilities for personalised education (Valverde-Berrocoso et al. 2022). Moreover, 5G holds the potential to improve interactions between educators and students, fostering collaborative efforts (Yan 2022). This includes real-time videoconferencing, instant sharing of educational materials and other interactive activities made possible by high-speed, low-latency connections provided by 5G.

Better connectivity allows students to collaborate on projects, share resources and engage in learning activities more effectively. Whether through virtual platforms, cloud-based tools or online resources, the speed and reliability of 5G can greatly enhance collaborative learning experiences. However, it is crucial to address potential challenges associated with the widespread adoption of 5G in education. Experts interviewed in this study voiced concern about the digital divide, which refers to how the quality of education in a country is determined by access to 5G services.

Improved internet connectivity not only impacts videoconferencing and distance learning but also has significant implications for on-site teaching. For instance, a history teacher can take students to historical sites like the Normandy beaches or Waterloo fields using smart devices connected to the internet to provide immersive experiences. Students can explore these locations

46. The potential of XR in history education was highlighted in interviews with experts from various institutions including The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History, House of European History, European Schoolnet, EuroClio, Anne Frank House, CREATE, and didactic experts participating in the IRAHSSE conference.

independently, combining on-site experiences with online information. They can view monuments from various angles, and access multimedia content such as historical photos, videos and 3D models, thanks to projects like Google Arts and Culture.[47]

Many museums and heritage institutions now offer XR experiences with geolocation, which was previously impossible with weaker internet connections. However, there are noticeable discrepancies in technological accessibility across European countries and within specific regions, posing challenges for the development of such digital capabilities. Questions also arise about the sourcing and presentation of online materials, especially for historians and the public. Concerns about privacy and safety surround digitised sources stored in the cloud, raising questions about how they are processed and accessed. Despite these challenges, experts agree that faster connections will facilitate collaboration and highlight the potential for interdisciplinary linkages.[48]

4. Blockchain technology

The application of blockchain technology holds promise in fortifying the security and veracity of educational records, certifications and credentials. This can simplify the process of validating academic accomplishments, facilitating the seamless sharing of achievements with prospective employers or institutions of higher learning (Loukil et al. 2021). By leveraging blockchain, individuals gain proprietorship over their academic records, thereby asserting control over their academic identity (Park 2021).

Although it does not have a direct impact on the development of students' historical skills or historical thinking, blockchain technology can be useful in teaching history in combination with other digital tools, for example, when issuing unique and secure certificates for students who are involved in the learning process with the help of digital games or learning management systems. It can also serve as a means of identification in systems that enable the adaptation of teaching materials to the capabilities of students without unauthorised sharing of personal or health data.

5. Internet of things (IoT)

IoT devices encompassing smart sensors and wearable technologies can provide instantaneous data about student engagement, attendance and emotional states. This information holds the potential for educators to customise their instructional methodologies and interventions, thus addressing the unique requirements of individual students (Al-Taai et al. 2023; Timotheou et al. 2022).

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47. Available at https://artsandculture.google.com/.

48. The potential of 5G and improved connectivity for history education was discussed in interviews with experts from European Schoolnet and EuroClio and didactic experts at the IRAHSSE conference.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge specific adverse dimensions. Incorporating information technology, including IoT, may detrimentally impact classroom concentration and entail a considerable time commitment (Shatri 2020). The constant influx of real-time data and the need for teachers to adapt to new technological tools may lead to potential distractions for educators and students, negatively impacting the overall learning environment and requiring a significant investment of time for proper implementation and management.

Museums and historical sites have the capability to integrate IoT sensors directly into their artefacts. When visitors approach, these sensors can offer additional context and historical details or even present relevant audio and video snippets. Students can picture themselves standing beside an ancient sculpture, and their smartphone can instantly receive details about its origins and significance. During historical re-enactments, students can don smartwatches or AR glasses. These devices would then provide them with real-time insights into the era, characters and events they are re-enacting. Moreover, IoT-enabled mobile applications can lead users through historical neighbourhoods. As individuals stroll, the app delivers historical backgrounds, interesting anecdotes and narratives tied to specific sites. An excellent illustration of this technology can be seen in interactive walking tours like iWalk, particularly utilised for Holocaust education.[49] Additionally, the IoT can facilitate the secure identification of individuals researching a historical location. This means that students could visit historical sites themselves and receive a distinct confirmation of their presence at the location, which could be used for teacher evaluation purposes.

6. Robotics and automation

Incorporating robotics in educational contexts has demonstrably favourable effects on cognitive processes, including critical thinking, computational thinking, problem solving, algorithmic thinking, creativity and collaborative skills (Tzagkaraki et al. 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that integrating robotics into educational practices yields positive outcomes in student conduct and development, particularly in problem-solving skills, collaborative aptitude, learning motivation, class participation and overall enjoyment and engagement (Wang et al. 2023). However, it is imperative to acknowledge particular challenges associated with adopting robotics in education. Foremost among these challenges is the considerable financial investment required to acquire the equipment (Talan 2021). Automation can also be applied to streamline administrative tasks within schools. Automated attendance systems

49. The iWalk digital learning application, created by USC Shoah Foundation, links users with historical sites via text, documents, images and video testimonies from Holocaust survivors and witnesses. Available at: https://iwitness.usc.edu/sites/iwalk.

can use facial recognition or RFID[50] technology to track student attendance, reducing the manual effort required by teachers and ensuring accuracy.

Robots in history teaching can play a primarily motivational role. They can also be used to connect history with other school subjects, such as STEM subjects. This aspect was not further considered in the expert interviews.

7. Natural language processing

NLP technologies enhance the sophistication of conversations with digital assistants and chatbots, including large language models.[51] The incorporation of NLP capabilities, like automated essay scoring, plays a pivotal role in efficiently evaluating vast amounts of constructed responses. Conducting this task manually would be both time-consuming and cost-prohibitive. The compatibility of NLP with modern learning methods is notable, with educators significantly integrating it into their classrooms. Strong empirical evidence supports the integration of NLP technologies in educational settings, notably in improving students' reading and writing skills. However, certain challenges specific to NLP require consideration, such as interpreting sarcasm, managing domain-specific language, addressing ambiguity and conducting aspect-based sentiment analysis (Shaik et al. 2022). Notably, in some cases, NLP's effectiveness in developing a feedback selection algorithm is compromised by issues such as including duplicate cases and identifying false positive examples during automated essay scoring (Zhang et al. 2019).

Recently various instances of chatbot use have been documented in Facebook groups like ChatGPT for Teachers and EuroClio.[52] Typically, chatbots are employed to bring historical figures to life, offering students the chance to engage in simulated interviews with a diverse array of historical personas. Hickey (2024) describes in his article how his students conversed with a Celtic druid, a medieval knight and an allied soldier on the eve of D-Day. According to Hickey, these encounters breathe life into history in a way textbooks simply cannot replicate. Herbert (2023) similarly detailed a project entitled Time Travel with AI, optimistically highlighting that students not only learn facts but also participate in conversations, grasp contexts and develop an empathic understanding of the past. There are already hundreds of chat simulation apps available in online app stores for smart devices. Among the most well-known applications that simulate historical figures are Character AI and Hello History.

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50. RFID (radio-frequency identification) is a technology that uses radio waves to identify and track objects wirelessly.
51. Large language models are advanced artificial intelligence systems designed to understand and generate human-like text by leveraging extensive datasets and deep learning techniques.
52. ChatGPT for Teachers is available at https://web.facebook.com/groups/703007927897194. EuroClio is available at https://web.facebook.com/groups/189428547843555. Both Facebook groups were observed during 2023.

The emergence and increased use of chatbots are reshaping how students traditionally researched history using the internet. Previous work with search engines mirrored the historical research process, where historians (or students) analysed and evaluated multiple sources, citing data, sources and creating their narrative. With chatbots like the popular ChatGPT, students now simply ask a question and receive a fully formed answer. However, the sources of this produced text are not always apparent. In newer versions, tools like Copilot have begun listing the references from which they draw their answers. History teachers can adapt to this new scenario by reversing the task, that is tasking students with finding references from the completed text.[53]

However, as exciting as these chatbot-driven conversations may seem for historical imagination and opinion development, there are still numerous reservations. For example, research such as UNESCO (2024) indicates that these systems often perpetuate, and sometimes even scale and amplify, human, structural and social biases. Crucial questions arise regarding the primary or secondary sources used to create the druid or medieval knight models. How broad or limited are these sources? How deep or multiperspectival are their approaches to the topic? Were they sourced from a single archive or multiple archives? Were they limited to a single language, most often English, for instance? When using chatbots featuring Napoleon and other historical figures, it is essential to note that these are not simulations of real individuals. There is also a significant risk that, without historical sources, fictional narratives might be created that potentially misrepresent voices like those of a medieval serf or a plantation slave, voices often poorly interpreted or ignored in history. There is also a legitimate ethical concern regarding sensitive topics such as the Holocaust – whether history teachers should create a chatbot of a camp inmate from Auschwitz or of Hitler, for example. The use of chatbots has the potential to encourage critical thinking and analytical skills but only if history teachers dedicate additional time to developing these skills with their students.

Text generators and chatbots are familiar tools to the experts interviewed, who have experimented with them in various ways. The current data managed by AI has sparked enquiries into the accuracy and copyright implications of generated materials. The significant advantage of bridging gaps between stakeholders through language was emphasised by the experts interviewed in this study, especially considering that most experts included in this research were not first-language English speakers. Given that English serves as a lingua franca in the scientific community, NLP is recognised as a crucial factor in reducing disparities and expanding the dissemination of scientific research and findings. Resulting from the creation of chatbots and digital assistants, the evolution of NLP now offers more potential benefits in student engagement, as outlined earlier in the chapter.

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53. The potential of NLP in history education was highlighted in interviews with experts from the House of European History, European Schoolnet, EuroClio and Anne Frank House and with didactic experts participating in the IRAHSSE conference.

8. Gamification and learning analytics

By using captivating game mechanics, gamification motivates students by offering multiple paths to achievement. This approach encourages safe exploration of failures and fosters a sense of progression, moving away from traditional punitive measures like point deductions (Huang et al. 2022). However, it is crucial to note that careless implementation of gamification can shift students' focus away from core learning objectives by placing undue emphasis on external rewards rather than intrinsic understanding (Luo 2022).

The integration of gamification into educational settings presents challenges such as resource constraints, time needed for implementation, lack of teacher training and the necessity for curriculum adjustments to accommodate innovative approaches (Sáez-López et al. 2023; Toda et al. 2018). Admittedly, these challenges are present when introducing all innovative tech approaches, not just gamification. Simultaneously, learning analytics offers valuable insights into students' progress and learning behaviours. By enabling targeted course offerings and informing curriculum development, learning analytics enhances educators' understanding of learning behaviours, leading to improved student outcomes. Personalised learning paths and real-time feedback from learning analytics further enrich the educational experience. However, the use of learning analytics raises ethical and privacy considerations, necessitating careful attention to ensure responsible and transparent practices that are compliant with ethical standards and privacy regulations (Cláuvin et al. 2021; Ifenthaler et al. 2021; Ungerer and Slade 2022).

