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## **National identity and European integration in contemporary textbooks in Slovakia**

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### ***Abstract***

*Drawing on the most recent textbooks for lower secondary education in Slovakia, this paper examines two issues. Firstly, the interpretation of national identity is analysed. Does this reflect a primordialist, constructivist or ethno-symbolist perspective? Secondly, this paper looks at the interpretation of European integration in Slovakian textbooks. Is it rooted in inter-governmentalism or supra-nationalism?*

**Keywords:** *National identity, European integration, textbooks*

### **Context and Relevance**

The enhancement of European identity as the safeguard of a thriving European integration (EI) has attracted increasing attention within academic and institutional circles of the European Union (EU), particularly since the negative response of the wider public to the Maastricht Treaty (1992). As a result, there has been a resurgence of interest in the incorporation of a European dimension into education systems of member states (Ryba 1992, Shore, 2000). The ongoing, unresolved Euro crisis highlights unambiguously that nationalism still has an impact on both political leadership and the public within member states of the EU. Moreover, it also clearly exposes rifts in European unity and identity. (The Economist, 2012, Auer, 2010). At the same time, the tensions within the EU emphasise the continuing relevance of a European dimension to education (EDE).

The concept of a European dimension to education manifested itself at the EU level for the first time in 1973 in the influential report of Professor Henri Jane (Savvides, 2008). As it has never been defined precisely, its application remains greatly inconsistent within both the EU and also national levels of administration (Philippou, 2005). Nevertheless, European dimension refers to a concept of education that is expected to enhance an understanding and support for European integration across member states. As a cross-curricular approach, it aims at the promotion of common values and interests, and the understanding of a shared, cultural and historical heritage in Europe. A wider, European contextualisation of teaching content particularly in history, geography, the arts, civics and foreign languages is seen as a suitable, practical adaptation of the concept of EDE (Council of Ministers of Education, 1988).

In spite of considerable research, little is known about the actual implementation of a European dimension into the teaching practices across member states (Savvides, 2008, Philippou, 2005). This paper aims to contribute to the knowledge within this area by focusing on EDE implementation in the pre-university education system in Slovakia.

Slovakia seems to be an interesting research topic for a variety of reasons. It joined the EU in 2004 shortly after regaining its national statehood in 1993 following the ‘Velvet divorce’ from Czechoslovakia.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the relationship between integrationist developments in Europe on the one hand and the building of national statehood on the other seem rather intriguing.

The European dimension in its broader context, i.e. the study of European history, culture or geography, is actually not a pedagogic innovation in Slovakia. European perspective, particularly within the subjects of history, geography, arts or literature has a long tradition in the education of Slovakia. Although burdened with a strong ideological bias during the period before 1989, it is a well established area of study. Therefore, it is the interpretation of the actual process of European integration and national identity from a Slovakian perspective which will be examined here.

The roles of curriculum and textbooks, both remain central (and often controversial) aspects of formal schooling (Maier ed., 2004, Schissler and Soysal, 2005). In Slovakia, which is not an exception in this respect, issues of European integration and nationalism are discussed mainly within history, geography and citizenship education. Therefore, this paper explores the contemporary textbooks which are used within all three subjects in the lower secondary level of education (ages 11-15).

### **Research questions and analytical framework**

Drawing on the insights of the theories of nationalism and European integration, a double structured analytical framework will be applied here. In terms of the interpretation of national identity (NI), primordialism, constructivism and ethno-symbolism are considered. In regard to European integration (EI) it builds on the approaches of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism.

Although a conceptual precision and consistency is unlikely to be found across all three subjects, there are two fundamental questions which this paper strives to illuminate:

- Does the interpretation of national identity show inclinations towards the perspectives of primordialism, constructivism or ethno-symbolism?
- Does the interpretation of European integration show inclinations towards the perspective of supranationalism or intergovernmentalism?

