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## **Discourse Analysis of Policies to Prevent Violent Radicalization in Ten European Countries and their Impact on Educational Systems**

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# **Discourse Analysis of Policies to Prevent Violent Radicalization in Ten European Countries and their Impact on Educational Systems**

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## **Abstract**

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After the 9/11 attacks, Western societies and institutions try to respond to terrorist attacks. The fight against radicalization has gained prominence on international agendas. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) proposes a new learning objective: global competence. This research analyses how the attitudes of global competence, are reflected in government plans for the prevention of radicalization in ten European countries: Spain, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and Finland. A lexicometric analysis was performed using clustering techniques. Iramuteq program is used. A quantitative analysis was also carried out on a qualitative data corpus to facilitate comparative analysis. While European socio-educational policies are, theoretically, a fundamental pillar in the pursuit of integration, in practice, the network of correspondence shows a policy focused on the threat of terrorism, where police intervention is prioritized, and the role of education is insignificant. We conclude that policies for the prevention of radicalization in Europe do not reflect the characteristics that define democratic, interculturally competent citizenship and are not aligned with global competence. We suggest promoting transversality and unity of policies which encourage integration and social cohesion and reassessing the value of schools as a proactive measure for inclusion.

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**Keywords:** integration, global competence, radicalization, PISA, education policy

# **La Análisis del Discurso de las Políticas de Prevención de la Radicalización Violenta de 10 Países Europeos y su Impacto en los Sistemas Educativos**

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## **Resumen**

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Después de los ataques del 11 de septiembre las sociedades e instituciones occidentales intentan responder a los ataques terroristas. La lucha contra la radicalización gana protagonismo en las agendas internacionales. El Programa de la OCDE para la Evaluación Internacional de Estudiantes (PISA) propone un nuevo objetivo de aprendizaje: la competencia global. Esta investigación analiza cómo las actitudes de esta competencia se reflejan en los planes gubernamentales para la prevención de la radicalización de diez países europeos: España, Suecia, Alemania, Dinamarca, Países Bajos, Austria, Bélgica, Francia, Reino Unido y Finlandia. Se realizó un análisis lexicométrico del discurso con el software Iramuteq que combina un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo para facilitar un análisis comparativo. Si bien las políticas socioeducativas europeas son, teóricamente, un pilar fundamental en la búsqueda de la integración, en la práctica, la red de correspondencia muestra una política centrada en la amenaza del terrorismo, se prioriza la intervención policial y el papel de la educación es insignificante. Concluimos que las políticas para la prevención de la radicalización europeas no reflejan las características que definen una ciudadanía democrática, interculturalmente competente y no están alineadas con la competencia global. Sugerimos promover la transversalidad y unidad de políticas que favorezcan la integración y la cohesión social y revalorizar el papel de la escuela como medio proactivo de inclusión.

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**Palabras clave:** integración, competencia global, radicalización, PISA, política educativa

Since the 9/11 attacks, Western democratic societies have been trying to respond to terrorist attacks (OECD, 2018a). Research on radicalization (Coolsaet, 2019) shows that its development is a complex process, arising from varied and interrelated causes and encompasses both individual (Schwartz, 2018) and structural aspects (Nemr & Savage, 2019). No profile can be made of radicalized individuals, although they do share some common characteristics such as: the Islamic religion, a complex socio-economic situation and the loss of cultural identity. A variety of factors come together in their radicalization, such as the pressure of modernization, the economic, cultural, social and political breakdown, the prolongation of some conflicts, the need for belonging and security, or the growing frustration of young people living in hostile foreign societies with little possibility of a future (Motti-Stefanidi & Salmela-Aro, 2018).

Immigration from Muslim countries, together with the arrival of more than one million refugees from mainly Muslim countries on Europe's shores in the course of 2015 (Frontex Agency, 2016), gave rise to a controversial and heated debate in Europe about "newcomers" that had major repercussions in the political, social and economic spheres. The press at the time dubbed it a new "crisis for Europe". However, hostility towards Muslim immigrants is not exclusive to countries with a higher percentage of Euro-skeptics or that has been affected by terrorism and immigration, but also extends to Eastern European countries (Strabac et al., 2014).

