

Presentation

Institutional Background

The Academy of European History at the [European University Institute](#), founded in 2001 by professor [Anthony Molho](#), professor [Diogo Ramada Curto](#), and professor [Bo Stråth](#), aims to provide a forum for the discussion of European history among two groups of young professionals, drawn from across Europe: professors at the pre-University level and journalists. The Academy will hold its second session from **3 through 12 July 2003**. Its first, experimental, session was held in the summer of 2002. A group of some forty secondary school history teachers and journalists spent about ten days discussing, with acknowledged experts and among themselves, questions of how the past, especially the past of Europe, should be taught to pre-university students and presented to a wider public. The same format will be followed in the course of the second session.

Purpose

Increasingly in the past few years, historians, and more generally educators, have been pondering a set of questions about the study of history: What is the relationship of the past to the present? What should it be? In any case, to what past do we refer and to whose present? Questions such as these have been staples of historical inquiry, from Herodotus to the present. In moments of profound change, such as the past two or so decades especially in Europe, they assume an even greater urgency. On occasion, they also generate much dispute.

For nearly two hundred years, until the second half of the twentieth century, the nation-state has been the fundamental unit of historical analysis, both in historical instruction and in discussions about the past in the popular press.

For the last half a century or more, thanks to the pioneering work of several historians, professional historical study has become less sharply focused on the nation state. Scholars across Europe have contributed to this enterprise: the *Annales school* in France, economic historians and the *Past and Present group* in Great Britain, less well organized but no less important historical groups in German-speaking Europe, the school of microstoria gathered around the journal *Quaderni storici* in Italy.

Context

Yet, at all levels of instruction, teachers of history today face the difficult task of fashioning a *curriculum* that takes into account the increasing importance of the European community. How should one think about the history of Europe in relationship to the histories of individual nation-states? How has the concept of

Europe changed over time? What regions, cultures, historical traditions did Europe encompass in the remote or more proximate past? Such questioning has begun in earnest among some historians. But historical curricula - at both the university and secondary school levels - and discussions about the past in the popular press do not yet reflect the outcome of these discussions.

In creating the Academy, its founders are animated by a simple idea. Quite simply put, they are convinced that, especially in Europe today, there is a need for opening new forums for discussing the past and its relationship to the present. No credo – ideological or otherwise – will colour these discussions. Rather, as we did in the summer of 2002, we intend, also in the summer of 2003, to open invite members of the Academy to explore the challenge we all face when thinking about the history and the future of Europe.

Every session of the Academy is devoted to one theme. Last year's theme was **Images of Europe, from Antiquity to the Present**. The theme of the second session of the Academy of European History will be **Borders and Borderlands**. Meetings will be held twice a day, mornings and some afternoons devoted to presentations by acknowledged experts, The remaining afternoons to discussions with the assistance of these experts.

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