### ***National identity***

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<sup>1</sup> Particularly under the influence of the expansionist politics of Nazi Germany, interwar Czechoslovakia (1918-1939) broke up. An ‘independent’ Slovak Republic (1939-1945) was established and the western part of Czechoslovakia was incorporated into the Third Reich as the autonomously administered ‘Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.’ Lipták (2000)

Nationalism, and in particular its negative potential has stimulated much academic debate. An enormous body of research has emerged, notably over the last three decades (Özkirimli, 2010). Although discussed controversially, the tripartite division of primordialism, constructivism and ethno-symbolism has become a widely used categorisation of nationalism theories within social sciences (Özkirimli, 2010, Green, 2005).

**Table 1. Analytical Framework: NI**

<b>Primordialism</b>	<b>Constructivism</b>	<b>Ethnosymbolism</b>
<p><b>Nature of nation</b> natural, given</p> <p><b>Attributes of nation</b> common origin, history, territory, traditions, language, national character, antique age</p>	<p><b>Nature of nation</b> constructed, invented, imagined</p> <p><b>Attributes of nation</b> modern historical phenomenon (after French Revolution, 1789)</p>	<p><b>Nature of nation</b> durable, long term character</p> <p><b>Attributes of nation</b> ethnie and ethnicity, pre-modern historical phenomenon (prior to French Revolution, 1789)</p>

Primordialism, derived from the Latin meaning ‘from the very beginning’, is not considered a dominant approach within contemporary academic debate (Özkirimli, 2010). It is understood as a term capturing a historical theorem within academia which strongly reflects the ideas of the German humanist, J.G Herder (1744-1803). Hence, nation is seen as a natural or given community united by a common origin, history, traditions and territory, language and national character. Nowadays, primordialism corresponds mainly with the non-academic perception of national identities as self-evident facts (Özkirimli, 2010).

Constructivism, frequently also called the modernist approach, considers nationalism and nations to be a result of socio-economic and cultural changes following industrialisation. Consequently, nations are seen as constructed, invented or imagined historical phenomena which gained prominence after the French Revolution (Özkirimli, 2010, Gellner, 1983, Anderson, 1983, Hobsbawm, 1983).

Ethnosymbolism, the second main school of thought in the contemporary discussion on nationalism, emphasises the long term character and durability of nations. Accordingly, nations predate industrialisation and the French Revolution, and evolved from ethnic groups. Ethnicity is seen through an ethnosymbolist approach as an inherent quality or the actual essence of collective identity which is rooted in cultural embodiments such as myths and symbols (Özkirimli, 2010, Smith, 2010).

### ***European integration***

Supranationalism is understood as an approach to EI which advocates the dismantling of national states' sovereignty within Europe. It is based on the notion of Europe as a cultural and political unity and therefore supports the development of its shared governance. As such, it emphasises the role of supranational institutions in the process of EI (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006, Rosamond, 2000). Intergovernmentalism on the other hand, highlights the role of nation states in the process of EI. Accordingly, nation states are the main driving force of the integration process. They engage in and support its development in order to reinforce and not to give up their political powers. The European Union is seen as a platform of interstate cooperation within clearly defined areas of competencies (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006, Rosamond, 2000).

**Table 2: Analytical Framework: EI**

SUPRANATIONALISM	INTERGOVERNMENTALISM
<p><b>Europe</b> cultural and political unity</p> <p><b>Sovereignty of nation states</b> dismantlement</p> <p><b>EU</b> supranational political organisation of Europe</p> <p><b>Drivers of EI</b> supranational institutions</p>	<p><b>Europe</b> multiplicity of national states</p> <p><b>Sovereignty of nation states</b> preservation</p> <p><b>EU</b> platform of interstate cooperation</p> <p><b>Drivers of EI</b> national governments</p>

Considering the complex structure of the European Union it is obvious that an examination of the interpretation of its nature using merely the theories of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism appears limited. Nevertheless, this choice might be justified by the fact that supranationalism and intergovernmentalism have remained the main theoretical conceptualisation of European integration within academia (Wiener and Diez, 2009, Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006). More importantly, the core arguments of these two approaches, preservation of national state sovereignty vs. its renouncement, seem to reflect the attitudes towards European integration as displayed by a considerable part of the EU public (The Economist, 2012, Auer, 2010).