Violent events have caused a strong social and media commotion and are considered a threat to security and to the values of freedom, citizenship and tolerance. Most of the attacks have been carried out by so-called "domestic or internal fighters" belonging to the second generation of Muslim immigrants who are socially stagnant even though they were born in the midst of European liberalism. As a result, suspicions and prejudices towards both the immigrant population as well as the refugees and asylum seekers have increased among the original population. Recent research shows increased hostilities and radicalization (Koo, 2018). The enmities are known to be mutual, and a similar psychology is evident in both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities and in both the native and non-native populations. The other is perceived negatively as being different and is seen as a threat to one's own values and way of life (Obaidi et al., 2018).

As a reaction to the attacks, the fight against radicalization has gained prominence on the agenda of international institutions and complements to the United Nations Plan of Action. Many of the most relevant international organizations have held conferences, symposia and resources and guidelines on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education (PVE-E).

The European Union's anti-terrorism policy has evolved from a reactive stance to a comprehensive and multidisciplinary strategy that includes seven action areas in which educational elements are particularly relevant as preventive factors to facilitate integration. Europe adopts a plan (European Commission, 2016) that includes three main groups: a) preventive actions for socio-economic and educational improvement; b) repressive actions against radicalization and c) actions for the rehabilitation of radicalized individuals.

The Paris bombing in 2015 was a significant event that led to a meeting of European education ministers and the adoption of the "Paris Declaration" (Eurydice, 2016). The "Declaration" defined common EU objectives and the implementation of initiatives to prevent radicalization of youth through education. Within this framework, Europe has become a paradigm and "laboratory" of integration and European socio-educational policies have become a fundamental pillar in the search for integration and social cohesion. The EU's efforts include the Strategic Framework 2020, which outlines the challenges, objectives and proposals for measures for education and training at across the EU. In 2015, the criteria for the period 2010-2020 were validated and the following priorities were indicated: the need to promote equality and integration, the transmission of shared European values, intercultural skills and active citizenship. Added later were measures to prevent social exclusion, bullying, dropping out of school and attention to the first signs of radicalization. Recently, the European institutions addressed with concern measures to prevent violent radicalization in the member states of the European Union (European Commission, 2020).

Developing a global perspective in students of the 21st century that allows them to participate in an interconnected world, to understand different perspectives, to learn to dialogue, to value other cultures and to benefit from interculturality has become objectives of world educational policy. As a result, international organizations encourage intercultural education and the development of civic skills.

The OECD (2018a) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) proposes to evaluate global competence and assess how education systems are leading young people toward a diverse, peaceful society. The interest of this test lies in the fact that it is used to identify key competences in 15-year-old students, competencies that, in the future, will allow them to solve problems in their adult life. PISA was created to provide policy makers with the factors associated with educational success. However, PISA has become a mechanism for decision-making and global governance, with a marked neoliberal tendency, which uses its recommendations to guide national educational policy reforms (Hopfenbeck et al., 2018; Robertson, 2021).

The conceptual framework of PISA (Council of Europe, 2016a, 2016b) reflects how Europe plays host to identities, beliefs, worldviews, perspectives and cultures that not only differ but sometimes are strongly opposed to one another (Martinen et al., 2018). The Council of Europe takes up this concern, prompted by the terrorist attacks by young radicalized Europeans, and proposes strengthening investment in education so that citizenship is not restricted to national boundaries, and so that the coexistence of cultures is seen as something positive, and young people searching for an identity or susceptible to radicalization find a balance between opposing dilemmas - equity and freedom, autonomy and community, innovation and continuity. In short, the aim is for education and coexistence to take outweigh radicalization and fanaticism.

Based on the competence model defined by the DeSeCo project and the guidelines set out by international institutions, the OECD has drawn up a global strategy: The Future of Education and Skills: OECD Education 2030 Framework (OECD, 2018b) to define what learning is needed in the coming decades for societies with social and cultural diversity and for societies that are changing so rapidly and profoundly. In addition to the above categories, there is another category that brings together "transformation skills" that address the need for future generations to be responsible, innovative and able to reconcile tensions and alternatives.

