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A Vehicle for Post-National Transformation or an Instrument for Interstate Cooperation? European Integration in Slovakia's Secondary Education Textbooks

- A presentation of European integration in Slovakia's lower secondary textbooks for History, Geography and Civics.
- A discussion of meaningful and problematic aspects of European integration conceptualisation.
- An exploration of why the deepening of European integration needs to be considered and discussed in textbooks.

Purpose: In light of the public resistance towards the deepening of European integration (EI) and the role that education is anticipated to have in supporting the process, this paper examines the conceptualisation of EI in lower secondary textbooks for History, Geography and Civics. Specifically, the paper asks whether EI is conceived of as a vehicle for the post-national transformation of Europe or as an instrument for interstate cooperation.

Design: Drawing on the insights of EI theories and content analysis, the paper adopts a qualitative approach. Applying this approach, the textbooks currently used in Slovakia's lower secondary schools are analysed as a case study.

Findings: The findings are inconclusive with regard to the research question. Indeed, while the sources are positive about EI, the findings suggest some problematic aspects in terms of how the textbooks analysed conceive the nature of the integration process.

Research implications: The approach taken in this paper could be replicated on a larger scale in other countries.

Practical implications: Curricula and textbook designers ought to consider how to include a critical discussion on the deepening of EI in secondary education.

Keywords:

European integration, History, Geography and Civics textbooks, Slovakia

1 Introduction

This paper takes, as a starting point, public dissatisfaction with the deepening of European integration (EI) - the progressive pooling of nation-state sovereignty - and the anticipation that a European dimension in education would enhance support for the EI process. Therefore, drawing on EI theories and content analysis, I explore how the nature of EI is conceptualised in the textbooks for History, Geography and Civics that are currently used in Slovakia's lower secondary schools. Specifically, I ask whether EI is conceived as a vehicle for the post-national transformation of Europe or as an instrument for interstate cooperation used by the member states of the European Union (EU).

Many academics and political commentators have highlighted the link between the UK's decision to leave the EU and the precarious public support for the deepening of EI (e.g. Bowman, 2017; Curtis, 2017; Goodwin & Heath, 2016; Luyendijk, 2016; Virdee & McGeever, 2017). However, signs of fragmenting public support for EI's deepening were recognised within academic and political circles well in advance of the fairly tight Brexit vote (Leave: 51.9%; Remain: 48.1%) in June 2016.

Researchers have identified two developments in particular that have set in motion the politicisation of EI and public dissatisfaction with its deepening: the Maastricht Treaty (signed in 1992), also known as the Treaty on

European Union, and the enlargements in 2004 and 2007 that extended the borders of the EU into Central and Eastern Europe (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009; Eichenberg & Dalton, 2007).

The provisions and implications of the Maastricht Treaty have been wide-ranging. The adoption of the common currency (the euro, in public circulation since 2002) within a number of member states (19 out of the 28) and the cooperation in security, justice and home affairs resulted in the pooling of national control over policy domains that were formerly primary concerns of sovereign national governments. The Maastricht Treaty further introduced European citizenship - a legal status allowing all member state nationals to settle and work within the EU (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009; Eichenberg & Dalton, 2007; Serricchio, Tsakatika & Quaglia, 2013).

Public resistance towards an ever-increasing pooling of nation-state sovereignty has gained increasing attention in the academic discussion since the Maastricht Treaty. Even if it has been of varying strength across the EU and dependent on cross-sectional variables (e.g. education, age, and the historical context of a specific country), national affiliation has been acknowledged in the literature as a significant political factor that can impede the deepening of EI (Carrey, 2002; Deflem & Pamel, 1996; Fox & Vermeersch, 2010; Goodwin & Heath, 2016; Serricchio et al., 2013). Immigration and the reduction in nation-state sovereignty, underpinned by the notion of a distinct UK national identity, clearly resonated in the pro-Brexit campaign (Bowman, 2017; Curtis, 2017; Virdee & McGeever, 2017).

Political and academic efforts to address the declining public support for the deepening of EI have equally

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intensified from the early 1990s. These also brought into focus the role that education can play in enhancing support for EI. Hence, the implementation of the European dimension in education – advocated for decades by the Council of Europe and the European Commission – re-emerged as a research topic within academia (Pépin, 2006; Ryba, 1992, 2000; Shore, 2000; Sultana, 1995).

The concept of the European dimension in education has never been precisely defined. Consequently, and also due to political constraints, its implementation remains inconsistent within the EU (Ryba, 1992, 2000; Philippou, 2005; Savvides & Faas, 2016). Nevertheless, drawing on suggestions from academic studies, researchers and EU decision makers identified the school subjects of History, Geography and Civics, and the arts and foreign languages, as suitable for the practical application of the European dimension in formal schooling (Janne, 1973; Hansen, 1998; McCann & Finn, 2006; Philippou, 2005; Savvides, 2008). As a cross-curricular approach, the European dimension in education therefore seeks to promote an understanding of, and support for, the integration process by stressing common values and notions of a shared cultural and historical heritage in Europe (Hansen, 1998; Pépin, 2006; Ryba, 1992, 2000; Shore, 2000).

Despite the continuing challenges, the discussion on the European dimension in education has provided valuable insights in terms of its thematic suggestions: representations of Europe, European identity and integration, and inclusion of universal values, combined with openness towards cultural diversity within Europe (Challand, 2009; Faas, 2011; Janne, 1973; Ryba, 1992; Sakki, 2016). Researchers have also examined teacher training and student attitudes towards Europe and how teachers and students perceive European identity (Convery & Kerr, 2005; Ross, 2015; Savvides & Faas, 2015).

Evidence suggests that the most recent challenges facing the EU will continue to stimulate educational research (Fernández & Blanco, 2016; Hartmann, Montlahuc, Rogozin & Stegers, 2017; Jeliaskova & Zimenkova, 2017). Therefore, I would like to extend the discussion on the European dimension in education by drawing attention to how the nature of EI is conceived in secondary education.

In the following sections, I outline the research design adopted, present textbook analysis results and then critically discuss these results. Subsequently, I conclude by highlighting the wider implications of my findings for textbook design and further research.¹

2 Research design

2.1 Theoretical framework

EI theories constitute a 'booming field' (Diez, 2009, p. 1) in the area of European Integration Studies. There seems to be a clear link between, on the one hand, the complexity of the EI process, the EU structure and its operation, and, on the other, the varied theoretical explanations. Nevertheless, in discussing the issues of what integration is, why it occurs and how it proceeds, EI

theories help to explain and enable us to comprehend the process.. Therefore, I consider their insights – summarised here as supranationalism and intergovernmentalism – suitable for guiding my analysis.