## Findings

Textbook production in Slovakia is centrally organised and overseen by the Ministry of Education. Although the Ministry of Education is the highest authority in education affairs, it is actually the National Institute of Education that designs curricula and evaluates textbook proposals which are then approved by the Ministry. In order to be authorised, a textbook must comply with the learning content and objectives defined in the national curriculum (EP).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Despite this being the fourth year since the implementation of the latest educational reform (2008), new textbooks are not available for a number of subjects. This also applies to the subjects

### ***History textbooks***

History is the subject where issues of national identities are discussed most extensively. An explicit primordialist perspective is established within the content of history education presented in the textbook for the seventh grade (age 13). The content of history teaching covers at this stage the periods of the Early Middle Ages (5<sup>th</sup> century) to the Enlightenment (ca. 1780).

The very first chapter of the seventh grade textbook, 'The life of our ancestors', introduces a definition of the process of the development of national identities. In an ethnosymbolist perspective, the formation of national identities is described as a long term process. At the same time, the strong emphasis on the uniqueness of nation formation evokes a primordialist approach:

The formation of each nation is a complex, unique and non-recurring process. The beginnings of some big nations are relatively clear and recorded in historical sources. The genesis of smaller ethnic groups is not as straightforward and intelligible. This statement also applies to Slovaks. The oldest denomination of our nation (ethnonym) was Sloveni which is very close to a general description for Slavs. What is more, this antique name changed in the course of the 14<sup>th</sup> century from Sloven to Slovak in the masculine form. In the female form (*Slovenka*) and in the adjective form (*slovenský*), the original shape remained (History 7/2, 2011, p.8).

The text continually employs the language of inclusion and of exclusion. Hence, it refers to 'our ancestors' who always succeeded in maintaining their 'own traditions' and 'own lifestyle'. In order to affirm the distinctiveness of the Slovak nation, the textbook predates its 'unique traditions' before the Slavic arrival in the Carpathian basin. In addition, the writing style which is applied in the textbooks does not escape completely the romantic influences of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Herder's notion of the peacefulness of Slavs is recognizable. Hence, 'our ancestors' appear sometimes in a more positive light when compared to the 'outsiders':

At the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century, the tribe of Sloveni settled in the territory of Slovakia. However, the peaceful life of new settlers was violated by nomadic and combative Avars. [...] Our ancestors maintained their own lifestyle even after the arrival in the Carpathian basin (History 7/2, 2011, p.8).

On other occasions, the text contradicts unintentionally statements on the unique aspects of the Slovak nation (common origin, tradition, territory) and clearly exposes the weakness of primordialist assumptions:

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of history, geography and civics which are examined here. Currently, there is only one set of authorised textbooks available for the here examined subjects. Hence, two sets of books will be considered in this paper (published before and after 2008).

The repercussions of the Tatar invasion were disastrous for Hungary.<sup>3</sup> In the central areas of the land, nearly half of the population perished. [...] The devastated land had to be re-settled. The king and aristocrats invited guests to their estates. Particularly German settlers arrived here and settled in developing cities, in the mining area of Middle Slovakia and on the Spiš (History 7/1, 2011, p.32).

The concepts and terminology of academic discussion of nationalism (ethnic group, nation) are applied frequently and inconsistently throughout the textbooks across all grades. The terms 'nation' and 'ethnic group' are used interchangeably as synonyms and are characterised through nearly identical aspects. For example the textbook for grade six defines ethnic group (*etnikum* in Slovak) as 'a group of people who are bound through a common, historical origin, a type of race, a language and cultural traditions' (History 6/1, 2011, p.40). The textbook for grade eight defines ethnic group as a community encompassing 'members of a nationality or nation' (History 8/3, 2011, p.39). Nation is then defined in the same text as a 'community of people with a common history, language, culture, lifestyle and a common territory' (History 8/3, 2011, p.39).

In spite of the national perspective applied already in the textbook for grade seven, nationalism in Europe is the dominant topic within the grade eight (age 14). The textbook starts with a European contextualisation of national movements which is summarised under the heading of 'On the route towards modern nations'. In five subsequent chapters, starting with the French Revolution (1789-1799) the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), and revolutionary movements in Czarist Russia, France, Germany and Italy in the period of 1825-1871 are described.

Despite the vocabulary of the academic approach of constructivism (modern nations), the development of national identities is not presented as a constructed historical phenomenon. Instead, the term 'modern' refers simply to the process of a gradual socio-political transformation (modernisation) of Europe which followed the French Revolution of 1789.