PISA 2018 assesses the three traditional core domains (reading, mathematics and science) as well as a new learning objective: global competence, which it defines as: "the ability to analyze global and intercultural issues, from the perspective of respect for human rights, to interact with people from different cultures, to take action for the common

good and sustainable development" (OECD, 2018a, p. 4). However, critics have voiced concern of the conceptual framework of global competence, pointing to the absence of diverse cultural perspectives as expected from an international comparison test (Grotlüschen, 2018; Sälzer & Roczen, 2018), the dominant liberal and Western approach (Auld & Morris, 2019) and the lack of consensus in the design of the conceptual model and the items and descriptors of global competence (Simpson & Dervin, 2019).

The main objective of this article is to analyze the presence of the attitudes of global PISA competence in the plans for preventing radicalization, which are part of the European Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Terrorist Recruitment of ten European countries. The descriptors of this competence are deemed to be the defining features of democratic and intercultural competent citizenship and should be chosen by educators as a proactive measure of integration (OECD, 2018a). In addition, the most salient features of each plan to prevent radicalization are described as they relate to youth and education. The presence or absence of these variables in these plans, together with a critical analysis of them, allows a comparative analysis to be made and conclusions to be drawn for the improvement of policies favoring integration from the educational point of view.

## **Method**

### **Objectives**

This research analyzes how European plans to prevent radicalization include the attitudes that make up the global competence assessed by PISA 2018. The conceptual framework of global competence was defined from an extensive process led by the Council of Europe that started with 101 conceptual schemes of global, intercultural and civic competence that were broken down into 55 clusters of competences and finally simplified into 20 competences (Council of Europe, 2016a, 2016b).

Early on in this research, it was found that including the 20 descriptors of global competence in our analysis made it difficult to understand and interpret them graphically, so it was decided to keep the research on the attitudes compared to the skills and knowledge that have been included in the school curriculum for years. This selection was made for the following reasons.

Firstly, attitudes and values are related, they have unity, and sometimes values are even integrated within attitudes. Secondly, we believe that there is a strong correlation between attitudes and the construction of an intercultural and inclusive European citizenship (Cala et al., 2018). Finally, this research aims to fill the gap detected by researchers in this field who find there is little research on the relationship between education and radicalization and, especially, on attitudes because they are not addressed in intervention programs (Burde et al., 2015). For Davies (2018) there is still too little information and too insufficient evidence on the real impact that the different activities that make up the plans for preventing radicalization are having in the field of education. Therefore, the following six attitudes have been studied: openness, respect, civic awareness, responsibility, self-efficacy, and tolerance- (Council of Europe, 2016a, 2016b), which the OECD includes in the OECD PISA program (OECD, 2018a) and are described in table 1 below (Council of Europe, 2016a, p. 12).

## **Sample**

The body of analysis is made up of the government plans to combat radicalization in ten European countries: Spain, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and Finland (Table 2). The selection of these 10 countries was based on all of them being European countries, having developed plans of prevention of the radicalization in the same time period (between 2015 to 2020) and having suffered terrorist attacks with mortal victims in their national territory. The plans were initially published in the local languages of the countries. For the study, we had to unify them in a language recognizable by the lexicographical analysis software, so they were translated into English. They are presented chronologically because it is assumed that the earlier ones may have served as a reference for the latter ones.



Table 1.

*Description of the analyzed attitudes*

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<b>Attitudes</b>
<b>Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices</b> Openness is an attitude towards people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself or towards beliefs, world views and practices which differ from one's own. Openness entails broad mindedness to facilitate personal relationships with others.
<b>Respect</b> Respect is an esteem for someone or something. It's an intrinsic value. Having respect for other people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations or different beliefs, opinions or practices from one's own is vital.
<b>Civic-mindedness</b> Civic-mindedness is an attitude towards a community or social group to which one belongs that is larger than one's immediate circle of family and friends. It involves a sense of belonging to that community, an awareness of other people in the community, an awareness of the effects of one's actions on those people and solidarity.
<b>Responsibility</b> Responsibility is being reflective about one's actions and how to act in a morally appropriate way, conscientiously performing those actions.
<b>Self-efficacy</b> Self-efficacy is an attitude towards the self. It involves a positive belief in one's own ability to undertake the actions that are required to achieve particular goals, and confidence that one can understand issues, select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks and navigate obstacles successfully.
<b>Tolerance</b> Tolerance of ambiguity is an attitude towards situations which are uncertain and subject to multiple conflicting interpretations. It involves evaluating these kinds of situations positively.

