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DIAGNOSIS OF THREATS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION'S INTERNAL SECURITY

There is a common belief that despite the many legal, practical, and supportive solutions that the EU has introduced in recent years in the area of internal security, its citizens still lack assurance. In order to obtain the desired state of security, it is necessary to improve the existing solutions and create completely new ones. This need is associated with a deep awareness of threats, as well as knowledge of the mechanisms of their emergence and functioning. The aim of this article is to identify threats selected by scientists and experts that cause the greatest fear and anxiety in all the EU states and their citizens using theoretical methods such as analysis, synthesis, generalization, and inference. These findings highlight the opportunity to learn about the essence of threats to the internal security of the EU states that arise from contradictions and antagonisms on political, economic, and social bases and are caused not only by human activities but also by natural phenomena, the effects of which may be immediate or anticipated and very severe.

Keywords: European Union, internal security, threats.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, unprecedented progress has been made, which has brought great changes in living conditions, providing a significant part of the world's population with increased wealth and improved quality of life. In EU countries, systematic and efficient work in well-functioning political, economic and social systems has produced the desired results. However, with development, a number of threats have emerged with increasing force and their consequences for the EU's internal security are difficult to assess. Knowledge of the threats increases the chances of preventing and combating them.

Threats, as actual actions that are unfavourable and dangerous to the underlying values and vital interests of a given entity (either individual or collective) cause states to try, individually and in combination with other states, to influence their environment to remove, neutralise or at least dismiss threats and thus eliminate their own fear, apprehension, anxiety and uncertainty (Zięba, 2016). It is difficult to talk about the internal security of the EU without taking into account international and internal factors relevant to the country and its citizens.

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There is a widespread belief that despite the many legal, practical and supportive solutions that the EU has introduced in recent years in the sphere of internal security, citizens of the community still lack a sense of certainty. In order to achieve the desired state of affairs, it is necessary to improve the already existing solutions and create completely new ones. This, in turn, is associated with a high awareness of threats and knowledge of the mechanisms of their formation and functioning.

2. CATALOGUE OF THREATS TO INTERNAL SECURITY

The identification of threats, their causes and consequences in relation to the internal security of the EU is of interest to many researchers and experts preparing opinions of the most important Community institutions.

An example of the authors' interest in threats is the work by Marek Wrzosek *Współczesne zagrożenia w obszarze bezpieczeństwa europejskiego (Modern Threats to European Security)*. He thoroughly analyzed the most likely ones, i.e.: threats of a social nature closely related to population migration, which in turn is a consequence of instability of states and governments; threats of an economic nature in the context of globalization of the economy and diversification of the development of EU states; threats of a technological nature due to the possibility of using cutting edge technologies for criminal purposes; natural threats to the population, such as natural disasters, epidemics, global warming, and threats to the environment caused by human activity (e.g. logging on a massive scale) (Wrzosek, 2013).

A complement to the threats indicated above can be found in the monograph entitled *Dylematy zarządzania europejskiego (Dilemmas of European Governance)*. The authors mention terrorism in the first place among security threats, stressing that contemporary terrorist groups are increasingly better equipped, more closely linked by electronic networks and more inclined to unlimited violence, all in order for their actions to exert a psychological effect on a mass scale. Organized crime, including in particular illicit drug and arms trafficking, smuggling of migrants and human trafficking, is another major cited threat (Wrzosek, 2015).

Their views on security threats were also presented by Waldemar Zubrzycki and Aleksander Babiński in the monograph *Procedury bezpieczeństwa w Unii Europejskiej (Security Procedures in the European Union)*. As the most serious threat, apart from terrorism, regional conflicts and organized crime, they considered the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction both by states and terrorists, as well as attacks in cyberspace, energy danger and the effects of climate change (Zubrzycki, Babiński, 2017).

