

Young people and state security. Social factors contributing to radicalisation in the Youth Diagnosis 2026 report

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The growing vulnerability of young people to radicalisation, disinformation and social influences leading to destabilisation – exacerbated by their mental health crises, the weakening of social ties, a sense of exclusion and functioning in digital environment – poses a challenge to national security. Risk analyses in this area rarely take into account the specific nature of the social challenges facing the young generation. The *Youth Diagnosis 2026 report*¹ published in the spring identifies a number of factors that foster radicalisation and lead to behaviours detrimental from the perspective of state security, which is also influenced by the psychosocial and informational resilience of young people – their ability to cope with crises,

¹ *Diagnoza Młodzieży 2026* (Eng. Youth Diagnosis 2026), P. Rabiej (ed.), Warszawa 2026.

disinformation, polarisation and pressure of digital environment. Such studies should form part of the risk analysis relating to threats of a terrorist nature. Their in-depth analysis enables a more accurate prediction of the trajectory of radicalisation processes at any given time, including those that result in violence or actions directed against the state. Holistic assessments of this kind also represent a valuable contribution by Poland to research conducted in other countries on the social and economic dimensions of the radicalisation.

A portrait of young people and young adults

In their research, the authors of the *Youth Diagnosis 2026* focused on Generation Z, i.e. individuals born between 1996 and 2012. For the purposes of the study, they adopted a division into two basic groups: young people aged 15–18 and young adults aged 19–29. This definitional scope is consistent with the solutions adopted in most European youth strategies and public policy documents concerning young generation.

The publication analyses more than 220 reports, studies and expert analyses published primarily between 2020 and 2025 on various aspects of the young generation's lives in Poland and Europe. It includes both national and international sources, including reports of public institutions, international organisations, research centres as well as youth strategies currently in force in the European Union states.

For the purposes of this publication, representative quantitative research was conducted on adolescents and young adults, as well as on staff working at institutions in the education, social services, healthcare and culture sectors, as well as organisations working with young people. The analysis was supplemented by qualitative research covering both the family environment and social relationships of young people, as well as issues relating to their identity, mental wellbeing and psychological capital. Issues concerning the functioning of youth in the digital environment were addressed, including the impact of social media, disinformation, online violence and the algorithmisation of content. The analysis covered also the educational environment, young people's civic engagement, their position in the labour market, the level of employment stability, and their strategies for achieving independence, including housing-related and economic barriers to entering adulthood.

A key value of the *Youth Diagnosis 2026* lies in its adoption of an interdisciplinary perspective combining the contributions of social policy, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, digital media studies and public policy analyses. This enabled a multidimensional approach to the situation of young people, encompassing both their individual experiences and social relations, as well as broader institutional, cultural and structural determinants. The analysis employs a life course approach, developed primarily by Glen H. Elder Jr. It is based on the assumption that an individual's life course is shaped by a sequence of interrelated experiences, transition points and accumulating risk factors as well as social resources. This made it possible, among other things, to capture the accumulation of risks and critical points emerging at successive stages of adolescence and the transition to adulthood².

The situation of the young generation was analysed both from the perspective of current social challenges, and in the context of long-term cultural, technological and civilisational transformations over the last 2–3 decades. These trends are cumulative in nature and reinforce each other. They affect young people's wellbeing, the level of social cohesion and national security. Nowadays, they live in a world characterised by a high degree of individualisation, with an increasingly evident focus on autonomy, personal needs and mental wellbeing. The growing focus on the 'self', accompanied by a weakening of relationships and communal bonds, increases individuals' susceptibility to environments that offer a strong group identity and simplified narratives of reality. These changes are taking place alongside the digitalisation of everyday life. As many as 71% of young people declare that their generation is addicted to mobile phones. More than 80% of children create social media accounts before the age of 13, and the average time spent online reaches nearly five hours per day³. These trends are reinforced by the functioning of the young generation under conditions of chronic stress and a sense of uncertainty.

