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## THE SECURITIZATION OF ISLAM IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND THE ATTITUDES OF EUROPEANS TOWARDS MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

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**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to present selected dimensions of the securitization of Islam in Europe in the context of European identity, and to show the impact of this process on the attitudes of Europeans towards Muslim migrants. The first part of the article focuses on the issue of European identity. This theoretical introduction allows for a better understanding of the dimensions of the securitization of Islam in Europe and their impact on the attitudes of citizens of selected the European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states towards migrants. The method used to conduct the research in this article is desk research and the qualitative method of analyzing written sources, both qualitative and quantitative data. The analysis uses numerous public opinion surveys, including the report “Trends in attitudes towards migration in Europe. A comparative analysis”, prepared on the basis of the European Social Survey from 2018.

**KEYWORDS:** securitization of Islam, Muslims, Europe, socio-cultural identity, migrants

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## SEKURYTYZACJA ISLAMU W KONTEKŚCIE TOŻSAMOŚCI EUROPEJSKIEJ I POSTAW EUROPEJCZYKÓW WOBEC MUZUŁMAŃSKICH IMIGRANTÓW I UCHODźCÓW

**ABSTRAKT:** Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu przedstawienie wybranych wymiarów sekurytyzacji islamu w Europie w kontekście tożsamości europejskiej i ukazanie wpływu tego procesu na stosunek Europejczyków do migrantów muzułmańskich. W pierwszej części artykułu zwrócono uwagę na zagadnienie tożsamości europejskiej. To teoretyczne wprowadzenie pozwoli lepiej zrozumieć wymiary sekurytyzacji islamu w Europie i ich wpływ na stosunek, obywateli państw członkowskich Unii Europejskiej do migrantów, czego analizy dokonano w dalszej części artykułu. użytą do przeprowadzenia badania metodą jest desk research (czyli metoda badania zza biurka) oraz jakościowa metoda analizy źródeł pisanych, zarówno danych jakościowych, jak i ilościowych. W analizie wykorzystano liczne badania opinii społecznej m.in. raport „Trends in attitudes towards migration in Europe. A comparative analysis”, przygotowany na podstawie the European Social Survey z 2018 r.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** sekurytyzacja Islamu, Muzułmanie, Europa, tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa, migranci

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, migration to Europe has increased rapidly. This is mainly due to migration routes through the Mediterranean, Greece, and the Western Balkans. These routes have been used on an unprecedented scale by Syrians affected by the civil war since 2011<sup>1</sup>, as well as citizens of other countries in the world. A significant group among them are migrants from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), considered one of the most unstable and extremely important regions for international security<sup>2</sup>. The dynamics and unprecedented scale of international migration to Europe, among other effects, have brought with them potential and actual changes in the area of culture<sup>3</sup>, including concerns about the protection of values significant to Europeans related to collective identity.

Identity has become a subject of interest in international politics with the harmonizing development of the globalized world and the expansion of international civil and human rights<sup>4</sup>. Although this concept concerns both the individual and collective levels, only the latter of its dimensions is the subject of research on social and cultural security. It should be noted that cultural identity is usually defined as one of the forms of social identity. It is characterized by a relatively permanent identification of a group and its members with a given cultural system, i.e. ideas, beliefs, views, customs, traditions, values and laws<sup>5</sup>. In the case of Europe, collective identities are classified differently and go beyond the classical national-European dichotomy. The literature indicates five basic constitutive dimensions of it: ethnic-territorial, religious-cultural, socio-economic, political-legal and political-military. They should remain intact in order to promote and maintain the social security of a given collective group<sup>6</sup>.