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Source. [Council of Europe, 2016a, p. 12.](#)

Table 2.

*Radicalization prevention plans analyzed*

<b>Year of publication</b>	<b>Government program (original language)</b>	<b>Country</b>
2015	Plan estratégico nacional de lucha contra la radicalización violenta	Spain
2015	Prevent, preempt and protect. The Swedish Counter-terrorism Strategy	Sweden
2016	Federal Government strategy to prevent extremism and promote democracy	Germany
2016	Preventing and countering extremism and radicalisation. National action plan	Denmark
2016	National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2016-2020	The Netherlands
2017	The Austrian Strategy for the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism and De-radicalisation	Austria
2018	Le Salafisme en Belgique. Mécanismes et réalité	Belgium
2018	Prévenir Pour Protéger. Plan national de prévention de la radicalisation	France
2018	The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism	The United Kingdom
2020	National Action Plan for the prevention of violent radicalization and extremism 2019-2023	Finland

## **Instrument**

The research used the methodology and tools of a textual or lexicographical analysis. To encourage rigor, networks were analyzed using clustering techniques (Leydesdorff & Persson, 2010). Text statistics software was used that applies multidimensional exploratory analysis methods on linguistic data. For this purpose, the software analyzes the texts in the logic of searching for

similarities and tracing matches in the texts for the same graphic shapes, whether words or lexems (Reinert, 1986, 1990). In this way, the different lexical worlds of discourse are grouped and classified in a descending hierarchical way to identify the general semantics of the narration. The resulting textometry, known as logometry or textual statistics, is the current form of lexicometry. This methodology is justified because it proposes statistical calculations for the study of a corpus of digitized texts and thus allows the study of multivariate texts. Use of this methodology is suitable for comparative studies, as is the case with this research. The software generates a great amount of relational information, so the Kamada-Kawai pruning algorithm was used to make relevant points more visible (Kamada-Kawai, 1989). Furthermore, starting off with the six attitudes of this study, templates of textual discourse analysis were generated to determine their presence explicitly or implicitly in the selected radicalization prevention plans.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedure**

It is important to note that the results generated by the software are too many to read. It produced 800 co-occurrences. Co-occurrence is understood as the relationship of lexical units within a text corpus, which necessarily have complementary terms as a semantic field. As this is a data mining analysis, the first 80 co-occurrences have been selected to elaborate the color images, which visually respond to the objective of this research: check the reflection of competences in all the plans for the prevention of radicalization.

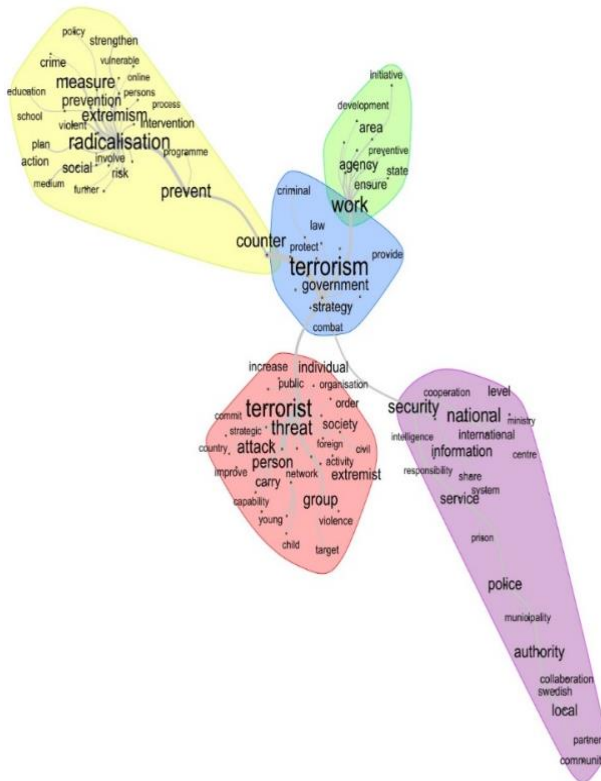
Each graph is a set of words that are related by their nearness to the object of study. The image carries a thread, with colored clusters branching off it, each based on relational data analysis. The thickness of the links also provides valuable information because it determines the importance of their relationship. The keywords are in the nodes of the graphs and represent the co-occurrence between them. The size of the words shows their value within the co-occurrence network. The colors of the different clusters are random and only serve to make it easier to visualize the differentiation between the blocks of common word groups.

