

## **History as a subject**

### **History teaching in primary and secondary education**

#### **History in context and the extent of history teaching**

History is taught in the countries under review and the different school types and age groups in various ways: as a subject in its own right, in combination with another subject such as geography, as part of a larger discipline such as social or civic studies, or within a wider perspective as part of courses with names like “orientation on the world” (Belgium) or “homeland study” (Czech Republic). In three of the countries studied (Austria, Bulgaria and Estonia) history is not taught at all at level ISCED 1, i.e. primary school. In six countries, namely Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Italy and Romania, history is taught from Year 1 for one to three periods a week. In the other national school systems, history is taught as part of a subject like social studies or in combined courses like national history and geography. Greece forms an interesting exception: at the primary and secondary level in both general and vocational schools a subject is taught that focuses on pre-modern history, i.e. ancient history, Byzantine and medieval history and mythology. In all school types, however, the entire spectrum from ancient to modern history is covered.

In ISCED 2 and ISCED 3 history is a compulsory subject in most countries, with the exception of Great Britain, where compulsory study ends at the start of ISCED 2. In the vast majority of cases history at this level is a subject in its own right, being taught otherwise in combination with civic education or as part of a wider social studies course. In some higher vocational schools history is taught if at all only as part of a general studies course. It is usually taught for two periods a week in general schools, although often for just one period in vocational schools. In Finland three periods of history are offered in some years. The length of a period varies considerably, however, from 40 minutes in Bulgaria to at least 55 minutes in France. In some countries the number of hours per week cannot be precisely determined as it is fixed individually by the schools.

The distinctions between related subjects such as geography, social and/or cultural studies, civic education, human rights education, ethics and psychology differ considerably from one country to another. Where clear distinctions are made, resulting in a large number of subjects in the timetable, these subjects are usually taught in most of the levels and school types. The greatest distinctions are made in the Belgian and Dutch school systems where practically all of the above-mentioned subjects are taught, although not always throughout the system from ISCED 1 to ISCED 3. In the vocational schools of some countries – Sweden and Spain, for example – these non-vocational subjects are not taught and in these cases there is a marked and early divergence between general and vocational education.

## **Content and aim of the school curricula**

It is interesting to note that in over one third of the case studies no reply was provided regarding the general aims and content of the curricula. Most curricula for which information was provided distinguish clearly between the history of the particular country and the wider geographical and cultural context. As far as teaching is concerned, the country is generally seen as part of a larger Europe but the role of the individual country in a global environment is also communicated and explored. Consideration of historical and geographical differences is designed to teach tolerance and a critical perception of the country's own position and behaviour and to stimulate curiosity and understanding for other cultures. In none of the curricula for which information was provided was national history the central focus, although it often provided the basis for consideration of the wider political and cultural context.

In line with this approach, some school curricula contain a description of personal characteristics to be fostered through history teaching, e.g. independent and critical thought or perception of the individual as part of his/her environment.

The relationship between the country and Europe can also be quantified in terms of the attention devoted to local, regional, national, European and world history (see illustration X below). All figures are estimates, as no curriculum actually specifies the proportions. Twelve countries, just under two thirds of the total survey, provided information on this topic. In most of them national and European history took up the largest share of the history curriculum. This polarity reflects the central aims set forth in the curricula. Closer inspection reveals a discrepancy between the general aims of the curricula and the teaching in practice, however, where national history in most cases took up the largest share. In Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Romania, Slovakia and Spain national history predominated and in Hungary it accounted for more than half of the history teaching. Without giving any figures, the respondent from Poland also stated that national history was the main focus of history teaching. European history is the most important geographical focus in Austria and Slovenia. In the Czech Republic, Finland and Sweden the relationship is balanced.

A different geographical orientation is to be found in Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain. In the first two countries European history also predominates, but second place is taken by world history, with national history being of subordinate importance. In Spain, national history is the main focus but almost one third of the time is taken up with world history, with European history being relatively insignificant.

