

Original article

## The importance of raising defensive awareness among children and young people with the involvement of the Polish Armed Forces

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### INFORMATION

#### Article history:

Submitted: 25 April 2022

Accepted: 21 November 2022

Published: 15 December 2022

### ABSTRACT

The raising of defensive awareness among children and young people is one of the fundamental roles in the process of creating a defence system, and thus the national security of the Republic of Poland. It should start at the stage of upbringing in the family home and then evolve with the help of educational facilities and their accompanying institutions, among which the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland should be mentioned in particular.

It is important to note that care for the creation of a reliable security system rests not only with an institution such as the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland and other uniformed services, but also with every citizen of the Polish state – in accordance with the law in force. Proper development of defensive awareness would not be possible if it were not for close cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland and the education sector.

This is evidenced by the results of a pilot study, presented in the following article, conducted in the form of a questionnaire among eighth-grade students of the Henryk Sienkiewicz Primary School in Siedlce, as well as students of two third-grade classes with the military profile, at the European Secondary School of Uniformed Services in Wrocław. Their main objective was to show the degree of defence awareness formation among children and young people, using specific methods and institutions that have a direct impact on this process. As it was shown – as a result of the research analysis – a group of respondents, regardless of the knowledge they already have, want to continue to deepen it. This means that specific projects need to be created which in cooperation with many pro-defence organisations have a direct impact on shaping the security of the Polish state through working with its youngest citizens.

### KEYWORDS

awareness, defensive awareness, Civil Defence Training, Safety Education



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## Introduction

„The future of the Republic will be decided by the education of its youth”  
[1, p. 26]

Despite appearances, the raising of defensive awareness among children and young people is one of the most difficult processes to achieve and enforce. Hence, this process should begin at an early age – in particular in family upbringing in the spirit of patriotism and a sense of duty to care for the homeland – and continue during primary and secondary school. This is stated – Article 3(1) of the Act of 11 March 2022 on Homeland Defence [2]. Hence the following objective of the pilot study<sup>1</sup>, which is outlined in this article: identifying both the degree of development of defensive awareness among children and young people and the way in which this knowledge is transmitted.

The findings presented, which emerged from the analysis of the collected material, indicate that the above-mentioned measures are carried out in a sound manner and are consistently implemented by means of the prescribed tasks, with particular emphasis on the desire for further development in the described subject area, both among primary and secondary school students, in accordance with the provisions contained in the Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 on Core Curricula for Pre-school and General Education in particular types of schools [3]. The school subject Safety Education is a consequence of legal requirements which, thanks to ongoing improvements and cooperation between the military sector and education sector, are almost constantly evolving, resulting in a more effective and improved formation of defensive awareness from an early age.

The above-described approach results from the necessity to create a defence system that is an inseparable element of the basis of the national security system of the Republic of Poland. Its main tasks are to cope with any emerging threats, which may occur both in connection with situations caused by natural forces and also at the moment of danger caused by the occurrence of militarily motivated actions.

## **Rationale and methodology of the study undertaken**

The essence of defensive awareness is a very complex issue. The continuous evaluation of this phenomenon has led the author of this article to conduct own research, presented in this article, the main objective of which was to systematise and show the importance of the ongoing process. The following methods were used during the study described below: a quantitative method (allowing statistical analysis and illustration, through the number of answers obtained, of the essence related to the issue in question) and a qualitative method (supplementing the quantitative information with additional statements, allowing the development of specific views and showing their importance, in relation to the phenomenon in question) [4, p. 21]. Moreover – to concretise and systematise the concepts – a content analysis of the documents was carried out, among which the acts, regulations and the literature shown in this article should be pointed out [4, p. 87]. Following the steps described above allowed the use of deduction and induction, thus making it possible to show certain conclusions and comparisons that are evidence of the importance of raising defensive awareness [4, p. 73].

In terms of empirical methods, a diagnostic survey was selected to conduct own research, which was conducted at the H. Sienkiewicz Primary School in Siedlce and the European School of Uniformed Services in Wrocław.

By taking these steps, it was possible to create a clear outlook and draw a number of conclusions with regard to the creation of the national security system of the Republic of Poland. As the analysis of the survey has revealed, the education of children and young people

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the small survey sample, this study should not be considered representative.

– undertaken already in the family home – becomes the key, and the next “step to success” becomes enabling them to further develop in the area of safety. This is possible during the implementation of classes in primary and secondary schools as part of the school subject Safety Education, as well as activities organised in cooperation with the Polish Armed Forces, the enormity of which can be seen by looking at the Plan for Cooperation with NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and other social partners [5].

### **Systematisation of the concepts used**

The key to implementing a proper analysis of the issue under consideration is to establish the meaning of the term “awareness”. According to the definition in the *Two-volume encyclopaedia of the Polish Scientific Publishers (Dwutomowa Encyklopedia PWN)*, from a psychological point of view, awareness was defined as “the highest level of regulation of human behaviour; a specifically internal capacity for direct cognition of the environment, one’s own person and relations with the environment, running on 3 levels: perceptual, conceptual/verbal and self-conscious” [6, p. 283].

This means that awareness is a specific level that regulates a given behaviour, which remains dependent on the stimuli a person receives from the environment. By referring to the above-mentioned definition, their cognition is possible on the following three levels:

- perceptual level – perceptions [6, p. 53],
- conceptual/verbal level – referring to any verbal communication with a given meaning combined with a concrete concept,
- the level of self-consciousness – referring to a person’s knowledge of themselves and their own capabilities [7].

In addition, the concept of “awareness” was also presented from a philosophical point of view, pointing out that it is: “a state of consciousness and the sum of the contents experienced in this state; a tool for the formation of the cognitive field, allowing the elements of the world to be grasped within a coherent model that reflects reality” [6, p. 283]. The above definition indicates the process by which a person perceives the world, looking at the environment through the prism of consciousness, and this becomes the reason for the creation of their specific attitudes in given situations that take place in everyday life.