The history of digital games provides fertile ground for development, with examples such as the game "What came first?" in the Google Arts and Culture project. In this game, players guess the age of cultural achievements or artworks, earning points for correct answers while learning about each artefact. This mirrors the essence of gamification – adding game-like elements to facilitate learning. The gaming industry often releases games based on historical events, such as the popular *Call of Duty* series, which depicts various historical conflicts. While these simulations engage players, games promoting violence are ethically unsuitable for educational purposes. Conversely, strategy games like *Civilization* prompt historical thinking by offering insights into societal development through interactive experiences. However, studies suggest that, while students enjoy playing *Civilization*, their historical thinking progress often stems more from classroom discussions than gameplay (Carretero et al. 2022).

Serious games refer to interactive gaming platforms designed to facilitate activities conducive to skill development and achievement beyond mere entertainment. These games integrate pedagogical methodologies, informational frameworks and ludic components to impart targeted competencies, knowledge and attitudes to users. Serious games, like *This War of Mine*, offer immersive experiences by presenting learners with challenging ethical dilemmas set in historical contexts, such as the siege of Sarajevo.

Such games, which develop empathy and challenge one-dimensional views of history, have been officially introduced into school curricula, for example in Poland in 2020. Also, the Czech games, *Attentat 1942* and *Svoboda 1945: Liberation*, are worth highlighting here.[54]

Experts recognise gamification as a powerful motivator for students engaging in historical research. However, challenges remain, including the cost-to-benefit ratio as the gaming industry demands significant investments for high-quality historical games. Concerns also arise regarding the accuracy of historical depictions and perspectives. Some experts in this study advocate for serious games as a practical approach to history learning, particularly in dramatising events for gaming suitability.

9. Biometric authentication

Biometric applications have the potential to enhance the efficiency of educational processes and to make services more appealing to both students and faculty. These applications find utility in student identification, access control and the management of personal data, contributing to time and cost savings while simultaneously enhancing various educational and non-educational activities. Examples of such applications include regulating school access, monitoring attendance, managing food services, controlling access to libraries and media centres, facilitating bus transportation and overseeing staff time (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al. 2021). However, security and privacy concerns are the predominant challenges confronting integrating biometric technology in educational settings.

While not directly contributing to the advancement of historian skills, biometric authentication can prove beneficial for teachers and students when accessing historical sites and heritage establishments. Through the identification of individuals, this technological advancement has the capacity to initiate customised educational modules that align precisely with the distinct requirements and competencies of each individual. For instance, it can offer students varied encounters with historical sites. Alternatively, when integrated with IoT, it can empower students to initiate tasks and access materials for individual or group assignments. Upon revisiting a particular area, new tasks or experiences can be activated seamlessly.

10. EdTech ecosystem integration

The incorporation of diverse educational technologies within integrated platforms can optimise pedagogical processes for educators, furnishing a

54. The potential of gamification and learning analytics in history education was highlighted in interviews with experts from The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History, House of European History, European Schoolnet and EuroClio and with didactic experts participating in the IRAHSSE conference.

comprehensive overview of student advancement and facilitating decision making. Educational technology (EdTech) is pivotal in augmenting student involvement, fostering inclusivity and cultivating interactive classroom environments. Integrating EdTech into various academic disciplines offers students enriching learning experiences and hands-on educational opportunities (Timotheou et al. 2022). The interactive nature of technology engenders heightened student engagement, contributing to enhanced retention of information and providing avenues for collaborative learning among peers (Costley 2014). Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge certain drawbacks associated with EdTech implementation. Some students exhibit a preference for traditional, instructor-centric teaching methodologies. Instances exist wherein educators rely excessively on technology, potentially compromising the efficacy of conventional teaching methods. Research has identified adverse effects of EdTech on the learning achievements of young children and a propensity to exacerbate educational disparities (Ahn 2022).

Online archives of historical documents, photographs and artefacts offer students and educators convenient access to primary sources. Platforms such as the Library of Congress,[55] Europeana[56] and many digitised national archives and libraries present a vast array of historical materials for research and educational purposes. Digital timelines and geospatial maps further enrich historical comprehension, allowing students to delve into events chronologically or geographically. Tools like TimelineJS[57] and Google Earth[58] offer dynamic visual representations of historical occurrences and movements. EdTech facilitates global collaboration among students, enabling them to collaborate on projects involving historical research and cultural exchange. Platforms such as Padlet[59] and Google Docs[60] support collaborative learning, empowering students to craft multimedia narratives about historical events or figures. They can seamlessly integrate text, images, audio and video to present their interpretations. Additionally, platforms like Microsoft Sway[61] and Adobe Spark[62] provide robust support for digital storytelling endeavours. Personalised learning platforms use data analytics to tailor content to individual student needs. In history education, these platforms adapt resources, quizzes and assessments based on student progress, with Moodle being an example of such platforms.[63]

55. Available at www.loc.gov/.
56. Available at www.europeana.eu/en.
57. Available at https://timeline.knightlab.com/.
58. Available at https://earth.google.com/web/.
59. Available at https://padlet.com/.
60. Available at https://docs.google.com/.
61. Available at https://sway.cloud.microsoft/.
62. Available at https://new.express.adobe.com/.
63. Available at https://moodle.org/.

Teacher survey results

Section 1 – Artificial intelligence

The survey findings reveal a neutral average understanding of how AI operates. Among respondents, there is generally positive sentiment and a strong consensus on the necessity for increased AI education. They moderately agree that AI has the capacity to analyse student performance for tailored content and foster self-guided learning. More agreement is shown regarding the potential benefits of AI-driven personalised learning platforms. It is widely agreed that AI could alleviate the workload of history teachers. However, respondents lack confidence in AI's potential to enhance historical literacy. Despite minimal current use of AI applications in student interactions, respondents overall express a positive outlook towards integrating AI as a standard teaching tool in the coming five years. This suggests a growing receptiveness to AI integration within educational environments.

Section 2 – Extended reality

The survey reflects a wide spectrum of opinions on XR knowledge without a definitive agreement. However, respondents are in strong agreement about the necessity for increased education on XR. When it comes to XR's capacity to establish immersive and interactive learning settings, there is a moderate consensus among participants. A majority of respondents do not regularly employ extended reality in their student-related work. Looking ahead, the survey indicates a cautiously hopeful outlook regarding the adoption of XR as a mainstream teaching aid within the next five years. The higher standard deviation indicates a variety of viewpoints, with some strongly advocating for XR integration, while others take a more cautious stance.

Section 3 – 5G

The survey results show a moderate consensus among participants on their grasp of how 5G networks function. Generally, they have a positive outlook on the rollout of 5G networks, expressing moderate to high agreement on its ability to improve online access, collaboration and real-time communication. However, opinions vary more in relation to its adoption as a standard classroom tool within the next five years.

Section 4 – Natural language processing

The survey results reveal largely negative sentiment towards knowledge of NLP alongside a somewhat positive belief in its potential to enhance interactions with digital assistants and chatbots. With a minimal standard deviation, the consensus leans towards a limited use of NLP technologies in student work. Moreover, there is moderate agreement on the integration of NLP as a standard teaching tool within the next five years.

Section 5 – Gamification and learning analytics

Participants generally display a positive trend in their assessments of their knowledge of gamified learning platforms, along with a moderate level of agreement or positive sentiment concerning their grasp of learning analytics.

There is a general consensus among respondents that gamified learning platforms can effectively motivate students. However, the presence of a moderate standard deviation indicates a range of opinions, underlining diverse perspectives within the group. On average, participants reported limited use of gamified learning platforms in their educational practices with students. There is a tendency towards disagreement or a less optimistic view when it comes to embracing learning analytics in teaching. Looking ahead to the potential utilisation of gamified learning platforms and learning analytics in teaching over the next five years, the average sentiment tends towards neutrality, reflecting a spectrum of opinions among participants.

Conclusions

Digital technologies can lessen geographical, socio-economic and physical barriers to education. The digitisation of education generates vast amounts of data that, when analysed effectively, can inform data-driven decision making in educational institutions. This can lead to better allocation of resources, personalised interventions and improved educational strategies. Countries and institutions that leverage the potential of digital technologies in education gain a competitive advantage in the global knowledge-based economy. Preparing students with digital literacy and 21st-century skills is becoming critical to success in the workforce. The integration of digital technologies, despite its potential benefits, presents notable challenges that encompass concerns related to data privacy, security and the potential for widening disparities between individuals with access to such technologies and those without. Examining these challenges is critical to developing responsible and equitable digital education practices.

The discourse on digital technologies has shifted beyond the mere question of financing novel technologies to encompass a pronounced emphasis on the preparedness of educators to integrate technology into pedagogy and history education effectively. It is noteworthy that teachers who participated in the survey have exhibited only moderate proficiency in utilising new technologies, underscoring the imperative for additional educational initiatives to enhance digital literacy. This is also stated as one of the key findings of the OHTE general report, as mentioned earlier.

The primary goal of this research was to determine which digital technologies currently under development have the potential to be used in history teaching. In order to make the results of the research to be more relevant we consulted, not only a group of experts in the knowledge of digital technologies and didactics of history, but also practitioners who were already using digital technologies in the teaching of history. The study scrutinised the prospect of employing digital technology as the primary instructional tool in history classrooms. There is at present little compelling evidence to substantiate the claim that digital technology significantly influences critical thinking or historical literacy. Notably, the predominant role played by digital technologies lies in student motivation, outcomes or students' work, and the cultivation of imaginative capacities.

This research has identified a prevailing sense of watchfulness among academics and practitioners regarding the trajectory of developments in digital technology. The research has shown that, in the next five years, history classrooms may witness the integration of five emerging digital technologies: artificial intelligence, extended reality, 5G and enhanced connectivity, NLP technologies and gamification coupled with learning analytics. The efficacy of these technologies is contingent on specific prerequisites, including enhanced teacher digital literacy education; the active participation of historians, history educators and history didactics in the evolution of digital tools; and the imperative for systematic assessment to gauge the ramifications of technological integration within history classrooms.

While AI has recently captivated the public, policy makers and segments of academia, experts in the field have shown caution regarding its application in history education. Alongside the potential benefits such as motivating students and fostering independent research, there is a notable concern about its potential impact in reducing historiographical literacy and critical thinking skills. Professionals are split on whether AI will streamline their interactions with students, although the findings suggest a glimmer of hope for AI's role in history education. However, there is a lack of confidence that AI will significantly enhance students' historical literacy. Moreover, there is only moderate consensus as to whether AI should become a staple teaching tool in history classrooms. The lingering question pertains to whether this lingering hesitance stems from insufficient digital literacy, a scarcity of tailored history teaching tools, or a genuine scepticism about AI's potential in education.

While practitioners may lack theoretical knowledge about XR's inner workings, there exists a moderate consensus on the potential of extended reality to craft immersive and interactive learning environments within history education. There is widespread acknowledgement among the survey respondents prevails concerning its capacity to enrich learning experiences by, for example, as simulating historical events and scientific processes and by visualising abstract concepts. Just as with the future integration of AI, future research may want to explore whether the hesitance towards utilising XR in education stems from history teachers' limited digital literacy or from the scarcity of accessible technology due to its elevated costs. It is vital to highlight that both literature and expert interviews underscore the potential adverse effects of XR use on students' well-being.

Similar results and reservations were observed for 5G and enhanced connectivity, NLP technologies and gamification.

