

International scientific conference

(Conference is a part of foreign activities of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.)

Programme Themes:

Humanity as a fundamental value of education.

From Comenius's Reform of Human Affairs to pedagogues, educators - humanists in the days of dramatic events of the 20th century.

Date of event:

October 17, 2016

Venue: National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in Prague

Organisers:

- National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius;
- Technical University of Liberec, Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education, Department of Pedagogy and Psychology;

In 2016, we remember the events that followed and are associated with the end of the World War II. The most tragic war in human history ended in the spring of 1945, but consequences of the war remained evident for a long time. Many of children and adolescents went through unhuman suffering in the Nazi concentration camps; thanks to brave educators and pedagogues, some of these children received education in part even during the appalling wartime: children were educated in Theresienstadt and in concentration camps. Because children were children even in hard times. After the war ended, lot of children from German families had to face hard times, as their families were subjected to post-war displacement.

The tense post-war period was rarely able to empathize with the children's destinies, in contradiction to Přemysl Pitter, the humanist and extraordinary personality of social-educational life. He – being motivated both by ideas of humanity in education, and Comenius's ideas – struggled for help and for preservation of dignity of all children – Jewish, Czech, German. After the war, in the Pitter's castles, there came together children with very different destinies. P. Pitter and his co-workers, social workers, nurses, and educators, sought to ensure each and every of these children with fundamental dignity and protection in difficult moments of their lives.

We may ask what connects efforts to help human beings sorely tried by the weight of history not only of the 20th century. We reply that it is the faith in victory of the idea of humanity, which ensures human dignity, freedom of thought and faith in justice. J. A. Comenius, the

greatest Czech philosopher of all times, was convinced that the reform of human affairs was led by education and reform of human society.

From the 18th century humanity began to be viewed in the enlightened way. The Enlightenment understood humanity in the Herder's spirit not primarily as a matter of true faith, but as a matter of education and ethics, although often based on much older concepts of faith.

Whatever motivated the efforts of educators of children being in danger of their lives, regardless how differently designed these motives were, we find out that the value of humanity, although differently worded, was their common starting point.

International conference reminds common efforts of many educators and forgotten pedagogical personalities, who contributed to preservation of human dignity or rediscovering of human dignity of the most vulnerable – children in the tragic 20th century.

Comenius's efforts for reform of human affairs sound again in its current form, even if we do not write the 17th century, but the 21st century.

For the conference are invited both expert speakers dealing with the work of Comenius and his reform ideas, and witnesses of eras and events that were beyond humanity, but who still remained faithful to the ideas of humanity.

The first block of the conference consists from contributions dealing with humanity from a theoretical perspective. The aim is to introduce anchoring of the concept in our and European intellectual history, in chronological range from the ancient world to the present. Special attention will be devoted to the concept of humanity in works of J. A. Comenius. Theoretical contributions are complemented by profiles of representative pedagogical personalities who expressed their humanism on concrete pedagogical actions.

The second block of the conference is focused on witnesses and concrete testimonies of humanity. Memories of an exceptional manifestation of humanity at times that often lacked humanity will be presented both by those who witnessed the horrific events of the World War II and also by witnesses of later periods. In case that witnesses will not be able to present their stories personally, or if it is a remarkable testimony of already deceased witnesses, their testimony will be reproduced in order to preserve maximum authenticity based on diaries or memoir texts.

Preliminary programme:

I. Morning session – history of the concept and examples of practical manifestations of humanity in pedagogy

1) **“Humanity” from the ancient history to the Enlightenment** (PhDr. Martin Steiner)

2) **“Humanity” by Comenius** (doc. PhDr. Jana Přívratská, CSc., RNDr. Vladimír Přívratský, CSc.)

3) **“Humanity” in Czech encyclopaedias – from Jungmann’s dictionary to the 20th century** (prof. PhDr. Milena Lenderová, CSc.)

4) **Teachers – humanists** (doc. PhDr. Růžena Váňová, CSc.)

5) **Foreign contribution to the theme**

Humanität in philanthropischer Idee und Praxis: Friedrich Eberhard von Rochow (1734-1805) Schulreform an der Reckahner Musterschule - Humanity and concept of philanthropism in theory and practice: school reform by Friedrich Eberhard von Rochow (1734-1805) in exemplary school in Reckahn (Prof. Dr. Frank Tosch, Universität Potsdam)

II. Afternoon session

– contributions by foreign participants and witnesses (Pavel Kohn, dr. Vojmír Srdečný and others)

Outputs from the conference will be published in the expert **journal Historia scholastica**.

Conference is organised by the **National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius** in Prague in cooperation with the Technical University of Liberec, Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education. Both institutions build on previous successful expert conferences in the field of education and history of education. They closely cooperate in scientific and conference activities and jointly open and process the so called “grey” areas and current topics in historical-educational and pedagogical debate.

The conference is organised under the auspices of the scientific committee of the conference; apart from PhDr. M. Pánková, Director of the NPML, it is headed also by doc. PhDr. T. Kasper, Ph.D., Head of Department of Pedagogy and Psychology of the Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education, the Technical University of Liberec. It is already the fifth expert gathering in the field of history of education and teachers organised under the cooperation of the NPML and FSHE TUL.