Another, relevant to the issue under discussion, is the concept of “security”. It derives from the Latin – “*sine cura = securitas*” [8, p. 7] – and means “without care”, which directly indicates a condition in which there is no danger. Confirmation and development of this definition can be found in the textbook for the school subject Safety Education. The meaning of the term again indicates that it is a state of peace and certainty and a life that is free of all threats and fears. Moreover, the essence of security is mentioned, namely the indication that it is not a permanent condition but a continuous process which, as part of properly undertaken measures, enables normal functioning and, in addition, development and the achievement of specific goals, despite constant changes in the environment [9, p. 8].

The notion of “nation” is relevant to the topic under discussion. While analysing the concepts mentioned above and the topic of this article, this formulation is an important consolidating element. This is due to the fact that nation is a collectivity of people with a developed characteristic, common national consciousness. This term should be understood as perceiving – in a manner that is particular to a nation – given stimuli and reacting to them in a strictly specific way, which is typical of a certain group of people who make up a given community.

The nation is also a community of ideas (its formation is dependent on the existence of one, or many, national ideologies), the aim of which is to mobilise as large a proportion as possible of a specific population which, over time, will begin to be seen as a unified whole (nation) whose guiding priority will become its protection.

Another important concept that is essential for this study to clarify is the “state”. It should be pointed out that it is a sovereign political organisation of a given society, living in a territory with defined boundaries. Moreover, the state possesses power of both hierarchical and public nature, and its sovereignty is made visible in the form of its ability to dispose of a coercive apparatus against social groups and individuals who, in their conduct, commit violations of certain provisions of the law and, by their actions, follow a monopoly in terms of its application [6, p. 38].

The final concept that needs to be defined is “state security”. In the opinion of J. Słoma, this term can be considered as a condition during which a state exists and remains unthreatened. By this is meant that both internal and external conditions create the possibility for free and unhindered development. Nonetheless, the aforementioned author points out that state security is not a fixed thing, but a constantly evolving process that requires new actions and solutions to be taken constantly, in relation to the constantly changing situations perceived in the environment [9, p. 8].

As a matter of interest, from the point of view of this study, is the definition of state security contained in *Fundamentals of State Internal Security in the European Union – Theoretical Considerations (Podstawy bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego państwa w Unii Europejskiej – rozważania teoretyczne)*. The authors of that publication define the state security as: “the state or conditions under which the protection of the nation and the territory of the state against an armed aggression is ensured as well as the ability to repel this aggression. This refers to both objective conditions and the subjective conviction of the nation or the foreign policy makers of the state that there is no threat of armed aggression, political pressure or economic coercion” [10, p. 13].

While analysing the concepts indicated, the complexity of the essence of defensive awareness is recognised, as well as its emergence and evolution. The defensive awareness has a very extensive range of topics. Two broad areas emerge, such as safety and education. From the definitions of these concepts quoted, their indispensable interdependence can be demonstrated, and this makes each of these areas very important in terms of creation of the most important values for human beings.

## **Institutions supporting defensive awareness**

The raising of defensive awareness also rests on institutions of an educational nature (*educatio* [11] – upbringing), which play a key role in the process of raising defensive awareness, creating – through their actions and activities – patriotic and thus defensive attitudes.

Leading institutions that are linked to this topic under discussion include:

- school (both primary and secondary),
- Scouting Association of the Republic (Związek Harcerstwa Rzeczypospolitej – ZHR),
- Riflemen’s Association “Strzelec” Social and Educational Organisation (Związek Strzelecki „Strzelec” Organizacja Społeczno-Wychowawcza – OSW),
- League of National Defence (Liga Obrony Kraju – LOK).

The education in the Republic of Poland, when looking at its basic assumptions, was created to unify and disseminate certain patterns not only in the sciences and humanities but also with regard to the formation of certain moral attitudes. When looking at the pages of our country's history, this has become one of the greatest goals for the Republic of Poland to face. It was crucial to educate younger generations, not only in terms of innovation and requirements imposed by the civilised world but, above all, to develop the essence of awareness and security, which contributed to the creation of a proper national identity with the characteristic attitudes required [12].

The first school subject that addressed the aforementioned assumptions was Civil Defence Training. Its themes mainly related to the formation of defensive awareness discussed in this article. However, this has proved insufficient with the continuous development of society and the surrounding outside world. The reason for this was its scope, mainly geared to the situation of a possible outbreak of war [13]. In view of this, in 2009, The Ministry of National Education carried out a reform resulting in the creation of a new school subject – Safety Education [14]. Safety Education replaced the aforementioned Civil Defence Training and applies to both primary and secondary schools. Teaching at these two levels has made it possible to start working with an increasingly younger generation to achieve this goal.

Another institution whose existence significantly influences the formation of patriotic attitudes and defensive awareness is the Scouting Association of the Republic (ZHR).

The history of the establishment of ZHR dates back to 1989. In its idea and programme organisation, this institution refers to the traditions and educational thoughts of several generations of Polish scouts [15]. Their predecessors have repeatedly, with their attitude and dedication, shown testimony to patriotism as well as selflessness in helping. Nowadays, ZHR continues to uphold these multi-generational national traditions and cultivates Polishness with the development of awareness – not only national awareness but also civic awareness and cultural awareness (the undertaken activities have multi-faceted nature). ZHR also carries out tasks relating to rescue and civil protection. Nonetheless – the most important thing during the activities implemented – is to work on the dissemination of knowledge relating to the skills needed, which have a direct effect on state defence.

Examples of education, in terms of these competences, include:

- survival,
- topography,
- communication,
- shooting training,
- diving,
- skydiving [16, p. 144].

The next organisation that deserves a mention in the subject under discussion is the Riflemen's Association "Strzelec", which is a Social and Educational Organisation (OSW). Its history dates back to 1989 when, at the Third Congress of the Confederation of Independent Poland, a resolution was passed, indicating the need to reactivate the (Józef Piłsudski-era<sup>2</sup>) Riflemen's Movement. The association remains true to its long-standing (dating

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<sup>2</sup> Józef Piłsudski – born on 5 December 1867, died on 12 May 1935. He was the first Marshal of Poland (1920) and twice Prime Minister in 1926-1928 and 1930. In addition, he was a soldier, a politician, as well as a Polish social and independence activist. Józef Piłsudski was a founder of the Combat Organisation of the Polish

back to pre-war times) tradition. This is evidenced by the – statutory – activities undertaken, among which are:

- all activities aimed at maintaining the inviolability of the independence of the Republic of Poland,
- all actions taken to strengthen Poland's independence,
- adequate preparation of young people for military service,
- nurturing the upbringing of the young generation in the spirit of patriotism,
- improving physical fitness conscientiously and adequately for the activities required,
- learning to function in a disciplined way and live harmoniously as part of a team [16, p. 144].