Furthermore, content on security threats can be found in the study titled *The nightmare of the dark. The security fears that keep Europeans awake at night*. Susi Dennison, Ulrike E. Franke and Pawel Zerka emphasize that today's EU security is being challenged as never before. The core assumptions of the international system that Europeans helped build are eroding, crumbling one by one. Great power competition is increasingly shaping the security environment for Europeans, while other threats, from terrorism and cyber attacks to climate change, are also on the rise (Dennison, Frank, Zerka, 2018).

The result of the work of an international team of researchers and experts on security threats is the *Europejska strategia bezpieczeństwa. Bezpieczna Europa w lepszym świecie (European Security Strategy. A Safer Europe in a Better World)*. In this document, the following are cited as the most important threats: proliferation of weapons of mass

destruction involving both states and non-state actors; terrorism, including perpetration by home-grown groups; organized crime taking multiple forms; cyber-attacks on private and official information systems and networks treated as new weapons in economic, political and military warfare; dependence on energy supplies from a limited number of countries, many of which are on the brink of stabilization; and the implications of climate change (Council of the EU, 2009).

Another important document on the subject under consideration is *Internal security strategy for the European Union – Towards a European security model*, which is a sort of complement to Europe's security strategy from an external perspective. It mentions many important threats common to all EU states, such as: terrorism in all its forms, characterized by an absolute disregard for human life and democratic values; organized crime dealing with illicit drug and arms trafficking, human trafficking and economic fraud; cyber-crime posing a global technical, cross-border and anonymous threat to IT systems and networks; as well as natural and anthropogenic disasters (European Council, 2010).

In addition to the above-mentioned documents, the topic of security threats is addressed in the *Global Strategy for the Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union*. For the purposes of this document, the situation in 136 countries was examined. On this basis, the commitment to mutual assistance and solidarity among EU states in countering, among others: terrorism, cyber-attacks, energy security threats, organized crime and border management was clarified (European External Action Service, 2016).

Security threats were also of interest to the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), which commissioned to find out the views of EU states on the issue. To this end, ECFR experts conducted surveys in all member states, interviews with policy makers and renowned analysts, as well as extensive research of policy documents and academic discourse. The survey clearly showed that there is a widespread perception across the EU that security threats are increasing. Respondents rated the threats facing their countries as having intensified in the past decade and will intensify in the next. The biggest perceived threats in 2018 were (in descending order): cyber-attacks, external meddling in domestic politics, uncontrolled migration into the country, and deterioration of the international institutional order. The respondents felt that the order of these threats would remain largely the same over the next decade, but that each would intensify. ECFR experts estimated that the situation was somewhat different in 2008, when the following threats were most frequently perceived (in descending order): economic instability and terrorist attacks, neighborhood instability and energy supply disruptions, and cyber-attacks (Shapiro, Hackenbroich, 2017).

The threats to the EU's internal security have also been addressed by the European Commission, which, in its *Communication on the EU Security Union Strategy*, notes that globalisation, free movement and digital transformation on the one hand provide prosperity, make life easier and drive innovation for EU citizens, but on the other bring certain inherent risks and costs. These can be used for terrorism, organised crime, human trafficking and the ever-increasing cybercrime. The European Commission believes that the structure of threats to internal security is becoming increasingly complex: attacks are facilitated by the ability to work across borders and interconnectivity; the blurring of boundaries between the physical and digital worlds also contributes to threats; perpetrators exploit vulnerable groups and social and economic differences. Attacks can occur without any warning and perpetrators leave little or no trace (European Commission, 2020).

In summary, according to researchers and experts, the biggest threats to the EU's internal security (in no set order) are: terrorist attacks, cyber-attacks, organized crime, energy insecurity, climate change, irregular migration and epidemics (Figure 1).