These findings can serve as a compass for policy makers and stewards of educational policies, indicating the direction in which digital technologies could be steered in the future to facilitate the advancement of these policies. Funding should be evenly allocated not only for enhancing digital technologies but also for bolstering the digital literacy of history teachers. This responsibility lies not solely on policy makers but also on other education stakeholders including academia, research institutes and organisations.

The secondary aim of this study was to assess the efficacy of researching future studies methodologies, such as the Delphi technique and the Futures Wheel method. While the experts examined were hesitant to predict the future of digital technology use in history teaching, these research methods allowed for the active expression of agreement and disagreement within an anonymous expert group. By identifying the potential uses of digital technologies in history classrooms, assessing their effects on enhancing student learning outcomes and considering the costs and benefits of implementation, educators and policy makers can make informed choices on the most effective ways to use upcoming technologies to enhance students' learning of history.

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Appendix to Chapter 5

Appendix 5.1.

SURVEY: History teachers' perspective on emerging digital technologies

This survey marks the culmination of an extensive study investigating the feasibility of incorporating new digital technologies into history teaching. The questions specifically address certain technologies identified in earlier stages of the research and do not encompass the entire spectrum of potential topics. Regardless of your knowledge of digital technologies, your opinion is critical to us, as it indicates the current state of affairs.

At this critical juncture, we value the input of practitioners – history teachers within the member states of the Council of Europe – who engage with students aged 10 to 18 years. Your opinions are vital to advancing our understanding in this field. The outcomes will be presented during the European Innovation Days in History Education from 3 to 5 April 2024.

The research is conducted by Miljenko Hajdarović, HISTOLAB Fellow (PhD candidate, Faculty of Education, J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek).

This survey is being conducted as part of a research fellowship within the HISTOLAB initiative's framework: a joint project between the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Section 1 – Artificial intelligence

- ***Assess your knowledge of how artificial intelligence works.***
  - I need additional education about the use of artificial intelligence.
  - AI can analyse student performance data to offer adaptive content, fostering more self-directed learning experiences.
  - AI-driven personalised learning platforms have the potential to tailor instruction to individual students' needs, strengths and areas for improvement.
  - Artificial intelligence has the potential to make history teachers' jobs easier.
  - Artificial intelligence can positively affect the development of students' historical literacy.
  - I use artificial intelligence applications in my work with students.
  - Artificial intelligence will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.

Section 2 – Extended reality

- ***Assess your knowledge of how extended reality works.***
  - I need additional education about the use of extended reality.
  - Extended reality can create immersive learning environments, enabling students to interact with content in engaging ways.
  - Extended reality technologies can transport students to historical events, simulate complex scientific processes or visualise abstract concepts.
  - I use extended reality in my work with students.
  - Extended reality will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.

Section 3 – 5G

- ***Assess your knowledge of how 5G networks work.***
  - The rollout of 5G networks will facilitate seamless access to online resources, collaborative projects and real-time communication.
  - 5G will become a standard tool in my classroom in the next five years.

Section 4 – Natural language processing

- ***Assess your knowledge of how natural language processing works.***
  - Natural language processing technologies can enable more advanced conversational interactions with digital assistants and chatbots.
  - I use natural language processing technologies in my work with students.
  - Natural language processing technologies will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.

Section 5 – Gamification and learning analytics

- ***Assess your knowledge of gamified learning platforms.***
  - Gamified learning platforms can motivate students by engaging game mechanics.
  - I use gamified learning platforms in my work with students.
  - Gamified learning platforms will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.
- ***Assess your knowledge of learning analytics.***
  - Learning analytics can provide educators with insights into students' progress and learning behaviours.
  - I use learning analytics in my work with students.
  - Learning analytics will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.

Appendix 5.2.

Full teacher survey results

Section 1 – Artificial intelligence

Table 1

Chart	Statement	SD	Mean	Median
1.	Assess your knowledge of how artificial intelligence works.	0.99	3.00	3.00
2.	I need additional education about the use of artificial intelligence.	0.91	4.05	4.00
3.	AI can analyse student performance data to offer adaptive content, fostering more self-directed learning experiences.	1.04	3.55	3.00
4.	AI-driven personalised learning platforms have the potential to tailor instruction to individual students' needs, strengths and areas for improvement.	1.01	3.64	4.00
5.	Artificial intelligence has the potential to make history teachers' jobs easier.	1.13	3.60	4.00
6.	Artificial intelligence can positively affect the development of students' historical literacy.	1.09	3.48	3.50
7.	I use artificial intelligence applications in my work with students.	0.62	1.64	2.00
8.	Artificial intelligence will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.	1.10	3.24	3.00

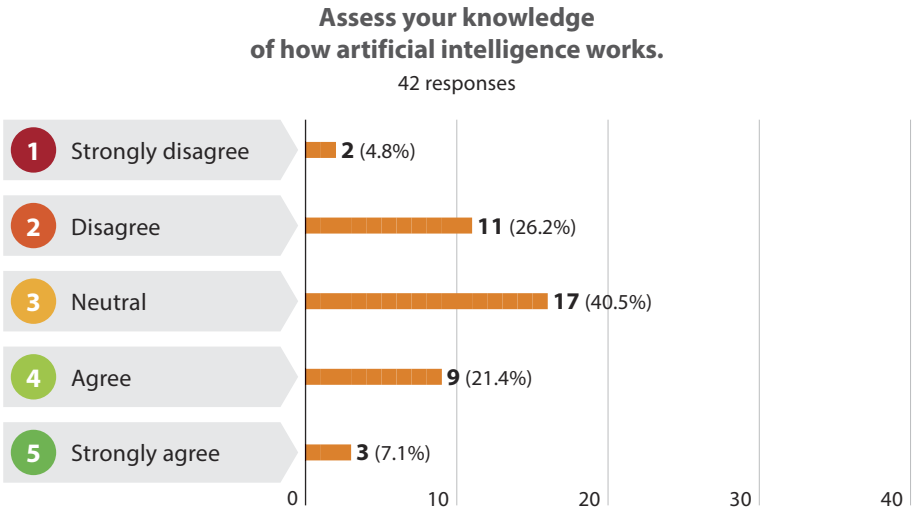

Chart 1. The survey results show a neutral average stance on knowledge of AI workings, with a notable standard deviation indicating substantial variability and lack of consensus among respondents.

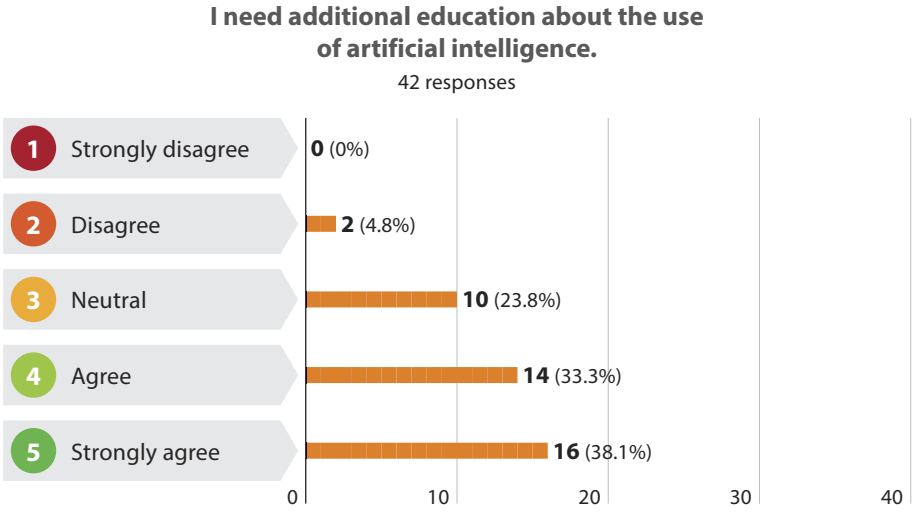

Chart 2. The survey results show a generally positive sentiment and high agreement among respondents on the need for more AI education. However, the notable standard deviation indicates varied opinions, suggesting that, while the overall trend is positive, not all respondents feel strongly about this need.

AI can analyse student performance data to offer adaptive content, fostering more self-directed learning experiences.

42 responses

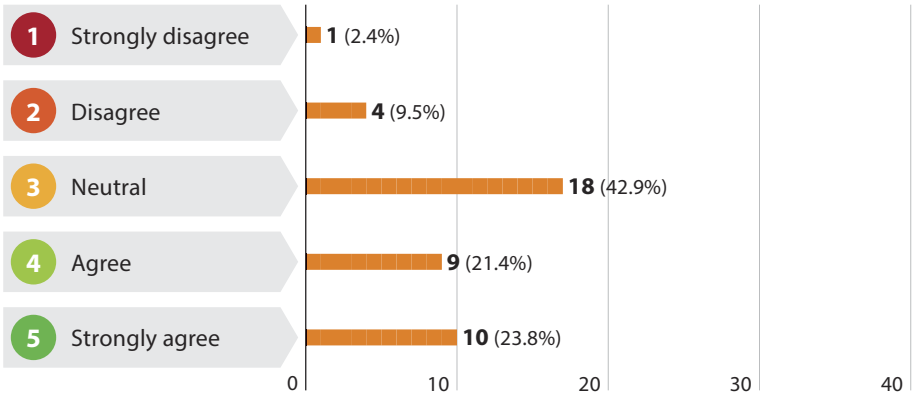

Chart 3. The survey results show moderate agreement that AI can analyse student performance for adaptive content, promoting self-directed learning. However, the variability in opinions and the balanced distribution of responses suggest a nuanced view, with both support and scepticism towards AI-driven adaptive content.

AI-driven personalised learning platforms have the potential to tailor instruction to individual students' needs, strengths and areas for improvement.

42 responses

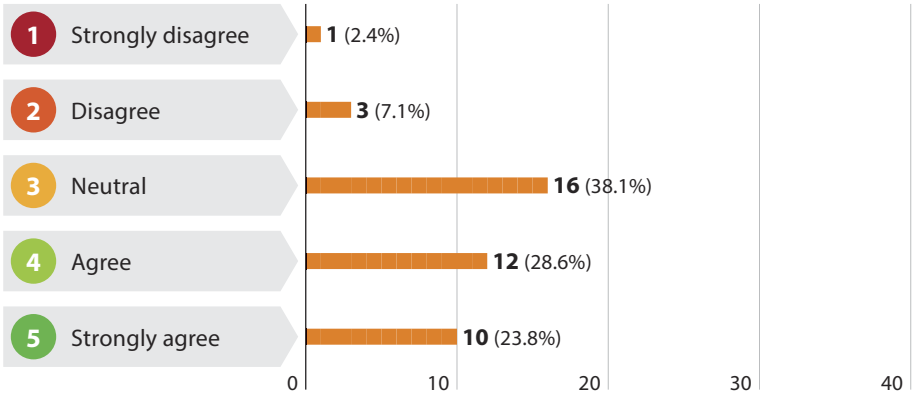

Chart 4. The survey results show a moderately positive consensus on the potential of AI-driven personalised learning platforms. Respondents generally agree, recognising the platforms' ability to tailor instruction to individual students' needs and strengths.