2.1.1 Supranationalism

Drawing on the interrelated insights of the multifaceted EI theories (federalism, functionalism, transactionalism, neofunctionalism, governance approaches, policy network analysis), supranationalism is conceived in this paper as a vehicle for the transformation of the nation-state structure within Europe (Bache, George & Bulmer, 2011; Wiener & Diez, 2009). To explain, supranationalism departs from the history of the idea of EI and highlights the logic and implications of the integration process.

The actual process of EI was launched in the early 1950s by a pragmatic approach focusing on economic cooperation in a limited area (steel and coal production). Nevertheless, ideas of Europe as an entity anchored in shared cultural heritage and peace maintenance (also incorporating a global dimension and inter-religious reconciliation) constituted recurring themes in intellectual debates throughout the centuries. They also influenced political thoughts and actions in the immediate post-war situation in Europe (Burgess, 2000; de Rougemont, 1966).

Driven by the inherent dynamics known within European Studies as the spill-over effect (Haas, 1958/1968), supranationalism regards economic integration as a precursor to political unification due to the intertwined relationship between the processes. As an 'actor-centred' approach (Marks, Hooghe & Blank, 1996, p. 348), supranationalism focuses primarily on the role that institutionalised and multiple political actors play in the integration process. The role of the general public, on the other hand, had received limited attention in the literature up to the early 1990s. The public, so the supranational premise, was expected to embrace EI almost automatically following its positive outcomes (Haas, 1958/1968; Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Niemann & Schmitter, 2009).

Nevertheless, supranationalism emphasises the ability of institutionalised political actors to learn, and thus to recognise, that domestic frameworks are insufficient for the delivery of their objectives (e.g. welfare provision). Consequently, national actors, by establishing networks and institutions beyond national borders, widen their action space. On the basis of their interactions, national actors eventually transform into supranational agents (e.g. the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice) with their own agendas. In operating fairly independently of governmental control, they continue to drive the integration process.

Further, supranational actors interact with additional interest groups, such as industry specialists, subnational (regional) bodies, non-governmental organisations or academics. As a result of these complex interactions, the exclusive political control exercised by nation-states diminishes. In turn, a post-national governance structure

(the EU) emerges and eventually paves the way for a new political formation such as the European Federation (Cohn-Bendit & Verhofstadt, 2012; Hass, 1958/1968; Wiener & Diez, 2009).

2.1.2 Intergovernmentalism

In academia, intergovernmentalism is typically understood as a theory of EI that departs from the intellectual legacy of realism developed within the discipline of International Relations. As such, it emphasises the primary role of national governments in the integration process (Bache et al., 2011; Hoffmann, 1966; Moravscik & Schimmelfenning, 2009).

In this paper, intergovernmentalism, incorporating also the insights of liberal intergovernmentalism, refers to a coherent and concise conceptualisation of EI. Historically, it is anchored in the understanding of Europe as a geographical area comprising distinct nations and sovereign nation-states. Intergovernmentalism dismisses the influence of the ideal of peace maintenance and links the origins of EI with the second half of the twentieth century. Accordingly, integration was launched by national governments as an economic project aiming to enhance the allegiance of citizens after this was compromised in the interwar and war periods (Milward, 2000; Moravscik, 1998).

Akin to supranationalism, intergovernmentalism considers nation-states as rational actors. In recognising the limits of their power and interdependence, nation-states initiate integration. As Moravscik (1998, p. 18) argues, integration occurs due to ‘the economic interests of powerful domestic constituents, the relative power of each state in the international system, and the role of international institutions’. Contrary to supranationalism, intergovernmentalism sees the establishment and operation of the EU as the outcomes of intergovernmental bargains. Therefore, it does not regard the EU structure as a precursor to an eventual political union. Instead, according to intergovernmentalism, the role of supranational institutions is limited to safeguarding the outcomes of interstate negotiations. It sees the EU essentially as an association of European states or a platform of interstate cooperation (Bache et al., 2011; Moravscik & Schimmelfenning, 2009). As for its future, intergovernmentalism maintains that integration merely reinforces the political power of nation-states in Europe (Milward, 2000; Moravscik, 2012).

2.1.3 Coding guide

I do not assume that the conceptualisation of EI in Slovakia’s textbooks is informed by a particular theory of European integration. Nevertheless, if textbooks are expected to encourage public support for a continuous EI, it is crucial to understand what concept of its nature they promote. Therefore, drawing on the above discussion on supranationalism and intergovernmentalism, Table 1 succinctly presents the key arguments that distinguish both approaches. These key arguments also constitute coding categories that will guide my analysis

of Slovakia’s lower secondary textbooks in the subjects of History, Geography and Civics.

Table 1: Coding guide

Conceptual indicators	
Supranationalism	Intergovernmentalism
<p>Europe Entity defined by shared cultural heritage</p>	<p>Europe Geographical area of distinct nations and sovereign nation-states</p>
<p>Rationale for EI Peace maintenance; political transformation of Europe</p>	<p>Rationale for EI Economic and political weakness of national governments after WWII; economic cooperation; restoration of nation-state power</p>
<p>Key political actors Supranational, national, sub-national, non-governmental bodies, professional associations</p>	<p>Key political actors National governments</p>
<p>Sovereignty of nation-states Dismantlement</p>	<p>Sovereignty of nation-states Preservation</p>
<p>The EU Institutional architecture of post-national governance in Europe</p>	<p>The EU Association of European states and platform for interstate cooperation in Europe</p>
<p>Future of EI European Federation</p>	<p>Future of EI Status quo: maintenance of nation-states</p>
Conceptualisation of EI	
Vehicle for post-national transformation of Europe	Instrument for interstate cooperation in Europe

Hence, in analysing the textbooks, I will focus on six questions:

- What is the concept of Europe that the textbooks promote and how do they do it? Is Europe conceptualised as a cultural entity or as a geographical area of distinct nations and sovereign nation states?
- How do the textbooks explain why European states should become integrated?
- Who are the political actors that the textbooks identify as the key drivers of EI?
- How do the textbooks discuss the impact of EI on the sovereignty of nation-states?
- How do the textbooks describe the EU?
- How do the textbooks discuss the future of EI?

Drawing on the answers to these questions, I will then consider the issue of whether EI is conceived in the textbooks along the lines of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism as a vehicle for the post-national



transformation of Europe, or as an instrument for inter-state cooperation.

2.2 Methods

2.2.1 Slovakia as a case study

I adopted a qualitative case study approach limited to Slovakia and lower secondary education to ensure meaningful engagement with the defined research question. However, there are also further reasons, which shaped my research choice. In addition to the similarities with other new member states from the region of Central and Eastern Europe (political and economic transformation after 1989), Slovakia constitutes an interesting case study for its contextual particularities.