According to Mathias Albert, the concepts of societal security and securitization are closest in the current literature to the concept of linking security studies with the development of the broadly understood social world<sup>7</sup>. These issues have been successfully applied from a new perspective on issues such as international migration, or European integration and regionalism. In addition to allowing us to study the issue of security, they have also enabled us to grasp the connection between maintaining a desired state of feeling free from threat and issues of identity. This has been done by drawing attention to categories such as nation and territory, which still constitute the main fabric of the current international system.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Sasnal (ed.), *Niekontrolowane migracje do Unii Europejskiej*, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, November 2015, <https://pism.pl/upload/images/artykuly/legacy/files/20992.pdf> (15.10.2024), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> M. El Ghamari, *Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa kulturowego wobec kryzysu migracyjnego oraz terroryzmu w obszarze MENA*, "Ante Portas – Studia nad Bezpieczeństwem" 2016, 2(7), p. 331.

<sup>3</sup> K. Romaniszyn, *Kulturowe implikacje współczesnych migracji międzynarodowych zarys problematyki na przykładzie Polski*, "Studia Polonijne" 1999, 20, p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> M. Thiel, *Identity, Societal Security and Regional Integration in Europe*, "Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series" 2007, 7 (6), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Z. Rykiel, *Identyfikacja i tożsamość kulturowa w różnych skalach przestrzennych*, "Opuscula Sociologica" 2017, 3(21), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> M. Thiel, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> M. Albert, *Security as Boundary Function. Changing Identities and Securitization in World Politics*, "International Journal of Peace Studies" 1998, 3(1), pp. 24-25.

This article aims to present selected dimensions of the securitization of Islam in Europe in the context of European identity, and to show the impact of this process on the attitudes of Europeans towards Muslim migrants. The first part of the article focuses on the issue of European identity. This theoretical introduction allows for a better understanding of the dimensions of the securitization of Islam in Europe and their impact on the attitudes of citizens of selected the European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states towards migrants. The method used to conduct the research in this article is desk research and the qualitative method of analyzing written sources, both qualitative and quantitative data. The analysis uses numerous public opinion surveys, including the report “Trends in attitudes towards migration in Europe. A comparative analysis”, prepared on the basis of the European Social Survey from 2018.

## EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND ITS DIMENSIONS

According to the assumptions of the Copenhagen School, security has a dual nature. In the case of state security, we are dealing with sovereignty, while in the case of societal (cultural) security, with identity. With the development of the European community, the discourse on societal security extended beyond the borders of the state. Thus, in the context of the concept of societal security, a separate referential object appears, subject to protection, i.e., the socio-cultural identity of Europeans<sup>8</sup>. As Stuart Croft notes, identity can be constituted through securitization, because it is one of the dimensions of this process, helpful in the analysis of cultural security<sup>9</sup>.

Taking into account the respect for the need for boundaries and categories, but at the same time recognizing that “each entity can be located in more than one mental context<sup>10</sup>” (referring to Eviatar Zerubavel), this analysis does not attempt to adopt one closed definition of the collective European identity. In analyses of it, two approaches play a dominant role: essentialist (substantialist<sup>11</sup>) and constructivist. Considering the research problem taken up in this article, it seems important to characterize both of these categories in order to understand the differences that appear in the scientific and social discourse concerning European identity.

In the case of the essentialist approach, identity is an important property of a given social group, its primary and essentially unchanging basis<sup>12</sup>. It is based on the belief in common origin.

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<sup>8</sup> O. Waever, et al., *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*, New York 1993, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> A. Ziętek, *Sekurytyzacja islamu w Europie*, [in:] E. Stadmuller, Ł. Fijałkowski (ed.), *Normy, wartości i instytucje we współczesnych stosunkach międzynarodowych*, Warszawa 2015, p. 314.

<sup>10</sup> M. Albert, op. cit., p. 24-25.

<sup>11</sup> A. Wiktorska-Święcka, *Wyznaczanie granic i konstruowanie tożsamości Europy*, [in:] A. Pacześniak, M. Klimowicz (ed.), *Procesy integracyjne i dezintegracyjne w Europie. Podręcznik akademicki*, Wrocław 2014, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem

Therefore, supporters of this concept seek real (historical) foundations of cultural identity<sup>13</sup>. Identity understood in this way cannot be chosen by a person, but is given to them from above<sup>14</sup>.