## Results

The analysis tool has produced the graph shown in Figure 1 that visualizes the network of similarities among the ten plans analyzed and, consequently, allows us to conclude the main characteristics followed by the strategy to prevent radicalization in the ten countries analyzed.

**Figure 1.**

*Network of common co-words in the prevention plans analyzed*



Source. Produced by the authors of this study with the methodology used in Azqueta & Merino-Arribas (2022)

Iramuteq visualizes graphically the similarity that exists in the official documents and clearly highlights that the threat is the matching metadata in all the official documents analysed. The network is grouped into five clusters. Closely linked to the threat, a second aspect that appears in all the documents stands out «security», which can be seen in the purple cluster. It follows that governments put surveillance, both police and citizen, to prevent radicalization. However, the references to actions that directly imply prevention versus surveillance are located in the distant clusters and far from the center, as in the yellow cluster. This would indicate that its role is still embryonic and marginal. Although the documents are qualified as preventive, the analysis shows that they place a considerable emphasis on security and that their message to citizens is geared towards security and protection. According to the analysis of this study, that investigates whether education is a relevant element in the prevention of violent radicalization, it should be noted that the term «education» is sporadic. The other two clusters (purple and red), further away from the middle and unrelated to each other, show another common aspect to the European plans to prevent radicalism: security. Emphasis is placed on cooperation between international intelligence departments, as well as on alerting to technology used by terrorists. It is concluded that education and school are not very relevant aspects: they occupy scattered and decentralized positions (not in sections of mediation and matching) and are small in size.

Table 3 summarizes a comparison between the plans of the ten European countries detailing the fulfillment or lack of fulfillment of the attitudes reflected in global competence in the plans examined.

From a critical perspective, it should be noted that the attitude of self-efficacy; understood as confidence in oneself, the capacity to take on goals and overcome obstacles; and the civic-mindedness; understood as an attitude towards a community or social group to which one belongs; are under-represented in the plans analyzed. However, the attitudes with the highest rating are responsibility and tolerance. However, the first appeal is to the attitude of responsibility which is present in all the plans under consideration. Some governments urge citizens to be responsible for detecting risk factors, such as the request to health care workers, social workers and educators. Secondly, to tolerance and its opposite, intolerance, in the case of Belgium, to refer to intolerance to radical Salafism, which is present in all the plans except the French and Finish plans, which do not include this democratic attitude.

Table 3.

*Inclusion of the attitudes in the Prevention Plans analyzed*

	<b>OPENNESS</b>	<b>RESPECT</b>	<b>CIVIC-MINDEDNESS</b>	<b>RESPONSABILITY</b>	<b>SELF-EFFICACY</b>	<b>TOLERANCE</b>
<b>Spain</b>		X		X		X
<b>Sweden</b>		X		X		X
<b>Germany</b>	X	X		X		X
<b>Denmark</b>	X		X	X		X
<b>Netherlands</b>	X			X		X
<b>Austria</b>	X	X		X	X	X
<b>Belgium</b>				X		
<b>France</b>	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>United Kingdom</b>	X		X	X		X
<b>Finland</b>		X	X	X		

Source. Produced by the authors of this study

With regard to the analysis of each plan, the following considerations are noteworthy.

The Spanish regulations ([Spanish Government, 2015](#)) are the pioneers and as such, they are generic, markedly policing and focused on public safety. The

regulations distinguish three areas of action: internal, external (outside Spain) and cyberspace. They suggest the townships be the ones to control and share information on risk groups. Spain chooses to produce local risk maps that identify dangerous micro-scenarios. The Spanish government's plan makes no explicit reference to the education system, although it considers it to be a cooperating actor. Education is included in this plan in a residual, generic way, focusing on social awareness and training in democratic values.