Slovakia joined the EU in 2004, shortly after the 'Velvet Divorce' of Czechoslovakia (1993).² Hence, the relationship between integrationist developments in Europe that led to the pooling of nation-state powers and the building of a sovereign nation-state is particularly striking. How are these seemingly contradictory processes conceptualised and reconciled in Slovakia's lower secondary education?

Added to that, there is the backdrop of political and public attitudes in Slovakia towards EI. Despite having been excluded from membership negotiations for non-compliance with the political pre-accession criteria in the period of 1993–1998, Slovakia eventually joined the EU in 2004. In spite of the wide political endorsement of Slovakia's membership of the EU, political views have become more diverse since 2004 (Haughton & Bilčík, 2012).

Moreover, the rise of right-wing populism across Europe, galvanised by the economic and financial crisis after 2008 and the ongoing migration challenges, has shaped the political developments in Slovakia (Ding & Hlavac, 2017; Trauner, 2016; Virdee & McGeever, 2017). The anti-migrant and anti-EU views vehemently promoted by populist leaders such as Marie Le Pen in France, Nigel Farage in the UK, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and Norbert Hofer in Austria also appeal to the Slovak electorate. Supported by almost 23% of first-time voters (aged 18–21) in the last general election (March 2016), the neo-Nazi People's Party – Our Slovakia, which calls for Slovakia's exit from the EU, secured 14 parliamentary seats (8% of 150) (Geist, 2016; Vasilko, 2016).²

Yet, evidence indicates that the public support for EU membership (73.9%) remains fairly strong in Slovakia (Pravda, 2017). However, the relationship between the Slovak citizens and the EU is, in fact, rather complex. Regardless of fairly high levels of endorsement for EU membership, Slovakia has three times (2004, 2009 and 2014) recorded the lowest participation of voters in elections to the European Parliament (2014: 13.05%) with young voters (aged 18–24) largely choosing to abstain from the ballots (2014: 5.60% of voter turnout) (European Parliament, 2014).

2.2.2 Selection of textbooks and method of their analysis

Textbooks' quality, the extent of their use in formal schooling and their impact on students' views continue to stir up academic debate in Slovakia and beyond. Nonetheless, as in many other countries, textbooks remain an integral component of pre-university instruction in Slovakia (e.g. Faas & Ross, 2012; Kováčová, 2016; Repoussi & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2010).

European integration constitutes a cross-curricular theme in Slovakia and, within lower secondary education, is addressed most extensively in History, Geography and Civics. Therefore, I selected textbooks from these subjects for my analysis. My choice was also shaped by Slovakia's textbook production policy and the country's educational system.

Textbook design and production is controlled centrally by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Theoretically, schools in Slovakia are able to choose textbooks, but, in practice, multiple and complete sets of textbooks (covering all grades of lower secondary education) were not available when this paper was completed (winter 2017/2018). Moreover, following the latest curricular reform in 2008 (which has since then been innovated), textbooks published before this date were not distributed to students (MoE, 2017). Lower secondary education in Slovakia is completed within elementary schools (grades 5–9, students aged 11–15) or the eight-year gymnasias (grades 1–4, students aged 12–15). Nevertheless, both types of school use the same set of textbooks for the three subjects considered here.

Table 2 shows the latest editions of the textbooks that I analysed, with consideration given to the school grade in which the topic of EI is addressed. Table 2 also provides an overview of all the themes that the selected textbooks cover.

Aided by the conceptual indicators, as summarised in the coding guide, I identified units for analysis within all the selected textbooks and assigned them applicable codes. I extracted the analytical units from the main, explanatory sections of the textbooks' chapters and from their supplementary parts, which comprised excerpts from primary sources, assignments for students and descriptions of photographic materials.

In analysing the extracted textual units, I applied content analysis, which Krippendorp (2004, p. 18) defines as 'a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use'. Hence, in analysing the selected text units, I examined their messages by seeking for clues that could be aligned to the paradigms of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism. In doing so, I established conceptual patterns and identified some additional themes that defied their straightforward categorisation into the predefined concepts of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism.



Table 2: Textbooks analysed

Textbook	Year of publication	Content overview
Civics 5 ³	2009	My family and my school
Civics 6/1	2009	Family and its function, local community, region, country, the EU
Civics 7/2	2017	Role of an individual in a society, social relationships in a community
Civics 8/3	2012	State and law, human rights and liberties
Civics 9/4	2012	Value of education, choice of professional qualifications, introduction to economy and economics, financial proficiency
Geography 8/3 ⁴	2011	Europe (includes general aspects of physical and human geography, as well as a specific focus on European states)
Geography 9/4	2015	Slovakia
History 5	2009	Introduction to historiography
History 6/1	2009	Prehistory, antiquity, the early Middle Ages
History 7/2	2011	The Middle Ages and the beginnings of modern history (Enlightenment)
History 8/3	2011	Modern history (French Revolution), the outbreak of WWI
History 9/4	2015	The 20 th century, contemporary history (entry of Slovakia into the EU in 2004 and its adoption of the euro in 2009)

N.B. The first number following the textbook title refers to the grade in which the textbook is used in elementary schools and the second number refers to the appropriate grade in gymnasias.

Therefore, in reporting the findings, I follow the coding guide and proceed thematically. I also highlight the additional themes that emerged from my analysis before critically evaluating the findings in light of my research question.

3 Findings

3.1 Europe

The understanding of Europe within the textbooks analysed here is marked by overlaps between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism and the shifting prevalence of their respective conceptual indicators (Table 3).

Table 3: Europe: Conceptual indicators

	Supranationalism	Intergovernmentalism
History textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christianity and its social, cultural and political role, particularly throughout the early Middle Ages • Hereditary socio-political structure within Europe • Cultural and intellectual movements (Renaissance, Humanism, Enlightenment) • Scientific progress • Art movements • Devastating impact of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) within Europe • Devastating impact of other military conflicts within Europe (e.g. WWI, WWII) • Establishment of authoritarian political systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of distinct nations and nation states, their histories and cultures within and beyond Europe • Nation-states as a result of natural human desires and existential needs
Geography textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legacy of Greek and Roman history • Christianity • Renaissance, Humanism, Industrial Revolution • Development of democratic political system • Urbanisation and architecture in Europe • Contemporary challenges: climate change, ageing population, regional economic differences, illegal migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of nation-states worldwide and within Europe • Emphasis on distinct national cultures of Europe
Civics textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarities in educational systems within Europe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalised narrative: experiences narrated by a student, Jakub Slovák • Emphasis on distinct national cultures worldwide and within Europe • European identity as an addition to national identity

History textbooks in particular provide clues that suggest how Europe is conceptualised. While supranational and intergovernmental lines run through all volumes, the textbooks for grades 5, 6/1 and 7/2 maintain a fairly balanced presentation of Europe. Hence, all three volumes depict Europe almost simultaneously as a cultural and geopolitical entity as well as a geographical space full of distinct nations and nation-states.