In the constructivist approach, on the other hand, identity is defined as the effect of the creation process. As a result, it is not an unchanging existing entity, but is subject to continuous transformation. Identity understood constructively is therefore open, which is why no entity is excluded from it in advance. Belonging to one's own is based on the community of goals and values developed in interactions. Therefore, in this sense, identity is not a source, but an effect of mutual interactions of individuals<sup>15</sup>.

Attempts to create theoretical models of European identity can be found in both the essentialist and constructivist approaches. The former refers to universal values and philosophical and legal achievements: democracy, human rights, principles of social justice, humanism, as well as to culture understood as a common history and tradition<sup>16</sup>. It is not easy to clearly define European identity through the essentialist approach, due to the excessive diversity of European heritage. Therefore, “the chance to build a common European identity, and thus create conditions for the success of the European integration project”, is not to construct identity in an ethnic way, searching for a common essence of cultural heritage “but in a political, civic way, based on an inclusive process of negotiation and construction of a platform of common civic values<sup>17</sup>”.

Within the constructivist approach, European identity is a common European project, where the entire spectrum of diversity can find its place. Constructivist approaches assume that European identity means identification with European institutions and with commonly accepted political and legal norms, and also with the concept of “constitutional patriotism<sup>18</sup>”. Thus, no entity is excluded because of their place of origin or cultural heritage. However, recognizing someone as a European must be based on negotiated, fundamental principles, rights, and values developed in the process of constructing the community. It is necessary that these values do not exclude each other and that every potential member can be included in its framework through them.

Over the centuries, however, the differences between what is “familiar” and “foreign”, “internal” and “external”, between “us” and “them” have become established in defining Europe. Aldona Wiktorska-Święcka points out that “constructing the 'other' that one is not or does not want to be, served to strengthen one's own positive identity”. Europe thus stood out from non-Europe, and the category of “European” emerged as a new subject of collective identity, which became an entity clearly different from the “non-European<sup>19</sup>”. Over the centuries, European identity was largely created in relation to the Orient. The basic features of Europeans were

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<sup>13</sup> K. Skrzypczak, *Jaka tożsamość kulturowa dla dzisiejszej Europy?*, “Refleksje. Pismo Naukowe studentów i doktorantów WNPiD UAM” 2010, 1, p. 206.

<sup>14</sup> A. Gabowski, *Europejska? Narodowa? Tożsamość przyszłych nauczycieli badana piętnaście lat po przystąpieniu Polski do Unii Europejskiej*, “Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze” 2019, 583 (3), p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> A. Wiktorska-Święcka, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> A. Gabowski, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>17</sup> A. Wiktorska-Święcka, op. cit., p. 36-37.

<sup>18</sup> A. Gabowski, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> A. Wiktorska-Święcka, op. cit., p. 24.

therefore shaped within the West-East dichotomy<sup>20</sup>, and Turkish/Ottoman, Arab or Jewish influences were foreign influences<sup>21</sup>. In the creation of European civilization, the Roman Empire and Christianity played a constructive and at the same time unifying role for the nations of Europe. Thus, defining someone as European referred not only to living in a given region of the world, but also to sharing and practicing a common tradition and history that enabled the constitution of common norms and values.

According to Eurobarometer data, although national identity still seems to be the most important collective identification for Europeans (73%<sup>22</sup>), a significant percentage of them also declare identification with being European (56%<sup>23</sup>) or a follower of their religion and beliefs (53%). In each of these cases, however, differences can be found between citizens of individual EU Member States. A higher than average percentage indicating a sense of European identity is found among respondents in Hungary (76%), Slovakia (75%), Malta (72%), Cyprus and Poland (both 67%), Romania and the Czech Republic (both 66%), Spain and Slovenia (65%), Italy (64%) and Lithuania, Latvia and Austria (both 63%). In contrast, citizens of Greece and Sweden (both 42%), Croatia (45%), Belgium and Estonia (both 46%), the Netherlands (48%) and Finland (49%) are the least likely of all EU citizens to identify with being European. Respondents from Sweden (28%), Greece (26%), France and Croatia (both 23%), Estonia (21%), Finland (19%) and the Netherlands (18%) are the most likely to say they do not identify with being European<sup>24</sup>.