In spite of the passage of many years, which have brought various events referring to security threats (including war) – the statutory tasks have remained almost unchanged in their guiding principles. This therefore indicates the relevance and importance played by the institution in question, which has had a direct effect on the raising of defensive awareness among children and young people, which is the basis of national security for so many generations.

The closing organisation – and one of the most important organisations mentioned in this article – is the National Defence League (LOK). At the turn of years, it could be found under the following names:

- from 21 July 1944 to 21 July 1950 – the Society of Friends of the Polish Soldier,
- from 21 July 1950 to 12 November 1962 – the League of Friends of the Soldier,
- finally from 12 November 1962 to the present day – the National Defence League.

The desire to join the association in order to continuously strengthen and support the defence of the Republic of Poland is one of the main assumptions among its members. Moreover, the desire to cultivate national traditions also plays an important role, which is an integral part of the functioning of the organisation in question. In addition, other tasks performed include:

- organisation of self-defence across the country,
- preparation of training courses during which participants take part in preparatory education for technical services of all types of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland.

It is noteworthy that there are sports clubs within the National Defence League, referring to disciplines such as shooting, diving, sailing and ham radio [16, p. 144].

The above description confirms the fact that this organisation is – thanks to its main objectives – a compendium of knowledge supporting the raising of defensive awareness and care for the security of the Republic of Poland in a direct way.

In conclusion, it is fair to point out that the above-mentioned educational institutions have a significant and direct effect on the formation of certain attitudes among both children and young people. It is not only about proper habits, but also about developed physical fitness, patriotism, respect for the homeland, but most importantly, defensive awareness.

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Socialist Party, as well as the Polish Legions and the Polish Military Organisation. From 11 November 1918, he served as the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army.

## **The role of the Armed Forces in the process of raising defensive awareness in cooperation with schools in the light of own research**

The stimuli, coming from the environments in which young people's upbringing is carried out (for example: at home – family; at school – peers, teachers, etc.), significantly influence their ongoing development. Having analysed the research, it is possible to see its purpose – the point is to indicate the degree of development of defensive awareness among children and young people and the way in which this knowledge is passed on.

This is reflected in the indication in the Act of 11 March 2022 on Homeland Defence, which – as mentioned earlier – obliges every citizen to take concrete actions as part of the state defence [2]. This legal standard finds its place in the educational pathway provided by the state for every young person (both in primary and secondary school) in accordance with the provisions [17] contained in the core curriculum [14; 18]. All of this is aimed at raising defensive awareness along with citizenship.

This is evidenced by the indicated below results of the analysis of the survey conducted in the 8<sup>th</sup> class of the Henryk Sienkiewicz Primary School in Siedlce. The choice of this facility was made because of the desire to show the level at which there is evaluation of the defensive awareness being raised already in the very children who start their education at primary school.

Eleven boys and seven girls took part in an anonymous study, conducted by means of a survey questionnaire, making a total of 18 respondents. The study was conducted in August 2020. Its main objective was to elicit answers related to the following research problems:

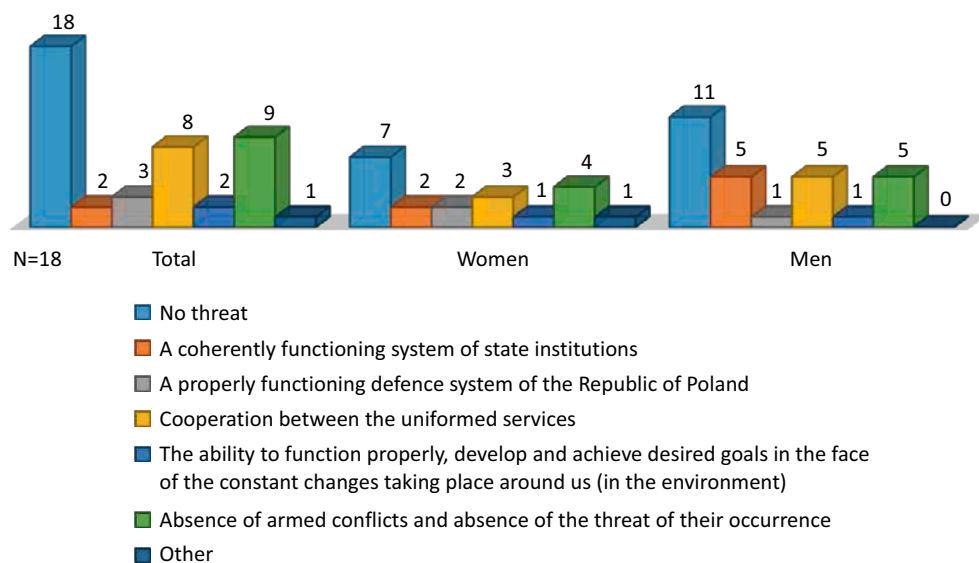
- to what extent defensive awareness is raised at primary and secondary school level,
- what methods have an effect on the raising of defensive awareness,
- to what extent defence-related institutions have an effect on the development of defensive awareness.

The first issue addressed in the survey questionnaire related to knowledge of the term “security”. Then, after the analysis, it turned out that out of 18 individuals, 17 respondents (including six women and nine men) stated that they knew what security was. This represents 94.4% of the total participants. Only 1 person (female respondent) indicated a negative answer. In a further step, in order to obtain a more accurate result of the self-reported research, the respondents were asked a question relating to the concepts that they believe are identified with the meaning of the term security. The results obtained are shown in Figure 1.

After aggregating the responses obtained, a picture of the data obtained and shown in the chart presented, indicates that most participants identify security with the following phrases:

- no threat (17 participants),
- absence of armed conflicts and absence of the threat of their occurrence (9 participants),
- cooperation of the uniformed services (8 participants),
- a properly functioning Defence System of the Republic of Poland (3 participants),
- a coherently functioning system of state institutions and the possibility to function properly, develop and achieve desired goals in the face of the changes constantly taking place around us (in the environment) (2 participants).