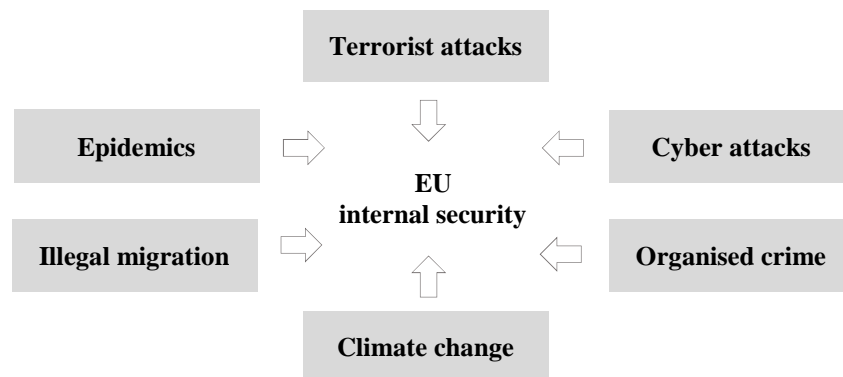


Figure 1. Threats to internal security of the EU

Source: Own work.

3. ESSENCE OF THREATS TO INTERNAL SECURITY

Currently, threats to the internal security of the EU have been unchanged for at least ten years. However, the scale and nature of some have changed, making them even more dangerous.

The unlawful use of force against persons and property to intimidate civilians or coerce EU governments has been occurring for several decades. The opening of the Union's borders to refugees arriving from North Africa and the Middle East has undoubtedly contributed to the increased threat of **terrorist attacks** in the EU. Along with the migrants, jihadists emerged in Europe and brought the conflict from the Middle East to the EU. These terrorists quickly became active (Shaffer, 2020). Overnight on 13 November 2015, they carried out a series of bombings in the French capital that killed 129 people and injured 350. Four months later, on 22 March 2016, 32 people and three suicide bombers were killed and 316 injured in three coordinated bombings carried out in Brussels. In Nice on 14 July 2016, a truck bomber drove into a crowd of walkers - 84 people were killed and 202 injured. A similar attack took place in Berlin on 19 December 2016 – 12 people were then killed and 48 injured (Siemiątkowski, Zięba (sc. ed.), 2016a).

The fact that there has not been a major spectacular terrorist attack in EU countries in recent months does not mean that the above threat has been eliminated. Unfortunately, the terrorist threat is still very serious. The detailed extent and nature of terrorism currently occurring in EU countries is revealed in the European *Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2020*. In 2019, 119 thwarted, failed and carried out terrorist attacks were registered within the EU in 13 countries. Most of these occurred in the UK with 64, Italy with 28 and France with 7 (Europol, 2020). The vast majority of terrorist attacks were attacks, using non-advanced technology, directed by individual perpetrators against individuals in public spaces (European Commission, 2020). The explosives used in attacks are mainly obtained by terrorists from areas where armed conflicts have taken place or are still taking place, in

cooperation with organized crime groups. Terrorist propaganda has taken on new importance with the live streaming of attacks carried out.

In the case of Islam terrorism, individuals who fought in the ranks of the so-called Islamic State and later returned to EU countries for various reasons and in various ways are not dangerous, as they can generally be monitored. The same applies to Islamists on EU territory who carry out radical activities, e.g. on Internet forums or in mosques. The most dangerous individuals are those who identify with Islamic fundamentalism and at the same time are willing to use terrorism, but do not publicly disclose their views (Wojciechowski, 2018). Terrorist organizations send their members to EU countries, who blend in seamlessly with the local population. These are usually students and well-educated and wealthy people. This camouflage provides an opportunity for an unsuspecting terrorist group to expand its structures on the EU territory.

Despite the efforts of many security services, terrorism, especially religiously motivated terrorism, has not ceased to threaten the EU; on the contrary, this threat affects not only the UK, Italy or France, but also other EU countries, including those not yet under attack, which is due, among other things, to the fact that the so-called Islamic State needs spectacular successes after its defeat in Syria and Iraq. It is also a manifestation of the strategy of creating new battle fronts, i.e. attacking in ever new places, taking advantage of the determination and radicalism of some of its supporters.