In all case studies the remaining geographical categories – local and regional history – are of subordinate importance, making up between 5 per cent (Austria, Hungary) and 20 per cent (Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia) of the total.

School Curricula - Proportion of Local, Regional, National, European and World History

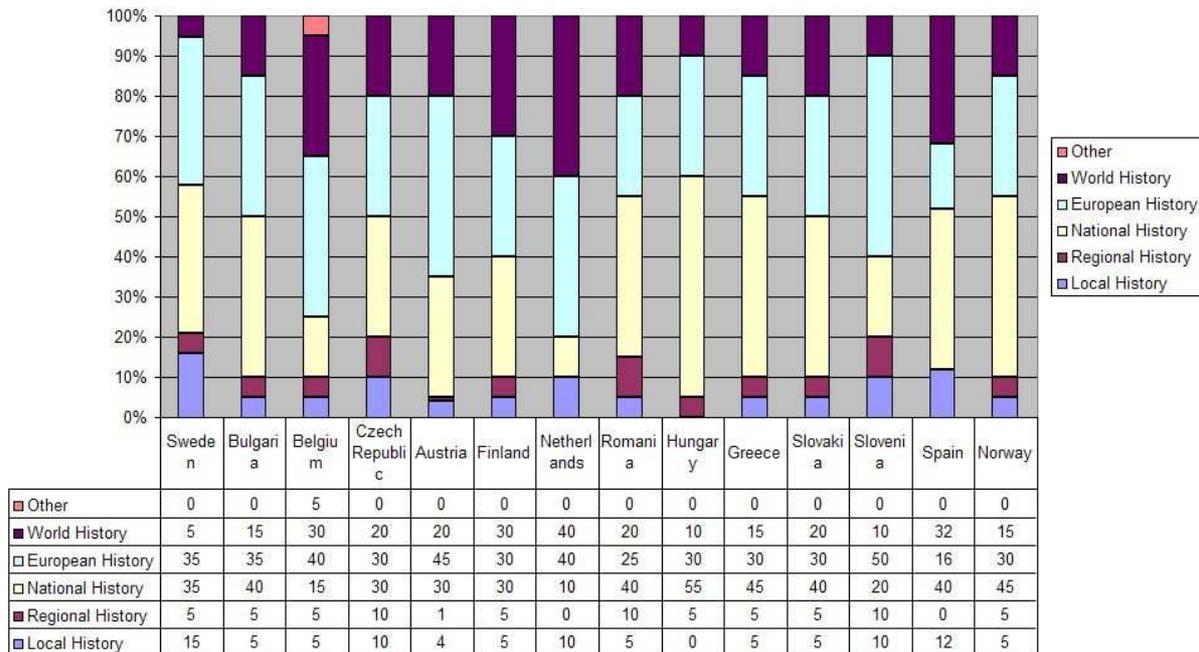


Table 11: School curricula: proportion of local, regional, national, European, and world history

Regarding the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of history (see illustration below), the main focus in practically all cases was on political history. Only in Slovenia and Sweden were political and social history said to be on an equal footing. In some countries – the most striking example being Slovenia – the four aspects were more or less equal, whereas in other countries – Slovakia, for example – practically two thirds of the history lessons were devoted to political history.

School Curricula - Proportion of Political, Social, Economic and Cultural History