In addition, one participant identified an additional factor such as “agreement between government representatives”.

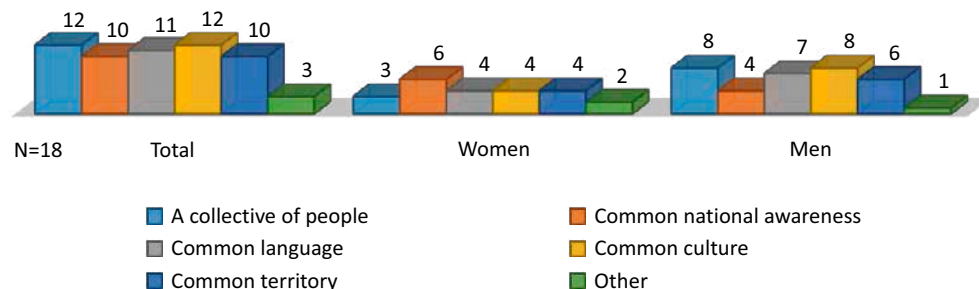


**Fig. 1.** A concept that is identified with the meaning of the term “security”  
 Source: Own research, Siedlce 2020.

As expected, the majority of respondents equate the concept of security with the absence of threat, the absence of armed conflict (and a condition in which there is no threat of armed conflict) and the cooperation of uniformed services. This is a very important indication because, as the factors cited above show, young people find these conditions in the activities of the uniformed services, which in turn are responsible for maintaining certain norms in the state, the purpose of which is to ensure a good level and sustainability of security.

The second major issue, the adequate conception of which directly affects the raising of defensive awareness, is the nation. When the next question was analysed, the results were as follows: among the respondents – as for the previous question – as many as 17 participants (including seven women and ten men) declared that they knew what was meant by this term.

Figure 2, which was created based on the data obtained, shows the respondents’ answers, according to which the most important factor indicating the characteristics of the concept in question should be identified with a term such as:



**Fig. 2.** Concepts identified with the meaning of the term “nation”  
 Source: Own research, Siedlce 2020.



- a collective of people and common culture (12 participants),
- common language (11 participants),
- common territory and common national awareness (10 participants),
- while other factors were indicated by 3 participants (including two women and one man) with the following responses: “the same or similar religion”, “celebrating the same holidays”, “having an anthem, a flag and an emblem”.

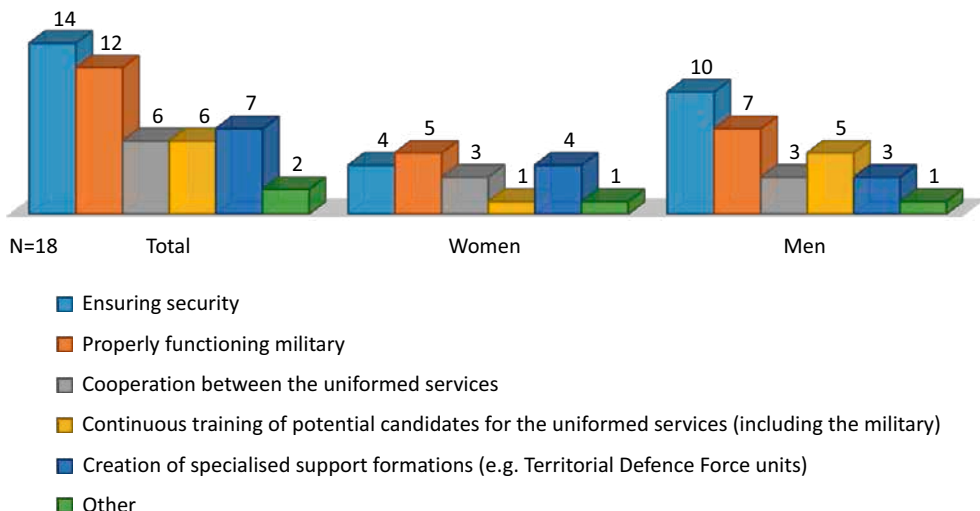
The next question addressed directly the terminology of the concept of defensive awareness. After the responses were analysed, a picture emerges whereby the respondents in their statements – in accordance with the assumptions – demonstrate knowledge resulting from their lessons in the school subject Safety Education. As many as 16 participants – 88.9% – indicated that they were familiar with this concept, while only two respondents (11.1% of the total) declared that they were not.

The above results are detailed in the analysis of the respondents’ surveys in the form of a chart (Fig. 3), which includes various elements that make up defensive awareness, as indicated by the respondents.

As can be noted, 14 out of 18 participants (i.e. 77.8%) indicated that the phenomenon in question is primarily about ensuring security and a properly functioning military – this answer was chosen by five women and seven men – indicating the important fact that the understanding of defensive awareness, both among women and men, should not be seen through the prism of common views in society.

The next questions answered by the respondents were aimed at demonstrating the participants’ knowledge of the above concepts, as well as of the material learnt in Safety Education lessons, which forms the basis for the common concern for the condition that is security.

In view of this, the next question concerned the concept of “state security”. After the analysis was conducted, the following result emerged: 11 respondents (61.1%) confirmed that they were familiar with this concept. In contrast, seven participants (38.9%) answered in



**Fig. 3.** Concepts identified with the meaning of the term “defensive awareness”

*Source: Own research, Siedlce 2020.*

the negative. The resulting discrepancy points to the need for further defensive awareness formation so that young people, through the path of education, learn to take proper care of the common good and a basic human need – the aforementioned security.

When analysing further, it should be noted that despite their young age, when asked about their understanding of the phrase state security, respondents demonstrated a great deal of knowledge.

According to the responses elicited, as many as 14 participants (77.8%) indicated that it is primarily the absence of a threat to the state and, in addition, a continuous process that ensures its development (10 participants). A further 7 participants, or 38.9%, indicated that undisturbed conditions also play an important role, which – in view of the maintenance of the security situation – are the basis for proper and stable development. The continuous training of potential candidates for the uniformed services and other factors shown by the respondents: “more equipment for the army and police”, “more protection in public places”, “good relations with other countries”, point to the unquestionable need for the continued expansion of the uniformed services and their adequate emoluments. In addition, state security should involve paying attention to relations and attitudes towards other countries.