² See in more detail: G.H. Elder Jr., M.K. Johnson, R. Crosnoe, *The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory*, in: *Handbook of the Life Course*, J.T. Mortimer, M.J. Shanahan (eds.), New York 2003, pp. 3–19; D. Woodman, J. Wyn, *Youth and Generation: Rethinking Change and Inequality in the Lives of Young People*, London 2015.

³ See in more detail: A. Ładna, K. Kamiński, K. Rosłaniec, A. Wrońska, M. Błazej, A. Jankiewicz, F. Konopczyński, M. Nawrot, *Nastolatki. Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów i rodziców* (Eng. Teenagers. Report on a nationwide survey of students and parents), Warszawa 2025.

Nearly half of teenagers have extremely low self-esteem, and almost every fifth student aged 13–17 has engaged in self-harm over the past year⁴.

Five reasons of youth susceptibility to risky behaviours

As the report shows, excessive use of digital environment by young people, deteriorating mental wellbeing, weakening social relationships, a crisis of social bonds and loneliness, problems at school, in the labour market, and the process of becoming independent, are not merely separate ‘sector-specific challenges’. Together, they form a constellation of risk factors that can lead to exclusion and undermine social integration, as well as increase young people’s vulnerability to radicalisation, polarisation, and behaviour that poses a threat to their own safety and public safety. The accumulation of various psychosocial and environmental stressors is of particular significance.

These conclusions are consistent with contemporary interpretations identified in academic literature and in reports by European institutions dealing with safety and the prevention of extremism. *The Root Causes of Violent Extremism* report prepared by the Radicalisation Awareness Network describes radicalisation as a kaleidoscope of factors encompassing individual, social, economic, political and digital experiences⁵. In this context, the report discusses mutually reinforcing risk configurations, overlapping experiences of marginalisation, the weakening of social bonds, identity crises, psychological strain, political deprivation and functioning within polarised digital environment. On this basis, five key factors can be identified that increase the vulnerability of young generation in Poland to extremist narratives, symbolic violence, civic withdrawal, radicalisation, extremist attitudes and behaviours that destabilise social safety.

⁴ See in more detail: M. Dębski, J. Pyżalski, J. Borchet, H. Witkowska, *Dobre i złe wiadomości – życie online i offline a zdrowie psychiczne polskich nastolatków. Raport z badań* (Eng. Good and bad news – online and offline life and the mental health of Polish teenagers. Research report), Gdańsk 2025.

⁵ M. Ranstorp, M. Meines, *The Root Causes of Violent Extremism*, Luxembourg 2024; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2025*, Luxembourg 2025.

A subjective sense of injustice, marginalisation and grievance

One of the key mechanisms increasing young people's vulnerability to radicalisation in Poland is a subjective sense of injustice, marginalisation and lack of social recognition. It has emotional and interpretative character, what matters is not so much the individual's objective social situation, but rather the way they perceive their own position in the society, relations with institutions and their ability to influence social reality. In the literature on radicalisation, a sense of grievance is considered one of the strongest predictors of susceptibility to extremist narratives, particularly in situations of accumulated frustration and weakening of social bonds⁶.

A significant proportion of the young generation experiences a sense of social 'invisibility' and 'insignificance'. This is confirmed by many indicators describing young people's relations with the state, institutions and society. Only 22% of young people believe that their views are taken into account in public decision-making processes, which is one of the lowest figures among the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. At the same time, only 35% of young Poles view the quality of public services positively, and in surveys, participants have repeatedly pointed out that public policies are designed primarily with older age groups in mind. As a result, young people often perceive themselves as a group lacking real influence on decisions concerning their future. Such people are convinced that their needs, lifestyle and values are not treated as a matter of individual choice. In qualitative research, young adults used expressions such as 'somewhat second-class citizens' and 'no one listens to us – at home, at school or in the state'. The sense of marginalisation is reinforced by the paternalistic and disrespectful treatment of young persons, among others by the education system, the labour market, and political parties, which generates a sense of limited influence over one's social life. In such conditions, radicalisation may be perceived as a form of regaining influence, agency and a sense of satisfaction from action.

⁶ Cf. A.W. Kruglanski, J.J. Bélanger, R. Gunaratna, *The Three Pillars of Radicalization: Needs, Narratives, and Networks*, Oxford 2019.