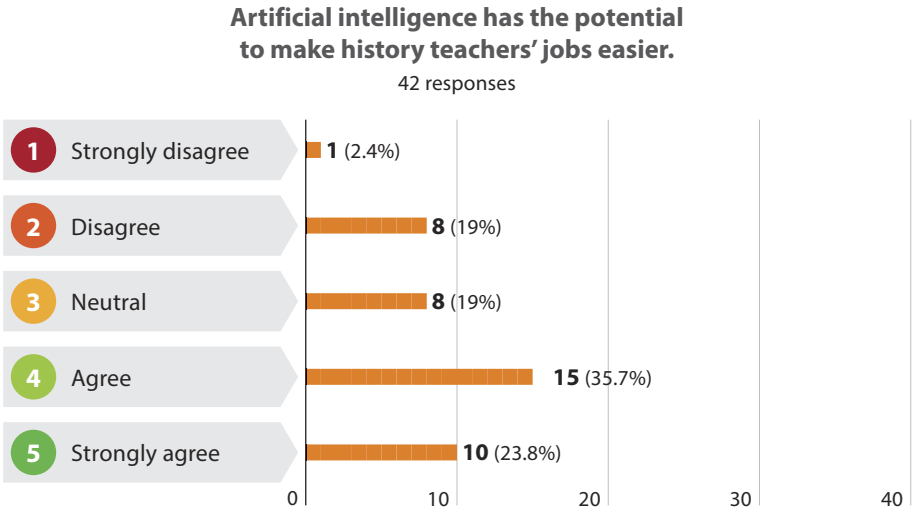

Chart 5. The survey results show general agreement that AI can ease history teachers' jobs. The close median and mean suggest a symmetrical response distribution. However, the high standard deviation indicates varied opinions, with some respondents diverging from the average view, suggesting a need for further investigation into these differing opinions.

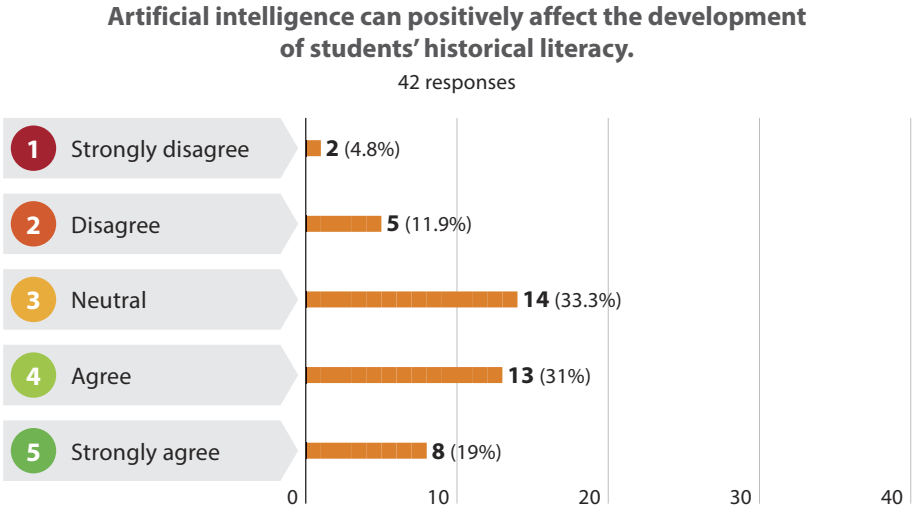

Chart 6. The survey results show that respondents have slightly below-neutral views on the impact of AI on students' historical literacy. The even distribution of responses and moderate standard deviation indicate varied opinions. The close median and mean suggest no strong bias. Overall, there is no consensus, and opinions on AI's potential positive effects on historical literacy vary moderately.

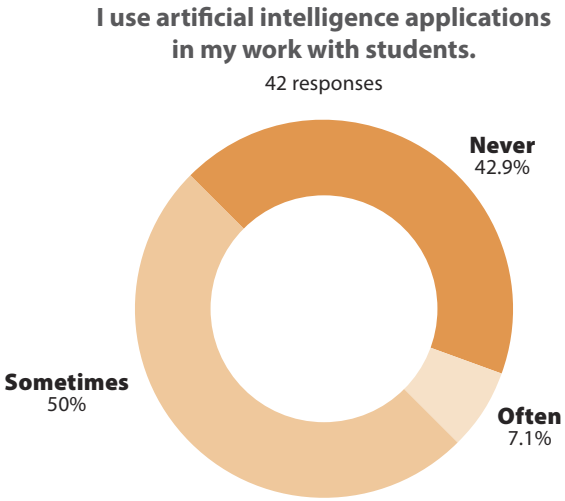

Chart 7. The survey results show that respondents use AI applications minimally in their work with students. The consistent responses and low variability indicate a common trend of lower usage. The median is less than the mean, suggesting a skew towards lower values and indicating a subset of respondents who are less agreeable to using AI in their work with students.

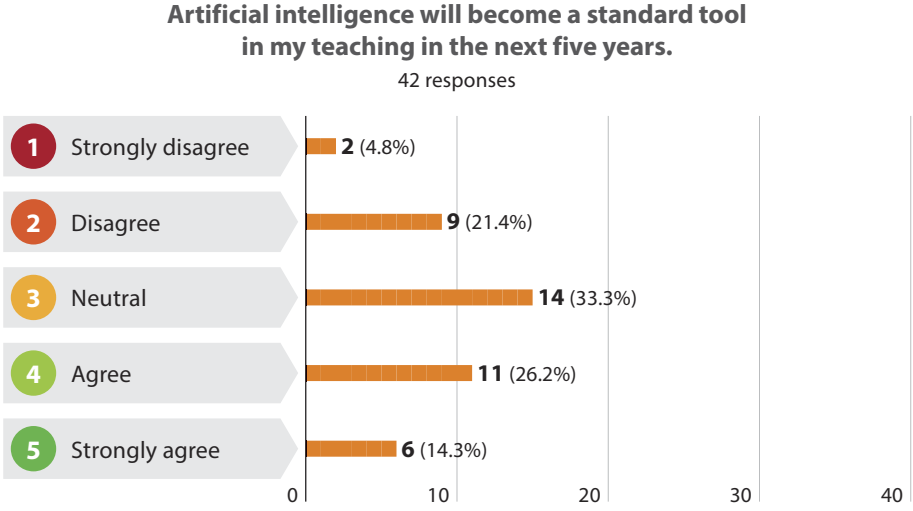

Chart 8. The survey results show a generally positive view towards integrating AI as a standard teaching tool in the next five years, with respondents expressing moderate agreement on average. However, the high standard deviation indicates varied opinions. The equal median and mean suggest a balanced distribution of responses, indicating diverse perspectives on AI adoption in teaching.

Section 2 – Extended reality

Table 2

Chart	Statement	SD	Mean	Median
9.	Assess your knowledge of how extended reality works.	1.21	2.57	3.00
10.	I need additional education about the use of extended reality.	0.96	4.10	4.00
11.	Extended reality can create immersive learning environments, enabling students to interact with content in engaging ways.	0.91	3.64	4.00
12.	Extended reality technologies can transport students to historical events, simulate complex scientific processes or visualise abstract concepts.	1.03	3.83	4.00
13.	I use extended reality in my work with students.	0.59	1.50	1.00
14.	Extended reality will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.	1.33	3.19	3.00

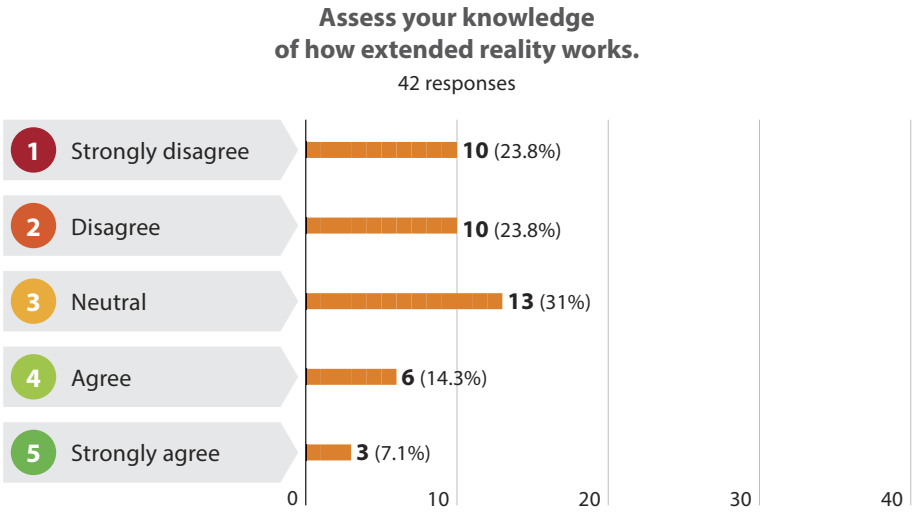

Chart 9. The survey results show diverse opinions on knowledge about extended reality, with a slight average disagreement indicating no consensus. The median suggests balanced opinions, but the high standard deviation indicates a wide range of responses showing diverse perspectives.

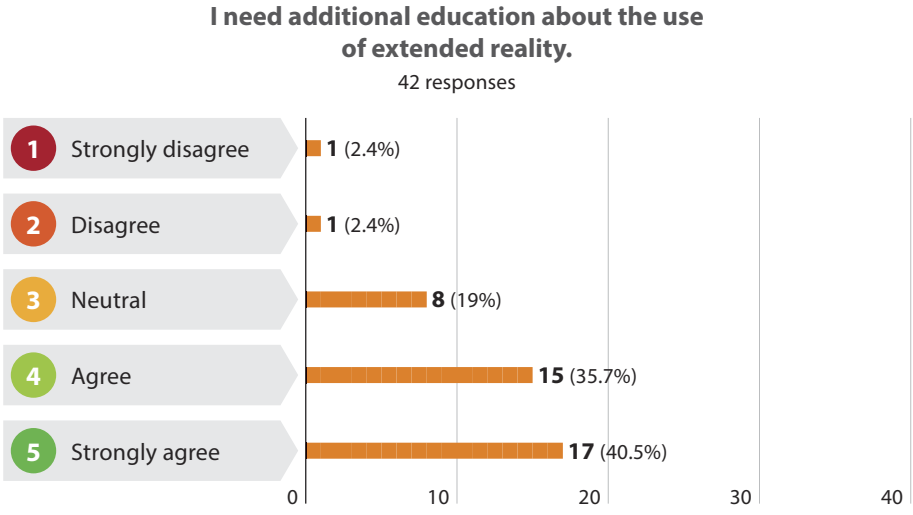

Chart 10. The survey results show strong agreement among respondents on the need for more education on extended reality. The high average agreement and positive sentiment reflect this need. The similar median and mean suggest a balanced view among participants. The moderate standard deviation indicates some diversity in responses, but overall there is a sense of the need for extended reality education.

