

Original Research Article

Leadership Styles in International Conflict Management. Action by the European Union Against Radicalization, Terrorism and Violent Extremism – Risks and Threats

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Abstract

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The article focuses on the antecedents of the emergence and management of international conflicts related to radicalization and terrorism in a European context and the interaction between leader and team. The objective of the desk research is to examine the correlation between the leadership style and the team, the leadership competencies, and to develop strategies for conflict resolution and management. It is achieved by analysing the European approach to the prevention of radicalization, terrorism and violent extremism, and exploring their positive and negative effects on a specific individual or group. The focus is on the role of leadership styles and competences at different hierarchical levels in order to achieve results and find solutions to problems. This paper presents the desk research conducted on countering radicalization and extremism.

Keywords: Conflictology, Extremism, International conflicts, Leadership, Management, Radicalization, Team collaboration, Terrorism

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an important resource for the development of the political system and it is one of its most significant priorities. Leaders are usually creative people with a lot of ideas and they transform the world. There are a lot of opportunities and power concentrated in them. If we observe a good socio-psychological climate and harmony in group life and activity in society, that is largely due to the leadership influence, the leader's ability to bring the necessary balance, to successfully manage group processes and dynamics, to mobilize group members for optimal achievement of the goals set.

Leadership in the process of organizational functioning and development contributes mostly to the effective work of political institutions. Administrative behaviour and the practicing of a given leadership style has a significant impact on socio-emotional relationships

in organizations and in the society as a whole, on the productivity of social policies. The lack of the necessary leadership skills or choosing wrong leadership tactics leads to low quality of the administrative process. This is a phenomenon with pronounced negative consequences. Leadership builds the normative and value unity of the group.

The leader is the commander of the group to whom the group recognizes the right to take responsible decisions in situations that are meaningful to the group. This is the most authoritative reference person playing a central role in organizing socio-political life. A leader is a strong person performing a variety of functions, whom the others follow and voluntarily obey. He has their trust and is capable of leading individuals, groups and entire organizations.

Leadership is a historical phenomenon of a complex nature. In all ages, the basic principle of leadership has been the principle of superiority. A leader must always outperform in certain respects the other members of the group he governs. Leadership is a category that refers primarily to the informal structure of relationships, but it is also used for the needs of the formal organization of relationships.

Effective leaders are extremely flexible according to the specific situation they are in at a given time. Among the founders and the most consistent supporters of situational theories of leadership are *F. Fiedler*, *P. Hers*, and *K. Blanchard*. It is known that in the period 1983-1987 *James Kouzes* and *Barry Posner* published the results of an empirical study "The Leadership Challenge", related to the distinctive characteristics of the leader, making an attempt to create a profile of the ideal leader. A successful leader, according to them, is distinguished by honesty; a clear vision of the future; inspiring impact on followers; competence; justice; support; breadth of thought; intelligence; clarity and straightforwardness; reliability. Representatives of the charismatic field (*M. Weber*, *R. House*, *B. Bass*, etc.) add to those characteristics the presence of superpowers in the leader, the ability to anticipate critical situations and take control of them, the ability to transform reality.

At the beginning of the third millennium, the idea of "shared leadership", or as it is also called "distributed leadership", gained great popularity. Proponents of this idea argue that joint leadership is appropriate and necessary, and oppose the widespread view that individuals should dominate by leading others. In this way, the management responsibility is shared between several people and roles. In this case the question is about collective, team leadership. Thus, the interpretation of leadership undergoes *qualitative changes and fits into a broader social context*, implying dialogue, cooperation, consensus, working on joint projects. Creative integration is achieved in the course of the activity, empathy, trust, freedom, autonomy and openness in the expression of one's own experience, while effectively counteracting individualism. Appropriate norms, rules of joint activity are constructed and applied; group experience and the contribution of each member of the team to a successful way out of problem situations are productively used; there is effective counteraction in extreme environments to avoid risks and conflicts in group life. It is important that the goals of the group are accepted by everyone and shared. Not insignificant are the manifestations of altruism in the behavioural aspect, as well as strategic planning in the activity, highlighting the leading priorities in it. Discussing different perspectives allows for a multifaceted interpretation of the issues. Shared leadership occurs when all team members are involved in the leadership of the group activity. Maximizing the potential of the team as a whole becomes a desirable perspective. The theory of shared leadership is one of the

new management theories and is actively used in the modern world to regulate relationships internationally.