There are also differences between the inhabitants of individual EU countries in terms of religious identification. In Cyprus (79%), Italy and Slovakia (74% each), Bulgaria and Poland (72% each), Romania (71%) identify with their religion or beliefs. In turn, Swedes (19%), Luxembourgers (26%), Danes (27%), Germans (35%), Finns and Belgians (36% each) and the Irish (37%) are the least likely to identify with their religion or beliefs<sup>25</sup>. Taking into account the Barometer data, it can be assumed that the image of European identity is quite characteristic for a significant part of Europeans, and it is a complementary element to national and religious identity for most of them.

## THE SECURITIZATION OF ISLAM IN EUROPE

The theory of securitization allows us to show the tension between the dimension of social facts and discursive constructions that are promoted by various groups for legitimizing purposes<sup>26</sup>. Securitization is a process that takes a given issue beyond normal politics. Thanks to

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<sup>20</sup> K. Łastawski, *Polskość i europejskość w procesie integracji kontynentu*, „Studia Europejskie” 2008, 1, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> A. Tekin, *Future of Turkey–EU relations: a civilisational discourse*, “Futures” 2005, 37 (4), p. 292.

<sup>22</sup> European Commission, *Values and Identities of EU citizens*, Special Eurobarometer 508. Raport, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2230> (26.10.2024), p. 71.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 74.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 66.

<sup>26</sup> N. Shukuralieva, *Sekurytyzacja islamu w Azji Centralnej*, “Studia Orientalne” 2018, 2(14), p. 34.

this, state authorities can appropriately justify the solutions they have implemented (e.g., introducing a state of emergency), explaining them as a higher necessity<sup>27</sup>. In the case of identities created in the securitization process, we can distinguish, for example, the identity of the radical other. Radical others are presented as a threat to existence, and the securitization process leads to dehumanization and presenting them as an object that should be feared because they are bad, irrational, abnormal, sick, crazy, primitive and dangerous (in contrast to us: good, rational, normal, healthy and predictable people). In reality, radical others may not have dangerous features at all and become a matter of security only due to the acceptance by the recipients of the way in which they are presented.

The securitization of Islam in Europe has been expressed in a debate linking security with Islam and integration, and the first dimension of this debate identifies Muslims with terrorism<sup>28</sup>. Most Muslims living in EU countries today came to the EU after World War II to seek work and fill a gap in some sectors of the economy. At some point, however, they stopped being perceived by societies just as immigrants, and their status began to refer to their religion<sup>29</sup>. Growing anti-Muslim sentiment on the continent has been reinforced, among other things, by terrorist attacks by groups known as Islamic radicals<sup>30</sup>. As Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul note, the mere classification of groups as radical confers a label on them and carries a stigma. This is a result of a certain performativity, because in a political context, with every slightest mention of radicalism the state narrative can either discredit the group in question (or glorify it<sup>31</sup>). In this way, it is decided what is normal and acceptable in politics and what becomes abnormal and unacceptable.