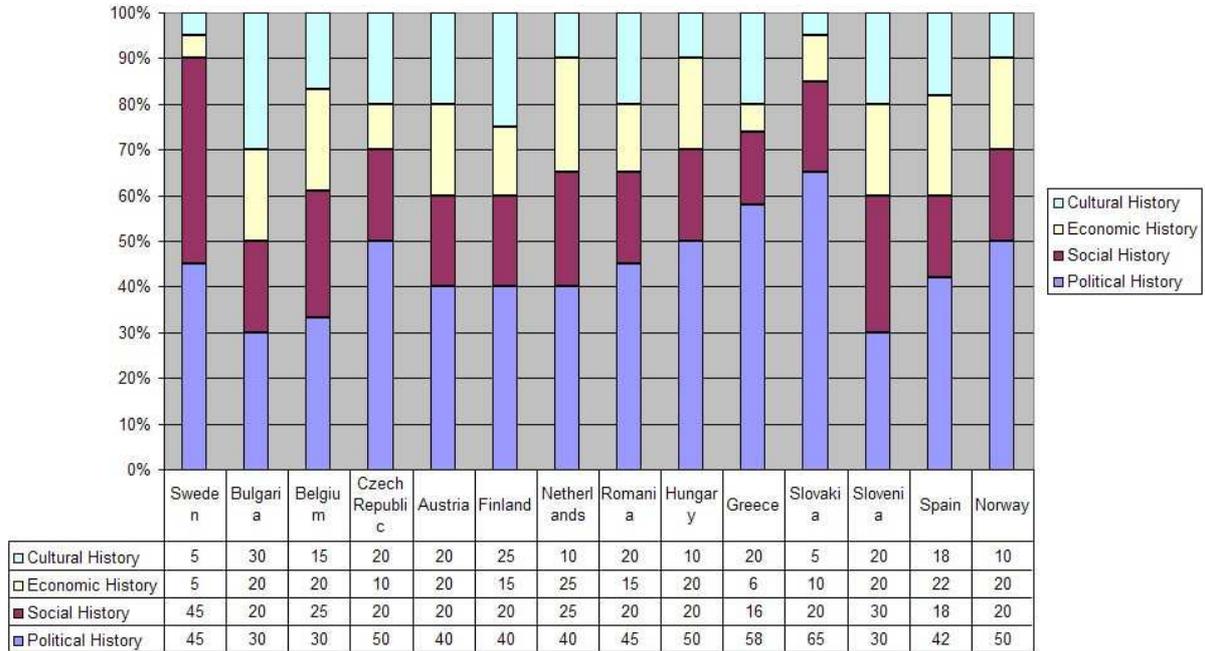


Table 12: School curricula: proportion of political, social, economic, and cultural history

### Differences between initial teacher training and school curricula

It is difficult to establish a basis for determining the differences between the teacher training curricula and the school curricula. In over a third of the countries there is no available information and in many other cases the information is very inadequate. There appear to be two different strategies in the European countries under review. In the first strategy, the teacher training curricula are closely linked to the school curricula. This means that the professional orientation of the teacher training is great and the acquired knowledge is directly applicable. Countries in this group include Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Norway and Poland. In other countries there are large discrepancies between the two curricula. The respondent from Slovenia, for example, stated that there were few if any correlations. In a group of countries including Finland and Greece, the relationship between the teacher training and school curricula is based on the assumption that university courses are designed to produce historians and the profession of teacher is only one but not the main career focus. Italy appears to take a middle path where the teacher training is oriented towards the school curriculum but is also independent of it.

## **Recent changes in history teaching and teacher training**

With the exception of Slovenia and the (few) countries where no information is available, history teaching in all participating countries has changed in the last few decades in a number of ways. In the Czech Republic extensive changes are to be introduced in the near future.

The most striking changes are those that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the democratisation of the former Warsaw Pact countries. Many of the new states that have emerged – Estonia and Slovakia, for example – have made incisive changes in the curriculum. Estonia has downgraded the importance of Soviet history and subsumed it within the history of the world. The changes in the system have also brought about major shifts in the subject matter. In Slovakia, vocational training, which used to be compulsory, has been withdrawn from the curriculum and subjects like social studies, foreign languages and sport have become more important. Art, ethics and religion have been included in the curriculum for the first time. The rapid process of change has also been reflected in some cases in modifications in the school system architecture with a view to alignment with European standards.

