



Perceptions of right-wing radicalisation and political polarisation in four EU Member States

A survey conducted by the EU funded CHAMPIONS project reveals that political polarisation and right-wing extremism is perceived as widespread. However, while resistance against these trends is forming several barriers prevent thoughts to be formulated into actions.

The CHAMPIONS project has conducted a survey, involving more than 230 individuals, like teachers, social workers, police men and psychologists in four countries, Germany, Hungary, Romania and Poland. It set out to analyse perceptions over the degree of right-wing radicalisation and polarisation in these states and responses to the phenomenon. This was done to identify needs and problems in Europe's resilience against the issues and to provide solutions through its own project.

Findings

In all the four countries surveyed by the CHAMPIONS project political polarisation is perceived to be significantly more widespread than right-wing radicalisation. Amongst the countries polarisation and right-wing extremism was perceived to be the most widespread in Hungary and the least in Germany. Furthermore, the CHAMPIONS study revealed a general consent, that the two phenomena mainly occur on national level rather than in the work or personal space of those questioned.

As such, depending on their nationality 73% to 97% of the participants, come across signs of political polarisation often or very often country-wise. On the other hand, 45% to 64% of the participants never or rarely meets the signs of polarisation in the close, personal environment.

The study reveals a similar trend for right-wing radicalisation. Country-wise, this phenomenon is observed most in Hungary and Poland, by 90% and 80% of those surveyed respectively. Also here, right-wing radicalisation does not seem to be widespread in the workplace and personal environments. The study found that 70% of Romanian, Polish and Hungarian respondents and above 90 % of the Germans never or rarely encountering signs of it.

Thus, the CHAMPIONS study has shown that while right wing radicalisation and polarisation was perceived to mainly occur on a national level, the two phenomena differed in perceived magnitude. As such, right-wing radicalisation is perceived to be less widespread than polarisation.



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However, the survey highlights that a sense of responsibility to refute right-wing radicalisation is shared by more participants than a responsibility to oppose political polarisation. As such, nearly all Germans 97%, 88% and 86% of Poles and Hungarians respectively and 71 % Romanians stated to see countering right-wing radicalisation as their responsibility.

Nevertheless, exposing political polarisation and right-wing radicalisation is considered a duty by a majority in all countries. Germans share this sense of responsibility the most, with 86% agreeing followed by Romania Hungary and Poland with over 60% of the participants in agreement.

Apparently regardless of the nature of the terms, the CHAMPIONS survey found that participants from all four countries indicated that they have enough information on these phenomena to identify them. However, the survey uncovered significant differences in the individual countries. While in Germany and Hungary 89% and 87% of those surveyed respectively agreed, it was already “only” 79% in Poland and 63% in Romania.

This could be due to the lack of resources on these topics available in the local language in Romania, Poland and other EU Member States, as identified by the CHAMPIONS project.

Indeed, this problem might be much more widespread as the survey indicates. Only 27% of the Poles surveyed, 28% of the Hungarians, 41% of Romanians and a small majority of 57% of Germans responded that they are having the tools and measures to take concrete action against the two phenomena.

However, the main problem identified was a lack of time. Only 20% to 33% of the respondents in the four nations had enough time to react to right-wing radicalisation and political polarization.

Therefore, the survey of the CHAMPIONS project highlights the perceived widespread nature of the two problems. It shows that while a vast majority believe to be able to identify the phenomenon and see it as their responsibility to do so, there are barriers preventing concrete action in several cases. As such, a lack of time is the dominant barrier, followed by a lack of tools and measures. Further, the CHAMPIONS study also highlights the need to make resources addressing the topics available in more languages to counter national inequalities in access to them.