Chronic stress and anxiety, a sense of uncertainty

Young people live under a great deal of stress and anxiety, constant social, economic and geopolitical uncertainty, which reduces their sense of security. Major sources of tensions include economic concerns and anxiety related to the global situation: 69% of young adults fear the outbreak of war⁷, 57% feel uncertainty due to rising living costs, and more than half are worried about the consequences of climate or demographic change⁸. Concerns about jobs are also a source of tension – these already affect teenagers aged 14–15 and are the result of the ‘transfer of fears’ from parents who have experienced difficulties in the labour market. Most teenagers (78%) are afraid that they will not find suitable employment, and 58% of young adults indicate a lack of job stability as a key problem that makes it difficult to enter adulthood. This reinforces anti-immigrant sentiment among the young people – as many as 68% of people aged 18–24 are concerned about the prospect of large-scale labour migration to Europe. Alongside war, this is one of the most frequently cited threats to the future. At the same time, 55% of study participants believe that migrants drive down wages, 66% – increase crime, and 69% – place a burden on the social welfare system⁹.

The housing situation is a major source of frustration for the Generation Z. The rent gap and limited access to support schemes mean that the proportion of young adults still living at home is steadily rising. According to CBOS research, almost 39% of single people aged between 25 and 34 live with their parents. By way of comparison, in 2005, this figure stood at 29%¹⁰. The factors contributing to ‘blocked adulthood’ are the cause of deep frustration among more than half of the young adults population, who respond to this situation with anger, fear and a sense of threat. This is exacerbated by an infodemic in a digital environment – that is, an overload of information in which it is difficult to distinguish truth from lies and manipulation – as well as the tribalisation of discourse, information bubbles and a low level of media literacy. War, migration, economic uncertainty,

⁷ *Młodzi Polacy o wyzwaniach stojących przed ich pokoleniem* (Eng. Young Poles on the challenges facing their generation), ‘CBOS Research report’ 2025, no. 56, comp. J. Scovil, Warszawa 2025.

⁸ See in more detail: European Parliament, *Eurobarometer Youth Survey 2024*, Brussels 2025.

⁹ *Młodzi Polacy o wyzwaniach...*

¹⁰ *Młodzi dorośli w domu rodzinnym* (Eng. Young adults living at home), ‘CBOS Research report’ 2025, no. 108, comp. D. Litwin, Warszawa 2025.

rising cost of living, competition for jobs and social status are fuelling the need for simple answers and 'us versus them' divisions.

The experience of exclusion, marginalisation, violence and humiliation

The report identifies a sense of deprivation as a third mechanism driving adolescents and young adults toward radical behaviours that threaten security. In 2023, extreme poverty affected 7.6% of people aged 0–17 (approx. 521 000 children), which was the highest level since 2015 and represented an increase of around 125 000 people compared with the previous year¹¹. Despite Poland's relatively favourable economic situation and the very strong state of its labour market compared with other EU countries, around 10% of young people aged 15–29 are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This involves the risk of long-term social exclusion and unstable pathways into adulthood. Approx. 23% of people aged 11–17 experienced at least one form of neglect, with emotional neglect being the most common type¹².

The increase in violence against children and youth is a risk factor. According to the report of the 'We Give Children Strength Foundation' (Polish: Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę, FDDS), as many as one-third of people up to the age of 18 have experienced various forms of aggression from those closest to them, and up to one-fourth aged 11–17 may have been sexually abused¹³. 67% of staff at youth-oriented institutions, who participated in the study for the report, highlighted an increase in violence. Exclusion and marginalisation also occur within the family environment. One in four 15- to 19-year-olds does not feel supported or accepted by their families. In turn, in the school environment, 62% of students experienced various forms of peer violence¹⁴. The latest research by the FDDS indicates that peer

¹¹ R. Szarfenberg, *Poverty Watch 2025*, Warszawa 2025.