In recent years, the idea of so-called "transformational leadership" has also been popular. Leaders of this type encourage individuals or groups to define and implement more significant socio-political goals that are of common interest. This approach is effective when strong organizational culture exists in the institutions. Numerous like-minded people are expected to be involved in the innovation processes related to important decision-making. This type of leadership leads to significant qualitative changes in the group's life and elevates it to the stage of creative integration. There is a huge developmental effect that can be achieved.

What is a leader? In the dictionary, the definition is "someone who leads, who has the ability to make decisions". One more: a leader is a person who has many followers. According to Peter Sage, the leader is a man who can create leaders. An inspirational person with sufficient qualities to get control of the chaos around them and teach others to do it so that all of us as a society can have a better life.

Leaders effectively contribute to overcoming conflicts and avoiding crisis situations in society. Conflicts are inherently clashes, contradictions and they allow for competition between individual subjects of national and international law. As a result, disputes may arise that lead to disagreements, opposition and difference in how to achieve certain goals and results. The value system of the participants there diverges. In the event of escalation, we observe a process of misunderstanding, unwillingness to accept the position of the other party and attempts to impose the point of view of certain persons due to their social status – celebrities, internationally and nationally.

One of the classifications provided in Wikipedia for the types of conflicts presents their diversity and is, as follows: interpersonal conflict, intrapersonal conflict, emotional conflict, group conflict, organizational conflict, intra-community conflict, internal conflict (examples: civil war, political conflict), international conflict, street conflict, intercommunity conflict, intra-community conflict – social conflict, ideological conflict, diplomatic conflict, economic conflict, military conflict, religious conflict. [20, p. 30]

An important element in successful conflict resolution is to clarify their phases, what are the causes that give rise to them, who are the participants in them and finally how to find a mutually acceptable solution for all parties. Difficulties arise here due to the divergent interests arising from the desire for domination and ambitions to achieve success "at any cost" and personal goals, as well as meeting the needs of the particular individual. In such situations, the disputing parties need to look for ways to resolve conflicts peacefully – through negotiations, in accordance with the laws and regulations of the territory of the country where they are located.

It is good to distinguish the terms, "conflict", "crisis", "dispute", "struggle", "scandal", "incompatibility". Conflict

is the concept that in a sense includes the others and integrates them, but in reality each of them represents a state generated by conflict. Conflict can also become a clash of individuals, of civilizations at a subsequent stage, and come to escalation and rivalry at a higher level. Failing to settle the conflict can also lead to military action, which poses a threat to the peace and security of humanity. The crisis is a more serious stage of the conflict, where it is difficult to make an acceptable decision for the disputing people or countries. The dispute is caused by disagreements and different points of view between the arguing subjects. Fighting can be physical and verbal. At this point, the conflict escalates even further. The scandal as an act is contrary to the generally accepted norms in society. It is associated with lack of self-control, loss of human form and morality, lack of upbringing and culture. Incompatibility may occur in the event of a difference in the interests of the disputing parties and pushing and pulling in the relations between them, and also as a result of non-acceptance of others' opinions.

In relation to the above reasons, there is also the need for leaders to intervene in these types of situations to help find constructive, appropriate and timely solutions to problems. To this end, they apply appropriate leadership styles.

The Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler is credited with introducing the concept of "leadership style" in the 1920ies. This concept was further developed by Kurt Lewin and his supporters and followers R. Lippit and R. White. It determines the nature of the separation of functions between the leader and the group, as well as the specifics of the set of methods, approaches and techniques used by the leader to manage activities and joint communication in certain social communities. The classification they propose for leadership styles is widely known, subdividing them into authoritarian, democratic and neutral (of non-interference, i.e. liberal styles).

American social psychologist Rensis Likert distinguishes four types of leadership styles: exploitative-authoritative, benevolent-authoritative, consultative, and participative.

Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard outline four main leadership styles corresponding to the maturity of the leader's followers – telling, selling, participating and delegating.