In fostering European unity and identity, History textbooks highlight positive and negative experiences and

phenomena of the past. Concurrently, such narratives historically anchor a collective distinction between Europeans and non-Europeans. Christianity, in particular, receives a status of great significance as a commonly shared identity trait of Europeans.

Regardless of the description of the polytheistic Greek culture as one of the 'fundamental pillars of European civilisation' (History 6/1, p. 25), the History textbooks studied portray Christianity as the key cohesive force

that has proved to be of almost existential necessity for Europe, particularly throughout the Middle Ages.

“The rules of family life changed gradually. However, in countries which adopted Christianity, all families were always very similar. [...] A Christian, European family also follows its rules until today. One of the major rules was the sanctity of matrimony. [...] An equally important rule was also child care. [...] Christianity prohibited a man from marrying more than one wife. [...] In Muslim countries, a man can marry more women.” (History 5, p. 44)

“The Christian Church had held on to traditions from late Antiquity. In this manner, it succeeded in maintaining many institutions which were necessary for the safeguarding of a more or less secure life for ordinary people. During centuries, when across the whole of Europe tribes, new nations and kingdoms were constantly fighting each other, it was very important.” (History, 6/1, p. 77)

History textbooks further refer to the hereditary socio-political structure of the Middle Ages and its gradual transformation in the course of modernisation (since the 15th century) as a shared European phenomenon (History 6/1; History 7/2). Furthermore, the Renaissance and Humanism (14th–16th centuries), described as the foundation of European modern society, are highlighted alongside the Enlightenment (mid-17th–18th centuries) and scientific progress (History 7/2). The History textbook for grade 9/4 stresses modern art movements from the early 20th century, such as Dadaism and Surrealism, as pan-European experiences.

Yet, History textbooks do not omit deplorable incidents of history to exhibit European identity. This also applies to Christianity. As such, the History textbook for grade 7/2 presents the intra-Christian violence between Protestantism and Catholicism from the early decades of the 16th century as a historical experience shared across Europe. In doing so, it describes the interfaith backlash as the ‘first pan-European conflict of the Modern Era’ (History 7/2, p. 69), which impoverished parts of Europe considerably. Equally, while the same textbook commends the geographical discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries as European achievements, it critically judges the violent colonisation of the formerly unknown world by Europeans.

The final volume of the History textbook for grade 9/4 assigns later developments a pan-European significance. It highlights, in this context, WWI and the devastating socio-political consequences that occurred in the interwar period (1918–1939), including the establishment of authoritarian political systems. The textbook then describes Europe at the outbreak of WWII as ‘the victim of dictators’ (History 9/4, p. 66).

Contrary to the History textbooks, the Geography textbook for grade 8/3 focuses only on favourable historical events to highlight European unity. Although the textbook acknowledges the difficulty in defining Europe in a geographical sense, the concept of Europe as a distinctive civilisation that can be aligned with supranationalism clearly appears. The legacy of Greek and

Roman history, Christianity, Humanism, the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, together with the development of democracy, are all interpreted in the textbook as a shared European heritage (Geography 8/3, 2011). In addition to historical periods, the textbook further portrays the urbanisation and architecture of Europe as a signifier of European identity and a variable for intercontinental comparison.

“The rich history of the whole continent is reflected in the contemporary shape of European cities. The historical centres of cities with antique churches, burghers’ houses, maintained parks and gardens are frequently a great attraction for tourists and enchant people with their beauty. [...] This pattern of the historical centres of cities is especially typical for Europe. On other continents, this is present only sporadically.” (Geography 8/3, p. 26).

The Civics textbooks provide limited conceptual indicators that can be aligned with the supranational concept of Europe as an entity anchored in shared cultural heritage. Indeed, while the textbook for grade 5 highlights educational system similarities across Europe, the textbook for grade 6/1 presents European unity as an outcome to be achieved in the future. An intergovernmental projection of Europe as a geographical area of distinct nations and sovereign nation-states is, on the other hand, clearly visible in Civics. Evidence is immediately provided in the personalised narrative adopted within the Civics textbooks for grades 5, 6/1 and 7/2. This takes the form of the experiences of a student called Jakub Slovák. The understanding of Europe as a continent of authentic nations and nation-states is further reinforced in Civics through an ethnocentric narrative. Ethnocentrism also shapes the chapter that explicitly discusses European identity.

Reflecting ‘Unity in diversity’ – a concept developed at the EU level in the context of identity policies (Shore, 2000) – the relevant paragraphs conceive European identity as a refined addition to national identities. The textbook for grade 6/1 articulates very clearly that on no account does belonging to Europe create a uniform culture or replace the authentic national identities and cultures that have to be cherished.

“Belonging to a unified Europe does not mean an artificial creation of a kind of unified culture. Each nation, nationality will maintain its own national identity and will enrich it through a new, ‘supranational’ – European identity. [...] People have to be proud of their own nation, in the particularities that are unique to them.” (Civics 6/1, p. 30)

The Civics textbook for grade 7/2 also promotes an intergovernmental perspective on Europe and stresses its national diversity. Discussing the structure of human society, the textbook describes nations as one of its fundamental components alongside races [sic] and ethnic groups. While stressing the equality of rights of all nations, the textbook defines nations as communities of common origin, with a shared language, history, culture and territory.

An ethnocentric narrative also shapes the History and Geography textbooks, and thus Europe comes across as a geographical space full of distinct nations and nation-states. European nations, including the Slovak nation, are conceived of in all of the volumes analysed here as authentic and historically continuous forms of collective belonging. The History and Geography textbooks stress nations' unique features, such as language, history and traditions. Moreover, in a similar vein to the role that Christianity had for Europeans, the History textbook for grade 6/1 associates the establishment of nation-states with existential needs and natural human desires. The text justifies the creation and existence of nation states by arguing that 'Everyone wants a fatherland' (History 6/1, p. 73).

A strengthened national narrative is particularly visible in History textbooks for the later grades (8/3 and 9/4). Focusing on the historical developments after the French Revolution (1789), the textbook for grade 8/3 pays considerable attention to the development of national movements, including Slovak, and the gradual foundation of nation states in Europe during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Equally, the final History textbook (9/4) narrates the history of European states and nations.

