

# ***Teaching History of Transition in Europe***

## ***A Handbook for History and Civic Education***

Created by the international network "Transition Dialogue" in 2019-2022



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# Transition Dialogue

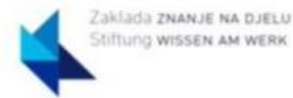
## Who is the handbook for?

- The handbook is aimed at history and civic education teachers and practitioners in a variety of fields and education settings.
- It is not just limited to schools, but other multipliers in education who can teach young people about the transformation comprehensively.

## Where can I find the handbook?

- In 11/2022 the handbook will be available at: <https://transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition/>
- It can be read online or downloaded as a PDF
- The book can also be pre-ordered as a print version via E-Mail: [info@austausch.org](mailto:info@austausch.org)

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## What is the handbook?

- *Teaching History of Transition in Europe* aims to support history and civic education practitioners in formal and non-formal settings to teach the period of transition out of communism in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989/91.
- The handbook provides
  - background on the concept of transition and its developments;
  - results of mappings of public discourse, school curricula and textbooks from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine;
  - teaching materials including lesson plans with detailed instructions on both national and international topics;
  - References to games, videos, podcasts and other material for engaging with the topic;
  - methodological approaches to addressing blind spots and neglected topics, including ways to deal with controversial issues in the classroom.

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## Chapters of the handbook.

- I. Post-communist Transition: The division of narratives
- II. Mapping the teaching of transition
- III. National lesson plans:
  - Bulgaria – People and monuments during times of transition
  - Croatia – What is (economic) transition?
  - Germany – Victims and perpetrators in the trials against the so-called wall-shooters.
  - Lithuania – The transition period in Lithuania: social, cultural, and economic challenges
  - Poland – From central to local governance - The greatest achievement of Polish transformation?
  - Russia – “Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s”
  - Ukraine – Studying Ukrainian and European history through active learning

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## Chapters of the handbook.

### IV. Transnational lesson plans:

- **The role of civil society** in transition to democracy. Examples from Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine.
- **The economic aspects of transition** taught through the Accidents of Birth game. Examples from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, and Poland.
- **Public memory**, dealing with the past, competing memories. Examples from Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Poland.
- **Crime and punishment?** Transitional Justice in Post-communist Countries. Examples from Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland, and Germany.

### V. Teaching transition:

- In search of better approaches and methods.
- Reflections on challenges, strategies, and conceptual approaches.
- The impact of the public discourse on teaching transition.

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## Excerpts

TEACHING THE HISTORY OF TRANSITION IN EUROPE

### Transnational lesson plans

#### THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

Examples from Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine

Authors: Alicja Pacewicz, Olena Pravylo, Leonie Sichtermann, Louisa Slavkova & Giedrė Tumosaitė

#### I. Overview

The lesson plan outlines a working definition of civil society and its role in a healthy democracy. It focuses on three pillars: 1) civil society in times of a totalitarian regime, 2) civil society and its role during a period of change – the end of a totalitarian regime and the beginning of a transition to democracy, 3) civil society today and its value for a resilient democracy.

#### II. Objectives

- Describe the role of civil society.
- Be in a position to compare different civil society movements before, during and after the transition to democracy in different countries.
- Be able to identify the challenges and opportunities for civil society in the present – on local, national, and transnational levels.

#### III. Key concepts

**Civil society:** "Civil society refers to all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to, nor managed by, the State."<sup>108</sup>

**Civil society organizations (CSOs):** "A civil society organization is an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process, and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and cit-

<sup>108</sup> EUR-Lex – Access to European Union law: Glossary of summaries – Civil Society Organisations. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil\\_society\\_organisation.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil_society_organisation.html). A very thorough description of the concept is available here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil\\_society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society). Civil society can be understood as the "third sector" of society, distinct from government and business, and including the family and the private sphere. By other authors, civil society is used in the sense of 1) the aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens or 2) individuals and organizations in a society which are independent of the government. Sometimes the term civil society is used in the more general sense of "the elements such as freedom of speech, an independent judiciary, etc. that make up a democratic society" (Collins English Dictionary). Especially in the discussions among thinkers of Eastern and Central Europe, civil society is seen also as a normative concept of civic values.

TRANSNATIONAL LESSON PLANS

izens. Examples of such organizations include social partners (trades unions & employers' groups); non-governmental organizations (e.g., for environmental & consumer protection); grassroots organizations (e.g., youth & family groupings). The European Economic and Social Committee represents civil society at EU level.<sup>110</sup>

**Non-governmental organizations (NGOs):** Sometimes civil society is mistaken for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) only. NGOs are legal entities regulated mainly by a special Non-Profit Legal Entities Act in any country. They are independent of the government and the private sector and are not working for profit; they are guided by certain goals and values set out in their statutes. Such a goal can be to support society as a whole or some of its individual groups (parents, children, artists, minority groups, journalists, etc.).