As available analyses of the political elites of Central Asian countries have shown, cases of securitization of Islam were more of an element of authoritarian politics than a rational response to the real problems of Islamist terrorism<sup>32</sup>. However, in the case of many European countries, as Jocelyne Cesari notes, it is still acceptable to link Muslim immigration with terrorist potential<sup>33</sup>. According to Anthony H. Cordesman, it is extremely easy for non-Muslim commentators on social and political life to focus on a small part of the threats that Muslim extremists pose to non-Muslims in the West. When faith is blamed for the patterns of violence used by a few Muslims worldwide, other important factors that lead to phenomena such as

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<sup>27</sup> B. Buzan, O. Waever, J. de Wilde, *Security a New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder–London 1998, p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> A. Ziętek, op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>29</sup> H. Grzymała-Moszczyńska, *Migracje i religia. Rola religii w procesach migracyjnych*, [in:] H. Grzymała-Moszczyńska, D. Motak (ed.), *Religia, religijność, duchowość: w poszukiwaniu nowych perspektyw: księga jubileuszowa dla Pawła M. Sochy od przyjaciół i uczniów*, Kraków 2015, p. 132.

<sup>30</sup> K.E. Brown, *Introduction: Radicalisation and Securitisation of Muslims in Europe*, “Journal of Muslims in Europe” 2018, 7, p. 140.

<sup>31</sup> T. Balzacq, E. Settoul, *Radicalization In Theory and Practice: Understanding Religious Violence In Western Europe*, Michigan 2022, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> N. Shukuralieva, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> J. Cesari, *The Securitisation of Islam in Europe*, “Challenge Research Paper” 2009, 14, p. 2.

extremism and terrorism are overlooked, namely population size, poor economic development, and compromised governments<sup>34</sup>.

Other dimensions of the debate on the presence of Muslims in Europe are linked to cultural issues, changes in the ethnic structure of states and the increasing cultural diversity of the continent, as well as the lack of integration. All these elements are presented as a threat to the cultural identity of Europeans. Events that significantly influenced the fact that Islam and Muslims began to be perceived not only for political but also cultural reasons, as a threat to European identity (and cohesion for the process of integration of European states) were terrorist attacks. Above all, the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005<sup>35</sup>. Although initially, the official reaction of the European Union was based on dialogue between cultures and societies (in contrast to the US approach based on the Manichean discourse of absolute good against absolute evil<sup>36</sup>). Over time, the diversity promoted by EU institutions, many politicians, and non-governmental organizations has become one of the challenges perceived by a large part of European society. It was seen as a threat to the social, cultural, religious, and economic security of the nations living on the continent<sup>37</sup>. Migrants are a cultural, linguistic and religious minority in the host countries, but at the same time they have changed the character of the society living on its territory. This state of affairs has contributed to their perception as a threat to the identity and culture of the host community. This is especially the case when migrants violate generally accepted norms and values, strengthening the sense of danger within the host community<sup>38</sup>.

The arguments presented above explain to some extent the increase in xenophobia in France (and other Western European countries<sup>39</sup>) and attacks on Christians, for example<sup>40</sup>. As Süleyman Demirel notes, associating Islam with violence and terror has led to an increase in xenophobia and a new category of extremism in the West. This process has been parallel to the polarization of the entire world along cultural and religious lines of guilt<sup>41</sup>. In recent years, Islamophobic discourse has become a significant trend in EU countries, and European societies

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<sup>34</sup> A. H. Cordesman, *Islam and the Patterns in Terrorism and Violent Extremism*, Center for Strategic and International Studies 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/islam-and-patterns-terrorism-and-violent-extremism> (28.10.2024).

<sup>35</sup> A. Ziętek, op. cit., p. 316.

<sup>36</sup> S. Silvestri, *EU Relations with Islam in the Context of the EMP's Cultural Dialogue*, "Mediterranean Politics" 2005, 10(3), p. 385.

<sup>37</sup> A. Dimitriadi, et al., *EU-Turkey Relations and Irregular Migration: Transactional Cooperation in the Making*, "Future Online Paper" 2018, 16, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> D. Liszkowska, „Societal security” szkoły kopenhaskiej a kwestia imigrantów muzułmańskich w Unii Europejskiej, "Studia i Analizy Europejskie" 2017, 15, p. 19-20.