The digitalization over the past three decades of almost all areas of human life has undoubtedly affected their security. The widespread use of computers, networks and wider ICT in both the public and private spheres has come with not only benefits but also increasing vulnerability to their harmful use. With today's rapidly evolving digital techniques and global business environment, banking systems, industrial installations and energy networks are particularly vulnerable to **cyber-attacks**.

There are various motives that can prompt a cyber-attack. One reason may be the cost of regular military action, which is incomparably higher than online activity. Nowadays, to launch a cyber-attack, all you need is access to the net and some skills. An attack can be organized from anywhere on the planet with Internet access. The barriers between state, private, commercial and military are blurred. The origin of the attack and who is behind it are unknown. The attack is sudden and unpredictable, the victim does not expect it, is unaware of the danger and unprepared to withstand it. Anonymity gives the opportunity to manipulate information, makes it difficult to repel an attack. There is a minimal risk of detecting a ready-made attack, and we also do not know the attacker's intentions. A greater propaganda effect and public recognition is given by paralyzing the information system of state institutions than by aggression on innocent people.

Europe has had to deal with cyber-attacks on a number of occasions, as exemplified by data from the Federal Office for Information and Communication Security (BSI), which shows that in the second half of 2018 there were 157 hacking attacks on Germany's critical infrastructure, 19 of them on electricity grids. In the entire previous reporting period (i.e. June 2017 to May 2018), there were 145 digital strikes. And in the previous one (2016/2017) – 34. The BSI also assumes that it does not know about all attacks – some are missed and some are not reported. In December 2018, the largest hacking attack on German politicians to date took place in Germany. It resulted in the data of around a thousand German politicians, including Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, as well as celebrities and journalists, being leaked online (BusinessAlert, 2019).

Harmful online activity continues to grow. Due to online services being attacked, e.g. through the use of malware, the end user is increasingly vulnerable to hackers. At the same time, the grey market, where cybercriminals sell their illegally acquired information, skills and tools, continues to flourish. Stolen personal and financial data has a tangible monetary value. Many new criminal activities are involved, such as phishing for passwords and confidential data, targeting fake websites, distributing malware and hacking into databases (Stolarski, 2019).

Modern industrial espionage has a significant impact on the economy, jobs and growth in the EU. The cost of cyber theft of trade secrets is estimated at EUR 60 billion and the resulting potential loss of 289,000 jobs (European Commission, 2018).

There are many reasons that make the threat of cyber-attack high and growing. The most commonly cited include: strong economic and business ties between companies, political-economic and military ties between countries, poor resilience and protection of data communication systems against this threat, poor technical infrastructure and detection systems, countermeasure and neutralization systems, low awareness and knowledge of users about the threat and related consequences, lack of appropriate structures for analysis, prevention and improvement of the countermeasure system (Dąbrowski, 2015).

Despite having a modern security system in EU countries with highly developed digital technology, such as: Germany, France or the United Kingdom, political, economic and social ties with countries with poorer and less advanced technical and information infrastructures also make them vulnerable to cyber-attacks and force them to maintain economically large expenditures to counter and protect their own information systems and networks.

Organized crime is a phenomenon that permeates all aspects of social, economic and political life. Europol data included in *Threat Assessment. Crime in the age of technology* shows that in 2017 there were over 5,000 organized crime groups operating in the EU, with members from over 180 countries. Compared to 2013, the number of observed criminal groups increased by nearly 1,500 (SOCTA, 2017).

The activities of organized criminal groups are focused on seeking maximum profits with the least possible risk of suffering the consequences of illegal activities. Criminal groups generate huge revenue, which together exceed an amount of several billion euro per year. The activity of criminal groups manifests itself in many ways, but most often through cross-border illicit drug trafficking, smuggling of irregular migrants, human trafficking, excise fraud and money laundering.

According to the *European Drug Report*, the European drug market receives both local production and drugs trafficked from other parts of the world. South America, Western Asia and North Africa are the main source regions for drugs entering Europe. Organized crime groups are also interested in the production and trafficking of psychoactive substances and precursor chemicals necessary for the manufacture of illicit intoxicants (EMCDDA, 2019).