The historical phenomenon of nationalism is introduced on three occasions in the textbook. First, contextualised against the French Revolution of 1789 and European revolutionary developments (1830-1848/49), nationalism is portrayed as a progressive, socio-political movement. A transformation of socio-political structures within Europe, the implementation of a constitutional and a republican legal order, national unification and autonomy are presented positively. Nations are explicitly portrayed as already formed and culturally homogenous communities:

Several European nations strove for the adoption of a new constitution, the introduction of a republican political order, recognition and unification. Such manifestations were described by the term of nationalism (History 8/3, 2011, p.20).

The text also contains a brief, encyclopaedic summary of the concept of nationalism. Although described in a mildly critical manner, the actual existence of nations remains

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<sup>3</sup> Present-day Slovakia was integral part of the Hungarian Kingdom from the 10<sup>th</sup> century until the dissolution of Austro-Hungary in 1918.

unquestioned: 'Nationalism - a stream of political and cultural thoughts which exalts nation, its interests, history and uniqueness' (History 8/3, p.23).

The section addressing the actual beginning of the Slovak national movement is summarised under the headline of 'The Modern Slovak Nation'. It is within this thematic area, subdivided into six separate chapters, that the ideology of nationalism is described explicitly for the third time. On this occasion, nationalism is presented from a socio-psychological perspective and again displays unintentionally the constructed character of national identity. In the context of romanticism, the ideas of academics and intellectuals of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century are briefly discussed. Notions of belonging and feelings of an inner bond with a distinctive group defined predominantly through linguistic affinity are presented as a novel, unusual perspective on collective identities. The innovative character of this stream of thought is highlighted against the traditional, collective identities anchored in social classes and confessional affiliations. Nevertheless, despite this broadly constructivist approach, the subsequent paragraphs and chapters do not elaborate further on this brief discussion. Instead, the description of the Slovak national movement continues in the narrative of a national writing of history.

In the following pages, the textbook reveals anew and incidentally the constructed character of the Slovak nation:

The big disadvantage of Slovaks was that they did not have a common literary language. They had spoken various dialects and were also divided through liturgical language. [...] Therefore, a pressing issue was the creation of a unified literary language that would unite Slovaks (History 8/3, 2011, p.38).

Despite such evident contradictions, Slovak nationalism is presented as a progressive movement focusing on the emancipation of a socially and politically disadvantaged but culturally homogenous community. The Slovak nation and its political history remains then a central focus in the subsequent parts of the textbook. The section on 'Austria-Hungary' is divided into three separate chapters and discusses the historical period following the Austria-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and is dominated by the politics of Magyarisation. Although portrayed in a non-emotional, factual style, Magyarisation is viewed through the prism of Slovak nationalism. Hence, it is portrayed as Magyar oppression of non-Magyar nations and of the Slovak nation in particular:

Hungarian politicians strove to transform the multinational country into a state of one, Hungarian nation - hence a Magyar nation. Although the new national law of 1868 formally granted national rights to non-Magyar nations, it was not adhered to in practice. Magyar language became the state language in Hungary. A period of increased national oppression set in which affected Slovaks and Ruthenians the most. (History 8/3, 2011, p.64).

Despite the occasional, idealising tendencies and the emphasis on the given nature of the Slovak nation, the writing style within history textbooks remains sober. Nevertheless, for the period of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the content of textbooks becomes clearly dominated by topics of national history (History 8/3, 2011, SEP 2011).



The first evidence of a specific interpretation of European integration is provided in the textbook for grade five (age 11). In a brief, encyclopaedic explanation, the European Union is defined from an essentially intergovernmentalist perspective as an organisation of European states: 'European Union - an association of multiple European states; Slovakia became a member of the Union on May 1, 2004' (History 5, 2019, p.10).