In (practically) all countries history teaching has been adapted to a rapidly changing society. This applies among other things to technological innovations and the inroads made by the new information technologies into history teaching (Norway). There have also been didactic changes: learner-based approaches are replacing the older teacher-based methods and independent thinking is being encouraged. Collaborative learning in groups and thematic workshops are also designed to help students to adapt better and more easily to the requirements of a knowledge and information society and to make use of the opportunities offered by it.

In some countries there has also been a change in the concept of education. Belgium, the Netherlands and also Estonia are attempting to shift the emphasis in teaching from knowledge to increasing the potential for using this knowledge (skills). Factual knowledge to be communicated to students is being reduced in favour of efforts to foster the development of a historical awareness.

Organisational changes in schools have also influenced history teaching in some countries. The shift in the decision-making competence in some countries such as Austria or Hungary to the individual schools (school autonomy) has had an impact on the scope and nature of history teaching. It is difficult if not impossible, however, to describe this shift on a national scale because the decisions by the individual schools are the main influencing factors.

It is also difficult to ascertain the extent to which these considerable changes in history teaching have also led to changes in teacher training or to make generalisations in this respect. The Czech respondent stated that although the curricula had changed the teaching methods remained the same so that lecturing and frontal teaching were still the most common method. No detailed information was available from Norway about changes in teacher training. In Belgium, by contrast, significant and comprehensive

reforms have taken place. The new problem-oriented approach and interactive teaching and learning methods in school history teaching have been reflected in teacher training through an extension and increase in the importance of teaching practice. In Estonia teacher training has mirrored developments in history teaching, with more emphasis being placed on the communication of skills. In Bulgaria the changes in the curricula have resulted in an extension of training for history teachers to include more teaching practice.

In spite of the incisive changes that have taken place in the last few years in some cases, most respondents state that further reforms are likely to occur. In the Czech Republic, as mentioned, a major reform is to be introduced shortly with new curricula and a new final examination at the end of ISCED 3. In the Netherlands as well, a new history teaching programme is to be introduced from 2007 that will place greater emphasis on the development of a historical awareness. A new subject, civic education, is being introduced in primary schools in Spain.

New curricula are being discussed in some countries (Estonia, Bulgaria, Greece), which should be introduced in the next few years, accompanied in some cases (Greece) by new textbooks.

One exception to this European trend is formed by Slovenia, one of the “new” states to be created after the collapse of Yugoslavia, where there are specific plans to increase the amount of national history taught in the ISCED 3 curricula, although the current level is fairly low by European standards.

The anticipated changes are varied and difficult to generalise about. At all events, there is no general trend towards a more European orientation of any sort in the European school system. In some core EU countries, and in Estonia, there are clear efforts to foster the development of use-oriented skills capabilities (skills).

## **Pupils and students**

The quantifiable data about the student structure are significant above all in terms of the percentage of the population graduating from higher education establishments. Interestingly, such information is not available for all countries, which naturally makes it more difficult to draw comparisons.