The structure of a criminal group smuggling migrants is usually a loose network of smaller groups. Most of them have ethnic or other cultural ties to the migrants they facilitate to cross the border illegally. Traffickers are quick to detect and exploit various changes in society, such as changing law enforcement tactics and changes in legislation, as well as the opening of new or cheaper transport routes or new border crossings.

Establishing the exact extent of human trafficking in the EU is currently impossible due to the lack of a harmonized data collection system; the number of victims is estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands. According to data recorded in Europol's systems, 71% of

identified victims of trafficking in human beings were EU nationals and 29% were non-EU nationals, including from West Africa and Asia (Europol, 2016).

Trafficking in human beings can take many forms from organized prostitution, begging, illegal adoption to trafficking in human organs included. In recent years, a new area of criminal activity has been identified – human trafficking for the fraudulent collection of social security benefits and child allowances.

The basic model of transnational VAT fraud involves at least two EU countries. It is perpetrated by criminal groups that structure related companies and individuals, while exploiting various details of national tax systems to mask the real links between participants. The actors involved in VAT fraud that are initially responsible for the tax damage - the so-called disappearing economic entities – are only active for a short period of time, sometimes only weeks (Europol, 2011).

The most problematic aspect of detecting the activities of an organized criminal group is that it does everything to maintain the appearance of legitimacy in order to hide the sources of illicit income. Not only is money laundering closely linked to other forms of crime, it is also a lucrative business that organized crime groups offer to other groups as a stand-alone service. One way to combine legal and illegal profits is through the use of legally operating companies. Criminals can either run such companies directly or do so using intermediaries or intimidated individuals (Bąkowski, 2013).

Europol reports that almost half (45%) of organized crime groups operating in the EU engage in more than one criminal activity. Many of them are very flexible and able to switch from one criminal activity to another or add new illegal activities. They increasingly offer their support and expertise to individual criminals. The majority of organized crime groups (70%) are active in more than three EU countries and one in ten in seven or more (SOCTA, 2017).

Undoubtedly, factors linked to scientific and civilizational progress have had an impact on facilitating the development and operation of organized crime in EU countries. These include: instant communication (GSM technologies, the Internet, social media), increased mobility (the opening of the Schengen borders, convenient transport links within the EU), easy access to advanced technologies and the ease of making financial transactions.

Climate change is recognized as a serious threat to international security and stability. The devastating impact of a changing climate on all continents is expected to take its toll in this century (Pérez de las Heras, 2020). Most experts take the position that climate change is a “threat multiplier” and that all countries of the world, especially rich EU countries, should engage in actions to both prevent undesirable climate events and respond to crises caused by them (Bremberg, Sonnsjö, Mobjörket, 2019).

One of the most serious consequences of climate change destabilizing internal security, not only in the EU, is the restriction of access to water. Rising temperatures, due to increased levels of greenhouse gases, particularly perfluorotributylamine, which has a warming potential more than 7,000 times greater than carbon dioxide (Pawlowski, 2020), affect the amount of precipitation and the rate of melting of mountain glaciers, which impacts available drinking water supplies. The latter is particularly important, since at least half of the water consumed by about 40% of the human population comes from the summer thaw of mountain glaciers. A reduction in agricultural production is also indicated. Every 1°C rise in temperature above the current average causes a 10% drop in cereal crops. This, combined with projections that global food demand will increase by half by 2030, could pose a serious problem for humanity. Climate warming is increasing the area of infectious

diseases transmitted by insects, for example – Dengue fever and malaria in particular. This can have a particularly negative impact on the level of security in geographical regions where these diseases did not previously exist. The rise in temperature and the associated process of melting glaciers will not be without impact on sea and ocean levels. Its potential consequences are population displacement on a massive scale, all the more so as approximately two thirds of the population (including the EU countries) live close to the coastline. This phenomenon threatens infrastructure, which plays a major role in the functioning of both EU economies and the global economic system (Skoneczny, 2011).