The actual process of European integration is a topic discussed in history within grade nine (age 15). The pre-reform textbook (published before 2008), still in use in the current school year (September 2011-June 2012), addresses EI and EU only marginally. Nevertheless, the contextualisation of European integration is set against a broader background of integrationist activities in the immediate post-war Europe.<sup>4</sup> European integration is then portrayed as a process that started with the economic cooperation of European (West) states in the aftermath of Second World War. However, given the excerpts of primary sources provided in the text, economic integration might be interpreted as a vehicle of national reconciliation and peace maintenance.<sup>5</sup>

### **Geography Textbooks**

The interpretation of national identity might be traced in the textbooks of geography, like in the case of history, from explicit statements and implicit assumptions manifest throughout the texts. Explicit references to concepts of national identity are less prevalent in the geography textbooks as compared to history. A direct discussion is portrayed briefly in the textbook for grade seven (age 13) which is dedicated to the presentation of two continents, Africa and Asia.

Within two paragraphs, an explanation of nation is provided. It is a description which clearly mirrors the conceptual variety and ambiguity characteristic of the academic discussion on nationalism. Reflecting the primordialist perspective of a nation, this is first described in the textbook as a large group of people bound through common territory, common history, language, culture and traditions. However, the explanation continues by maintaining that members of a nation do not necessarily need to display all common characteristics with a subjective perception of belonging to a nation emphasised:

Large groups of people who are bound through a common territory where they live, a common history, language, culture and traditions, are called nations. The members of a nation do not need to have all of the listed characteristics in common. There are nations which do not have a common language (Swiss) or a common territory (Jews) or a common religion (Germans). What is important is that their members have a feeling of belonging, consider themselves to be one community - a nation. The

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<sup>4</sup> Foundation of Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), predecessor of OECD, in 1948; The Council of Europe in 1949. History 9 (1995), p.45

<sup>5</sup> This may be inferred from Schuman Plan (May 1950) and also a brief statement from George Ball, (1909-1994), a US official and collaborator of Monnet. Ball's statement identifies German reparations obligations following First World War as the reason for the rise of Nazi Power. It then interprets the Marshall Plan as an instrument of political and economic consolidation of Europe. History 9 (1995), p.45

territory where a nation developed or lives now does not need to be congruent with borders of a state (Geography, 7/2, 2011, pp.5-6).

The text does not provide a straightforward clue in terms of an age of nations as it does not address the process of national development explicitly. Unlike history, geography textbooks (grades seven and eight) do not discuss the concept of ethnic group. In spite of the conceptually rather unclear explanation of nation, the actual existence of nations is not questioned. Employing an impartial language, nations are always presented very briefly as self-evident facts in each chapter of geography as a part of a presentation of a singular state. This also applies to the textbook for grade eight (age 14) which focuses on the European continent. However, a brief, introductory paragraph to the chapter dedicated to Slovakia begins in a rather emotive style: 'Slovakia - the most beautiful country in the world' (Geography 8/3, 2011, p.42).

Despite the modest, conceptual references to national identity, some resemblance with the national narrative of history textbooks becomes apparent. The language of group comparison is also utilised in geography and establishes a clear dividing line between nations of Europe. Positive stereotypes also appear occasionally in the text and highlight the differences between nations of Europe. A typical national character by which nations in Europe differ is portrayed in an implicit manner when discussing the states of Austria, Switzerland and Germany. The influence of Herder's emphasis on the link between language and national character is discernible:

Germans, similar to Austrians and German speaking Swiss are known for their punctuality. Consequentiality is also frequently linked to the attribute German (Geography 8/3, 2011, p.58).

The topic of European integration is tackled in the textbook for grade eight (age 14). In an introductory section dedicated to 'Natural and man-made peculiarities of Europe', an emphasis on Europe as a distinctive civilization clearly appears. Multiple historical phenomena are highlighted in order to display it. The antique legacy of Greek and Roman history, Christianity, historical periods of Humanism and Renaissance, Industrial Revolution, together with the development of the political tradition of democracy are all interpreted as a common, European heritage (Geography 8/3, 2011, pp.22-23).

The actual process of European integration is addressed separately in a chapter entitled 'Integration of Europe - European Union (EU)'. The chapter starts with a brief excerpt from a news item published in April 2010. It briefly discusses the issue of the access of workers from East Europe to the labour market of Germany and Austria from May 1, 2011. The fears of a significant migration of East Europeans to the countries in question are described as unfounded in this context. The needs of the labour market for a qualified workforce are highlighted. Professional qualifications are then emphasised as being clearly more important than the origin of the labour force. Through questions which follow the brief article, children are encouraged to consider both the outdated and still relevant ideas of the news item. They are also asked to ponder its possible, personal implications. (Geography 8/3, 2011, p.35). A clearly critical approach to the description of the process of EI had been established through the choice for the opening of the chapter.