¹² K. Makaruk, K. Drabarek, A. Popyk, S. Wójcik, *Diagnoza przemocy wobec dzieci w Polsce 2023* (Eng. Diagnosis of violence against children in Poland 2023), Warszawa 2023, p. 6.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See in more detail: R. Kaczan, P. Rycielski, M. Wójcik, *Obraz bullingu w szkołach ponadpodstawowych* (Eng. Bullying in secondary schools), https://swps.pl/images/DOKUMENTY/Raporty/Obraz-bullingu-w-szkolach-ponadpodstawowych- raport-2025.pdf?utm_source=mautic&utm_medium=mailing [accessed: 24 VI 2026].

violence has become a widespread phenomenon. According to the *Peers. Report on Peer Violence 2026*, as many as 87% of children and young people aged 10–17 have experienced at least one form of peer violence, 75% have encountered cyberbullying, and 63% have experienced physical violence. It is particularly worrying that almost one in three young people (31%) has experienced repeated bullying, which, according to the relevant literature, is one of the most harmful forms of peer violence¹⁵.

Research on bullying indicates that prolonged violence, rejection and marginalisation increase young people's inclination to seek out alternative communities that provide a sense of belonging, significance and agency. The experience of exclusion and 'social invisibility' can undermine trust in the institutions, whereas radical circles offer emotional community, empowerment, as well as symbolic compensation for earlier experiences of humiliation and failure.

Mental overload, low mental resilience and an identity crisis

A significant proportion of the young generation lives under conditions of constant stress, pressure and reduced mental resilience. Almost two-thirds of people aged 15–18, who took part in the survey conducted for the report, said they felt burnt out or depressed, with 36% reporting this to a significant or very significant extent. During the moderated discussions, young people kept saying: 'We haven't even started living yet, and we are already utterly exhausted'. 70% of young people cite school as one of the main sources of everyday stress and mental overload¹⁶.

Almost half of teenagers aged 10–19 have low self-esteem, and around 40% of secondary school pupils show symptoms of depression¹⁷. One in

¹⁵ J. Kopycka, S. Wójcik, P. Raczyński, *Równieśnicy. Raport o przemocy rówieśniczej 2026* (Eng. *Peers. Report on peer violence 2026*) Warszawa 2026, pp. 8–9.

¹⁶ See in more detail: *Prawa dziecka w Polsce 2024. Wyniki badania porównawczego prezentującego perspektywę dzieci, rodziców i nauczycieli oraz rekomendacje koniecznych zmian* (Eng. *Children's rights in Poland 2024. The results of a comparative study presenting the perspectives of children, parents and teachers, and recommendations for necessary changes*), UNICEF, <https://unicef.pl/prawa-dziecka/analizy-i-rzeczniactwo/analizy-i-rekomendacje/prawa-dziecka-w-polsce-2024>, p. 12 [accessed: 24 VI 2026].

¹⁷ See in more detail: J. Flis, M. Dębski, *Młode głowy. Otwarcie o zdrowiu psychicznym. Raport z badania dotyczącego zdrowia psychicznego, poczucia własnej wartości i sprawczości wśród młodych ludzi w Polsce* (Eng. *Young heads. Opening up about mental health. Report from*

four pupils experiences feelings of sadness and emptiness¹⁸. Particularly alarming is the rise in the number of suicide attempts among young people – between 2013 and 2024, the figure increased approx. sixfold. The vast majority of staff in institutions working with young people (87%) have observed a rise in emotional and mental health problems among the Generation Z. A state of chronic stress, reduced mental resilience and an identity crisis may increase young people's susceptibility to radical narratives that offer simple explanations of reality, a strong sense of group identity, a sense of agency and emotional compensation, and thus foster openness to behaviour that undermines social and public security.

Weakened relationships, loneliness, alienation, lack of sense of belonging

The final factor identified in the report as increasing young people's susceptibility to radical behaviour that threatens public safety is the weakening of social ties and a growing sense of loneliness and alienation. Individualisation of social life, focus on individual autonomy, the selective nature of relationships and the diminishing role of community institutions are leading to a narrowing of the support networks available to young people. Relationships between adolescents and young adults often involve only 2–3 people, more than 80% of young people maintain their most important bonds within a very narrow group of friends¹⁹. Intergenerational ties have also weakened, as have the relationships previously forged by school, social organisations, interest groups or local communities.