As climate change deepens, the existing civilizational conflict between the rich North and the poor South may be exacerbated. Northern countries believe that one of the causes of global warming is the rapid population growth of the South and its rapid economic growth, which does not take into account ecological factors. Developing countries, on the other hand, point to the North's excessive consumerism and its link to the greenhouse effect.

Further, even more intense, global warming is predicted, and this trend seems a foregone conclusion for at least a few decades. If a major volcanic eruption occurs, there may be a short-term (up to a few years) cooling, but then the temperature will continue to rise. This is because the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is already high, and – despite some attempts to limit emissions – there is no end in sight for the increase (Kundzewicz, 2008).

Although in the early 1990s there were large movements of people from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to Western Europe, they did not pose serious threats to the internal security of the EU in the same way as immigration from non-European countries, especially from North Africa and the Middle East.

According to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the sum of violations on all European migration routes in the first eight months of 2019, although 26% lower than the year before, was still high, with about 68,700 cases (Muczyński, 2019). Factors affecting immigration include the break-up of multinational states and directly related ethnic and religious conflicts, natural disasters, discriminatory government policies, poverty, lack of adequate social welfare programs and uncontrolled population growth (Konarzewska, 2010).

Illegal migration is an acute problem of today's Europe. It is mainly the southern countries of the continent that complain about it. Human trafficking routes are constantly evolving, and the conditions under which they are carried are an affront to human dignity. The main beneficiaries are organised criminal groups, reaping enormous profits. Illegal migration threatens not only the internal security of the EU, but also, and perhaps above all, the migrants. Migrants are often exposed to death while attempting to cross borders illegally, physical and sexual violence and abduction for trafficking purposes.

The migratory threat of recent years is linked to the influx of people who have a different system of beliefs from those of the European population, and thus their own rites, traditions and customs. Undoubtedly, the presence of large numbers of migrants, especially those from other cultural and civilizational backgrounds and poorly integrated into the host society, causes strong social tensions, often finding vent in protests and street riots that constitute serious breaches of public order.

It is not possible to assess the scale of irregular migrants arriving in Europe due to the hidden nature of the phenomenon, and published information contains only estimates (Wawrzusiszyn, 2017).

Infectious diseases have constantly accompanied man, and the modern world creates conditions for their more rapid spread. The development of means of transport has greatly accelerated the movement of people from place to place. Changes in location carry the risk of transmitting viruses that can infect humans, animals and plants. The spread of viral infections is undoubtedly facilitated by illegal migration.

Large-scale **epidemics**, involving countries or even continents, are particularly dangerous. Epidemics not only affect human health, but can also cause serious economic, social and political disruption. In 2017, scientists and public health organizations, including the World Health Organization, warned that another epidemic was imminent and that no country was sufficiently prepared to face the coming waves of disease (Dokos, 2019).

Two years later, an influenza virus (COVID-19) emerged that became dangerous to the entire population on Earth. The disease caused by COVID-19 was initially not treated as a serious threat by the authorities of EU countries. It was only after the increase in the number of cases and especially of fatalities that health protection of EU citizens became an absolute priority. To avoid further spread of the virus, various restrictions (e.g. mass events were banned, schools and shops were closed) were introduced in the EU. The lockdown period and the need to maintain social distance resulted in shifting many processes to the digital space, which, on the one hand, proved to be salutary in the time of crisis, but on the other hand contributed to the growth of many abuses, especially financial ones.

The fight against the epidemic forces an increase in budgetary spending on public health and government support for the most vulnerable economic sectors and social groups. During an epidemic, all sectors of the economy experience disruption. Scarcity of certain goods leads to an increase in their prices. Reduced economic activity produces lower tax revenues. Because this happens when the government increases spending, so it increases the fiscal deficit and public debt. This in turn is the cause of a deep economic and social crisis.