American political scientist D. Barber takes an unconventional approach in defining the leadership style, linking it to the stereotype of the leader's behaviour in making certain decisions. He characterizes four types of leadership styles: *active-positive* aimed at achievement (political power is placed at the service of society and its needs); *active-negative* (politics is interpreted as an arena for the realization of personal interests and self-development); *passive-positive* (related to the desire to assign functions and responsibilities to people in the environment) and *passive-negative* (characterized by a

lack of productivity of actions and empty rhetoric) [11, pp. 361-363]. The last style H. Doncheva calls "fictitious leadership" [13, p. 235]. Depending on the peculiar patterns of political behaviour, she distinguishes 2 more styles – conflicted and diplomatic [13, p. 239].

Leadership skills are extremely important for organizational success and the gradual acquisition of leadership skills. Good managers manage to create a normal working atmosphere without unnecessary tension. They know how to motivate their employees for personal and professional development, growth, to show them the way to go when establishing themselves in the workplace, create a favourable working environment so that each team member can perform at their best and be useful to society and to themselves. In addition, they should be good organizers. It is important to clarify when the team works best – when they are alone or when clear and specific goals are set? It is of paramount importance to specify what the role of each team member will be. There are different types of managers who manage teams differently. Some leave people and watch them work on the side and intervene only in crisis situations. Others exercise "excessive control" over their subordinates, thus not allowing them to show their strengths. It is good to have permanent control, but it should be exercised in a way that stimulates the employee to do a better job and be more productive. Work should stimulate employees to increase their knowledge and skills. If we do not adhere to this, we risk losing trust in each other and coming into conflict, which is not desirable.

It is of particular importance to observe the principles of labour and organizational psychology, which examines human behaviour in organizations. Employees acquire skills to work in a cross-cultural environment, improve their emotional intelligence, develop skills in coaching, leadership, team management and professional counselling. Over time, good leaders and managers are formed, with a wealth of life experience, energetic and combative, prosperous, cooperative, tenacious, emotionally stable and self-confident, standing out among others and taking on responsibilities.

At the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, there was an escalation of conflicts and instability in the system of international relations. Existing and emerging armed military conflicts caused by inter-ethnic clashes, global resource scarcity, and increasing poverty, and economic inequalities are fundamental factors in the rise of violent extremism and organized crime. Additional threats in this regard are created by environmental crises and intensifying migratory flows. In this context, there is a growing need to create a new climate in international relations, innovative solutions and actions in national security and defence policies are needed in all European countries. Against this background, thanks to technological progress and innovation, the Internet plays an increasing role; there is an avalanche of information

and disinformation, which in turn leads to the active radicalization of the population of our planet, to terrorist threats and actions. Therefore, early prevention of the spread of extremist ideas and radicalization among young people is of paramount importance, as well as overcoming religious, political, social, ethnic division and social isolation in society; restoring spirituality and moral values; strengthening integration processes, the battle to achieve a well-functioning civil society and constructive social dialogue on the priority strategic issues for the development of each social sphere. The identification of at-risk groups of the population and the implementation of various training and advisory programs with them is important for good awareness to counteract aggression and violence.

Police and prison correctional officers must also be prepared to respond adequately, i.e. in accordance with national interests in such situations.

The direct work with the victims of terrorist actions, as well as with migrants and refugees, should not be ignored in order to support their adaptation, awareness, employment, health and hygiene care for them. It is necessary to know well the updated EU anti-terrorism strategies; human rights conventions; Council of Europe conventions on the prevention of terrorism; European security programmes and measures against cyber-attacks and cybercrime, against radicalization and terrorism, against group crime; on the control of the possession of weapons and the fight against arms trafficking; on the exchange of information; on the good staffing of the external borders of the EU in order to strengthen border and coast guards; on cooperation in the field of legislative justice, to harmonise EU Member States' legislation on criminal procedures.

A key priority is working with the young people in society, who are also expected to shape its future, stimulating and supporting interactions with them. Educational institutions and related units for socio-pedagogical activity could implement numerous initiatives against the manifestations of deviant and delinquent behaviour, for exchange of experience and good practices to prevent negative risky forms of activity, and radicalization. Counter-terrorism measures need to be well integrated at all levels – local, regional, national, European and global. Young people need to be aware of the dangers of being associated with extreme right-wing organisations. The problem behaviour of students should be in the orbit of the attention of pedagogical specialists in school, who should work in close cooperation with parents and their close social environment. Particularly important are issues relating to inclusive and participatory education, to building a culture of tolerance and humanism to combat all forms of discrimination, especially racial or ethnic intolerance. The research and teaching activities of the country's higher education institutions with teaching profiles need to be well organised so that future teachers are aware of the risks

of radicalization in society and terrorist threats. These are global phenomena manifested without borders and participation in international forums – conferences, seminars, round tables, focus groups of researchers on these issues with analysis of the risks of radicalization and terrorism is extremely valuable.