Around a quarter of pupils experience exclusion from their peer group and loneliness at school, while 64% of pupils in Poland say they feel part of the school community, compared with the OECD average of 75%²⁰. 38% of teenagers report feeling lonely, and 16% experience severe loneliness. Among young adults, the sense of loneliness affects more than 42% people. At the same time, 44% of young adults are not in any relationship and do

a study on mental health, self-esteem and agency among young people in Poland), Warszawa 2023.

¹⁸ See: M. Dębski, J. Pyżalski, J. Borchet, H. Witkowska, *Dobre i złe wiadomości...*

¹⁹ See in more detail: *Diagnoza Młodzieży 2026...*, p. 63.

²⁰ See in more detail: *PISA 2022 Results. Learning During – and From – Disruption*, vol. 2, Paris 2023.

not have anyone close to them²¹. Almost two-thirds of young adults believe that it is difficult to find a suitable partner these days, half say they do not trust other people²². This is often accompanied by low levels of social trust and difficulties in building lasting emotional relationships. The factors mentioned encourage the search for groups or individuals with a clearly defined identity who offer support and a sense of belonging, including those from radical circles, promising easy respect and a restoration of a sense of agency.

The digital and information environment as 'a risk multiplier'

The digital and information environment has become a key 'risk multiplier', that is, a factor that increases the risk of young people being susceptible to radicalisation and behaviour that undermines social security. Particularly worrying is the nature of young people's lives, which are shaped by the recommendation algorithms of social platforms, streaming services, online games and messaging apps. A characteristic of the modern digital environment is the asymmetry between the pace of development of online platforms and the ability of public institutions to regulate and oversee them. As a result, young users remain exposed to the influence of algorithmic content selection mechanisms that can reinforce cognitive polarisation, create closed information bubbles and increase exposure to extremist and anti-establishment narratives.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the available research in this field. Firstly, the vast majority of young people who use social platforms are exposed to various types of conspiracy theories in this environment. The more time they spend there, the more susceptible they become to their influence. Those least resistant to the influence of conspiracy theories are individuals aged 14–16, and among adults, those up to the age of 35²³.

²¹ See in more detail: *Młodzi Polacy o męskości, kobiecości i różnicach między płciami* (Eng. Young Poles on masculinity, femininity and gender differences), 'CBOS Research report', 2025, no. 52, comp. J. Scovil, Warszawa 2025.

²² See: K. Gagatęk, U. Karaś, J. Kelsz, *Stan młodych 2025* (Eng. State of youth 2025), Warszawa 2025.

²³ A. Byrne, D. Martin, C. Jones, N. Galbraith, T. Mercer, *Conspiracy theory beliefs in the adolescent population: A systematic review*, "Journal of Adolescence" 2024, vol. 96, no. 5, pp. 925–939. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12316>.

Secondly, recommendation algorithms enable easy access to violent content – they promote radical, eye-catching content that isolates young people in information bubbles. There is also a clear trend in boys' exposure to misogynistic messages that promote hatred towards girls and women, reducing them to a subordinate role in relation to men. The so-called manosphere – created through algorithmic radicalisation is a conglomerate of extremist content²⁴.

Thirdly, we are seeing a huge increase in the amount of sexually explicit material, including pornography (distributed mainly by social platforms), and content depicting the sexual abuse of children, the so-called CSAM (child sexual abuse materials). Analyses concerning the activities of the 764 Network²⁵ – deemed terrorist by some countries – indicate that such actions are not driven solely by sexual motives, rather, they exploit the natural curiosity and confusion of young people to generate materials used for manipulation, intimidation and the coercion of criminal acts²⁶.