A discussion of the rationale for EI is absent in the text. Hence, economic considerations seem to overshadow its presentation. The history of EI is described succinctly as a process which started with an economic co-operation of six European states. Robert Schuman is mentioned as the author of the project of European integration.

A number of contemporary and very complex issues within the European Union are briefly listed. The issue of budget discipline and excessive debts within countries such as Greece and Portugal are approached and evaluated as a threat to the common currency. Regional disparities within the EU, together with the reform of pension systems and agricultural policy of the EU are also included in the few short paragraphs which address some of the contemporary problems within its borders (Geography 8/3, 2011, p.36).

The chapter also includes an account of EU institutions. The focus is on the European Council, European Parliament and European Commission. Their functions are then presented from a quasi-supranationalist perspective. In other words, they are not portrayed as agents of national governments but as institutions in their own right, each having specific tasks to fulfil in the governance structure of the EU. Nevertheless, in a concise summary of the chapter, the European Union is portrayed as a platform of economic and political cooperation between sovereign states: 'The present European Union consists of 27 member states which cooperate economically and politically' (Geography 8/3, 2011, p.37).

### **Civics Textbooks**

The civics textbooks provide the most straightforward insights into the theoretical foundation of both aspects examined here. The notable emphasis on nationhood is directly apparent in the adopted style of the textbook. The textbooks for grades five and six (ages 11-12) are designed in a personalised form. Topics are presented as the personal stories of a student 'Jakub Slovák'. Their texts frequently apply the terminology of academic discussion of nationalism. In particular, the textbook for grade six reveals a strong focus on the construction of national and state identity.

'Municipality, Region, Homeland, European Union' is a heading of a thematic area that builds the content of civics for one half of the school year. Sub-topics within this area aim to enhance pride in their local, regional and state settings in children. They are encouraged to explore their local and regional history, familiarise themselves with symbols (coats of arms, flags, etc). In this way, children are supposed to acquire a pride in their local, regional and state belonging. Each chapter concludes with a number of questions and suggestions for further activities. Children are exhorted to: 'Express love and pride in your municipality. Apply the information as arguments when explaining why are you taking pride in it' (CE 6, 2009, p.7).

The textbook for grade six also provides a conceptual clarification of nation and clearly distinguishes it from the concept of state:

Nation - historically developed community of people with a common language, territory, economic system, history, culture, traditions (CE 6, 2009, p.24).

State - a fundamental, legal organisation of political power of a society within a specific territory (CE 6, 2009, p.24).

The strong emphasis on national and state belongings indicates implicitly an intergovernmentalist perspective on European integration. Nevertheless, both EI and the EU are presented in the textbook within two chapters in a notably positive way.

However, a wider contextualisation of the process of EI is missing. The first chapter, 'A small EU Citizen Jakub explores how Europe is integrating', reduces largely the rationale for integration to economic considerations. The increased competitiveness of Europe in the global market is given as the first reason and necessity for its integration. Further personal benefits of integration, such as the possibility of studying and living in a country of choice are also stressed. However, European integration comes across as being predominantly an economic project:

Through an abolition of borders between states, much will change in the economy and also in peoples' lives. [...]. If Europe wishes to prevail in economic competition against other states of the world, it must integrate. In a united Europe, the economy will develop faster and so will the quality of life of the population. People might live where they like, study in the country which has the best schools, work where they might apply their skills best (CE 6, 2009, p.28).

In the summary of the first chapter, economic cooperation is re-emphasised and portrayed in a rather simplistic manner as the foundation of the European Union. Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman are briefly mentioned as the main architects of EI. Little attention is paid in the text to EU institutions. The Council of European Union, European Parliament and European Commission are merely listed and described as institutions which represent the national and common interests of member states. In summary, the first chapter portrays the EU as a platform of interstate economic cooperation (CE, 2009, pp. 28-29).