We conducted an empirical study on these problems during the summer semester of the 2022/2023 academic year at South-West University "Neofit Rilski" – Blagoevgrad with 482 bachelor and master students. The students are from the following majors: Pre-school and primary school pedagogy – 1st and 2nd year, full-time and part-time education; Pre-school pedagogy with a foreign language – 1st and 2nd year; Primary school pedagogy with a foreign language – 1st and 2nd year; Social pedagogy – 1st and 2nd year; Special pedagogy – 1st and 2nd year; with master students in Primary school pedagogy and Pre-school pedagogy – 1st year of the Faculty of Pedagogy and with 3rd year students from the Faculty of Philology majoring in Pedagogy of Bulgarian and English Language Education.

The answers to the question from the questionnaire "Do you think that enough work is being done in school to form a culture of tolerance and acceptance of differences?" are visually illustrated in Figure 1.

The conducted rating survey showed that only 8% (39 in number) of students are of the opinion that the school is working at a satisfactory level to a large extent to form a culture of tolerance and acceptance of differences. Impressive is the large relative share of respondents – 25% (120), who rate the efforts of teachers and educators in this field as being "to a low degree". 65% (313) of them are adamant that the prevailing level of organization and conduct of the pedagogical process is average, which shows that there are many untapped reserves in the practice of education and upbringing in school for the qualitative process of socialization in children. 2% of respondents note that this area in particular is not addressed at school at all.

The distribution of answers to the question "Do you think there are joint actions between school, family and other socio-pedagogical institutions on strengthening dialogue and stimulating inclusion, and supporting socially disadvantaged and at-risk groups?" is illustrated by Figure 2.

The picture is similar when assessing the degree of coordination between socio-pedagogical factors in relation to enhancing interaction and dialogue in society, and stimulating the inclusion and support of socially disadvantaged and at-risk groups: only 9% (43) of the respondents report a high level of coherence and partnership between school, family and other socio-pedagogical factors; 59% (284) – report an average level; 24% (116) – report a low level and according to 8% – there is no synergy.

The answers to the question "Do you think that unsatisfactory educational work at school and in the