Sweden ([Government Office of Sweden, 2015](#)) points out that radicalization is a complete phenomenon that is carried out through social relationships where young people end up joining extremist groups through friends, family or social leaders.

Germany ([Federal Government, 2016](#)) has a National Program for the Prevention of Islamic Extremism, which stands out for its focus on prevention. The term citizenship does not appear in the plan, despite the fact that the document is entitled "Preventing extremism and promoting democracy". It emphasizes the education of young people since most of the radicalized people in this country are between 18 and 24 years old and 20% between 12 and 17 years old; so it gives an important role to the school and the family. These two words are among the 20 most cited terms in the plan's top word ranking. In addition, religion is the third most frequently cited term among a total of the 800 most often repeated words. The German government is urging that the universities should be the ones to train teachers, social workers or Islamic religious leaders in the Islamic religion.

Denmark ([Danish Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing, 2016](#)) has launched the Aarhus Model, after the country's second largest city, which is noteworthy for its preventive nature in which education and school play a major role and whose main objective is to dissuade young people from radicalization. It defines violent extremism as opposition to fundamental democratic values. The measures are in line with the European policy for an inclusive and responsible citizenship in which young people play a clearly leading role. This Model also accepts those who repent and facilitates reintegration into society, if they have not committed crimes. Denmark focuses on an extensive network (parents, teachers, police, social workers, youth association staff or volunteers) to alert them if they see signs of radicalization in any young people in their environment. The Danish plan adds a compulsory subject to the curriculum, one dedicated to human rights in

addition to proposing radicalization prevention materials for activities in schools. In addition, it has a National Corps of professional mentors and parent coaches to work with families at risk of radicalization. The program imposes eligibility requirements on leaders of religious communities (priests, imams, preachers) who must take a compulsory course in Danish family law if they wish to be licensed to perform marriages. In addition, they must sign that they respect Danish laws on freedom of expression and religion, gender equality and women's rights.

The Netherlands ([National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, 2016](#)) is the only plan analyzed that mentions at the same level preventive, repressive and curative measures in an approach seen as comprehensive. It presented its first program in 2004, following the assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by young jihadists born and educated in the Netherlands. The intelligence service is actively involved in the plan and envisages three areas of action: prevention, targeting of people with extremist ideas and intervention. The Netherlands uses education, as well as social services and health centers, to detect worrying behavior. Although it does not have a national counter-radicalization policy, in the field of education it has undergone a change in direction in its education and immigration policy by no longer financing education in one's own language and culture for the children of immigrants and no longer providing free compensatory activities for underprivileged children and those of non-native origin in the Early Childhood Education Intervention Program. The main term throughout the Dutch program is "threat".

Austria ([Federal Ministry of the Interior of Austria, 2017](#)) focuses attention on young people with an immigrant background and associates them with increased terrorist activity. For this reason, it increases health care and education for immigrant youth as a measure to counteract their joining extremist ideologies. Thus, the Austrian authorities consider that the causes of radicalization are mixed and require considering both personal and structural aspects.

Belgium ([Veiligheid van de staat. Vei Sûrete de l'Etat, 2018](#)) puts the focus on Salafism, understood as a fundamentalist doctrine of Sunni Islam, with a growing political projection and which is considered susceptible to becoming a social problem due to its hostility to Western and democratic values. Since 2011, Belgium has become an exporter of terrorists who have joined the ranks



of Daesh. In particular, it criticizes the intolerance of Salafism. Belgium records only one of the attitudes in this study, responsibility, and leaves the rest outside its scope. In the field of education, the Belgian Ministry of Education offers resources and training programs for teachers and students. In addition, it has made a telephone number available to citizens to report possible cases of radicalization.

France ([Gouvernement Republique Française, 2018](#)) presents its plan three years after the Paris attacks (2015). The French government proposes a defensive approach to republican values, with special mention of secularism as a basic principle of the educational system. It is a weak plan from the point of view of prevention. Its program includes 60 measures, some of which are repressive in nature. The regulations aim at early detection since extremists may be among its citizens. France details how to detect cases of radicalization in schools by giving a prevention guide to teachers and school principals. It protects against the risk of radicalization by teaching digital literacy and moral and civic citizenship. There is no mention of integration or diversity in their plan. The focus is on detection, where school and family are key allies.