**Active citizenship:** "Active citizenship means people getting involved in their communities and democracy at all levels from local to national and global. An active citizen promotes the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes developing a combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to work to make a difference in the society."<sup>111</sup>

**Totalitarianism:** "Totalitarianism is a form of government that attempts to assert total control over the lives of its citizens. It is characterized by strong central rule that attempts to control and direct all aspects of individual life through coercion and repression. It does not permit individual freedom. Traditional social institutions and organizations are discouraged and suppressed, making people more willing to be merged into a single unified movement. Totalitarian states typically pursue a special goal to the exclusion of all others, with all resources directed toward its attainment, regardless of the cost."<sup>112</sup>

**Pluralism:** "Pluralism, in political science, the view that in liberal democracies power is (or should be) dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups and is not (or should not be) held by a single elite or group of elites. Pluralism assumes that diversity is beneficial to society and that autonomy should be enjoyed by disparate functional or cultural groups within a society, including religious groups, trade unions, professional organizations, and ethnic minorities."<sup>113</sup>

#### IV. Key questions

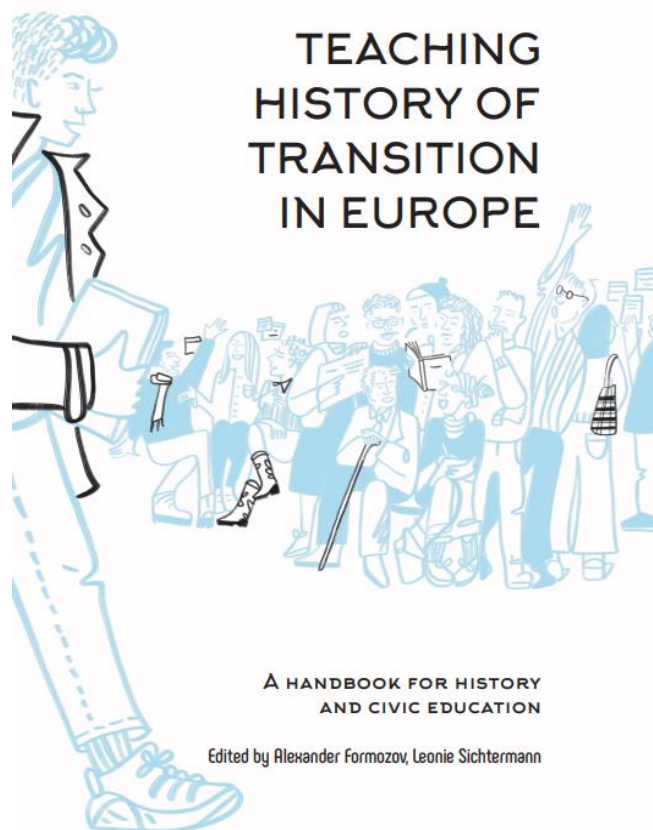
<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> European university college Association (Euca): "Active citizenship". Available at: <https://www.euca.eu/activecitizenship>.

<sup>112</sup> Britannica (2021): Totalitarianism.

Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/totalitarianism>.

<sup>113</sup> Britannica (2008): Pluralism. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pluralism-politics>.



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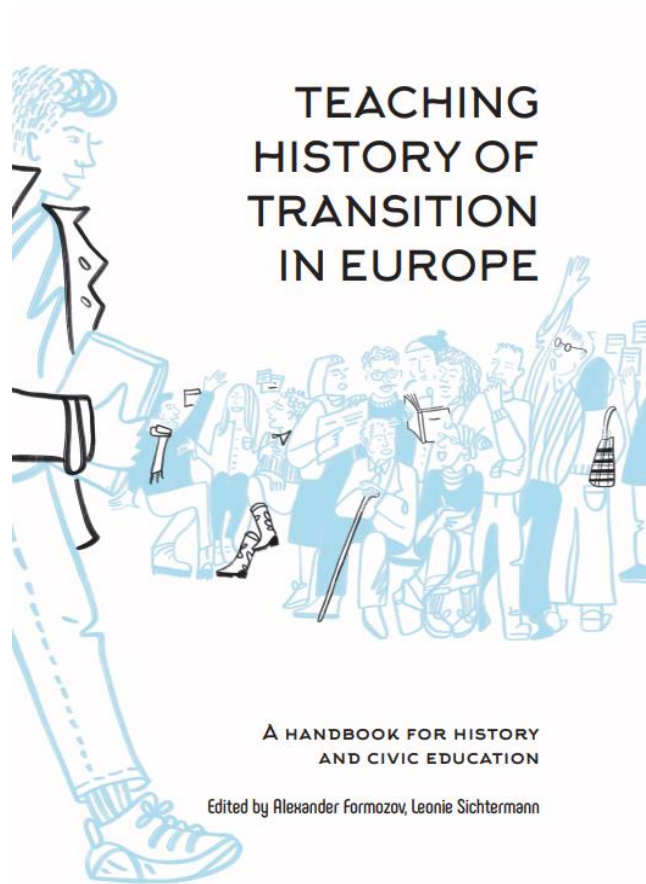


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# TD Transition Dialogue

## Excerpts



TEACHING THE HISTORY OF TRANSITION IN EUROPE

### Lithuania

Author: Asta Ranonytė

#### LITHUANIA

##### Grade/Age group:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade / age group: 9;
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 11;
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 12;
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 16;
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 18.