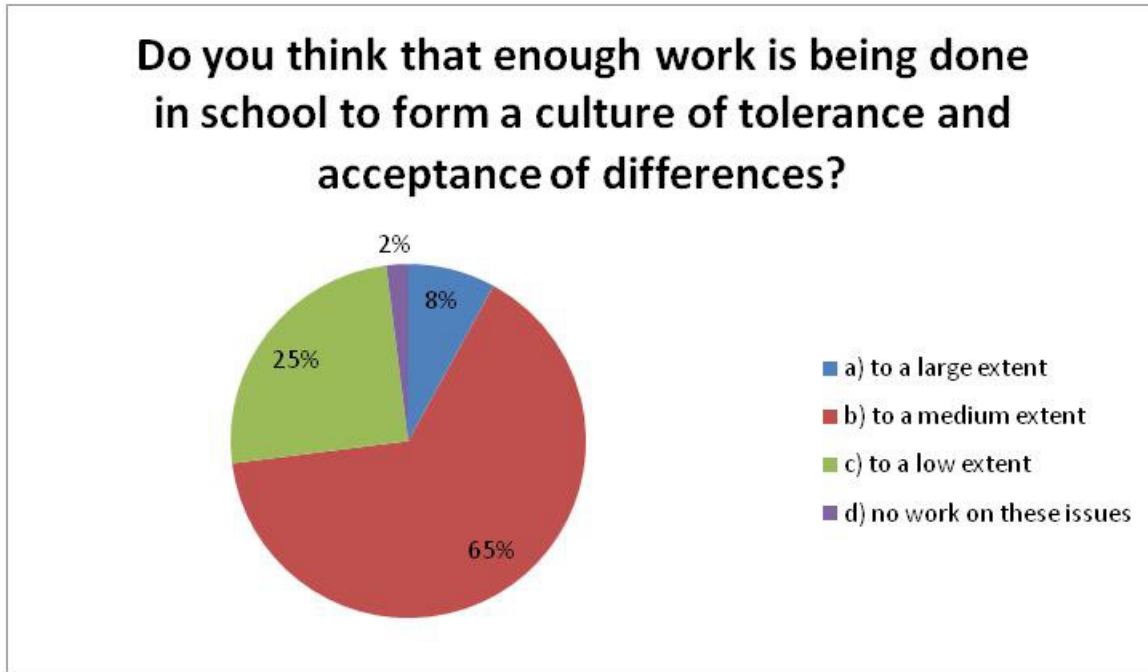


Figure 1. Assessment of the level of pedagogical activity in school on forming a culture of tolerance and acceptance of differences in adolescents

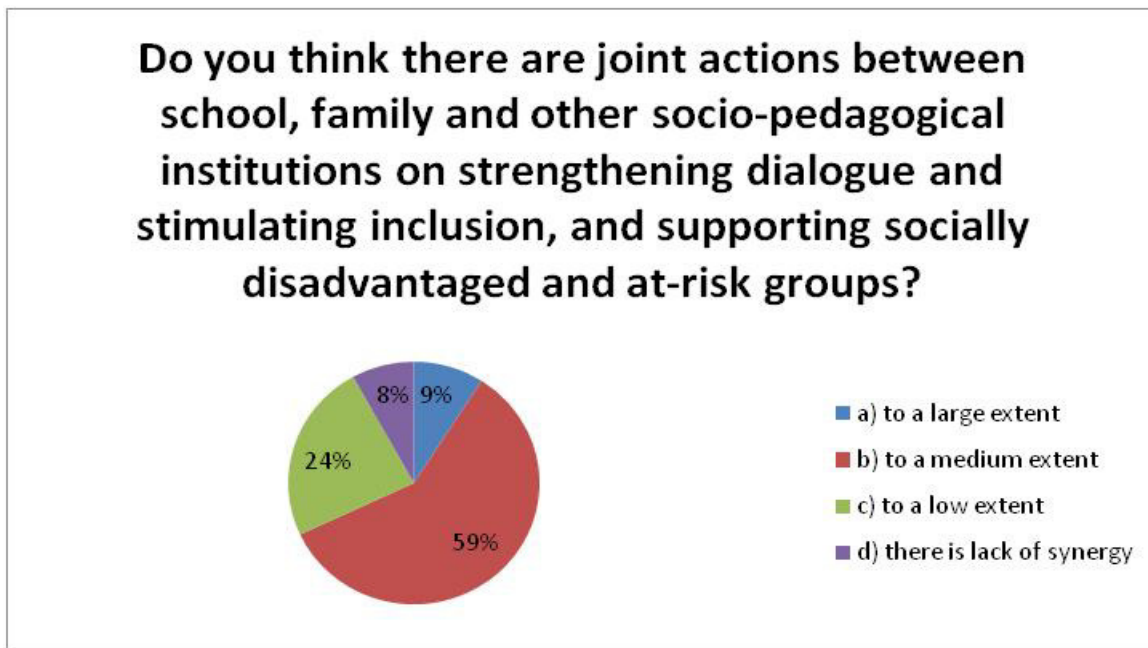


Figure 2. Exploration of the level of collaborative work between school, family and other socio-pedagogical institutions on strengthening dialogue and stimulating inclusion and support of socially disadvantaged and at-risk groups

family is the main reason for the radicalization of a large portion of the population and for the orientation towards socially unaware and antisocial behaviour?" are interpreted based on Figure 3. Of interest is the study of the genesis of radicalization in society. It begins to form

from an early age and is multifactor-determined. Its prerequisites can be found in preschool and primary school age. The values in the family relationship system are particularly significant. The formation of radical attitudes in a person's individual path, in the