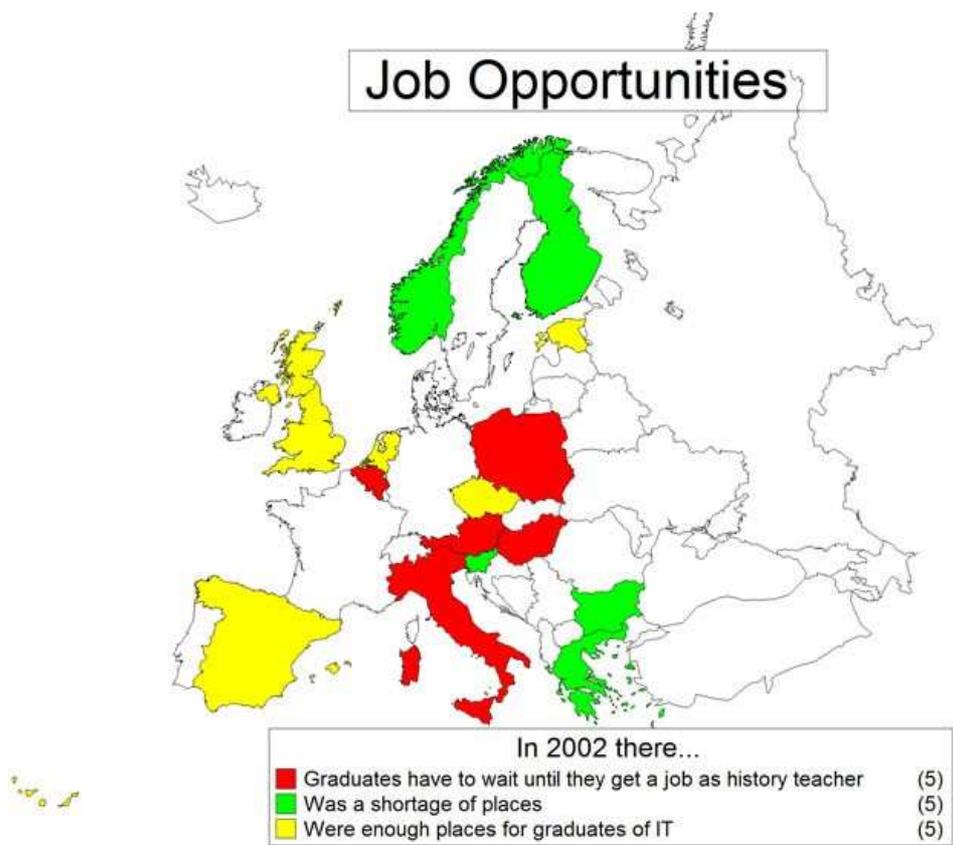
In the countries where the information is available, there is a wide scatter: at the top end of the scale are Slovenia and Finland where over 90 per cent of the population completes higher education. At the bottom end of the scale are Poland with 37.8 per cent and Austria with 43 per cent. In the countries with a gender breakdown, the proportion of women completing higher education is consistently greater – in some cases significantly – than men.

Romania presents a special case: there the number of students is declining markedly because of demographic developments – a tendency that has already led to the closure of (private) universities for lack of students.