<sup>39</sup> It should be noted, however, that despite the recorded increase in xenophobic and racist behavior in France by over 130% in recent years (2018 - 496, 2019 - 1142), anti-Muslim attacks constituted a relatively small percentage (154 in 2019, 100 in 2018). As data from the French Ministry of the Interior show, the largest group affected by anti-religious acts in this country are Christians (996 actions and 56 threats).

<sup>40</sup> K. Stańko, *Francja: MSW: wzrost o 130 proc. liczby aktów rasistowskich i ksenofobicznych w 2019 r.*, Forsal.pl 2020, <https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1450564,francja-msw-wzrost-o-130-proc-liczby-aktow-rasistowskich-i-ksenofobicznych-w-2019-r.html> (28.10.2024).

<sup>41</sup> S. Demirel, *World and Turkey Today – Tomorrow*, "Journal on European Perspectives of the Western Balkans" 2011, 2(5), p. 9.

have begun to express their concerns about the lack of security and socio-economic deprivation (even in cases that are not related to the actual threat from Islam<sup>42</sup>). However, the deficit of Muslim integration has led to the emergence of a hierarchical identity of others. The effect of such a process is, apart from the increase in xenophobic attitudes, also isolation, the creation of ghettos and cultural enclaves, the functioning of parallel communities. These then, over time, transform into political radicalization and an increase in internal terror<sup>43</sup>. An important securitization move was therefore to transform the various manifestations of Islam into a homogeneous threat to multidimensionally perceived security<sup>44</sup>. This was accompanied by the creation of an atmosphere of threat through messages and images that allowed numerous political entities to pursue their own goals, for example during the migration crisis in 2015-2016.

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS MUSLIM MIGRANTS IN EUROPEAN STATES

The factor of cultural difference plays a significant role in politicians' narratives on migration, as well as in the attitudes of European societies towards migrants. Differences in defining preferred migrants and refugees in terms of intersectionality in terms of ethnic or cultural origin of specific groups have become an important topic of public debate in Europe<sup>45</sup>. In recent years, a clear shift in migrant policy has been noticeable, for example, in the Nordic states. Until recently, these states were characterized by a high rate of humanitarian migration and a significant share of the population structure of citizens from countries such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, or Somalia<sup>46</sup>. For example, after 1970, most migrants in Sweden were family members and refugees, outnumbering economic migrants<sup>47</sup>. The number of asylum seekers has been steadily increasing, reaching around 30,000 per year in the mid-1990s. In the first half of 2011, Sweden had the fourth-highest number of asylum applications among 44 industrialized countries in the world (behind the United States, France, and Germany<sup>48</sup>). The low level of integration and the possibility of using numerous welfare state privileges have led to migrants being blamed for a number of social problems in recent years. The visible change in attitudes of Swedish society has prompted the government to tighten the law on refugees. As a result, in April 2016, a law was passed under which people who have been granted refugee status are entitled to a three-year temporary residence, instead of permanent residence, as was the case before. In addition, people who have been granted subsidiary protection can obtain a residence permit for

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<sup>42</sup> A. Dimitriadi, et al., op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> A. Ziętek, op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>44</sup> N. Shukuralieva, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>45</sup> D. Liszkowska, *Securitization of Migration and Crisis Management in Poland*, "Defence Sciences Review" 2023, (17), p. 35.

<sup>46</sup> P. Pogodzińska, *Integracja i przeciwdziałanie dyskryminacji imigrantów na szwedzkim rynku pracy*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych 2011, <https://www.isp.org.pl/uploads/drive/oldfiles/dyskryminacjamiigrantownarynkupracy-Szwecja.pdf> (15.10.2024), p. 3-4.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem.



thirteen months. Restrictions have also been introduced on family reunification. Similar steps have also been taken by Denmark, Finland, and Norway<sup>49</sup>.