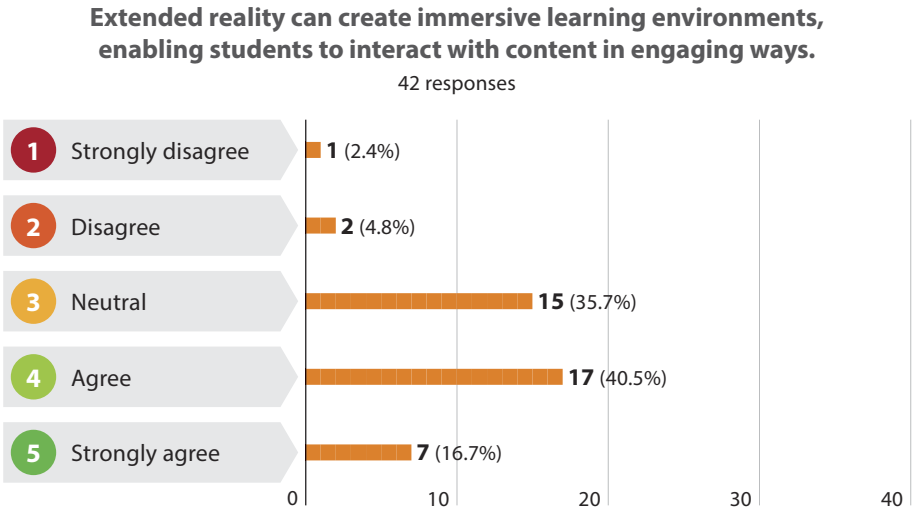

Chart 11. The survey results show a moderate consensus among respondents on extended reality's potential to create immersive and interactive learning environments. The equal median and average indicate a symmetric opinion distribution, and the moderate standard deviation suggests some diversity in responses but these are not extreme.

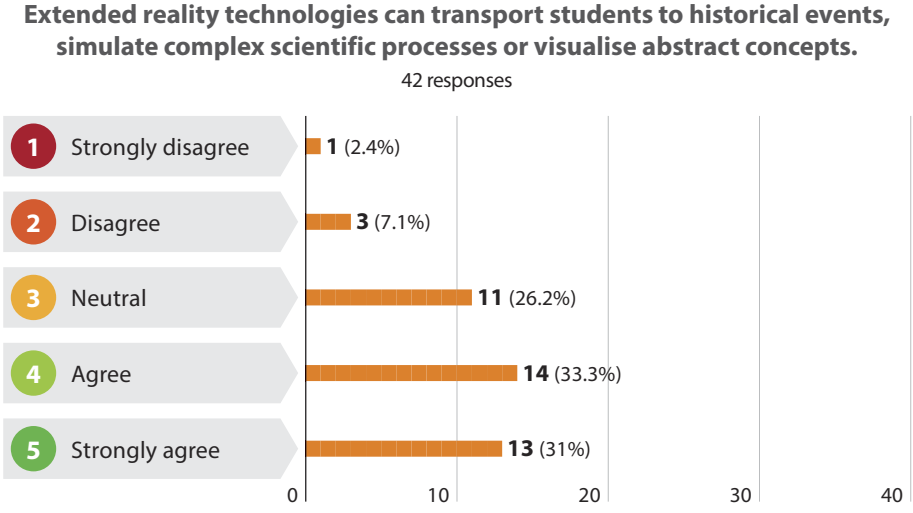

Chart 12. The survey results indicate moderate average agreement with extended reality technologies. Despite varied responses, there is general recognition of its potential for enhancing learning experiences, for example by simulating historical events and scientific processes and visualising abstract concepts.

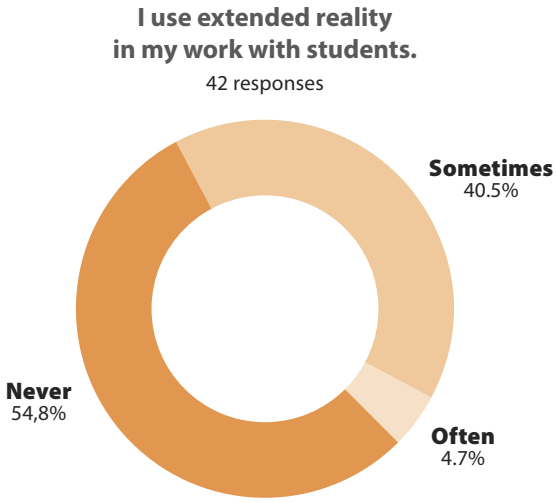

Chart 13. The survey results show that most respondents do not frequently use extended reality in their work with students. This is indicated by a low median score and a small standard deviation, suggesting a consistent trend of low usage. A significant number of participants rated their satisfaction towards the lower end of the scale.

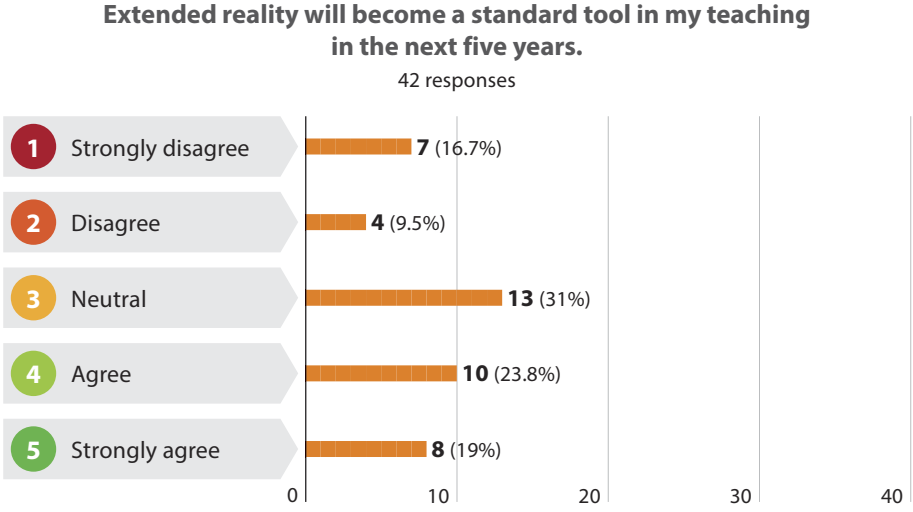

Chart 14. The survey reveals a cautiously optimistic attitude towards adopting extended reality as a standard teaching tool in the next five years. While average and median responses are generally positive, a higher standard deviation of 1.33 indicates diverse opinions among respondents. This suggests a range of perspectives, with some strongly supporting XR integration while others hold more reserved views. The variance underscores the importance of exploring individual preferences and concerns regarding incorporating XR in education.

Section 3 – 5G

Table 3

Chart	Statement	SD	Mean	Median
15.	Assess your knowledge of how 5G networks work.	1.22	3.21	3.00
16.	The rollout of 5G networks will facilitate seamless access to online resources, collaborative projects and real-time communication.	1.05	3.76	4.00
17.	5G will become a standard tool in my classroom in the next five years.	1.15	3.50	3.50

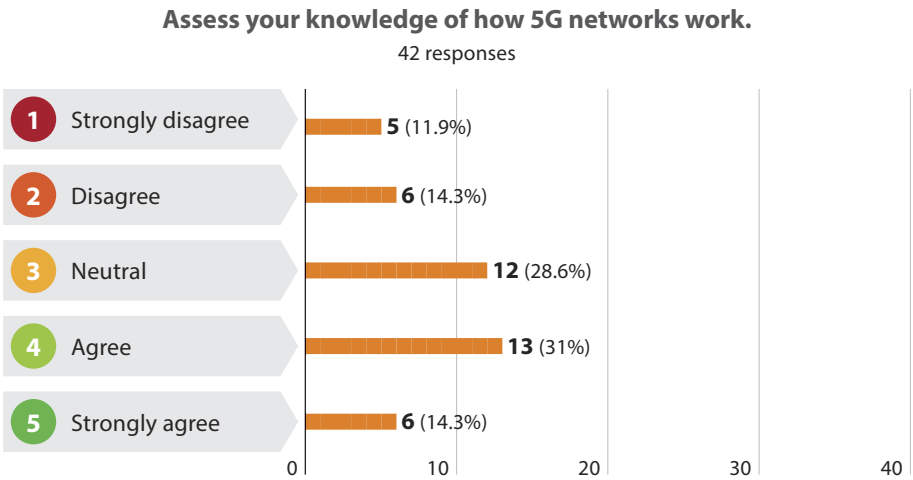

Chart 15. The survey reveals a moderate consensus among participants regarding their knowledge of how 5G networks work, with moderate agreement centred around the Likert scale midpoint. However, the elevated standard deviation indicates significant diversity in individual responses, emphasising varying levels of understanding among participants.

The rollout of 5G networks will facilitate seamless access to online resources, collaborative projects and real-time communication.

42 responses

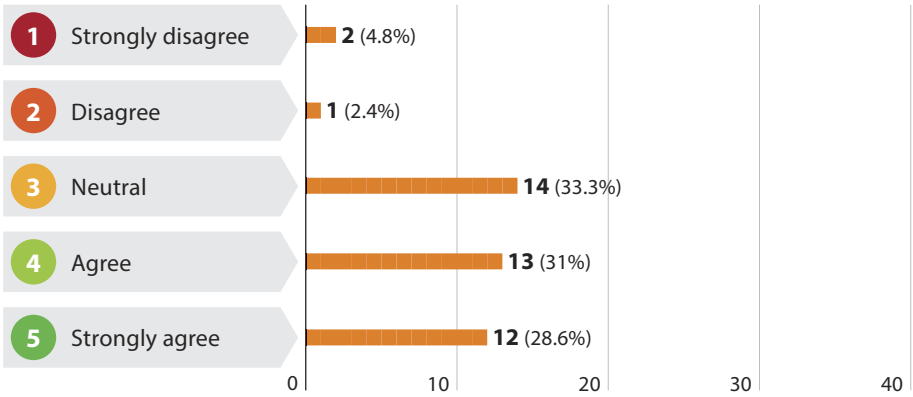

Chart 16. Respondents generally hold a positive view of the 5G network rollout, expressing moderate to high agreement with its potential to enhance online access, collaboration and real-time communication. The close alignment of median and mean values suggests a balanced distribution of opinions. A moderate standard deviation indicates a consistent, though not uniform, level of agreement among the surveyed population.

5G will become a standard tool in my classroom in the next five years.

42 responses

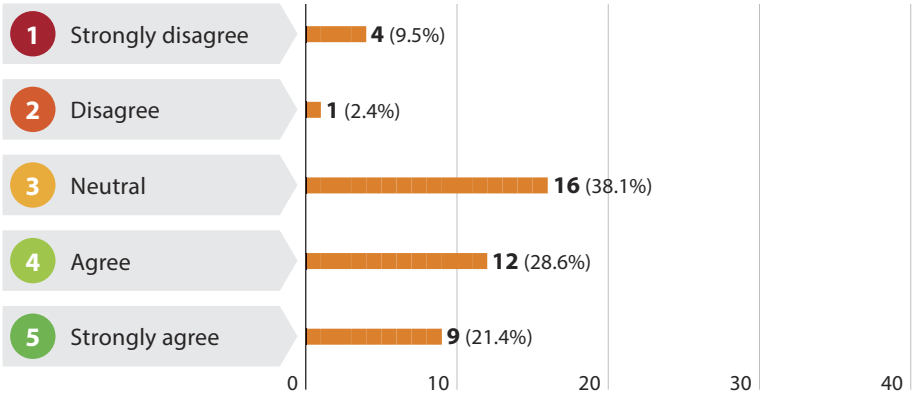

Chart 17. The survey shows a neutral or ambivalent stance among respondents regarding the statement, with an average response of 3.5. The distribution of responses is symmetrically centred around the mean, indicating a lack of solid consensus. A moderate degree of variability is evident, reflected by a standard deviation of 1.15. The equality of the median and mean reinforces the symmetry, emphasising a balanced distribution of opinions on adopting 5G in classrooms over the next five years.