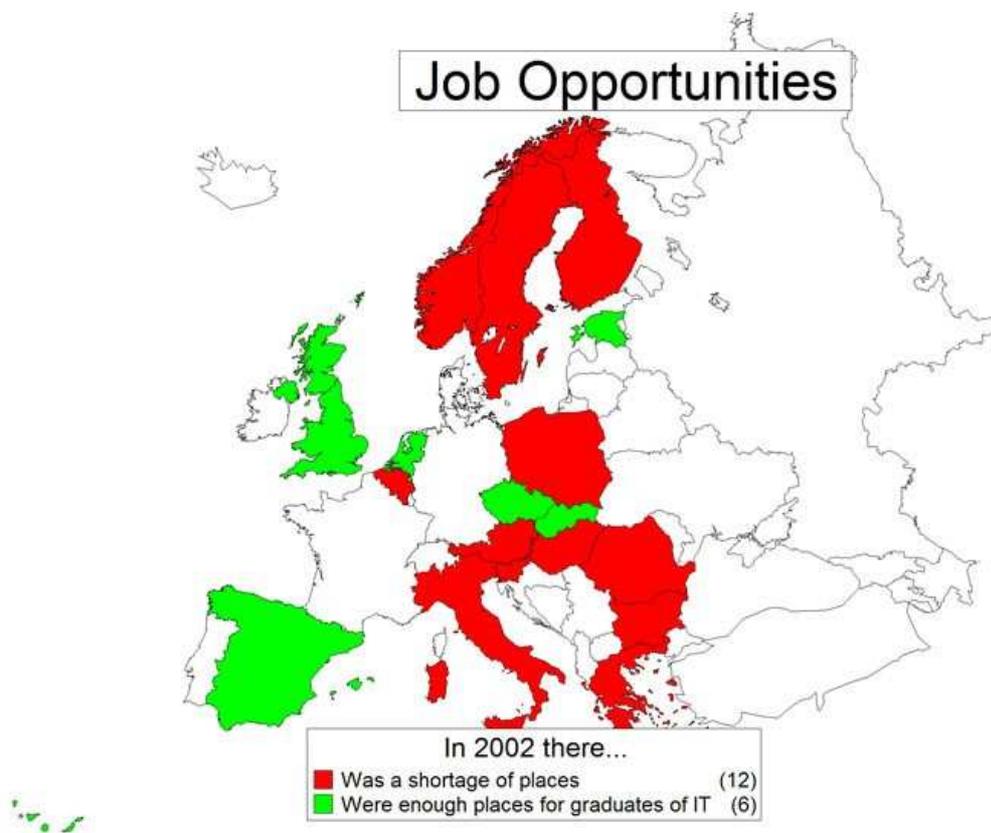
## **Teachers**

The information relating to the number and situation of teachers differs considerably from country to country. It is possible in all cases to determine the absolute number of teachers but in two thirds of the countries under review it is not possible to obtain a breakdown by subjects taught. It is possible to estimate the number of history teachers in Austria, for example, but not with the necessary statistical precision. Gender breakdowns are not available in some countries – Italy, for example – and it is therefore impossible to make reliable statements regarding the possible feminisation of the teaching profession in general and the history teaching profession in particular. The fragmentary data on the breakdown of teachers by state and private schools provides information about the significance of private schools in some countries. Taking the number of teachers as the yardstick, it is interesting to note that private schools predominate over state schools only in the Flemish part of Belgium. In all other countries studied the vast majority of teachers work in state schools.

The labour market and the economic situation of teachers as a whole differs considerably from country to country (see illustration x and x). In seven countries including the Czech Republic and Estonia there are sufficient jobs for graduates; in the others there is a job shortage, which in eight countries including Italy and Austria means that graduates need to wait a certain time before they can find an adequate placement. It may be assumed, however, that this situation does not apply equally to all teachers but that the actual situation varies considerably depending on the region and subjects offered. Precise unemployment figures for history teachers exist in only a few countries (Netherlands, Norway) and figures for teachers as a whole are only marginally better, which makes it very difficult to plan in the education sector.