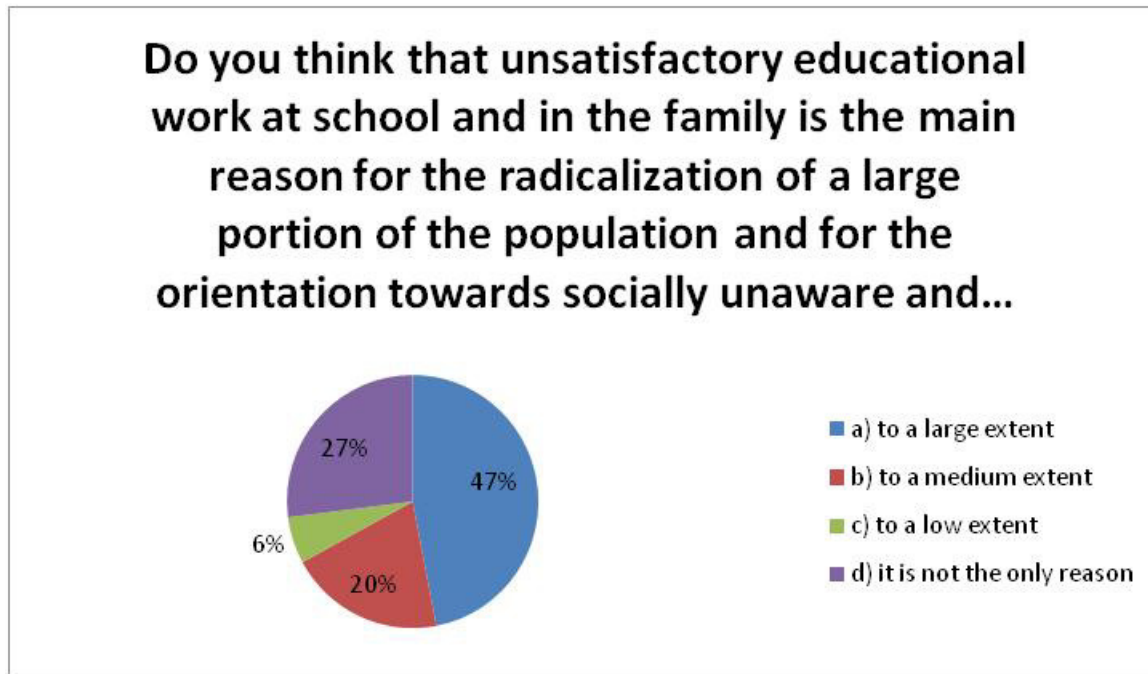


Figure 3. Assessment of the degree of effectiveness of educational work at school and in the family in relation to the radicalization of populations and their orientation to socially unaware and antisocial forms of behaviour

person's consciousness and behaviour, is a complex and lengthy process. Deficits in the educational work of the family and the school play a particularly important role in taking up deviant and delinquent patterns of behaviour. 47% (227 in number) of the respondents are adamant that unsatisfactory educational work in the school and the family is one of the main reasons for the radicalization of a large part of the population, especially given that in the period of democratic development of our society after 1989, the quality of educational work in the Bulgarian school decreased dramatically. However, 27 per cent (130) of the respondents emphasise that this is not the only reason. The economic crisis, unemployment and the impoverishment of many families and groups of the population have a significant impact in this regard.

The responses received to the question "What other risk factors for population radicalization affect more?" are ranked in descending order of importance.

Among the variety of factors influencing the radicalization of individuals, the role of the Internet on the globalising population of the planet; the widening gap between rich and poor, leading to stark social differentiation, inequality and conflict in society; the devaluation of people's value systems; the destructive influence of aggression and violence as behavioural patterns are highlighted. The lack of spirituality and ideals in the lives of adolescents, which is a consequence of the increasing commercialization and consumerism, the cult of things and the aspiration for self-sufficiency of a large part of the people, is reported. All this influences the

value orientation of young people. Many adolescents are victims of alienation, of social alienation, of social distrust, giving rise to various phobic states. The number of so-called hikikomori is also growing. Respondents also noted the negative impact of the numerous societal divisions and confrontations – ideological, political, religious (38% of the students – 184 in total). In psychological terms, attention is also paid to the individual vulnerability and susceptibility of certain individuals to radical influences (25% of respondents – 121 students). 7% of the surveyed future teachers, educators, pedagogues indicated as significant reasons for taking up deviant and delinquent forms of behaviour: "underlying genetic disorders leading to antisocial or aggressive behaviour; the presence of unhealthy families and violence at home; frequent divorces", "economic instability; mass migration and violation of human rights", "the lack of a stable social system", "bigotry in social communities", "personal example playing an important role in the process of identification and the civilizational development of adolescents". 16% (77) of the students surveyed also linked radicalization to the impact of the penitentiary system on imprisoned individuals.