The interpretation of European identity is addressed in the second chapter, 'Jakub thinks about the interlinking of nations in Europe', and displays an inclination towards primordialism. 'Unity in diversity', a notion conceived at the EU level in the context of identity policies, clearly underlies its conceptualisation (Shore, 2000). European identity is presented positively as enrichment not a replacement of Slovak nationality. This is then summed up and described as supranational identity. At the same time, the textbook authors assert that belonging to Europe does not lead to a creation of a uniform, artificial culture:

Belonging to a unified Europe does not mean an artificial creation of a kind of a unified culture. Each nation will maintain its own national identity and will enrich it through a new, 'supranational' European identity. [...] People have to be proud in own nation, in particularities that are unique for them. (CE 6, 2009, p.30)

Hence, European identity is presented from a basically primordialist perspective as it is founded on the acceptance of the unique, multiple national identities. Therefore they have to be preserved and not transcended in the EU. A diversity of national identities is then declared to be a foundation of European identity.

The process of European integration is presented in the civics textbooks from an instrumentalist perspective. The advantages for Slovakia and gains on a personal level are emphasised. Critical questions in relation to the process of EI are not raised explicitly in the text. Nevertheless, some implicit criticism is apparent in regard to potential attempts to cultural inequality and domination. Hence, in the concluding section of the second chapter dedicated to European identity, children are asked to consider following issues:

#### Convention of the Rights of the Child

Selma, a Muslim girl who lives in Paris would like, together with her friends, to wear a burqa. The school director prohibited it. He considers it to be an expression of extremist, Muslim groups.

Try to solve the problem. Does the decision of the school director comply with the ideas valid in the EU? Could a dress symbolise extremism? What does it symbolise in your opinion? (CE 6, 2009, p.31)

#### Conclusion

Without doubt, it is an extremely challenging task to present highly complex and controversial academic discussions to a pre-university audience; and, in spite of being a significant academic topic for decades, the debates on the interpretation of nationalism have hardly influenced pre-university education in Slovakia. The understanding of national identities, as presented in textbooks for history, geography and civics remains notably shaped by primordialism. Limited, ethno-symbolist tendencies are visible only in the context of the age of nations. Insights of the constructivist perspective are wholly excluded from the teaching content. Despite nations not being portrayed as 'God given' entities, they continue to be depicted as constant and fixed historical phenomena and their existence and characteristics as objective facts. A conceptual, critical discussion on nationalism is entirely absent in the textbooks. What is more, presentation of the theme is not completely free from evident inconsistencies and contradictions. The strong emphasis on patriotism particularly in civics textbooks and the significant focus on the topics of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in history teaching suggest a rather nationally oriented pre-university education.

Yet, at the same time, there is the seemingly effortless accommodation of multiple concepts of education policies developed at the EU level within the education system of Slovakia. What is more, considering the short history of Slovakia as a national state, the notable presence of topics on European integration and its overwhelmingly positive presentation is remarkable. European integration is not presented as a threat or a

contradiction to the national and state sovereignty of Slovakia. On the contrary, it is seen as advantageous for both Slovakia and Slovaks.

However, the approach adopted in this context is not unproblematic. The interpretation of European integration shows a significant tendency towards intergovernmentalism. Despite the evident limits of economic instrumentalism (Euro crisis, Maastricht Treaty), this constitutes the explanatory framework of European integration within the textbooks of civics and geography. A marginal supranationalist perspective on EI emerges in the brief description of the institutional structure of the EU within geography. Even the positive account of European identity as presented in the civics and geography textbook is a clear reflection of primordialism and intergovernmentalism. What is more, the contextualisation of EI remains unsatisfactory in both textbooks. Only the history textbook provides an adequate account of the rationale for the integration process which is portrayed as national reconciliation and peace maintenance.

In 1882, the French scholar, Ernest Renan (1823-1892), argued in his famous lecture, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (What is a Nation?):

Nations are not something eternal. They have begun, they will end. They will be replaced, in all probability, by a European confederation. But such is not the law of the century in which we live. (Renan, 1882)

It is apparent that the textbooks examined here are not designed in accordance with Renan's view. They clearly reflect a rather different notion in both respects.

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