While stressing common features of Europeans, the Geography textbook for grade 8/3 highlights the linguistic variety within Europe as the major element of the latter's national distinctiveness. It then further reinforces the conceptualisation of Europe as a geographical area of distinct nation states by presenting their distinct features (geography, climate, economic structure, demographics, and historical and cultural characteristics) to students in separate chapters. By focusing entirely on Slovakia, the final volume of Geography (for grade 9/4) further strengthens the intergovernmental perspective on Europe.

3.2 Rationale for EI

Compared to the presentation of Europe, the discussion of the rationale for EI in the textbooks analysed is less marked by conceptual overlaps between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism (Table 4).

In discussing the rationale, the History textbook for grade 9/4 sets the origins of EI into the geopolitical context after WWII: the growing influence of the Soviet Union in Central and Southeast Europe, the engagement of the US on the continent through the Marshall Plan (in operation 1948–1952) and the subsequent establishment of international organisations, the European Organisation for Economic Co-operation (1948) and the Council of Europe (1949), as well as the economic weakness of European states. Hence, in implicitly suggesting the weakness of European states and the role that international organisations played in launching integration, the description comes fairly close to the argument of intergovernmentalism.

Table 4: Rationale for EI: Conceptual indicators

	Supranationalism	Intergovernmentalism
History textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devastating experiences of WW • Peace maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing influence of the Soviet Union in Central and Eastern Europe after WWII • Economic and political engagement of the US in Europe after WWII • Establishment of OEEC and Council of Europe • Economic and political weakness of nation states in Europe after WWII
Geography textbooks		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade and economic cooperation
Civics textbooks		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising economic competitiveness on a global scale • Advantages of EU membership

The History textbook for grade 9/4 also reinforces the intergovernmental conceptualisation of EI through the assignment sections found at the end of each chapter. Approaching EI through the instrumental calculation of intergovernmentalism, one of these assignments prompts students to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of Slovakia's EU accession. Consequently, the textbook encourages students to see the rationale for EI in the advantages that can be gained for their country.

Yet, the textbook also contains indicators that can be associated with the supranational conceptualisation of EI. Contrary to intergovernmentalism, the text seems to attribute economic considerations a mere supplementary function in the beginnings of integration. Instead, the textbook highlights the devastating experiences of WWII and peace maintenance as primary factors that shaped the inception of EI. The relevant paragraph also refers to Jean Monnet (1888–1979) as the author of the EI project.

"Experiences from the devastating Second World War led a number of politicians to the idea of the integration of Europe as the guarantee of peace maintenance. It also seemed that the economic integration of states was a precondition for economic growth. One among these politicians was also the French economist and diplomat Jean Monnet, who elaborated an unusual plan. [...] Monnet's plan became a reality, when in 1951 representatives of six European countries signed an agreement on the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community." (History, 9/4, p. 120)

The textbook further underlines peace maintenance as the primary rationale for EI through selected excerpts from primary sources. This is evidenced, for example, in a brief citation from the US official George Ball (1909–1994). Ball's statement identifies German reparation obligations following WWI as the key influence contributing to the rise of Nazi power. It then describes the Marshall Plan as a tool that should prevent comparable



developments by enhancing the political and economic consolidation of Europe.

Patterns of intergovernmentalism can also be found in the Geography textbook for grade 8/3. Associating the reasons for EI with trade and economic cooperation, the intergovernmental perspective seems to overshadow the presentation of the process.

“We talk of European Union first from the 1990s. The first associations which aimed at the simplification of trade and closer cooperation in economics had an entirely different name, for example, the European Coal and Steel Community and European Economic Community.” (Geography 8/3, p. 35).

In the Civics textbook for grade 6/1, the chapter addressing the launch of EI starts with a size comparison between Europe, the US and Russia. Although the text briefly mentions the situation in Europe after 1945, it does not elaborate further on the consequences of WWII for EI. So, the following sentences seem to reflect intergovernmentalism by linking the rationale of EI with interstate cooperation in the economic domain. Specifically, the text directly refers to increased competitiveness on a global scale and outlines it as the main reason for EI.

“Jakub has a world map in his room. While comparing the size of territory between Europe, USA or Russia, he thought: “It is hardly surprising that Europe is unifying”. However, this does not seem to be that easy. He began to explore the idea of European unification and how this unification is proceeding. [...] If Europe wishes to prevail in economic competition against other states of the world, it must integrate.” (Civics 6/1, p. 28).

Akin to the History textbook for grade 9/4 in leaning, to some extent, towards intergovernmentalism, one assignment in the Civics textbook for grade 6/1 prompts students to identify the advantages of Slovakia’s membership in the EU. Nevertheless, students are not asked to consider its disadvantages.

3.3 Key political actors

A small degree of conceptual overlaps between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism seems to define the presentation of key political actors of EI in the textbooks analysed (Table 5).

Table 5: Key political actors of EI: Conceptual indicators

	Supranationalism	Intergovernmentalism
History textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of expert (business) groups: Jean Monnet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National governments
Geography textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Parliament • European Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National governments • Council of the European Union
Civics textbooks		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National governments

Clues depicting nation-states as the dominant drivers of EI appear within all the textbooks. Hence, such a conceptualisation can be aligned with the paradigm of intergovernmentalism. The History textbook for grade 9/4 also presents Slovakia’s accession to the EU in 2004 and the adoption of the common currency in 2009 as an outcome that resulted primarily from the activities of the Slovak Government.

“The federative Czecho-Slovakia declared its accession to Euro-Atlantic structures, hence into the integrating Europe and NATO, as the objectives of its politics. The orientation was also adopted by the Slovak Republic. [...] Due to problems with the functioning of democracy, Slovakia [...] was not invited to negotiate accession to the European Union. Change eventually occurred in 1998, when following general election, a new government led by Mikuláš Dzurinda was formed [...]. Negotiations were successful and on May 1, 2004 Slovakia became [an EU] member [...]. In 2009, Slovakia joined the European Monetary Union and the adopted Euro.” (History 9/4, p. 124)

In explicitly defining integration along inter-governmental lines, the textbook seems to imply once again the dominant role of nation-states in the process: ‘Integration – the coming together of diverse states in interest groupings within various areas and to different extents’ (History 9/4, p. 93). Yet, by identifying the French businessman Jean Monnet (1888–1979) as a key figure in the launch of EI, the textbook adopts a somewhat supranational position. Namely, it suggests that the views of representatives of professional or expert groups can be very influential in the integration process (History 9/4).

Similarly, the Geography textbook for grade 8/3 conceives EI as a process initiated in the 1950s by six European states. Contrary to the History textbook (9/4), the Geography textbook mentions Robert Schuman (1886–1963) as the author of the integration project. At the same time, it describes European institutions as key political actors while outlining the institutional structure and operation of the EU. In line with intergovernmentalism, the text stresses the dominant position of nation-states by referring to the role that the Council of the European Union has in decision making. Simultaneously, by referring to the responsibilities of the European Parliament and European Commission, the same paragraph reveals supranational tendencies by presenting both institutions as actors in their own right, each having specific tasks to fulfil independently while participating in the supranational governance of the EU.