The content-based analysis of the responses to the question "What is your assessment of the implementation of preventive pedagogical activity in relation to the manifestations of radicalization in society?" is based on Figure 5.

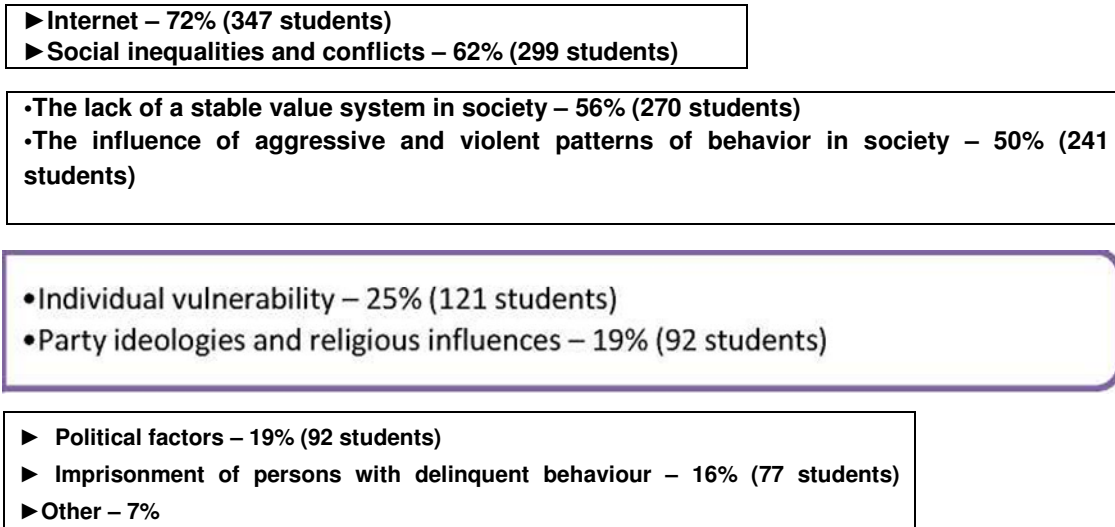


Figure 4. Ranking order with an assessment of the risk factors influencing the radicalization of the population in society