In order to summarise the part of the survey related to terminological issues, the following question was asked: *In your opinion, is “defensive awareness” linked to the following factors that are hidden under the following terms: “security”, “nation”, “state security”?*

After an analysis of the responses obtained, as many as 17 (including 7 women and 10 men) out of 18 participants specified that all the indicated concepts were related to defensive awareness. This situation makes it possible to conclude that the present issue revolves around a number of areas, each of which – in an individualised way – exerts its own specific influence on it, nevertheless still forming a whole.

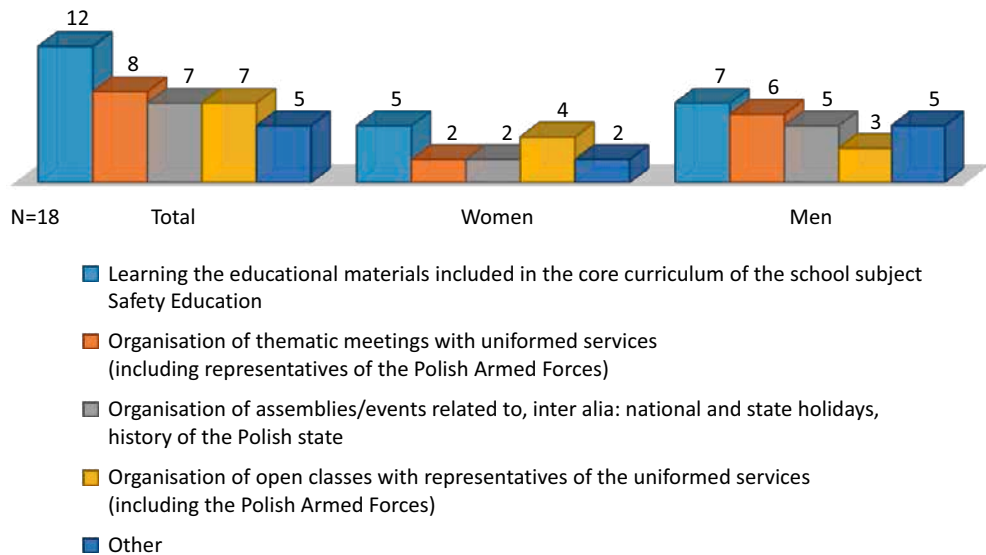
The next issue that was included in the survey was intended to indicate whether defensive awareness is perceived – particularly by children and young people – through the prism of connection and cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. The following question was then asked: *In your opinion, is the occurrence of “defensive awareness” linked to the institution of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland?*

The response of the respondents was almost unanimous, as 12 participants stated that defensive awareness, in its essence, is linked to the Armed Forces and, most significantly, as many as four respondents indicated that the phenomenon in question has its origin there. Only two participants stated that the Armed Forces did not have an effect on the occurrence of defensive awareness, representing only 11.1% of the total respondents.

Following the links, the next question was as follows: *In your opinion, is the occurrence of “defensive awareness” linked to educational institutions and educational facilities?*

The analysis of the results revealed a unanimous response, namely – the entire group of respondents indicated that the occurrence of defensive awareness is linked to educational institutions and educational facilities – a total of 17 participants – of which 8 respondents indicated that this is where the formation of the phenomenon in question begins. Only one respondent (male) indicated that there was no link between the factors discussed.

The task of the next question was to show the respondents’ knowledge of the tasks performed by educational institutions and educational facilities that contribute to the development of defensive awareness among young people. The results ranked as follows and are illustrated in Figure 4.



**Fig. 4.** The occurrence of defensive awareness and its link to educational institutions and educational facilities – manifestations of their activities. Respondents' indication  
*Source: Own research, Siedlce 2020.*

Again, it is important to note that when analysed by gender, the tasks remain similar, resulting in respondents giving the following answers in turn, together with an indication of the following factors:

- learning the educational materials included in the core curriculum of the school subject Safety Education (17 participants),
- organisation of thematic meetings with uniformed services, including representatives of the Polish Armed Forces (8 participants),
- organisation of assemblies/events related to, inter alia: national and state holidays, history of the Polish state, and organisation of open classes with representatives of the uniformed services, including the Polish Armed Forces (7 participants).

Additionally, among those surveyed, 5 respondents indicated the following:

- “organised military-themed picnics”,
- “trips to organised ceremonies where there is also army”,
- “trips to Independence Day celebrations”,
- “Safety Education lessons”,
- “meetings and talks with district officers”.

In order to show the detailed effect of education on the raising of *defensive awareness*, it was asked whether: [...] *do you think that the lessons taught in a school subject such as “Safety Education” play an important role in the process of defensive awareness formation?* Then, the majority of respondents in the form of 13 participants (i.e. 72.2%) indicated unquestioningly that the lessons of Safety Education play an important role in the process of the aforementioned formation of defensive awareness.

After the analysis of the question no. 14: *In your opinion, do the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland play an important role in the creation of the defence system?*, the following

conclusions can be drawn: 17 respondents believe that the Armed Forces play an important role. Furthermore, 11 respondents believe that the Armed Forces are the basis in the creation of the state's security system and thus its defence system.

The question no. 15 concerned the core curriculum and the issues contained therein, including those that are related to the military and should be pursued by students during the school subject Safety Education. This question read as follows: *According to the educational programme contained in the core curriculum of the school subject "Safety Education", does the role of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland play an important role in the process of its education?* Again, after the analysis was conducted, it should be pointed out that more than half of the respondents – 17 – indicated that, looking through the prism of the school subject and its thematic scope, the Armed Forces still play an important role and, according to 6 out of 17 respondents, it is considered the most important.

Having obtained the above-mentioned data, the question no. 16 was aimed at making them strictly concrete, namely it read as follows: *According to the subject "Safety Education", please indicate what role and what tasks do you think the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland play in relation to the defence system of the Polish state?*

The answers that respondents gave were ranked as follows, indicating the following tasks:

- protection of independence (11 participants),
- ensuring state security (8 participants),
- protection of the indivisibility of the state territory (7 participants),
- involvement in the implementation of defence policy (6 participants),
- involvement in the implementation of defence policy and ensuring the inviolability of state borders (5 participants).