“The Council of the European Union takes the most important decisions. It is constituted of heads of states and governments of member states. [...] The European Parliament discusses and issues laws and law regulations which should be applicable in all member states. This is not always easy. [...] The European Commission acts as the government of the European Union. Its members are minister-commissioners.” (Geography 8/3, p. 36).



The Civics textbook for grade 6/1 also associates the origins of integration with the initiative of national politicians. While discussing the origins of EI, the text underlines, in particular, the role of French and German political representatives. The textbook also briefly mentions the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Commission. In doing so, the text leans towards intergovernmentalism by describing them as institutions that represent the national and common interests of member states.

3.4 Sovereignty of nation-states

The impact that EI has on the sovereignty of nation-states is not addressed substantially in the textbooks analysed here. Nevertheless, some supranational patterns seem to appear in the History textbook for grade 9/4. One sentence describing the EU implies the pooling of nation-state control within a number of policy areas: 'The European Union strives contemporarily for a deepening of economic integration and also for common foreign and defence policy, and the reinforcement of integration in the area of justice and internal security' (History, 9/4, p. 120).

Implicit and explicit presentations of diminishing nation-state sovereignty appear in the Geography textbooks. The textbook for grade 8/3 displays a supranational tendency while describing the institutional structure and operation of the EU, which was discussed in the previous section (section 3.3: Key political actors). While the relevant paragraph highlights the dominant role that the Council of the European Union has in decision making, by outlining the specific responsibilities of the European Parliament and the European Commission, the same paragraph suggests the diminishing power of nation states and thus supranational leanings.

An additional and very brief demonstration of supranationalism occurs in the final Geography volume (9/4). While discussing Slovakia's accession to the EU, the relevant sentence highlights the reduction of national sovereignty as its consequence: 'Following the public referendum in 2004, however, [Slovakia] lost part of its sovereignty and entered the European Union' (Geography 9/4, p. 16).

The Civics textbook for grade 6/1 suggests a degree of supranationalism by acknowledging that EI will impact the political organisation of Europe: 'Through an abolition of borders between states, much will change in the economy and also in people's lives' (Civics 6/1, p. 28).

3.5 The EU

The presentation of the EU in all textbooks seems to be dominated by intergovernmentalism. The History textbook for grade 5 reveals patterns that can be aligned to intergovernmentalism, as it describes the EU as an interstate association: 'European Union- an association of multiple European states; Slovakia became a member of the Union on May 1, 2004' (History 5, p. 10). References to the EU also appear once more in the final volume (that for grade 9/4). On this occasion, however, the textbook does not provide any straightforward clues about the conceptualisation of the EU. The relevant sentence merely acknowledges its creation in 1992: 'Through the signing of a treaty in Maastricht in 1992, European Union (EU) was eventually established' (History 9/4, p. 120).

The Geography textbook for grade 8/3, as already highlighted in two previous sections (3.3 and 3.4), displays supranational leanings while describing the EU's governance. At the same time, reflecting a degree of intergovernmentalism, the chapter dedicated to the topic of EI concludes by presenting the EU as a platform for economic and political cooperation between its member states.

The Civics textbook for grade 6/1 provides a similar definition and describes the EU as an interstate association comprising 27 current members (as at the publication date of the textbook).

3.6 The future of EI

The textbooks analysed do not address explicitly the future of EI. Indeed, all tend to present it implicitly as an ongoing and open-ended process. They provide relevant suggestions by referring to the EU as a growing association of nation-states. Consequently, such presentations can be tentatively associated with intergovernmentalism and its perspective on the future of EI.

Nevertheless, the History textbook for grade 9/4, the final volume, briefly suggests a supranational perspective on the future of EI. It indicates that EI could be seen as a vehicle of the post-national transformation of Europe, in that it outlines the engagement of Jean Monnet (1888-1979) and his understanding of the ultimate outcome of the process: '[Jean Monnet] saw the establishment of United States of Europe as the ultimate objective [of EI]' (History 9/4, p.120).

3.7 Additional conceptual patterns

The textbooks analysed also revealed conceptual patterns that do not fit neatly into the conceptual categories of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism (Table 6).

Table 6: Additional conceptual patterns

	Rationale for EI	Drivers of EI	Further themes related to EI
History Textbooks		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slovak public (modest significance) 	
Geography Textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemporary challenges: climate change, ageing population, regional economic differences, illegal migration 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive debts (Greece and Portugal) • Budget discipline • Regional economic discrepancies within Europe • Reform of pension system • Common agricultural policy
Civics Textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity • Enhanced quality of life • Advantages of EU citizenship • Guaranteed rights for all, irrespective of cultural or religious background 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional economic discrepancies within Europe • Advantages of common currency • Advantages of EU citizenship • Humanitarian policies of the EU • The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) • Consumer rights in the EU • Symbols of common currency

Similarly to the concepts of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism, the History textbook for grade 9/4 pays moderate attention to the role that the public has played in the integration process. However, one assignment encourages students to discuss the attitudes of the Slovak public towards EI on the basis of the pre-accession referendum in 2003. Contrary to the assumptions of supranationalism in particular, however, the low participation of Slovakia’s electorate (52.15%) does not suggest a high degree of public appreciation of the advantages of EI. Yet, the assignment implicitly demonstrates the role, although modest, that the Slovak public takes in driving EI.

The Geography textbook for grade 8/3, while introducing Europe as a topic to students, tends to widen the conceptual frame of EI by including the contemporary socio-economic, political and environmental challenges facing the continent. In doing so, the textbook refers to regional economic differences, alongside the ageing population and illegal immigration. The text further stresses extreme climate change and natural disasters (e.g. floods) occurring across the whole of Europe.

The textbook keeps the contemporary focus in the chapter specifically dedicated to EI and presents it as an ongoing but complex process. It illustrates this by highlighting the issues of budget discipline and excessive debts within countries such as Greece and Portugal and evaluates these as a threat to the common currency. It then further refers to regional discrepancies within the EU alongside the reform of pension systems and agricultural policy.

In a similar vein to the Geography textbooks, the Civics textbooks emphasise current EU policies and the advantages of integration. While discussing the administrative structure of Slovakia, the Civics textbook for grade 6/1 also focuses on the country’s regional differences. In this context, the relevant chapter highlights European regional policy. In evaluating it positively, the text portrays the EU as a community that stands in solidarity with all of its members.