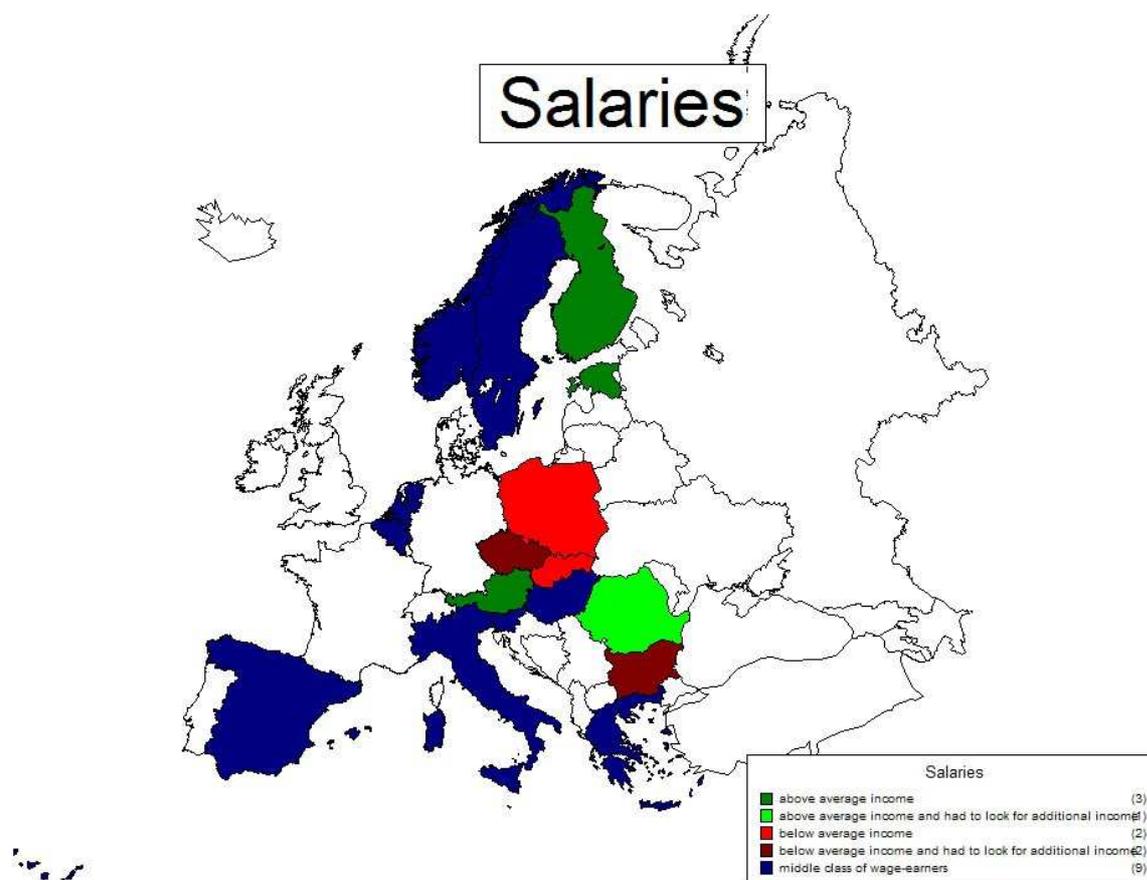


Map L: Job opportunities of graduates who want to become history teachers



Map M: Job situation for graduates who want to become history teachers

As a further finding, there appears to be is no statistical correlation between the labour market and the pay situation (see illustration). In some countries – the Czech Republic or Bulgaria, for example – teachers’ salaries are so low that additional income is required to live on. And yet there are too few jobs for teacher training graduates in Bulgaria, but not in the Czech Republic.



Map N: Salaries of history teachers

The forecasts for the future by the respondents vary considerably. Six expect no significant change in the labour market for history teachers, while five anticipate an increase in the demand, particularly because of the current age structure of active teachers which will give way to a wave of retirements. This is the case in Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. In Romania as well almost half of the teachers are over 50. The retirement age varies considerably within Europe (from 55 to 67) and in many countries the pension insurance systems are in a state of transition as a result. The situation is made even less clear by the fact that there is a distinct discrepancy in many countries between the theoretical and actual retirement age. Here, too, education planning is likely to be difficult because of the absence of a statistical basis. There are no figures for Austria, Estonia, France, Greece and Slovakia, for example. In other countries there is information only about teachers in general but not by subjects taught.

Where a drop in the demand for history teachers is anticipated – in Austria, Poland, Slovakia and Spain – demographic causes, i.e. the drop in the birth rate, and organisational changes such as cuts in education spending, are frequently cited as reasons.

In the majority of countries – ten in all – teachers' salaries are at around the average for the population. In four countries teachers earn above-average salaries. All three of the countries in which teachers earn less than the average salary are former members of the Warsaw Pact. It is possible that the poor economic situation of teachers, the vast majority of whom work in the public sector, is connected with the decline of the public sector in these countries in general. This situation does not apply to all emerging economies, however: in some – Estonia for example – teachers earn more than the average salary. The precarious economic situation in Romania is reflected by the fact that although teachers there earn above-average salaries they are nevertheless required to take additional jobs to survive financially.