According to the data from the European Social Survey report and studies conducted in 21 countries (including 17 EU member states), European societies clearly define a hierarchy of the preferred type of migrant. Respondents show the most favorable attitude towards people belonging to the same race or ethnic group. However, the conclusions of the studies showed a different attitude towards individual groups that do not constitute a majority in a given country. Jews are preferred more than Muslims, and Muslims more than Roma. This hierarchy occurred in all the societies studied<sup>50</sup>. In turn, the religion of refugees became a significant factor in the conclusions of the studies by Kirk Bansak, Jens Hainmueller, Dominik Hangartner. They were conducted with the participation of 18,000 Europeans in 15 countries. They show that respondents, regardless of the ideology or demographic characteristics they represent, are willing to accept refugees, distinguishing them on the basis of economic, humanitarian and anti-Muslim sentiments. However, the willingness to help is particularly dependent on prejudices against Muslim asylum seekers. These people were 11% less likely to be accepted than Christians with similar socio-demographic characteristics. Importantly, negative attitudes towards this group were twice as high among respondents identifying with views on the right side of the political spectrum than on the left<sup>51</sup>. The conclusions from the studies by Silke Goubin, Anna Ruelens and Ides Nicaise turn out to be different. They show that (as before) the preferred group of migrants is people who are well-educated and have the skills necessary to bring benefits to the economy of the host country. However, for most Europeans, the factor related to socio-cultural identity (being Christian or white skin) is not decisive in the matter of accepting a given migrant. The issue of adaptation and integration is important, determined by, among other things, acceptance of the lifestyle of the host country or knowledge of the local language<sup>52</sup>. At the same time, as the report shows, the feeling that national identity is threatened undermines the attitude of hospitality in the host society towards migrants<sup>53</sup>. Analyzing data from the European Social Survey from 2014/2015, it results that religious origin as one of the criteria for accepting migrants varies across EU Member States. This issue is significant in the case of countries such as Lithuania (51%), Poland (43%), Hungary (41%) or the Czech Republic (40%). The situation is slightly different in Sweden (7%), the Netherlands (9%), Germany (10%) or Belgium (15%), where the religious factor is not as significant in terms of acceptance of migrants of individual

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<sup>49</sup> A. Wójcicka, *Skandynawia ochładza stosunek do uchodźców*, "Biuletyn migracyjny" 2016, 54, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> A. Heath, L. Richards, *Attitudes towards Immigration and their Antecedents Topline Results from Round 7 of the European Social Survey*, "ESS Topline Results Series" 2016, 7, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> K. Bansak, J. Hainmueller, D. Hangartner, *Decoding European Attitudes Toward Refugees*, Immigration Policy Lab, <https://immigrationlab.org/project/decoding-european-attitudes-toward-refugees/> (15.10.2024).

<sup>52</sup> S. Goubin, A. Ruelens, I. Nicaise, *Trends in attitudes towards migration in Europe. A comparative analysis*, HIVA – Research Institute for Work and Society 2022, <https://www.opportunitiesproject.eu/media/attachments/2022/04/20/changing-attitudes-towards-migration.pdf> (15.10.2024), p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23.

groups<sup>54</sup>. Significant differences also occur in the case of acceptance of Muslim migrants among the societies of the Member States. The highest percentage of acceptance is found in Sweden (79%), Germany (70%), France (63%). Less than half of the population is able to accept Muslim migrants in Hungary (10%), the Czech Republic (14%), Estonia (27%), Lithuania (28%), Poland (30%), Portugal (35%), Finland (36%), Spain (39%), Austria (42%), Ireland (42%<sup>55</sup>).