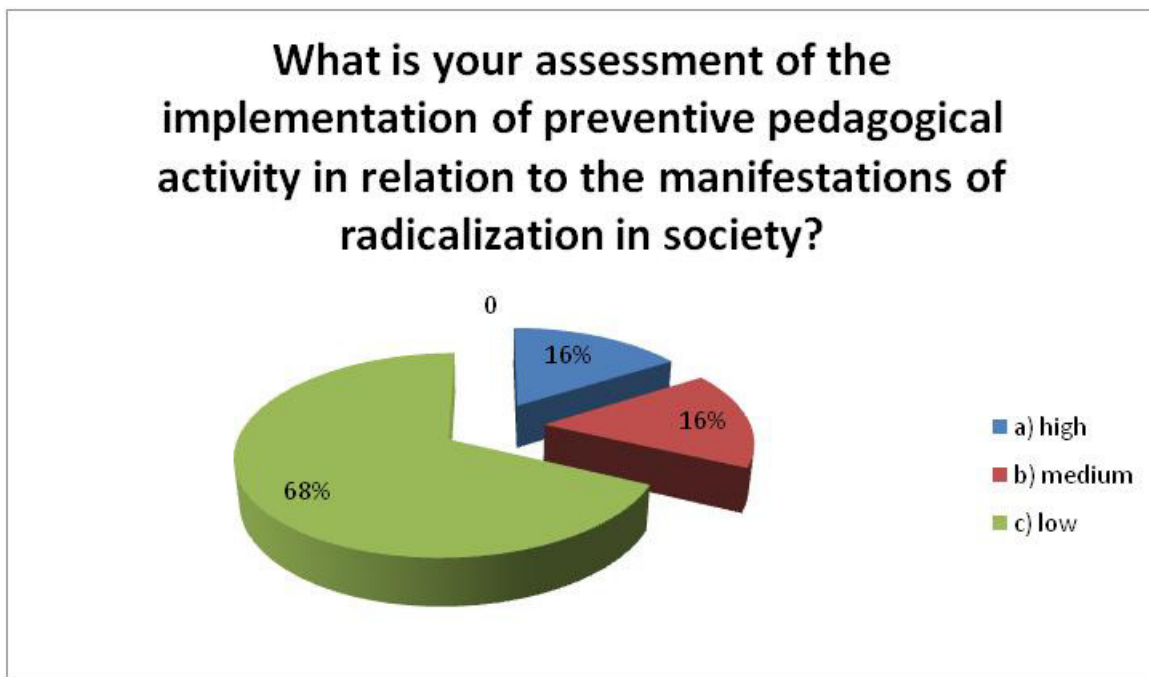


Figure 5. Assessment of the level of preventive pedagogical activity on manifestations of radicalization in society

The survey showed that 68% (328) of students with intensive study of pedagogy assessed the implementation of preventive pedagogical activity in relation to the manifestations of radicalization in society as being at a low level. This points to a reflection on the huge role of preventive measures against increasing radicalization. Resources in this regard are invaluable in the process of socialization of adolescents.

The distribution of the responses to the question "What do you think are the most important measures

against terrorism and serious crime?" is illustrated in Figure 6.

A large number of the respondents combined "punishment by imprisonment" and "value transformation by persuasion", accepting the thesis of the need for their integrated application. Terrorist actions are subject to the most severe legislative sanctions, but even in penitentiary institutions socio-pedagogical counselling and the implementation of various psychotherapeutic interventions has a huge educational and re-socializing value.

What do you think are the most important measures against terrorism and serious crime?

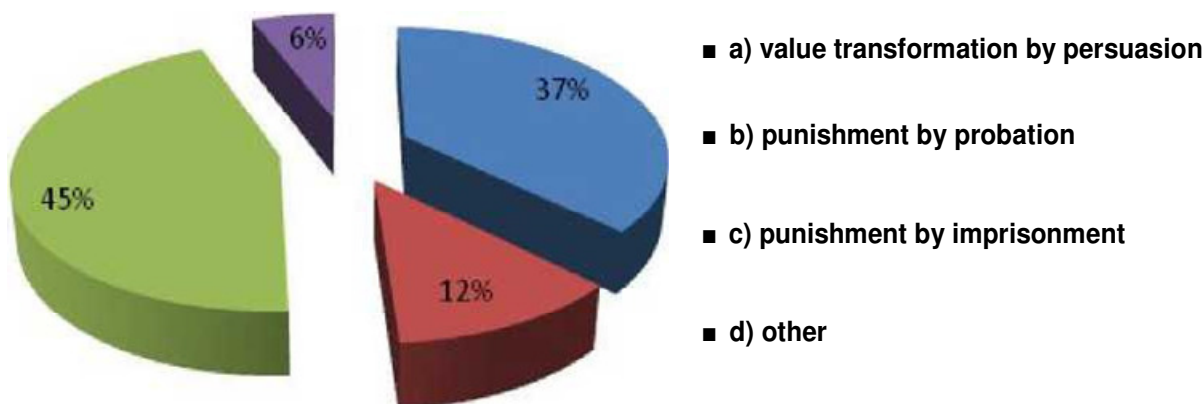


Figure 6. Study on overriding measures against terrorism and serious crime

CONCLUSION

It is essential for security to maintain a good partnership between the countries, to evade conflicts and to follow a humane approach in resolving international disputes. Main obstacles in the prevention of radicalization are the lack of inter-institutional dialogue and inter-departmental working groups, as well as the absence of coordination and cooperation between law enforcement bodies in the respective countries. Group differentiation in modern society is an objective fact. It occurs at all age levels. The need for the implementation of preventive programs of a variable nature in relation to deviant communities of young people distinguished by a destructive model of value orientation and prone to radicalization and antisocial manifestations is ripened. Young people are the future of a society and life requires that the process of socialization for them proceeds with optimal characteristics. This is related to a complete rethinking of the system of educational and correctional work in the educational institutions of the countries of the European Union.

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