The United Kingdom ([Her Majesty's Government of United Kingdom, 2018](#)), an icon for its social and cultural diversity, with a Muslim community made up of second and third generation immigrants, does not catalog diversity as a strength. The UK has intensified its policy against terrorism since the Manchester bombing (2017). Its plan calls for collaboration among all social classes and with the rest of the countries, through Interpol. The anti-terrorism law came into force in 2015. It underscores the legal responsibility of schools, universities, and teachers to be vigilant so that young people are not inclined towards radicalization. From this perspective, education, local authorities, social care, health professionals, and prison officers are key in the detection processes and have a duty to monitor and prevent. Securitization is imposed, especially of the education and health systems, focused on the collaboration of citizens. Consequently, it has had some effects, such as one known as "Britishness" for the schools to promote British identity on ([Matthews, 2016](#)). Criticism of this policy is widespread and varied: they point to the political inability to propose alternatives and the fear of the consequences of not alerting the authorities ([Revell & Bryan, 2016](#)); it causes ethical dilemmas for both teachers ([Lumb, 2018](#)) and health professionals who see confidentiality and trust undermined ([Middleton, 2016](#)) and the elimination, in some cases, of

the right to freedom of speech in schools or universities ([Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016](#)). It is also criticized as a threat to policies that address racism, promote equality, and support community cohesion ([Jerome et al., 2019](#)). From a critical realist perspective, it is an increased feeling of suspicion and fear for some groups, especially young Muslims ([Walker, 2019a](#)) and from a left perspective, the 'values' promoted through education under Prevent bear a disturbing resemblance to the pattern of fascist propaganda criticized by Adorno ([Ward, 2018](#)).

Finland ([Ministry of the Interior, 2020](#)) is the only State that focuses on the importance of education, especially education in the early stages of schooling because it favours the inclusion of minors with an immigrant background in society. In addition, it reinforces the educational policy in the country, social welfare and the improvement of employment to attend to adolescents who could be attracted to radicalization. Finland has created interdisciplinary working groups that bring together the State security forces, schools and families.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

The methodology developed here is efficient. It represents the plans for preventing radicalization in a graphic and logical way, according to the competences analyzed. Overall, the analysis shows that, despite the interest of European countries in giving a relevant role to education as a preventive measure, in practice, the plans do not include features that define a democratic and interculturally competent citizenship. At the same time, European policies are not aligned and integrated around shared values.

Some issues are evident:

Firstly, policy is overly focused on the threat of terrorism, which prioritizes police intervention, with only a secondary and residual emphasis on education as a preventive measure. In all the plans, the term "radicalization" is continuously present while the term "education" takes a secondary role, thus making it clear that its role is still incipient and scarce. In most countries, efforts are aimed primarily towards the use of "hard" prevention strategies ([Sjøen & Jore, 2019](#)) that sometimes produce effects contrary to their initial objective, both on the part of some groups, especially young people, who are under suspicion, as well as by some communities - especially Muslims - who

feel stigmatized. And even, it may be that violence is being promoted rather than prevented by government efforts to counter ‘radicalisation’ and ‘extremism’ (Walker, 2019b). The education wasn’t included because the security aspects outweigh the preventive ones. Moreover, there is a lack of coordination on the institutional level, and it implies a significant inversion of efforts and human and economic resources.

Secondly, there is a trend in many European countries towards a securitization of education systems. Security-based counter-terrorism measures give way to more elaborate strategies that include mobilizing local actors to help detect extremist behavior and take early action accordingly. In some countries such as France or the United Kingdom, schools and universities are obliged to be vigilant so that young people do not lean towards radicalization. Education, social care, health professionals, and even the neighborhood all have a duty to watch and prevent. The Prevent Duty implementation is a ‘securitisation’ of education (Busher & Jerome, 2020). Likewise, risk indicators to be observed by teachers are proposed and an attempt is made to detect cases of radicalization in schools with a prevention guide aimed at school directors and teachers. This practice has extended to other countries such as Sweden (Mattsson & Säljö, 2018). Along this line, although education and schools are considered to be at the forefront of Community policy guidelines, in practice, schools are like other public institutions in that they are more platforms for the early detection of radicalization than areas and means of education and training. In short, these practices involve subordinating the school to the security and intelligence agendas of the countries. The emerging academic literature on education and security studies take different points of view but have in common that the securitization of education systems is not a novelty and shows the deep historical roots of this type of practice (Gearon, 2015; Stonebanks, 2019).