“Jakub was thinking about why he has come across the word regions so frequently in papers and in television recently. Why are funds from the European Union directed towards regions? Perhaps because when people living within a larger territory come together, help and support each other, they are more likely to improve the situation.” (Civics 6/1, p. 22)

In addition to the principle of solidarity, this Civics textbook draws attention to the values of respect and tolerance for multiculturalism within the contemporary EU. Referring to a campaign title of the Council of Europe from 1995, “All different, All equal”, the textbook aligns both principles to the concept of active citizenship and suggests that learning constitutes its integral component, which enhances the acceptance and appreciation of multiculturalism.

“All people living in European Union have the same rights. All forms of discrimination are prohibited. What does it mean in practise? In class 6.A, there is Laila, a student from Afghanistan. She is Muslim. Her family has a different religion, different culture and traditions. Kids in the class did not accept her initially. But this was out of ignorance. Once they understood her “difference”, learned about the country of her father, they accepted her. Following the principle “All different, All equal”, nobody in the school discriminates against her. In class 6.A, we all act as “active citizens”. (Civics 6/1, p. 30).

When discussing the benefits of EI, the Civics textbook for grade 6/1 underlines the personal gains of integration and European citizenship. In illustrating this, the textbook emphasises the freedom of choice that all EU citizens have in terms of selecting a preferred place for studying, working and living. The textbook further stresses the equality of rights and duties that are coupled with EU citizenship and the advantages of the common currency for businesses and the general public.

The textbook for grade 7/2 highlights once again the values-based dimension of contemporary EU policies. This is reflected in two assignment sections in which the textbook draws attention to the role of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian



Aid Operations, known under its abbreviation ECHO, and to the European Year of Volunteering (2011).

Further themes related to EI also emerge within later Civics volumes (those for 8/3 and 9/4). In a chapter focusing on 'Fundamental documents of human rights', the textbook for grade 8/3 highlights The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), in addition to the Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on Human Rights (adopted by UNO and the Council of Europe in 1950 respectively). As the textbook suggests, the member states of the EU agreed to comply with the protection of human rights and freedoms. In a similar vein, the final volume for Civics (that for grade 9/4) also accentuates the European dimension in education. In doing so, the textbook provides students with information on the common currency, including its symbols and their meanings. In addition, the textbook also refers to the topic of consumer rights in the EU.

3.8 Discussion

There are three broad but notable findings that emerge from the textbook analysis. One is an accentuated European dimension with regard to education and a specific focus on the process of EI. The positive presentation of EI is equally striking. In spite of the relatively short history of Slovakia as a nation-state, textbooks do not conceive of EI as a contradiction to the national identity of Slovaks and sovereignty of Slovakia. On the contrary, textbook authors embrace it and portray the integration process as perfectly compatible with Slovakia's national interests, and advantageous for its citizens.

Nevertheless, the textbooks remain inconclusive in terms of the supranational versus intergovernmental conceptualisation of EI. Thus, the findings suggest that EI is neither a vehicle of the post-national transformation of Europe nor a tool deployed by EU member states in enhancing their cooperation in specific policy domains.

The textbooks highlight multiple positive and also challenging historical and contemporary developments to signify European identity and unity. A rather exclusive account of European identity, somewhat overemphasising Christianity, is given in the History textbooks. In contrast, by stressing the values of tolerance and respect for the contemporary cultural and religious diversity of Europe, the Civics textbooks provide an inclusive concept of European identity.

Parallel to the supranational, an intergovernmental line runs throughout all three subjects. Although the History textbook for grade 9/4 links the rationale for EI with national reconciliation and peace maintenance, in Geography and Civics the emphasis is on economic considerations. It would seem the evident limits of economic instrumentalism – as demonstrated most recently by Brexit (though this of course did not occur before the time of the textbooks' publication), and also by the euro crisis and the Maastricht Treaty – were not considered by the textbook authors. Therefore, presenting economic interests to students as the main rationale for EI seems a fairly precarious choice.

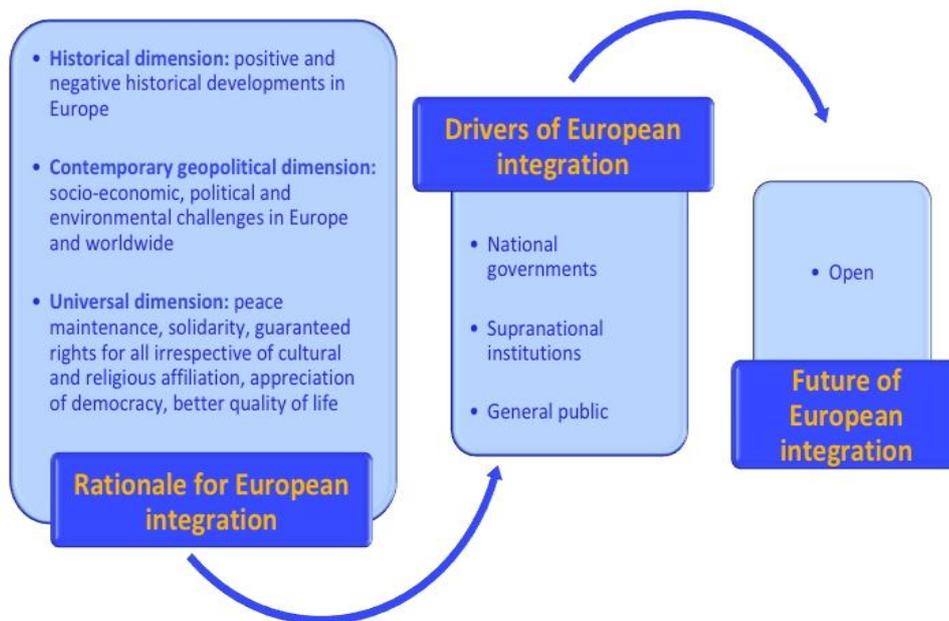
All the textbooks are also inclined to highlight nation-states as the main drivers of integration, which are deployed by them as a tool of (mainly) economic cooperation within Europe. Moreover, underpinned by an ethnocentric narrative, the textbooks celebrate national diversity within Europe and portray nation-states as the optimal guarantors of a prosperous existence for their citizens. This suggests that the textbook authors have not considered the substantial academic criticism of national narratives (e.g. Berghan and Schissler, 1987; Connor, 1990; Özkırımlı, 2010; Šulíková, 2016, 2017; Williams, 2014) and the constraints that nationalism imposes on integration (Deflem & Pamel, 1996; Fox & Vermeersch, 2010; Hoffmann, 1966).