At the same time, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of encrypted messaging apps, which, while providing a sense of privacy, have also become tools for criminal activity. Numerous analyses carried out by institutions responsible for security indicate that this represents a new trend in the development of phenomena threatening public safety, which are linked to the use of popular applications for weaponisation of minors – that is, exploitation of children and young people as a form of weapon, a tool for exerting influence, destabilisation or causing harm. Particular attention should be paid to two phenomena: nihilistic violence²⁷ and assigning tasks

²⁴ K. Regehr, C. Shaughnessy, M. Zhao, N. Shaughnessy, *Safer scrolling. How algorithms popularise and gamify online hate and misogyny for young people*, Canterbury 2024.

²⁵ The 764 Network is a loose international online community comprising mainly very young people associated with extreme forms of online psychological abuse, blackmail, self-harm, sexual coercion and the radicalisation of minors. The name derives from the number used by one of the community's first administrators. See in more detail: K. Ciesiołkiewicz, *Weaponizacja osób małoletnich i młodych dorosłych. Nowe zagrożenia dla bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego* (Eng. Weaponisation of minors and young adults. New threats to internal security), https://uczelniaokrczaka.pl/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/WEAPONIZACJA_MATERIAL.pdf, p. 17 [accessed: 24 VI 2026].

²⁶ *OSINT Report 764*, 12 September 2024, https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Public%20Version%20of%2020240910_nr02_OSINT_Report_764%20.pdf [accessed: 12 V 2026].

²⁷ *Terror without ideology? The rise of nihilistic violence*, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 8 V 2025, <https://www.isdglobal.org/digital-dispatch/terror-without-ideology-the-rise-of-nihilistic-violence-an-isd-investigation/> [accessed: 12 V 2026].

to minors through popular messaging apps. The first of these relates to the operation of distributed networks known as Com (English: Communities). These are informal groups, movements and individuals who communicate with one another online and who have their own system for establishing their status within the group by engaging in criminal activities²⁸. The 764 Network, as described earlier, is the very epitome of this type of nihilist form of radicalisation.

Europol points to the growing scale of the use of instant messaging apps to commission criminal activities. It refers to them with the acronym VaaS (violence-as-a-service)²⁹. The data shows that digital environment not only increases exposure to extreme content but also weakens the ability to critically evaluate information and reinforces social polarisation. The data indicates a low level of competence regarding the assessment of digital content credibility. More than 40% young people believe it is difficult to distinguish between true and false information online, and less than half say they are interested in the credibility of the profiles they follow and sources of information³⁰. Research conducted by the Centre for Information Society Analysis at Korczak University shows that among teenagers there is a distinct, strong relativisation of truth and a reliance on the principle of fairness – the more comments there are under a particular post and the more popular it is, the more credible it becomes. It also seems that information overload is leading to ever-increasing cognitive passivity³¹.

²⁸ K. Ciesiołkiewicz, *Nowe zagrożenia. Nihilistycznie zorientowana przemoc małoletnich oraz „przemoc jako usługa” – wyzwania dla bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego i społecznego* (Eng. New threats. Nihilistic juvenile violence and ‘violence as a service’ – challenges to internal and social security), https://uczelniakorczaka.pl/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/NOWE-ZAGROZENIA_Konrad-Ciesiolkiewicz-Uczelnia-Korczaka.pdf, p. 6 [accessed: 12 V 2026].

²⁹ *Operational Taskforce GRIMM*, Europol, 1 IV 2025, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/how-we-work/operations/operational-taskforce-grimm> [accessed: 12 V 2026].

³⁰ R. Lange, A. Wrońska, A. Ładna, K. Kamiński, M. Błażej, A. Jankiewicz, K. Rosłaniec, *Nastolatki 3.0. Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów i rodziców* (Eng. Teenagers 3.0. Report on a nationwide survey of schoolchildren and parents), R. Lange (ed.), Warszawa 2023, p. 7.

³¹ K. Ciesiołkiewicz, A. Buchner, K. Ferenc-Błońska, M. Wierzbicka-Tarkowska, *Między faktem a feedem. Podatność młodzieży na dezinformację w środowisku mediów cyfrowych* (Eng. Between fact and feed. Young people’s susceptibility to disinformation in the digital media environment), Rzeszów 2025, pp. 55–61.

