

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

*“Living with the other, who is different, while preserving one’s own difference, this is any person’s fundamental task – from the basic levels up to the very top... Maybe this is where a partial advantage of Europe lies, as Europe has managed, and has indeed been forced to learn the art of living with others.”*

Hans-Georg Gadamer

These words uttered by a German philosopher whose works cultivate the science of “understanding” summarise the main reasons why this monograph has been created. The history of Europe is characterised by the blending of cultures, mutual enrichment as well as tragic conflicts. The image of the “other”, whether positive or negative, frequently shaped mutual coexistence in multi-ethnic Europe. It exerted a significant influence upon the region of Central Europe, where the borders

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<sup>1</sup> This monograph contains quotations from the following publications and diploma theses: LABISCHOVÁ, D.: *The Intercultural Dimension of History Teaching in Today’s Czech Secondary Education Curricula*. Yearbook – Jahrbuch – Annales 34, International Society for The Didactic of History, Wochenschau Verlag, Schwalbach /Ts. 2013, pp. 27–44; LABISCHOVÁ, D.: *Historical Consciousness in School Education*. Pedagogical Faculty, University of Ostrava, Ostrava 2013; LABISCHOVÁ, D.: *Vybrané aspekty interkulturality z pohledu empirického oborově didaktického výzkumu*. In: KRÁKORA, P. et al.: *Aktuální společenskovoědní pohledy na výchovu k demokratickému občanství*. Epocha, Prague 2012, pp. 99–114; GRACOVÁ, B., LABISCHOVÁ, D.: *Současná teorie a praxe dějepisného vzdělávání na školách*. Pedagogická orientace, 2012, year 22, No. 4, pp. 516–544; LABISCHOVÁ, D.: *Czech History in Historical Consciousness of Students and History Teachers – Empirical Research*. Yearbook – Jahrbuch – Annales 33, International Society for The Didactic of History. From Historical Research to School History: Problems, Relations, Challenges. Wochenschau Verlag, Schwalbach /Ts. 2012, pp. 165–190; LABISCHOVÁ, D.: *Evropská dimenze dějepisu a občanského vzdělávání (současný stav oborově didaktického výzkumu)*. In: KRÁKORA, P. et al.: *Multikulturalita – Národní identita – Občanská společnost*. Epocha, Prague 2011, pp. 30–45; LABISCHOVÁ, D.: *Klíčové momenty a kontroverzní události poválečné historie v historickém vědomí žáků, studentů a učitelů českých škol (výsledky empirického výzkumu)*. In: *Sborník prací Pedagogické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity v Brně, řada společenských věd*, year 25, No. 2, 2011 pp. 9–25; LABISCHOVÁ, D.: *Obraz Polska a Poláků v očích žáků a učitelů českých škol (empirický výzkum historického vědomí)*. In: BOGUS, M. (Ed.): *Jazyk – škola – prostor jako determinanty kulturního vývoje Těšínského Slezska*. Czeski Cieszyn: Kongres Polaków v Republice Czeskiej, 2012, pp. 236–246; LABISCHOVÁ, D.: *Stereotypy a předsudky v dynamickém pojetí interkulturního vzdělávání*. In: KRÁKORA, P. et al.: *Multikulturalita a výchova k občanství ve středoevropském kontextu*. Epocha, Prague 2011, pp. 63–77; ZÁDRAPOVÁ, L.: *Vědomí evropanství u české studující mládeže po vstupu do Evropské unie*. Diploma thesis at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava 2011. 140 pages, of which: 117 pages of text, 23 pages of appendices. LABISCHOVÁ D., GRACOVÁ, B., ZÁDRAPOVÁ, L.: *Multikulturní aspekty vzdělávání v sociálně humanitních předmětech a jejich odraz v historickém vědomí studující mládeže*. Research report, University of Ostrava 2011.

of countries never corresponded to areas inhabited by homogenous national communities.

History is always a narrative about past events. This story is influenced not only by the availability of historic sources, but also by the historian, who invests both collective experience as well as individually idiosyncratic views, values and attitudes shaped by the social and ethnic environment.

We cannot give up “our own” history, which co-creates the national identity; however, we should attempt to understand the view of shared history held by “the other”. It is useful to know how “we” are perceived by others and to realise that our image of others may also be stereotypical.

The mutual images of European nations, especially neighbouring ones, have been subjected to a systematic observation by Blažena Gracová and Denisa Labischová and their team from the University of Ostrava since the mid-1990s.

Up to now we have dealt with the influence exerted by the interpretation of history in the basic educational medium upon students’ attitudes. However, history textbooks are not the only factor influencing young people’s historical consciousness. A number of surveys show that the mass media play a crucial role. But the Czech context is specific in that the teaching of history is based on the teacher’s presentation and their particular historical narrative. Therefore we decided not to limit the respondent group to students, and to address their teachers as well.

The aim of this monograph is to capture the changes in the respondents’ knowledge of and attitudes towards selected aspects of European consciousness, and to characterise some of the features of history teaching as it is practiced at schools, mainly the principle of multiperspectivity and the level of accentuation of intercultural topics.

The theoretical part strives to shed light on the educational context of the research. We focused on the conception of the intercultural education and European education in the current Czech curriculum. We also briefly present the existing sociological and disciplinarily didactic research on the issue, especially those carried out in the Czech Republic. Part two presents the methodology of the research, and analyzes the results of the two parallel surveys which formed part of the research project entitled *Multicultural aspects of education in humanities*

*and their reflections in the historical consciousness of young students.*<sup>2</sup> The concluding part of the text articulates recommendations for an optimisation of the teaching of history at primary and secondary schools.

We believe that this monograph will challenge and inspire history didactics experts, teachers, and decision makers. It will also provide information for the authors of the curriculum, reviewing the framework educational programmes and laying down educational standards for the teaching of history. Authors of various methodological materials and handbooks will also find it useful.

Authors

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