Along this line, it is worth highlighting how anti-radicalization policies make contradictory demands on schools and educators. On one hand, education and school are seen as particularly relevant factors for prevention and for facilitating integration, and their work as promoters of social cohesion and resilience is recognized; on the other hand, however they are turned into information platforms for security agencies through risk indicators. In some countries, such as the United Kingdom, this has become a legal obligation; in others, such as Belgium and France, they are developing structures so that

educators can report cases (Ragazzi, 2017). The early detection of radicalization is necessary and is still considered a preventive objective, but it must be complemented by a multifaceted educational task that fosters integration and personal and social development, especially of young people, families, and those from the most vulnerable surroundings.

The permanent challenge of the educational system is to adapt the structures and the educational resources and means and make them more flexible to ensure the chances of progress and improvement, especially for children and adolescents. This challenge is not without its difficulties. It should be noted that there is little empirical evidence on how the process of radicalization and risk factors develop (Verkuyten, 2018), thus making it difficult and complicated to specify what educational needs and objectives become prevention efforts. It is clear that the radicalization of minors includes control of their schooling and the interest of recruiters in interfering with their education (Vicente, 2018).

As has been shown, the prevention plans show that the role of schools is not particularly relevant, despite the fact that its role is crucial in facing the difficult task of facilitating integration, beyond the mere schooling of immigrant students. Along with the relationships with native peers, schools are the main exponent of the host culture as opposed to the culture of the home represented by the family, peers, and ethnic group. In migratory contexts, school is a double-edged sword because it can be an important facilitator of integration or become an element of exclusion. Given the growing importance of friendships in adolescence, friends can play a crucial role in socialization and integration processes. At school, peer contact is facilitated, friendships are created, prejudices are diminished, and relationships and interactions between different individuals are forged. Through relationships between peers and fundamentally through friendship, one learns to accept and value identities that differ from one's own, thus making the school an environment that promotes citizenship. According to (Dahl, 2017) the importance of peers in developing positive values and feelings towards immigrants is an important source of positive influence for a more humanistic, democratic, and diverse society.

Following the Allport theory (1962), man is not born with prejudices; they are learned. Prejudices deny individual human dignity and break the fundamental unity between people. He defines prejudice as "a hostile or pre-

emptive attitude towards a person who belongs to a group, simply because he or she belongs to that group, and is therefore assumed to possess the objectifiable qualities attributed to the group" (Allport, 1962, p. 22). He also specifies that it is a judgment, based on stereotypes, that ignores the truth and leads to arbitrary judgments about an individual or group. Academic research considers the adolescent stage as a critical period in which peer influence is especially relevant (Berndt, 1982). Therefore, this stage can be considered key to forging positive attitudes towards immigrants (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2001; Van Zalk et al., 2013). Consequently, we consider it worthwhile to promote civic, intercultural and democratic values and attitudes in the educational field and in the adolescent stage through friendship and equal treatment at schools. Children and young people need to understand what extremism and terrorism are. Teachers have an important role in this goal. Empowered teachers can develop critical understanding and engage children and youth in various forms of values education (Jerome et al., 2020).

Just as schools can be an important element of integration, they can also become a vehicle for discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion since many negative attitudes towards immigrants from non-native communities are experienced in nearby environments such as the school or the neighborhood. Along this line, it is desirable to prevent some schools from becoming ghettos for certain ethnic groups. Such situations can have harmful effects on getting along, they may diminish social contact, increase fear of being "different", and constitute, in short, risk factors for radicalization.

We conclude here that policies to prevent violent radicalization in Europe, while conceiving of education and school as an indispensable means of integration, do not realistically and practically go beyond the mere detection of the first outbreaks of radicalization. Greater efforts are therefore needed to promote the mainstreaming and unity of policies for integration and social cohesion and to reassess the value of schools as a proactive area for integration and inclusion.

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