In addition, 3 participants (1 woman and 2 men) mentioned the following tasks in their statements:

- "cooperation with other countries",
- "being a member of NATO",
- "continuous training".

The above responses indicate that defensive awareness is being broadened through Safety Education lessons, both in the area of international cooperation and the resulting responsibilities.

One of the concluding questions of the survey was: *did the "Safety Education" lessons, the materials included in the core curriculum and the information on the role of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland contribute to your defensive awareness?* Here, the respondents also showed almost unanimity, since as many as 9 of them indicated that these lessons, and the education programme covered in them, contributed to increasing their defensive awareness. Additionally, 4 participants – in relation to the above question, answered "Probably yes", which can be considered in this case as a doubtful – but nevertheless acknowledgement – of the impact of the above-mentioned lessons on the process of raising defensive awareness. Only 2 respondents indicated that the subject did not contribute to increasing their defensive awareness, and 2 respondents could not give concrete answers – hence they chose the phrase "I don't know".

Furthermore, in order to test the possible need for further/additional defence-oriented education, respondents were asked the following question: *according to you, should there be more subjects aimed at raising awareness in the course of education, both in primary and*

*secondary schools?* Despite the young age of the respondents, when analysed in detail, the answers were surprising. Over half of the respondents – 61.1% (11 participants) indicated that they would like to be able to attend more classes on similar topics, and in addition, as many as 10 participants indicated that they would like this learning to take place in a theoretical way, and nine participants also mentioned a possible desire to participate in practical learning. Only 4 respondents felt that additional learning in the area in question was not necessary and 2 respondents did not express an opinion by marking the answer “I don’t know”.

In summary, it can be concluded that – despite the young age of the respondents, which is between 14 and 15 years old – they demonstrated a high level of knowledge in the area in question. This means that their defensive awareness is being shaped correctly by the established system.

However, it needs to be mentioned that they should continue to develop their knowledge in this area, as the issues in question are a key element that enables them to undertake secondary education.

Proof of the validity of the educational pathway sanctioned by law, which is responsible for the development of the phenomenon in question, is provided by the author’s analysis of the results of research conducted at the European Secondary School of Uniformed Services (Europejskie Liceum Służb Mundurowych) in Wrocław, using an identical questionnaire to the one given to pupils at the Henryk Sienkiewicz Primary School in Siedlce. The choice of this educational facility was intended to show how important it is – right from the primary stage – to form a foundation of defensive awareness among children so that, as they grow up, they will want to deepen their existing knowledge by choosing this form of education.

25 women and 27 men took part in this anonymous survey, meaning that a total of 52 respondents (students in two military classes) aged 18 years or over responded. Similarly, as above, the aim of the study was to show the role – the impact – of Safety Education on raising awareness among young people, in particular, among students at a uniformed services school.

The very first question in the survey was designed to test knowledge of the concept of security. After analysis, the following result was obtained: out of 52 students, as many as 45 (86.5% of the total – 22 women and 23 men) indicated that they knew the meaning of the term, and only 7 respondents gave a negative answer.

The above verification was supplemented by a question in which respondents were required to mark the terms synonymous with the meaning of the concept of “security”. Respondents – looking at the statistics in relation to the presented gender – gave almost identical answers. This means again – as in the case of the questionnaires from primary school discussed above – that gender does not influence views related to and the process of developing defensive awareness, contrary to many commonly propagated misconceptions.

Of the secondary school students surveyed, as many as 47 respondents indicated that security is mainly associated with the absence of danger, and the following responses were given:

- absence of armed conflicts and absence of the threat of their occurrence (41 respondents),
- a properly functioning Defence System of the Republic of Poland (32 respondents),
- a coherently functioning system of state institutions (30 respondents),
- cooperation of the uniformed services (28 respondents),
- the ability to function properly, develop and achieve desired goals in the face of the constant changes taking place around us (in the environment) (27 respondents).

In addition, 7 respondents gave the following answers:

- “concerted international cooperation”,
- “a coherent policy of the Polish state”,
- “cooperation with foreign partners”,
- “concerted conduct with regard to regulations – the law being the same for all”,
- “international consensus”,
- “the state acting in unison”,
- “respecting human rights”.

Regarding the above responses given by the surveyed students, one common element, accompanying almost all of the listed responses, should be recognised, namely – peace. Looking through the prism of the described studies, it should be understood in the broader sense of synchronisation and caution accompanying conduct (particularly in and in relation to the international arena).

In relation to the next question included in the survey, relating to verification of knowledge of the term “nation”, the results of the analysis were similar to the question related to the definition of security – as many as 45 respondents indicated knowledge of this term, while 7 of the respondents marked a negative answer – i.e. the “No” answer.

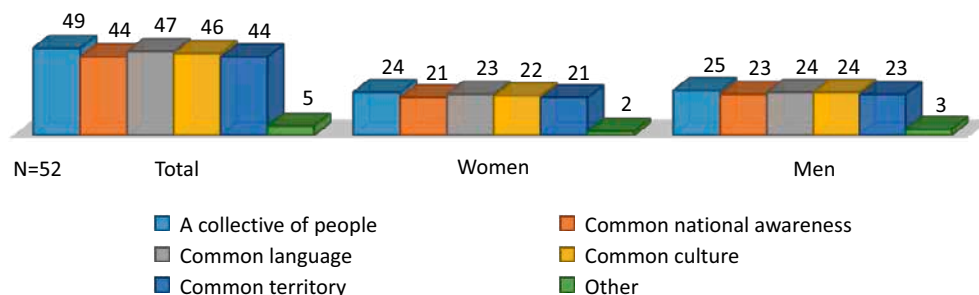
Figure 5, which illustrates the data from the analysis, confirms the declared knowledge of this concept.

Looking at Figure 5, one can see that 49 respondents (or 94.2%) indicated that the term “nation” should be understood as a collective of people. The other answers given by respondents ranked as follows:

- common language (47 respondents),
- common culture (46 respondents),
- common territory and common national awareness (44 respondents).