Section 4 – Natural language processing

Table 4

Chart	Statement	SD	Mean	Median
18.	Assess your knowledge of how natural language processing works.	1.21	2.40	2.00
19.	Natural language processing technologies can enable more advanced conversational interactions with digital assistants and chatbots.	1.08	3.36	3.00
20.	I use natural language processing technologies in my work with students.	0.59	1.40	1.00
21.	Natural language processing technologies will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.	1.06	3.12	3.00

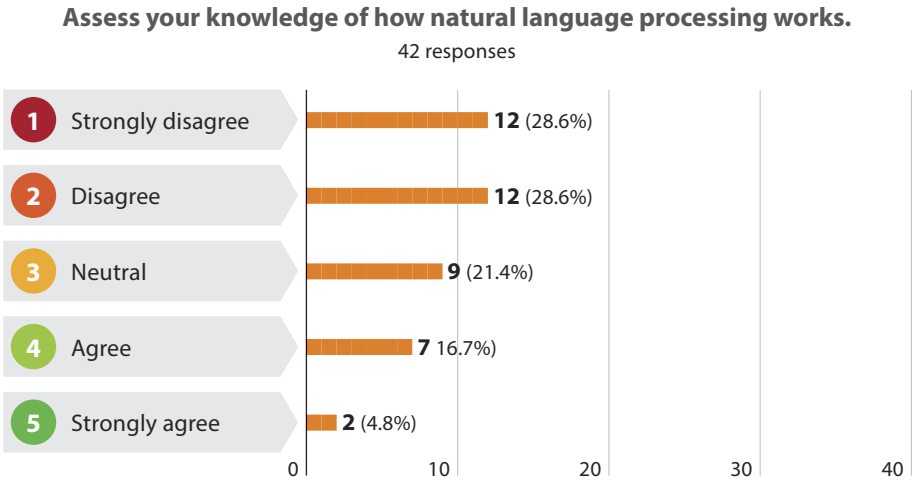

Chart 18. The survey results are predominantly negative sentiment on knowledge of NLP, with respondents generally disagreeing. The high standard deviation indicates diverse perspectives, with a skew towards lower values. The lower median than mean emphasises this variability and the nuanced nature of opinions on understanding NLP.

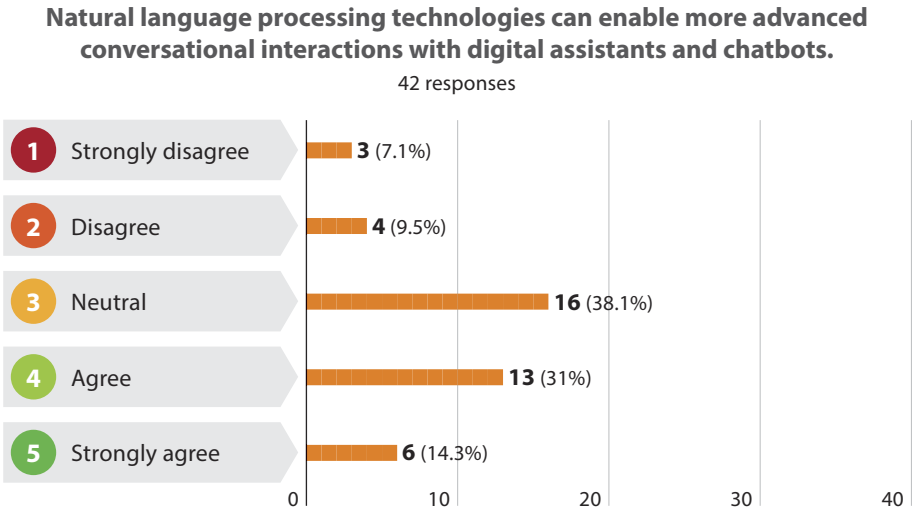

Chart 19. The survey reveals a moderately positive sentiment towards the belief that NLP technologies can improve conversational interactions with digital assistants and chatbots. Although the mean is slightly above 3, indicating overall positivity, the median is at 3, and a wide range of responses reflect diverse opinions among respondents. The higher standard deviation underscores substantial variability, emphasising differing perceptions on the potential of NLP to enhance conversational interactions among those surveyed.

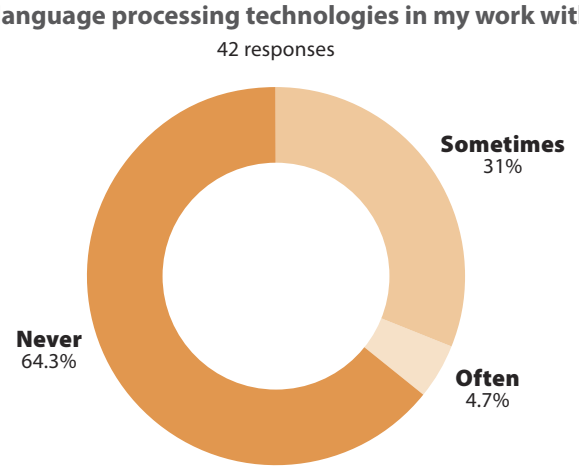

Chart 20. Survey results show a consistent trend of disagreement among respondents regarding integrating NLP technologies into their work with students. The symmetrical distribution, indicated by the proximity of the median and mean, suggests a uniform stance across participants. The minimal standard deviation indicates little variation in responses, consistently leaning towards the lower end of the scale. The findings suggest a prevailing sentiment of non-engagement or limited utilisation of NLP technologies in working with students.

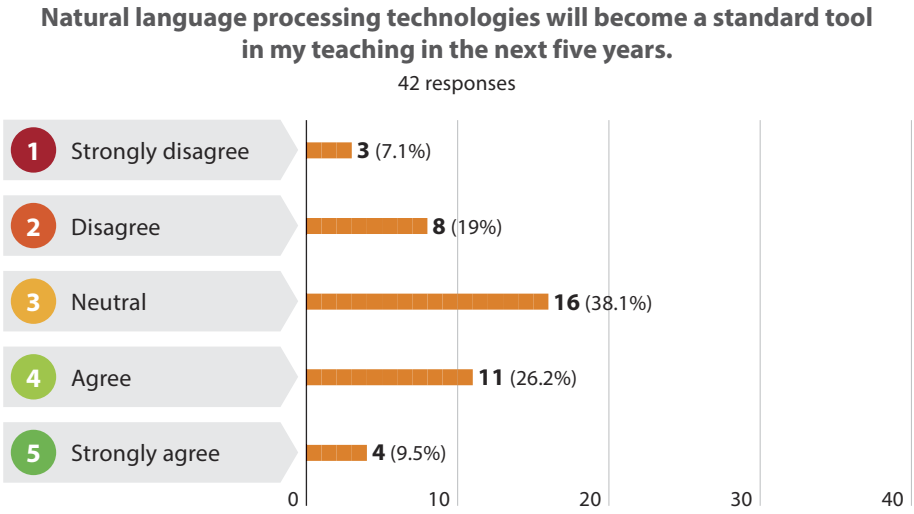

Chart 21. The survey shows moderate agreement among respondents about the integration of NLP technologies as a standard teaching tool in the next five years. The symmetrical distribution, reflected in the close alignment of median and mean, indicates a balanced perspective. However, the moderate standard deviation points to variability in individual responses, underscoring diverse opinions within the surveyed group.

Section 5 – Gamification and learning analytics

Table 5

Chart	Statement	SD	Mean	Median
22.	Assess your knowledge of gamified learning platforms.	1.10	3.36	4.00
23.	Assess your knowledge of learning analytics.	1.27	3.05	3.00
24.	Gamified learning platforms can motivate students by engaging game mechanics.	1.11	3.74	4.00
25.	Learning analytics can provide educators with insights into students' progress and learning behaviours.	1.08	3.60	4.00

26.	I use gamified learning platforms in my work with students.	0.63	1.88	2.00
27.	I use learning analytics in my work with students.	0.68	1.79	2.00
28.	Gamified learning platforms will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.	1.15	3.43	4.00
29.	Learning analytics will become a standard tool in my teaching in the next five years.	1.15	3.40	3.50

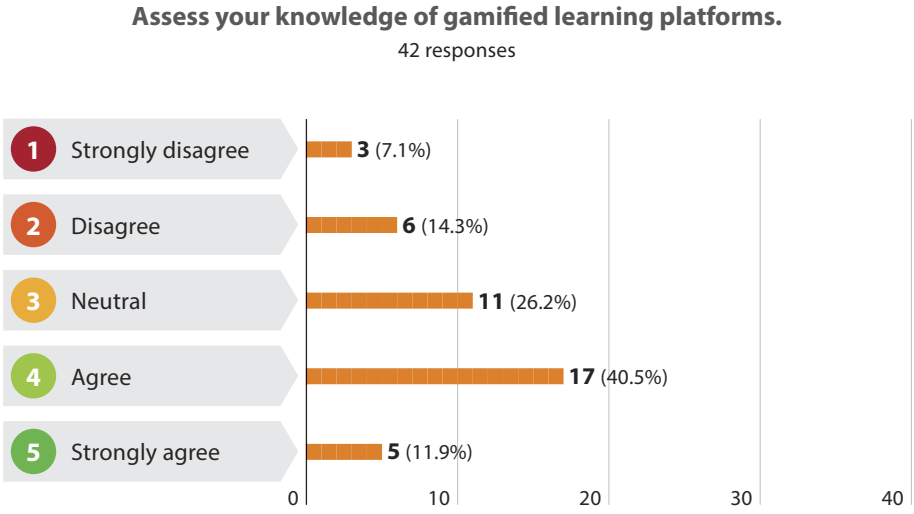

Chart 22. The survey reveals a generally positive view in participants' assessments of their knowledge of gamified learning platforms, reflected in the median score of 4. However, the average and standard deviation suggest some variability, leaning slightly towards the lower end. While there is overall agreement, the diversity in responses indicates that some participants express less agreement with the statement.

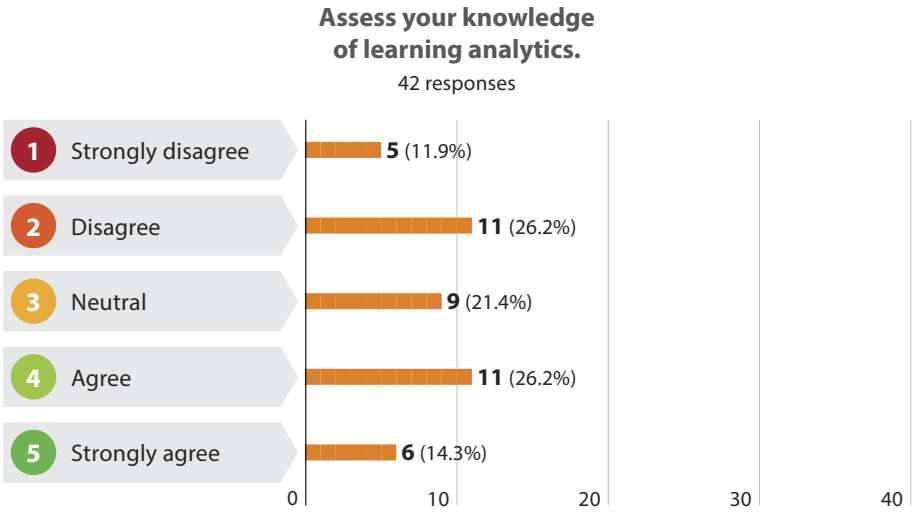

Chart 23. The survey reveals a moderate level of agreement or positive sentiment among participants regarding their knowledge of learning analytics, with both the average and median around 3. While there is moderate consensus, the standard deviation of 1.27 suggests some response variability, indicating a range of opinions. Overall, respondents exhibit moderate consensus with some diversity in individual perspectives on their knowledge of learning analytics.