While appropriate for the period when integration was launched, textbooks pay minimal attention to the general public. Similarly to the theories of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism, the idea of the public as an active political actor in European affairs remains rather sketchy in the textbooks analysed. Added to that, with the exception of Geography, which introduces students to supranational governance within the EU, all the textbooks tend to present the EU as an association of European states. Consequently, and regardless of the emphasised advantages of integration for ordinary citizens, the textbooks portray EI as an elite, top-down project that is outside of citizens' control and influence.

Despite including some references, the textbooks do not adequately discuss the implications of integration for nation-state sovereignty. Equally, the textbooks are fairly vague about the future of EI. Although the History textbook for grade 9/4 refers briefly to Jean Monnet's view on the United States of Europe as the eventual outcome of integration, considerations about its future emerge across the analysed textbooks in the form of implicit suggestions. Hence, a supranational conceptualisation of EI is tentative and thus remains marginal in the analysed textbooks. At the same time, intergovernmentalism cannot be said to be the dominant conceptual influence.

As well as patterns that can be associated with supranationalism and intergovernmentalism, further conceptual elements emerged as a result of analysing the textbooks. In addition to peace maintenance in History, values-based aspects of the conceptual presentation of EI might be also gleaned in Geography and Civics. They can be associated with the principles of solidarity, respect and tolerance for cultural diversity (Civics) and also with the appreciation of democracy (Geography) and a better quality of life (all textbooks). Therefore, together with the intergovernmental and marginal supranational aspects, universal values seem to cultivate a new approach to the conceptualisation of EI in all three subjects. Despite the shortcomings highlighted above, which are also relevant for this emerging approach, I would suggest that this is best described as values-based pragmatism (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Values-based pragmatism



Advanced through this perspective, the textbook authors seem to effortlessly accept the integration process and EU. Departing from a three-dimensional rationale – historical, contemporary geopolitical and universal – they explain and justify the integration process and its outcomes to date. Stressing the role of national governments, supranational institutions, and, to some extent, the general public, the textbook authors conceive EI as an ongoing and open-ended process. And it is values-based pragmatism that appears to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the process of sovereign nation-state building and the concurrent participation of Slovakia in EI.

4 Conclusions and implications

Framing this paper is the precarious public support for the deepening of EI and the premise that the European dimension in education can foster positive attitudes towards it. Using Slovakia as a case study, I investigated whether EI is promoted in Slovakia's lower secondary textbooks for History, Geography and Civics as a vehicle for the post-national transformation of Europe, or whether, by contrast, it is approached from an instrumentalist perspective and outlined as a tool for inter-governmental cooperation.

As the various EI theories suggest, integrating Europe is a highly complex process. It follows from this that presenting EI in a simplified, but still factual and engaging, manner to lower secondary students is, for textbook designers, an intricate task. Nevertheless, I would argue that EI theories enhance the comprehension of the process. Therefore, their insights and content analysis informed my examination of the selected textbooks. Moreover, while helpful in explaining how the nature of EI is presented in the analysed textbooks, the coding guide proved valuable in identifying meaningful and problematic aspects of its conceptualisation.

Consequently, the coding guide also indicates how the presentation of EI in textbooks can be further enhanced.

Overall, while evidently positive about EI, the textbooks remain inconclusive in respect of the nature of the process. However, if textbooks are to encourage support for a continuous and deepening EI, it is essential that their designers overtly outline and convincingly justify such an option.

My findings further indicate that the conceptualisation of EI in Slovakia's textbooks for various subjects would benefit from cooperation between their designers to ensure that students receive a consistent message. This applies, in particular, to the presentation of European identity, which, when taking into account the multicultural diversity in contemporary Europe, should draw on universal values to be inclusive.

The presentation of the rationale for integration would equally benefit from a coordinated approach. Although outlined to some extent, the discussion on the rationale for EI in the textbooks needs to be strengthened and made more explicit in order to be more compelling. Therefore, the discussion would benefit from being extended beyond peace maintenance and economic considerations. The presentation of the rationale for EI could be also enhanced by integrating into textbooks a critical discussion on nationalism and the options and limitations for nation-states to safeguard their citizens' expectations of a good quality of life.

Equally, textbook designers ought to include an unambiguous yet differentiated presentation of the future of EI and outline how the general public in particular can actively shape it. I would suggest that the academic field of European Integration Studies seems suitable to inform such efforts.

Considering the case study approach, this paper is not without its limitations. Nevertheless, as the politicisation of EI seems set to continue and the public support for its deepening cannot be taken for granted, the question raised in the Slovakian context has wider relevance for the European dimension in education. Therefore, by replicating the approach of this study on a larger scale, textbook designers and educationalists could learn more about the implementation of the European dimension in education across the EU and how to further advance it.

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Endnotes

¹ Multiple reasons have been discussed in the academic literature to explain the break-up of Czechoslovakia: the revival of repressed nationalist sentiments in Eastern and Central Europe after 1989; Slovak nationalism and Czech economic nationalism; the absence of a Czechoslovak identity; socio-economic and cultural differences within Czechoslovakia; and Czechoslovakia's constitutional structure and discrepancies regarding political leverage. Others have highlighted the primacy of mismanaged negotiations and undemocratic decision making among the political leadership of Czechs and Slovaks between 1990 and 1992. Without any political consultation such as a referendum, a political agreement between the winners of the last common election (June 1992) led to the establishment of two independent states in January 1993 (Innes, 2001; Rychlík, 1998).

² In the last regional election (November 2017), the People's Party was defeated and gained only two seats in regional assemblies (out of a total of 426 seats). Marian Kotleba, the leader of the party, also lost his position as the Head of the regional administration in Banská Bystrica (Agerholm, 2017).

³ Following an innovation of curricula for lower secondary schools (valid since academic year 2015/2016), the curriculum for Civics has changed. Civics is taught in grades 6–9. Hence, the original curricula for grades 5 and 6 have been innovated. As a result, the new curriculum for grade 6 comprises three themes: 'My family', 'My class and school' and 'My country'. However, as a new textbook for grade 6 is yet to be published, schools use textbooks that were originally published for grades 5 and 6 (State Pedagogic Institute, 2015). To avoid unnecessary confusion, when mentioning and citing Civics textbooks I will refer to their original grade designations.

⁴ As in the case of Civics, the curriculum for Geography changed in the academic year 2015/2016. Hence, Europe as a topic is now addressed in grade 7/2 instead of the original grade 8/3. Slovakia as a curricular theme has been moved from the original grade of 9/4 to grade 8/3 (State Pedagogic Institute, 2015). However, as new textbooks have not yet been published, Geography textbooks that were in use before 2015/2016 continue to be used in schools (MoE, 2017). To avoid unnecessary confusion, when mentioning and citing Geography textbooks I will refer to their original grade designations.