Recommendations

The *Youth Diagnosis 2026* indicates that limiting the young generation's susceptibility to radicalisation requires a systemic approach that goes beyond the actions of security institutions, and responses to isolated incidents. The conclusions included in the discussed report make it possible to formulate the key directions for further actions.

A coherent national youth strategy should be developed, based on an analysis of life trajectories, combining educational, social, health and digital initiatives, as well as measures to strengthen psychosocial resilience of young people. One element of national youth strategy should be public policy measures aimed at countering radicalisation leading to violence.

Cross-sectoral initiatives are also essential to counter the radicalisation of young people, including the involvement of the social services sector. In European countries, the importance of the preventive social approach is growing. It is based on the premise that young people's radicalisation is often the result of a combination of relational, mental health, educational and social problems. Schools, social services, working with families, local organisations and mental health institutions play a key role in this approach. Particular importance is attached to schools as institutions for the early detection of crises and the building of psychosocial resilience, emotional competences and a sense of belonging. In many EU countries, teachers, educators and psychologists are trained to recognise signs of social isolation, sudden changes in behaviour, fascination with violence, radical narratives and mental health crises. It is also important to combat peer violence, including bullying, as well as to strengthen relationships and group cohesion.

Increasing importance is being attached to environmental youth work. This idea is based on creating safe and easily accessible spaces for meeting, engaging in activities and building relationships, which young people can use voluntarily, without any formal requirements for participation and institutional barriers. Such 'low-threshold social spaces' operate outside school and family, enabling young people to form relationships with their peers and trusted adults. Youth clubs, mentoring, street working or sport and cultural activities strengthen social bonds, agency and local integration, as well as enable the early identification of marginalisation, mental health crises and radicalisation processes. These measures are complemented by civic, media and digital education, which helps to build resilience to disinformation, manipulation and

extremist narratives. Prevention of radicalisation is increasingly based on the development of social and emotional skills as well as strengthening the so-called community resilience, because strong social relationships, sense of belonging, agency as well as presence of accessible and supportive institutions are a key safeguard against extremism.

The authors of the *Youth Diagnosis 2026* propose focusing public sector efforts on weakening the social factors conducive to radicalisation and dangerous behaviours, as well as on prevention and building resilience. Based on the findings of the research, they also identify two areas of action: the first focuses more on youth, the second on young adults. In accordance with the triad of resilience, it is proposed that the competencies and resources that protect young people from the influence of disinformation, violence, manipulation and radical groups should be strengthened. The key is to reinforce young people's mental and emotional resilience, which involves developing social and emotional skills, the ability to cope with stress, build relationships and regulate emotions. The second pillar of this approach is strengthening relational and community resilience, rebuilding social ties, reinforcing the sense of belonging and supporting peer, family and local communities. The third element is information and digital resilience – the development of media literacy skills, critical thinking and the ability to recognise manipulation, disinformation and extremist content in the digital environment. Regulations of digital environment are also urgently needed, including, among other things, effective regulation of digital platforms, limiting exposure to violence, pornography, toxic content and extremist content, greater responsibility of platforms for their recommendation algorithms, and the development of rapid response and support systems.

The second line of action focuses on young adults, and the aim in this case is to strengthen life stability as a means of preventing radicalisation. The authors of the report indicate that job insecurity, the precarious nature of work and barriers to housing increase frustration and a sense of a lack of prospects. It is therefore crucial to implement the public policies described as the triad of resilience. This includes improving job security, access to housing and support for becoming independent, as well as enhancing social mobility by reducing transport exclusion.

The *Youth Diagnosis 2026* presents one of the most comprehensive pictures of the current situation of young generation in Poland. It shows that radicalisation of young people is not just a problem of security

or the influence of ideology, but a phenomenon deeply rooted in social processes. The authors of the study indicated that effective prevention must be based primarily on policies that strengthen social functioning of the young generation – developing psychological, relational and informational resilience, and ensuring a stable transition to adulthood for young people through job security, access to housing and increased social mobility. Curbing radicalisation therefore requires action at the source – rebuilding social ties, a sense of agency and a sense of security in young people's lives. In the long term, this may become one of the key factors in strengthening social resilience and state security.

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