In addition, one respondent indicated an individual additional answer, which was as follows: “it is a common good cared for by a particular community connected by bonds”.

Another of the questions also related to knowledge of terminology, namely the knowledge of what defensive awareness is. After conducting the present analysis, one can see a similar statistic that appears in the previous questions – an affirmative answer was given by a large majority of respondents (46 participants), while a negative answer was indicated by 6 respondents.



**Fig. 5.** Concepts identified with the meaning of the term nation by respondents  
 Source: Own research, Wrocław 2020.

According to the next question, respondents should “mark the term which” is identified with “the meaning of the term defensive awareness”. Of the 52 respondents, 43 indicated a properly functioning military. The remaining responses, according to the number of indications, are presented below:

- ensuring security (40 respondents),
- cooperation of the uniformed services (37 respondents),
- continuous training of potential candidates for the uniformed services, including the military (34 respondents),
- creation of specialised support formations, e.g. Territorial Defence Force units (29 respondents).

Furthermore, three respondents additionally indicated that defensive awareness is also:

- “readiness to fight for the homeland in any situation where there is a threat”,
- “the desire to help in the event of war, in the fight against the enemy”,
- “the need to defend the country against threats”.

This means – for the aforementioned 3 participants (including 1 woman and 2 men) – a readiness to fight to defend the common good, namely the freedom of the homeland.

The role of the questions asked was to summarise the knowledge of the above terms and how they interact with each other, namely a question designed to determine “what is state security”. An affirmative answer was given by 46 (88.5%) participants, while only 6 (11.5%) indicated a negative answer.

These results are complemented by another of the questions in which respondents showed knowledge of the concepts identified with the meaning of the term “state security”. According to the analysis, as many as 46 participants answered that state security is first and foremost the absence of a threat to its existence, but it is also the continuous training of potential candidates for the uniformed services, including the army (38 participants). On the other hand, undisturbed conditions that enable the country to develop were indicated by 36 participants, and this means the pursuit of continuous, further development – which was supported by 31 participants. In addition, 3 respondents (including 2 women and 1 man) indicated an understanding of this term as:

- “the absence of conflict in the international arena”,
- “continuous monitoring of the state borders”,
- “a reinstatement of compulsory military service for every man”.

As can be seen, in the statements quoted, the respondents point to state security, looking at both international relations and internal legal regulations, as well as the creation of a specialised social group (in this situation, men) which, in a situation of danger, will duly perform certain duties, thus ensuring the security discussed in this article.

The above issues were related to the terminology of the concepts relevant to the subject matter of the article, while the three questions, which will be discussed below, relate directly to defensive awareness, and its constituent links to individual factors.

When analysing the responses to the question: *In your opinion, is “defensive awareness” linked to the following factors, entailed by the following terms: “security”, “nation”, “state security”?*, it was indicated that 46 respondents confirmed in their statement that the issues addressed by the previous questions in this survey questionnaire are related to the concept of defensive awareness, while 6 participants gave a negative answer.

In addition, in the next question, respondents were asked to indicate the occurrence of defensive awareness and its links to the institution of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. The analysis of the answers then showed that 39 (75%) of the students supported the position that the military, in terms of this process, was the main reason for starting the education programme in question, while 7 students (13.5%) supported the thesis that this uniformed formation had a significant impact on the process. Only 6 participants – analogous to the analysis results above – selected a negative answer.

The next question also referred to the link between *defensive awareness* and, in this case, educational institutions and educational facilities, namely respondents were asked: *Is [...] the occurrence of "defensive awareness" linked to educational institutions and educational facilities?* Then, 44 participants (84.6%) selected an affirmative answer, thus indicating that both educational institutions and educational facilities have an important influence on the development of defensive awareness. In addition – and this should be pointed out – 38 participants (73.1%) also identified it as the basis for the learning process discussed in this article. Only a group of six participants (15.4%) indicated a negative answer.

Figure 6, illustrating the data obtained from the analysis, complements the above question and aims to show the concrete answers, indicating the manifestations of raising of the defensive awareness among young people in educational facilities.

Respondents' statements relating to factors indicative of the phenomenon in question ranked as follows:

- organising thematic meetings with uniformed services, including representatives of the Polish Armed Forces and organising assemblies/events related to e.g. national holidays, history of the Polish state (38 respondents),
- organising open classes with representatives of the uniformed services, including the Polish Armed Forces (32 respondents),
- learning the educational materials included in the core curriculum of the school subject Safety Education.



**Fig. 6.** The occurrence of defensive awareness and its links to educational institutions and educational facilities – examples of manifestations of their activities indicated by survey respondents  
 Source: Own research, Wrocław 2020.



In addition, 4 students gave personalised statements, which read as follows:

- “trips to military bases for exercises”,
- “trips to the training ground”,
- “field exercises”,
- “field training”.

These formulations, although directly indicative of the specific nature of the Secondary School of Uniformed Services, should become a valuable guide for the creation of similar projects, within the framework of general defence education.

This is confirmed by the fact that, on further analysis, as many as 45 respondents gave an affirmative answer to the question: *Do you think that the conducted lessons on the subject “Safety Education” play an important role in the process of defensive awareness formation?* Only seven participants gave a negative answer.

In addition, respondents were asked whether they thought that: *the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland play an important role in the creation of the defence system.* The answers given to this question were also the same as above – namely – 46 participants (88.5%) indicated that the military plays an important role in the creation of the defence system, and – it should be mentioned – 38 participants (73.1%) stated that the Armed Forces are its foundation. Only six participants (11.5%) gave a negative answer.

The next question in the survey was about the core curriculum and the Safety Education subject included in it. This question read as follows: *According to the educational programme contained in the core curriculum of the school subject “Safety Education”, do the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland play an important role in the process of its formation?* and was intended to determine whether the Armed Forces were influencing the topics of the lessons taught. The answer, as the results of the analysis showed, was conclusive – again, a significant majority – 46 participants – gave an affirmative answer, with 38 respondents indicating that the military plays the most important role in this programme. As in previous questions, only six participants gave a negative answer.