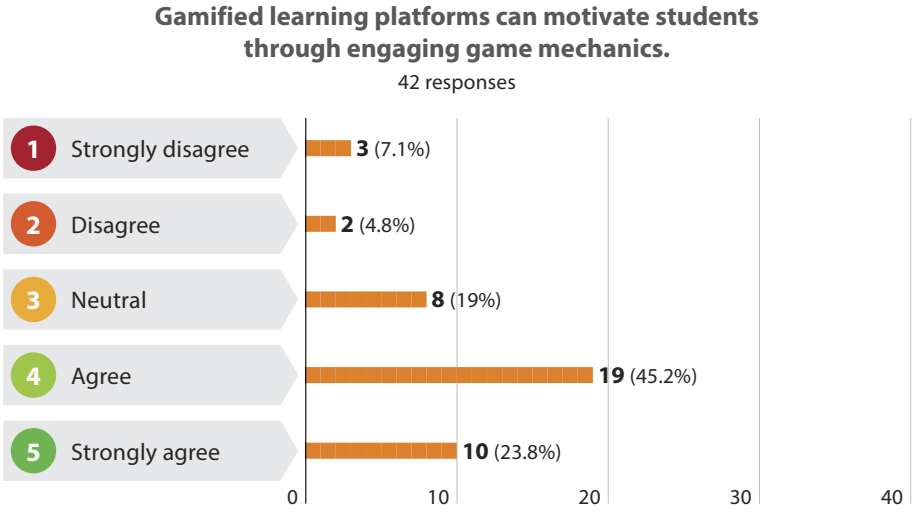

Chart 24. The survey reveals a positive stance. Respondents generally agree with the idea, with an average median score of 4 and a concentration of responses towards the higher end of the Likert scale. However, the moderate standard deviation suggests variability in opinions, highlighting some diversity in perspectives regarding the effectiveness of gamified learning platforms for student motivation.

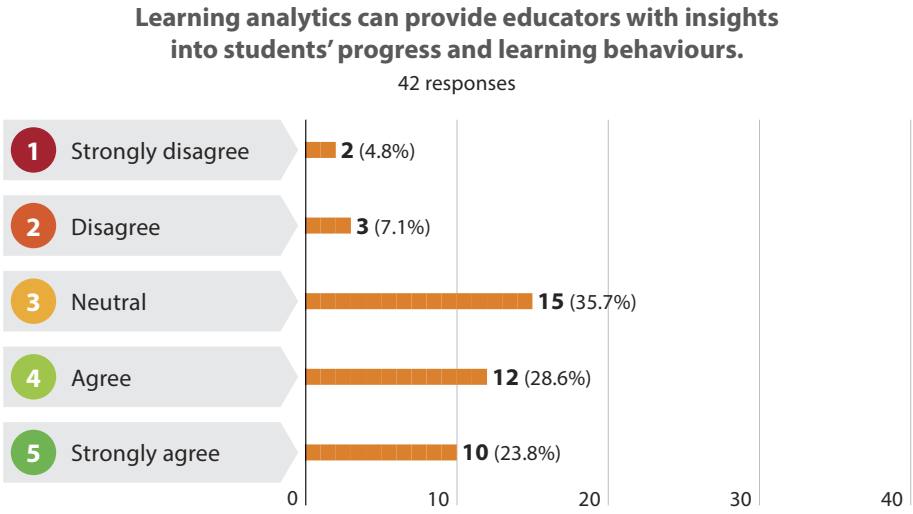

Chart 25. The survey results suggest a nuanced view regarding using learning analytics in education. While there is a moderate level of disagreement or neutrality on average, the relatively high standard deviation and diverse median point to varied and potentially skewed opinions among respondents. The wide spread of responses indicates a lack of consensus, emphasising differing perspectives on the effectiveness of learning analytics in providing insights for educators.

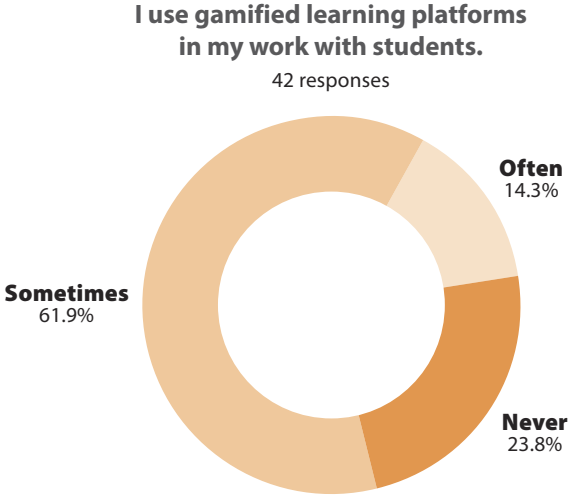

Chart 26. The survey reveals that, on average, respondents reported limited utilisation of gamified learning platforms in their work with students. The data indicate a consistent trend of lower ratings on the Likert scale, with responses predominantly clustered towards the lower end. Minimal variation among responses suggests a widespread pattern of lower engagement with gamified learning platforms across the surveyed population.

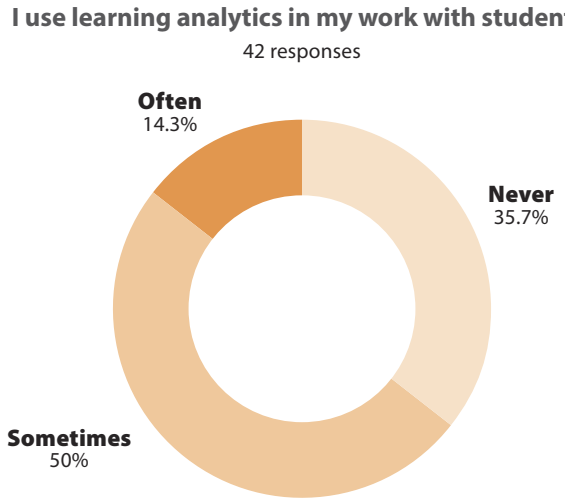

Chart 27. The survey reveals a general tendency towards disagreement or less positive sentiment among respondents regarding adopting learning analytics in their teaching. While the median and mean align closely, indicating a moderate level of variability, the standard deviation suggests diverse opinions within the sample.

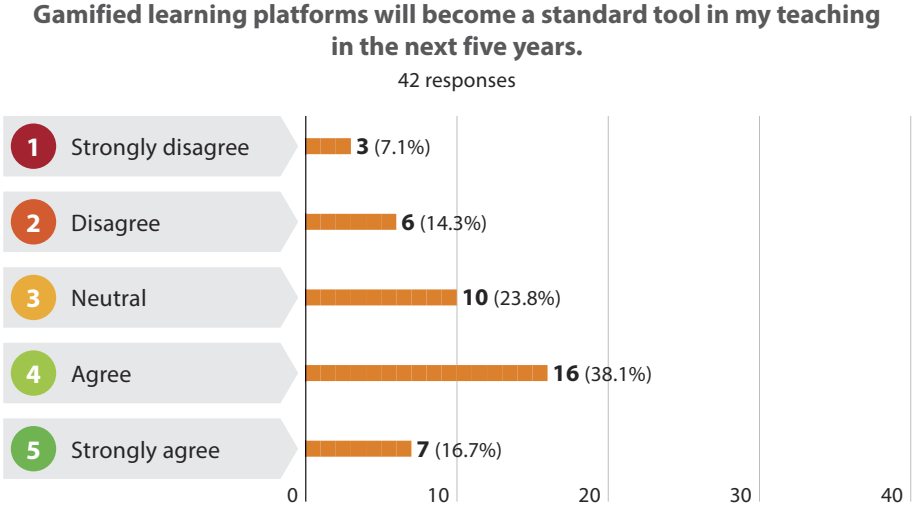

Chart 28. The survey shows the teachers have mixed opinions on integrating gamified learning platforms as a standard teaching tool in the next five years. While the survey average leans towards disagreement or a neutral stance, the higher median suggests a notable proportion leaning towards agreement. The substantial standard deviation indicates a diverse range of opinions among respondents.

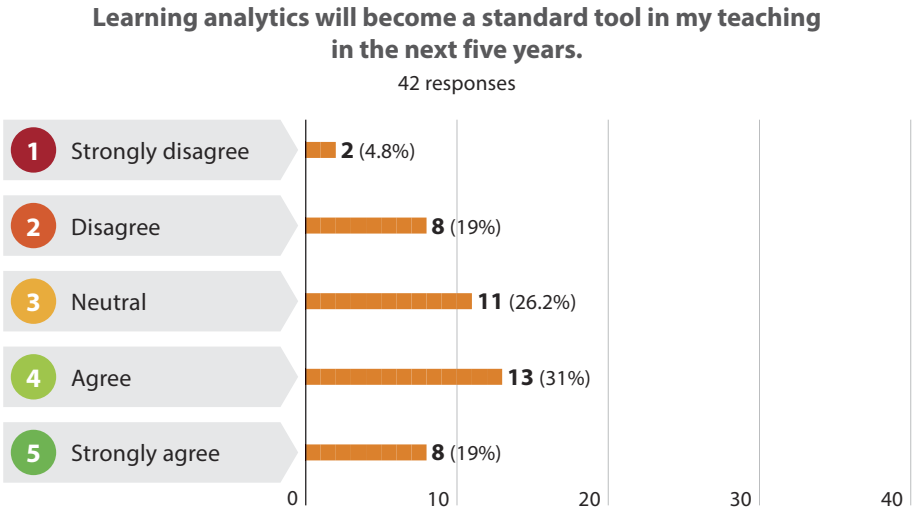

Chart 29. Respondents generally lean towards favouring learning analytics as a standard teaching tool in the next five years, with moderate agreement on average. The variability in opinions, as indicated by the standard deviation, highlights differing perspectives among respondents despite an overall positive sentiment.

Chapter 6
Conclusions and guidance from the HISTOLAB project

HISTOLAB Advisory Board partners:
EuroClio – European Association of History Educators
FEDE – Federation for European Education
House of European History
International Society for History Didactics
Leibniz Institute for Educational Media/Georg Eckert Institute

The present volume is dedicated to exploring the powerful role that history education could play in mastering the sociopolitical challenges of our times, if the potential for innovation in both the technological and methodological realms is embraced by policy makers, teachers and learners alike in appropriate and thoughtful ways. Although the situation varies between different member states, the process ahead is still long and complex. Often, however, processes can be effectively streamlined when a clear vision of what should be achieved guides our action. In order to create such a vision that might inspire policy makers and practitioners, we have reflected within the HISTOLAB Advisory Board on what history education in 2030 could look like from the expertise gathered there and the experiences achieved over the two years of HISTOLAB.