##### Subject:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: Integrated Social and Scientific course;
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade: History (national level);
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade: World History;
- 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> grade: Lithuanian and World History.

##### Share (%):

- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: less than 1%;
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade: 3-4%;
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade: 5%;
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade: 18%;
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade: 5%.

#### I. General information

Lithuania's education system is decentralised, on the basis of the subsidiarity principle. National authorities, municipalities and schools share responsibility for the quality and content of the education. The Parliament adopts the main laws and legal acts regulating the system of education and science at a national level, while the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, or the Government, adopts other legal acts applicable at the national level (i.e., a core curriculum). The municipalities set and implement their own strategic education plans in accordance with the national documents. The schools organize the education process and the teachers are able to adapt the core curriculum and other education content to students' individual needs.

TEACHING THE HISTORY OF TRANSITION IN EUROPE

### National lesson plans

#### BULGARIA: PEOPLE AND MONUMENTS DURING TIMES OF TRANSITION

Author: Bistra Stoimenova

#### I. Overview

The focus of this lesson is the issues regarding the cultural heritage of the communist regime, such as monuments and other architectural sites, the variety of attitudes towards this during the transition period, and possible solutions to these issues. The students will be advised to use different types of historical sources, as well as a variety of perspectives on the subject at hand.

#### II. Students' age

Upper secondary level: 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

#### III. Objectives

The students will be expected to:

- Develop their knowledge and critical understanding of the complexities related to the monuments of the communist regime during the transition, and people's attitudes towards them.
- Analyse various types of historical sources to investigate different viewpoints.
- Discuss and express their own opinions using specific facts.
- Develop teamwork skills.

#### IV. Key concepts

Cultural heritage, civil society, collective memory.

#### V. Key question

What were people's responses to the totalitarian regime monuments in Bulgaria after 1989?

#### VI. Prior knowledge

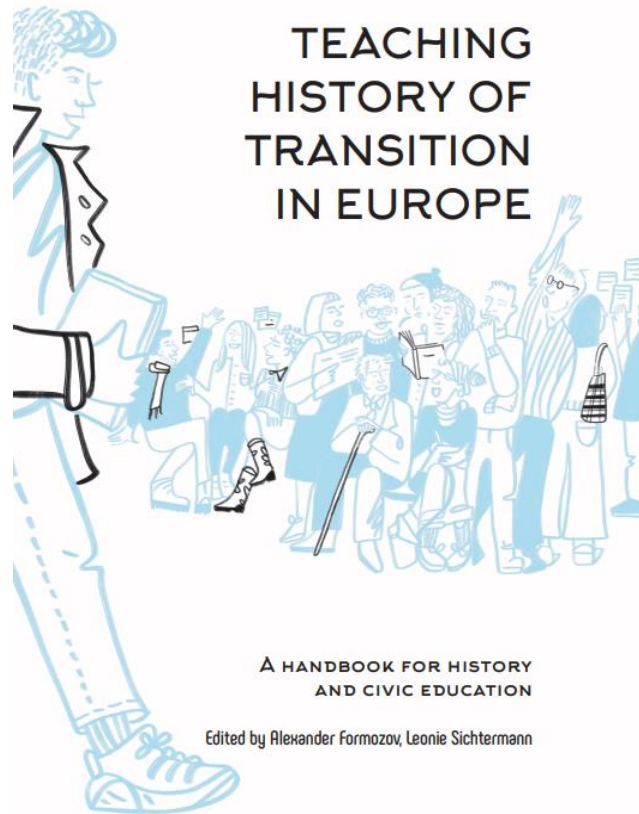
Knowledge about the period 1945-1989 in Bulgaria.

#### VII. Step-by-step description of the lesson

Duration: 90 minutes (2 X 40 minutes)

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# Transition Dialogue

## Who are we?

- The “Transition Dialogue” network focuses on the formation of knowledge and perceptions of the transition from communism in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989.
- We are taking a closer look at the public discourse on history and civic education, and at how transition is being taught at schools in six European countries.
- We are spearheading a new multifaceted democratic discourse on post-socialist transition, highlighting the discrepancy between official discourses and the experiences of real citizens in Central and Eastern European countries in the years following ‘89/’91.
- We aim to come to a more nuanced understanding of the impact of transition on societies and use our findings to provide new methods and tools for civic education in the future.

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