Countries around the world are vaccinating on a massive scale. But beyond the logistics and coordination of such a large operation, there is another challenge – fighting the trade in fake vaccines.

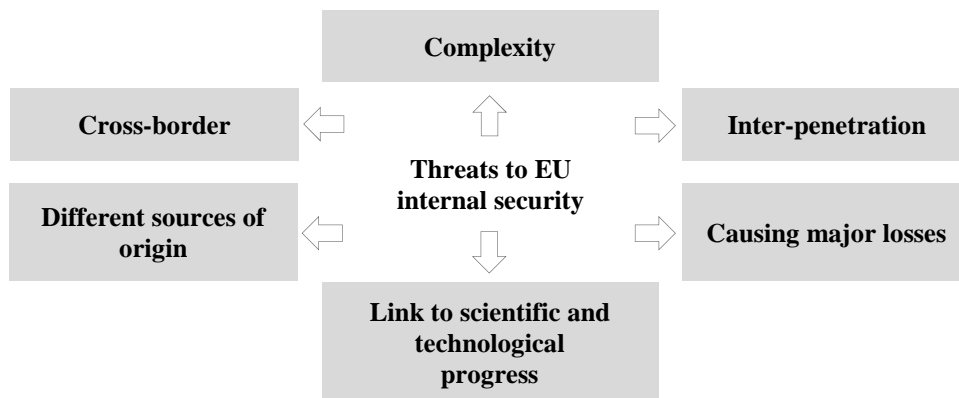


Figure 2. Essence of threats to internal security of the EU

Source: Own work.

It is likely that no country EU will emerge from the crisis caused by COVID-19 without compromising its capacity. Economic hardship and rising unemployment can fuel recruitment of individuals for organised crime groups. Conversely, home isolation and hours spent online provide an excellent 'opportunity' to learn the anti-systemic narrative used by terrorists (Europol, 2020).

To sum up, the results of the conducted research point to complexity, inter-penetration, trans-borders, different sources of origin, causing significant losses and being linked to scientific and technological progress as the basic features of the current threats to EU internal security (Figure 2).

4. CONCLUSION

Threats are an inseparable part of human life. They destabilize it, deprive of a sense of security and in many cases lead to the collapse of value systems. Threats are subject to constant re-defining and evolution. In the conditions of growing international interdependence and globalisation processes military threats cease to be the only threats. Next to them there are political, social and economic threats creating their non-military dimension.

The greatest threats to the internal security of the EU today are undoubtedly associated with the unlawful use of force against people and property, illegal activities in cyberspace, the activities of organized crime groups, energy insecurity integrated with primary fuels, climate change as a result of global warming, an excess of illegal migrants and highly contagious diseases with a wide range. From the perspective of the last year, the COVID-19 epidemic has proven to be particularly threatening to the internal security of the EU, which has been recognized as a multidimensional threat with extreme economic, social, political and even cultural consequences.

The current threats to the EU's internal security are a complex phenomenon. They arise against a background of political, economic, social and other contradictions and antagonisms. Threat carriers are state and non-state actors. They are caused not only by human actions, but also by natural causes. They occur on a global, regional and local scale. They do not occur individually. They are intertwined. In certain situations, one threat can take the form of another. They evolve using the latest technology. They often have an avalanche character. They also have a high capacity to negatively affect most aspects of state (community of states) functioning.

Although the primary responsibility for internal security lies with the Member States, recent years have shown that the security of each individual Member State is equivalent to the internal security of all EU countries. The Union responds to threats in a multidisciplinary and integrated way, providing Member States' security services with the tools and information they need. Practice shows that current legal, practical and support mechanisms are insufficient and need to be strengthened and improved. Close cooperation not only within the Union but also with third countries and at the global level is essential to fight threats effectively and comprehensively.

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DOI: 10.7862/rz.2021.hss.19

The text was submitted to the editorial office: March 2021.

The text was accepted for publication: September 2021.