Guiding principles for history education

First, some considerations on what aims history education ideally should and should not pursue by 2030. While these appear throughout the publication, they are worth stressing here again, as they build the normative framework for any action aiming at reforming history education. Very importantly, history education should continue to, and in some cases, be used purely for educational purposes instead of for ideology or political gain. Teachers should fulfil their role as defenders of human rights and democracy and should preserve and extend the space they have to promote and develop freedom of thought, to learn to disagree and to find facts.

Addressing societal challenges through history education

At the same time, history education should tackle societal challenges such as loss of biodiversity, disinformation campaigns, armed conflict and social and economic inequality, as these are concerns young people should and do care about. This is closely connected to history education's role in helping

young people to become independent and critical thinkers, as well as active citizens who feel responsible for others. They should learn to recognise and resist manipulation instead of buying into the manipulation and spreading it. As such, history education should help to counter the rise of populism, authoritarianism and extremism. Thus, in 2030 history education should as a rule enable students to distinguish between fact and fiction on the basis of evidence and rational and convincing arguments.

Critical thinking and media literacy

Central to this is the critical analysis of primary and secondary sources, which is also the cornerstone of information and media literacy. This becomes increasingly imperative as students navigate the digital media landscape, where they must contend with a deluge of information blurring the lines between fact and fiction. In this context, history education plays a fundamental role in equipping students with the necessary skills to discern truth from falsehood and to combat disinformation and misinformation effectively. At the same time, the content taught in history classes should, at least in part, resonate with the most challenging issues of our era.

Empowering learners and encouraging interdisciplinary learning

Young people should have agency when it comes to their own learning and be allowed to research the things that matter to them and their peers. With a view, for example, to climate change, the global environmental history associated with the concept of the Anthropocene poses pressing challenges for the teaching of history, which may have been somewhat neglected in the past. The concept of the Anthropocene requires an understanding of human history that transcends the traditional dichotomy between nature and humanity and understands the human sphere as an integral part of the whole Earth system. History education in the Anthropocene needs to incorporate this new understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature into its curriculum. It should explore how human societies have both shaped and been shaped by environmental change over time and also adopt an interdisciplinary approach that integrates insights from history, environmental science, geography, sociology and other fields.

Teaching the Anthropocene and global issues

Finally, the Anthropocene introduces unprecedented levels of complexity and uncertainty due to the interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental systems. Teaching about this complexity requires history educators to navigate ambiguity and equip students with the critical thinking skills necessary to cope with an uncertain future. Investing in improving the teaching of such topics is

especially crucial in the light of the thematic report on pandemics and natural disasters by the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (2022), which finds that there is only minimal coverage of such topics in the history curricula among its member states. Besides climate change, global inequality and overcoming legacies of conflict are central challenges of our times that history education can help to overcome. If historical injustices are not acknowledged, they will be perpetuated in the present. Studying colonial legacies can offer an adequate way to address this in the classroom. These legacies include the social inequalities, economic disparities and cultural hierarchies that continue to shape the world we live in today.

Revisiting Eurocentric narratives and addressing biases

History education needs to engage with critically these legacies, exploring their historical origins and contemporary manifestations. This involves examining and revising Eurocentric perspectives and biases embedded in traditional historical narratives and world views critically, and confronting these biases on the basis of multiperspectivity. This means giving space to a wide range of different voices and perspectives, including from formerly colonised regions and societies, thus enriching historical discourse with multiple viewpoints. It is also essential to raise students' awareness of the bias of the so-called "Western canon", which highlights and glorifies Western achievements and concepts (for example progress, civilisation and modernity) while marginalising or ignoring those of non-Western societies.

Confronting historical injustices and challenging grand narratives

This ties in with the wider imperative of history education to acknowledge and address historical injustices such as colonisation, slavery and genocide. By challenging the grand narratives, students gain a more nuanced understanding of history and its implications for contemporary society. In this way, history education can serve as a platform for engaging with the complexities of the past and fostering a more democratic, inclusive, just and informed understanding of the world today. At the same time, developing a more profound understanding of such issues among students further reduces the likelihood of them falling for attempts, for example, by Vladimir Putin to utilise colonial legacies to justify his own actions in the war of aggression against Ukraine and to campaign against the so-called West in this context.

Sensitive histories and reconciliation

At the same time, teaching about other sensitive histories, such as armed conflicts, remains crucial in achieving reconciliation, allowing societies to move on and build sustainable and peaceful relations with their neighbours and former adversaries. Otherwise, people from historically marginalised communities will feel that

they still lack an equal place in society today, and the grounds for conflict will continue. Coming to terms with the past and acknowledging historical wrongs requires courage, skill and leadership. Teachers should be part of this change and be supported to deal with the societal tensions that these acknowledgements bring. Furthermore, both topics require students (and teachers alike) to assume a global perspective and to make meaningful connections between events and processes at the global, European, regional, national and local levels. Making such connections is essential to understand the globalised world we live in today. At a time of historically high rates of depression among young people, dealing with topics that are of concern to them might also serve as an acknowledgement of their fears and as a source of inspiration and hope for tackling such challenges. At the same time, recognising learners' interests and needs is a promising way to make them see the relevance of studying history, allowing them to enjoy history learning as an interesting and challenging intellectual endeavour. Learning history should help them to better understand themselves, other people and the world they live in. It should be clear that history is about real people and that it is reflective of societal diversity, both in the past and present.

Embracing technological innovation and place-based learning

Making use of new digital technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence or video games can be useful in achieving these goals, as they can boost learners' motivation, make history more tangible and in some cases, when used appropriately, also foster learners' critical thinking skills.

By 2030, teachers should have a solid understanding of the benefits different technologies can offer history teaching and of their limitations. They should be able to access clear guidance on how to use different digital technologies in history classes. Such an approach can equip teachers with the confidence needed to handle such technologies in meaningful ways in history classes. Developing this requires not only further empirical research on the effects of the use of different technologies for history teaching but also reflection and dissemination of experiences with using such technologies among history educators, as well as continued teacher training. At the same time, ministries should provide the necessary infrastructure to allow teachers to use such tools in their classroom practice in a systematic manner, as well as the necessary conditions to encourage them to undergo continued training and to take part in research activities.

On the other hand, it is essential to cultivate spaces for face-to-face dialogue and collaborative reflection without digital tools. In this context, it is also crucial to strengthen place-based learning in history teaching with visits to memorial sites or museums. Such visits and conversations allow students to engage deeply with historical issues, consider different perspectives and develop critical thinking skills. Moreover, such conversations foster empathy, understanding and connection with the past, enriching the learning experience beyond the capabilities of digital tools

alone. Formats in which educators in the context of museums and memorial sites collaborate with history teachers, for example through the evaluation of museum learning materials by teachers, prove to be especially valuable. However, as with the use of digital technologies, the implementation of study visits or field trips also depends on financial resources. Consequently, ministries should provide funding for place-based learning opportunities. Ideally, mechanisms should also be put in place at the European level to reduce the impact of economic inequalities in the study of history between different member states.

Redefining learning outcomes and assessments

By 2030, such commitments need to be reflected in assessments as well. What should be evaluated primarily are the historical thinking skills of students rather than historical information such as dates. This is even more important, as the *OHTE general report on the state of history teaching in Europe 2023* shows that the content of exams is a major factor in determining what is taught in class. And at the same time, it creates a clear picture that the vast majority of examinations are still based on recounting memorised information rather than on testing historical thinking competences. Thus, in order to ensure that historical thinking skills are adequately developed in history classes, by 2030 history exams should focus on testing historical and critical thinking skills rather than on reproducing memorised information. At the same time, it must be safeguarded that students are evaluated in terms of how they think rather than what they think. Students should be encouraged, not punished, to challenge the textbook or the teacher, as long as they do this on the basis of solid arguments and sound evidence. To allow learners to develop such skills, it is necessary to give more time to learning about a topic in more depth. Accordingly, it is important that sufficient time is allocated to teaching history and that the amount of content that should be covered is both manageable and chosen in close consultation with history teachers. Countries that have chosen to abolish history as a subject in upper secondary education should consider reversing this decision, and in those cases where history has become part of an interdisciplinary study, teachers should be required to have studied history as part of their initial teacher education. At the same time, overloaded curricula are one of the main obstacles that teachers encounter, and policy makers should start recognising that overloaded curricula are an obstacle to quality education as well. If curricula aim at providing opportunities for in-depth engagement with a topic, curricula should become more flexible, offer more choice for students and teachers, and be presented in a way that is concise and clear to all. The choice of content that should be taught must be informed purely by educational and societal needs.

Bridging the gap between academic history and classroom practice

It is noteworthy that all aspects mentioned here are closely connected to the need to reduce the gap between the state of the art in academic history and history education practice, which can succeed only in close collaboration between

academics and practitioners. While in academic history we find countless projects, articles and books dealing with the continually evolving issues of climate change and histories of conflict or colonialism from a myriad of perspectives, ways need to be found to reflect the latest developments in this constantly evolving field of academic history in history teaching practices as well. Thus, by 2030 we must establish channels through which academic historians and history teaching practitioners can work hand in hand to multiply findings in academic history and make the findings of academic history known among European history teachers and learners, while bringing history teachers' practical experience of research about history education. This includes not only offering continual teacher training opportunities as well as material support for teachers to attend them, but also to publish research results in ways that are accessible to history teachers. Open access publishing and a clear orientation towards teaching practice in publications appear to be of paramount importance to increase teacher engagement with academic developments. Also, making research results available in several languages besides English is key to improving the accessibility of research to history teachers.

Sustaining momentum to innovate and democratise history education

Developing and mainstreaming such a balanced approach to innovation in history education that builds on suitable learning methods that foster critical thinking skills, including place-based learning and an informed use of digital technologies, in a constant dialogue with academic history, requires more knowledge and a continuing exchange of experience on the effects of different innovative approaches and technologies have had on learners' historical thinking skills. To safeguard the set-up of such a knowledge base and opportunities for exchange means not only to support, conduct and make available empirical research on the use of such practices and their results, but also to create and maintain spaces in which learners, practitioners and policy makers can exchange and profit from each other's expertise, allowing them to continue to grow professionally. We now have a chance to utilise this momentum to ensure a sustainable transformation of history education. This would allow it to be a significant and powerful force in tackling present challenges and in bringing our democracies and societies back on track by 2030.

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History education possesses immense power, serving as a double-edged sword. It can either propagate divisive, harmful narratives or foster critical thinking, understanding and unity. The Council of Europe's pioneering efforts since its creation have profoundly shaped history education, emphasising multiperspectivity and democratic values. Through comprehensive programmes and projects, they have reformed curricula, promoted critical historical inquiry and introduced innovative teaching practices. Today, initiatives like the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe and HISTOLAB continue this legacy, addressing contemporary challenges to enhance history education. This publication delves into these efforts featuring insightful articles from four HISTOLAB fellows, exploring the intersection of digital innovation, inclusivity and curricular reform in history education.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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