The data from the report prepared on the basis of Eurostat statistics regarding attitudes towards immigration are slightly different. It shows that the negative attitude towards migrants varies across EU Member States, but the negative attitude towards immigration is greater in the case of immigration from outside the EU than in the matter of migration within the community. According to the results of analyses, in the years 1994-2017 the most negative attitude was shown by societies of Great Britain (almost 30%, which was one of the main factors in leaving the EU<sup>56</sup>), Denmark (approx. 29%), Belgium (approx. 27%) and Germany (approx. 23%). Interestingly, the most positive attitude was characteristic of societies of Central and Eastern European countries: Slovakia and Slovenia (below 5%), Latvia and Poland (approx. 5%<sup>57</sup>). The results of analyses prepared on the basis of the European Social Survey from 2018 in the report "Trends in attitudes towards migration in Europe. A comparative analysis" are slightly different. Based on the question: have migrants made the country a better place to live? The most and least favorable countries towards migration were designated. The Scandinavian countries (Iceland and Sweden) and the Anglo-Saxon countries (Ireland and Iceland) were considered the most favorable. The attitudes towards migrants, societies of Germany, Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal were also determined to be above the European average. The Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary, and Italy were considered the most unfavorable countries towards migration<sup>58</sup>. In turn, Silke Goubin and Anna Ruelens, analyzing data from 2002-2020, assigned individual Member States to three clusters (positive, skeptical and negative), which concern how much the citizens of a given country support migration. As the analyses show, in recent years the most negative attitudes towards migration were held by citizens of Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. A skeptical attitude is characteristic of, among others, the societies of Austria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, and Italy. In turn, the most positive attitude towards migration was observed, among others in Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries, France, Germany, and Poland<sup>59</sup>. The respondents from the countries covered by the European Social Survey analysis also agreed on the sphere on which migration has the most negative impact. In 2014, the vast majority (60%) of Europeans indicated that

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<sup>54</sup> A. Heath, L. Richards, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, s. 25.

<sup>56</sup> V. Di Iasio, J. Wahba, *Natives' Attitudes and Immigration Flows to Europe*, "IZA DP" 2023, 15942, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, p. 7-10.

<sup>58</sup> S. Goubin, A. Ruelens, I. Nicaise, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem, p. 16.

immigration had increased problems with crime<sup>60</sup>. In another analysis of trends from the same study, covering the period 2002-2018, over 40% of respondents believed that migration had increased the issue with crime. Slightly more respondents (approx. 49%) considered its impact on crime to be neutral, and less than 10% considered it to be positive.

## CONCLUSIONS

The significant changes taking place in Europe in recent years have become a reason for individuals, societies and nations to redefine their identity. Among these processes, we can point to the ongoing process of shaping the single market, with its accompanying deregulation processes, as well as technological progress and the development of new forms of social communication. An important aspect of the changes has also been the processes taking place in other parts of the world, which have highlighted social inequalities, including in African states. Moreover, in an era of numerous challenges and economic and demographic crises, as well as armed conflicts, a situation has arisen in which representatives of culturally different communities have begun to migrate en masse to the European states. The presence of many newcomers from different cultural circles in Europe has meant that they have begun to be perceived, among other things, as a threat to the identity of the host communities.

It can be assumed that the share of Muslim minorities in the population of countries such as France or Sweden has led to a situation in which this group has found an important place in the discourse on the integration of migrants, as well as the rules and methods of reconciling their identification with the identification of the host societies. As shown by the analysis of conclusions from research conducted among societies of European states, the presentation of followers of the Islamic world by securitizing actors in the categories of terrorism, xenophobia, isolation or ghettos is reflected in the attitude of Europeans towards migrants from this cultural circle. It should be noted, however, that although the religious factor has a significant impact on the degree of acceptance of migrants and refugees, the respondents also pay attention to issues such as adaptation and integration, including in the scope of lifestyle or language of the host country, which may indicate the importance of the aspect of cultural identity of Europeans. Today, in many European countries, the share of migrants of foreign cultures causes numerous social, economic or political problems, as evidenced by changes taking place in, among others, the migration policy of countries which societies were until recently considered the most favorable towards migration.

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<sup>60</sup> A. Heath, L. Richards, op. cit., pp. 8-10.

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