Respondents in the next question: *According to the subject “Safety Education”, please indicate what role and what tasks do you think the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland play in relation to the defence system of the Polish state?* identified – quoted below – the roles and direct tasks that the military performs in the creation of the defence system, with reference to the subject Safety Education. Namely, the following factors were mentioned:

- ensuring the inviolability of the state borders (46 participants),
- ensuring state security (45 participants),
- protection of the indivisibility of the state territory (44 participants),
- protection of independence (42 participants),
- involvement in the implementation of defence policy (38 participants),
- involvement in the implementation of defence policy (35 participants).

Moreover, four respondents (two women and two men) indicated that these tasks are made visible by:

- “being a member of NATO”,
- “being a member of UNO”,
- “constantly guarding the borders”,
- “assistance in states of natural disaster, e.g.: during floods”.

It is noteworthy that the young people – again – point to international cooperation but also to the tasks performed by the military, in emergency situations – for example, as mentioned in the above-mentioned statement – during floods.

One of the last questions included in the survey questionnaire aimed to show the effect of *“Safety Education” lessons and the materials included in the core curriculum, information on the role of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, which contributed to the improvement of defensive awareness among the respondents*. A demonstration of the role played by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in the process of raising defensive awareness, after the analysis of the answers given, can be observed by looking at the answer of 43 respondents who indicate an affirmative answer, identified with the assumption that the lessons of Safety Education are in line with the current core curriculum, containing specific content related to the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, and contribute to raising defensive awareness. Other respondents made the following answers:

- five respondents, without fully manifesting their conviction – as can be assumed – indicated the answer *“Probably yes”*,
- three respondents remained undecided and thus gave an answer *“I don’t know”*.

It is extremely encouraging that none of the students chose the negative answer – *“No”*.

The last question in the survey was: *In your opinion, should there be more school subjects in both primary and secondary schools, which aim to raise defensive awareness and the role of the Polish Armed Forces?* Then, after the analysis of the answers given, it became apparent that 43 participants indicated that additional school subjects on the topics discussed in this paper should be developed in schools. Furthermore, 43 students indicated a desire to learn theoretical knowledge, but most importantly, 42 of them indicated the need for practical classes. Again, it can be noticed that no student made a negative statement and only 6 remained without an opinion, choosing the answer *“I don’t know”*.

In conclusion of the above results, which appeared after the analysis, it should be pointed out that young people, thanks to school subjects that are related to the subject of raising defensive awareness, are significantly improving their knowledge in the discussed area. The attitude and statements evident in this survey testify to an interest in this subject, as well as an ongoing monitoring of the situation that is taking place both in Poland and internationally.

## Conclusions

When analysing the results obtained during own research, it is necessary to point out that Safety Education plays a fundamental role in the process of raising defensive awareness. Such action is possible thanks to the positive approach of the Ministry of National Defence, as well as the measures taken by the Ministry of Education.

In order to conclude this paper, it should be noted that young people in the 14-15 age range (primary school) and those aged 18 (or older) demonstrated their knowledge of basic concepts and their mutual collaboration. All of this creates the conditions in which the relevant factors can become the focus for further, concrete action in this area. It should also be pointed out that the knowledge represented by the students of the 8<sup>th</sup> class of the Henryk Sienkiewicz Primary School in Siedlce differed compared to that shown by the 3<sup>rd</sup> class students (with a military profile) of the European School of Uniformed Services in Wrocław. This is due to the fact that each of the surveyed groups is at a different level of education, which means that these differences are natural (although, contrary to assumptions, they are not large).

Nonetheless, these differences should be levelled at successive stages of education and (in relation to individual needs) by other institutions of an educational and defensive nature. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the pilot study carried out and its objectives – after the analysis shown above – were achieved, while remaining in an evolving phase.

### Acknowledgement

No acknowledgement and potential founding was reported by the author.

### Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.


### Author contributions

The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

### Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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## Biographical note

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### **Istota kształtowania świadomości obronnej wśród dzieci i młodzieży z udziałem Wojska Polskiego**

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#### **STRESZCZENIE**

Kształtowanie świadomości obronnej wśród dzieci i młodzieży stanowi jedną z podstawowych ról w procesie tworzenia systemu obronnego, a tym samym bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Jej początek winien rozpoczynać się już na etapie wychowania w domu rodzinnym, a następnie ewoluować przy pomocy placówek oświatowych i instytucji im towarzyszących, wśród których należy w szczególności wskazać Siły Zbrojne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej.

Istotny jest fakt, iż dbałość o tworzenie niezawodnego systemu bezpieczeństwa spoczywa nie tylko na instytucji, jaką są Siły Zbrojne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej oraz pozostałych służbach mundurowych, lecz także na każdym obywatelu państwa polskiego – w myśl obowiązującego prawa. Prawidłowe kształcenie świadomości obronnej nie byłoby również możliwe, gdyby nie ścisła współpraca Sił Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej wraz z sektorem oświaty.

Dowodem tego są przedstawione w poniższym artykule wyniki badań pilotażowych, przeprowadzonych w formie ankiety, wśród uczniów klas ósmych Szkoły Podstawowej im. Henryka Sienkiewicza w Siedlcach, a także uczniów dwóch klas trzecich o profilu wojskowym, w Europejskim Liceum Służb Mundurowych we Wrocławiu. Ich głównym celem było ukazanie stopnia wykształcenia świadomości obronnej wśród dzieci i młodzieży, z wykorzystaniem określonych metod oraz instytucji, mających bezpośredni

wpływ na niniejszy proces. Jak ukazano – w wyniku analizy badań – grupa respondentów mimo posiadanej wiedzy, chce nadal ją pogłębiać. Oznacza to potrzebę tworzenia określonych przedsięwzięć, które we współpracy z wieloma organizacjami proobronnymi, mają bezpośredni wpływ na kształtowanie bezpieczeństwa państwa Polskiego, już u najmłodszych obywateli.

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**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE** świadomość, świadomość obronna, przysposobienie obronne, edukacja dla bezpieczeństwa

### How to cite this paper

Bober A. *The importance of raising defensive awareness among children and young people with the involvement of the Polish Armed Forces*. Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces. 2022;54;4(206):473-93. DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0016.1755.



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