

COMENIUS DECLARATION

"We are all citizens of one world, we are all of one blood. To hate people because they were born in another country, because they speak a different language, or because they take a different view on this subject or that, is a great folly. Desist, I implore you, for we are all equally human. Let us have but one end in view: the welfare of humanity."

This year 2022 offered us a unique opportunity to remind ourselves of the legacy of the polyhistor, pansophist and one of the most prominent personalities in Europe's new-age history known also as "the Teacher of Nations", Johannes Amos Comenius, who was born 430 years ago. Although he did not consider himself a teacher, he laid the foundations of modern didactics. His life was gravely influenced by the horrors of war caused mainly by the inability to reach an agreement between the Catholics and the Evangelicals in 17th century Europe. War which in its wake brought about the plague, involuntary exile and the loss of loved ones. Perhaps it was his belief in dialogue and communication, that lead him to later concentrate on didactics and especially on foreign languages. His works, such as *Didactica Magna*, *Orbis pictus* or *Schola ludus* introduced educational approaches which are still in use today.

The last two years could be seen as a historical parallel with Comenius' times. The two years of the Covid-19 pandemic had global and unprecedented influence on the life of the whole of society and heavily affected in particular children and youth. The entire teaching and learning process had to be adapted to offer alternative solutions and digital education took a lead in this. However, before Europe and its citizens had time to recover, Europe was exposed to another crisis. Crisis caused by the barbaric Russian aggression against Ukraine which forced millions of Ukrainian women and children to search involuntarily for exile in EU countries.

Our role is to respect and honour European values, insist on their application and create a bright future for all of our children. We must safeguard access to and continuity of quality education for all - regardless of whether they're citizens from EU Member States' or migrants fleeing the terrors of war and an uncertain future. Based on Comenius' principles, such act of aggression is to be absolutely, indisputably and irreducibly condemned in Europe of the 21st century. Education and training go hand-in-hand with respect to human rights, values and ideas of humanism. There is no other way.

Czechia has adjusted to the new reality and proclaimed support to Ukraine as one of its overarching priorities, coordinated help of EU Member States towards integration of misplaced Ukrainian children and facilitated exchanges of good practices and lessons learned. We are proud of the fact that the Member States and the European Commission agreed to grant Ukraine the candidate status for the accession to the EU and to invite the Ukrainian delegations to our meetings, which facilitate mutual dialogue, communication and understanding.

As the year is reaching its last days, we call upon the Member States to continue our efforts and actions of support within the principles and values upon which we stand until the Russian

war of aggression is stopped and to further assist in the post-war recovery of the Ukrainian education system.

We call on all the democratic countries of the world and their citizens to be aware that we have responsibility to defend the values on which our civilization has stood for millennia. Ethics and economic development do not stand in opposition to each other but condition each other.

“The goal of education and wisdom is for a person to see a clear path of life ahead of him, walk carefully along it, remember the past, know the present and foresee the future.”

Johannes Amos Comenius