Not surprisingly, there are considerable differences in absolute terms in the typical salaries earned by teachers in the participating European countries. The discrepancy in terms of prosperity within Europe is also reflected in teachers' income. In Bulgaria, teachers earn €95 per month at the start of their career and €120 at the end, whereas in other countries such as Norway, the Netherlands and Austria, for example, the corresponding figures are 20 times as high. The available data does not allow comparisons in terms of buying power.

In all of the countries studied income increases considerably with service: by at least 25 per cent (Greece), rising to between 50 and 60 per cent in most countries and peaking at 80 to 90 per cent for some school types (ISCED 2, Austria).

### **The status of the subject and discipline**

The responses regarding the status of history teaching and teacher training do not reveal a direct correlation between the status, income and/or labour market situation. As the prestige attached to this course of study is difficult to objectify, the respondents were asked for their personal impressions. The responses reflect the extremely different national situations. In a very small number of countries humanities are at the top of the scale in terms of prestige as a subject for study (e.g. the Netherlands) or in the top third (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic). In most countries humanities and cultural studies are at the lower end of a scale from 1 to 10 (Austria, Greece, Hungary). Medicine and technical subjects are regarded by the respondents as enjoying far more prestige.

A comparison of the responses regarding the prestige of history as a university subject and training as a history teacher reveals a very clear trend. All of the respondents who answered the question regarded teacher training as less prestigious than the study of the corresponding subject without teacher training (Bulgaria), although some pointed out that teacher training in history was particularly prestigious (Romania). The prestige attached to the study of history can also be seen in the context of humanities in general. It is generally agreed that humanities are less prestigious than technical and scientific subjects, but a university degree in history (implicitly compared with teacher training in history) was thought by most respondents to have relatively high status, certainly higher

than the corresponding teacher training. Respondents who gave a reply regarding the value of history as an academic discipline pointed to the great social relevance of historical knowledge that existed traditionally and in some cases had even increased in recent years. The respondent from the Netherlands also stated that history graduates, alongside law graduates, were finding employment increasingly in the public administration, which had a positive impact on the social prestige of this subject.

While the responses regarding the prestige of history teacher training and the factors influencing the status of history as an academic subject produced similar answers, responses regarding the factors that influence the social value of history teacher training varied a good deal. Some respondents referred to the earning potential or labour market situation as the most important factors, while others mentioned theoretical reasons such as the knowledge of society that history teachers possess and communicate. Two respondents from ex-Warsaw Pact countries mentioned, albeit in completely different ways, a connection between the political situation before 1989 and the transition after 1989 and the prestige attached to history teacher training. These references are too scant, however, for really substantial conclusions to be drawn about the specificity and function of history teaching in the Socialist countries before and during the transition. This very interesting but highly complex research area deserves more detailed and specific study.

The respondents provided a wide range of responses regarding possible changes in the popular perception of history as a teaching subject over the last few years. Many of the responses referred to specific situations rooted in the context of the country in question. The Norwegian respondent, for example, stated that in his country the public interest in history was generally on the increase and that the prestige and popularity of history as a subject was also growing as a result. In some of the ex-Warsaw Pact countries the transition in 1989 is cited as a reason for change (Slovakia). Other respondents were unable to pinpoint any change (Bulgaria); in fact the majority of respondents either failed to perceive any changes or simply gave no response to this question.

### **Cooperation between universities and schools**

In all countries for which information is available there are agreements for teacher training that regulate cooperation with university training facilities and schools, where teaching practice takes place. Trainee teachers train either in special training schools (Greece) or in regular schools and are supervised and evaluated by university lecturers and/or school teachers. In Sweden there are projects at the universities that feature diverse forms of cooperation.

Apart from these different types of cooperation, there are other varieties of collaboration: university lecturers write textbooks for schools, often in collaboration with school teachers, and universities conclude contracts with individual teachers to provide lectures on education.

In some cases cooperation between schools and universities as part of the teacher training programme is under review (Czech Republic) or has been reformed (Sweden).