

FaR 2021**International Forum “Freedom and responsibility in pivotal times”****PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND
ETHNOCULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS OF RUSSIA FOR
STRENGTHENING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE**

Eraj Begidzhonovich Boev (a), Alexey Nikolaevich Starostin (b),
Petr Borisovich Chuprikov (c)*, Petras Starkus (d)

*Corresponding author

(a) Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University named after N. A. Dobrolyubov (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia),
sogdak@yandex.ru

(b) Ural State Mining University (Yekaterinburg, Russia), alisheria@mail.ru

(c) Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University named after N. A. Dobrolyubov (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia),
petrchuprikov@gmail.com

(d) Dobrolyubov Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University, (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia), Starkuspi@mail.ru

Abstract

This article examines the regulatory conditions for ensuring interaction between Russian higher education institutions and ethnocultural non-profit organizations aimed at strengthening interethnic harmony and preventing extremist sentiments. The relevance of the study is due to the importance of harmonizing interethnic and interfaith relations in the traditionally polyethnic and polyconfessional space of Russian universities, an increase in the presence of foreign citizens from various cultural regions of the world, as well as the need to counter the growing threat of ethno-religious terrorism and extremism among the youth. In modern conditions, both at the global and at the national level, the issues of developing international cultural ties between different states while preserving national identity, protecting state sovereignty and strengthening civil unity in a multicultural society, as well as preventing ethno-religious terrorism and extremism, are becoming important. The authors substantiate the importance of using the potential of ethnocultural associations, which are part of civil society, in the implementation of educational policy by institutions of higher education. The possibilities of cooperation between universities and ethno-cultural non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are analyzed. The novelty of the research lies in the generalization of the regulatory framework of interaction between Russian universities and ethnocultural NGOs. As a methodological basis for the study, axiological, personality-activity and competence-based methods were used.

2357-1330 © 2022 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Prevention of extremism; ethnocultural associations; social partnership; educational environment of a higher education institution



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

A person's belonging to a specific community today determines his role, whatever this community may be. "When applied to the latter group of communities, the tendency of modern society to form information-closed structures due to the impossibility of processing the entire current flow of information and the inability to work with sources is fully manifested. Nevertheless, for the necessary satisfaction of the need for intellectual saturation, appropriate interest groups are formed, for which specific people have authority (often these groups have formed). Despite the fact that these people are most often not true specialists, but differ mainly due to significant charisma, their opinion becomes authoritative for the followers of the group, primarily young people, and their views become decisive for a fairly wide range of events. This is how information groups closed from external interaction are formed (this phenomenon is theoretically developed under the name of "glocalization" (Chuprikov, 2016, p. 112).

2. Problem Statement

Traditional ideological centers underwent serious strength tests in the 1990s, on the one hand, they lost the support of the state in the format that took shape in the post-war period, on the other hand, they did not have sufficient tools to influence the youth environment. At the same time, fundamentally different approaches to work were required. Many new, often informal, groups have emerged, adding to the old ones dating back to the Soviet period. And the period 2000-2015 accounts for the main searches, selection of options, and their consolidation as leading paradigms.

It is obvious that since 2000 Russian society has been actively developing a specific structure of political guidelines, values, ideas. Thanks to three decades of political turbulence in the life of the state, the formation of a new political and economic reality, the emergence of new actors in the religious sphere, the establishment of real freedom of conscience, a change of generations, Russia was faced with the need to choose the main trajectory for further development. In these conditions, the risks of radicalization of young people and the spread of extremist ideology, including of an ethnic and religious nature, among them have increased.

3. Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the article, the following goals were set:

1. To study the corresponding challenges that are similar for the Nizhny Novgorod and Sverdlovsk regions (among the difficulties facing these regions, issues of interethnic, interreligious and interethnic contacts also take their place);
2. Identify factors contributing to the development of social tension, as well as potential causes of interethnic and interreligious conflicts;
3. Propose approaches to determining the place of culture in the process of moderation and management of interethnic interactions in the context of educational activities;
4. To propose new practices for the work of ethnocultural associations and institutions of higher education in the field of moderating intercultural dialogue and preventing extremist tendencies.

4. Purpose of the Study

For the purpose of the study, it was necessary to analyze sociological information about the perception of the population of ethno-religious and interethnic interaction, including in the educational space. To achieve these goals, a sociological study of the Sverdlovsk region was carried out, the results of which were compared with expert assessments of the situation in the Nizhny Novgorod region.

5. Research Methods

As a methodological basis for the study, axiological, personality-activity and competence-based methods were used.

6. Findings

Society is perceived by the population as antagonistic as a whole: those who consider society to be conflict-free are practically absent (5%). As such, practically no one feels the unity of society. The perceived polarization of society is multifaceted and systemic: people feel cultural, economic, and political contradictions in society. The most acutely felt antagonism is class antagonism, namely, the contradictions between the rich and the poor.

The relevance of this contradiction was noted by 55% of the respondents. In times of crisis, residents have an increased demand for social justice. Also, the respondents quite seriously feel the contradictions between the youth and the older generation and the contradictions between representatives of various political parties. Against this background, cultural antagonisms (including interethnic and interreligious) are perceived as relatively rare and insignificant.

It can be stated that according to the survey results, the current state of interethnic relations is generally perceived as favorable. In the mass consciousness, the problem of interethnic misunderstanding is present to an insignificant extent. In difficult economic circumstances, the problems of earnings and well-being, the quality and accessibility of health care and education (distance learning), as well as quarantine measures due to COVID-19 came to the fore for people. Ethnic issues have become secondary against their background. However, at the same time, in the course of the study, a number of risk factors were identified that should be taken into account by public authorities in the implementation of ethno-confessional policy, both at the regional and municipal levels.

6.1. Risk factors

6.1.1. The fragility of a national identity

The study showed that the vectors of residents' solidarity are concentrated around their generation, profession, and nationality. Solidarity with one's people is felt more often than a feeling of unity with all citizens of Russia. Hence the potential risk: lack of solidarity with other fellow citizens and an internal readiness for conflict.

6.1.2. Migrantophobia

The risks and trends noted in past years continue. Migrants are an emotionally powerful social factor with which problems are associated. Negative attitudes towards migrants are the fruit of stereotypes and phobias. Almost no one mentions real conflicts between migrants and newcomers. A negative attitude towards migrants remained widespread even in a situation of a pandemic and a real reduction in migration flows in 2020. The severity of this migrant phobia depends very little on the actual actions of the migrants themselves or their number in the region. A potential risk is the increased susceptibility of society to anti-migrant speculation, which heightens interethnic tensions, which are often used by some politicians and the media.

6.1.3. Mundane contradictions

The main vector of perceived intolerance is domestic, connected with everyday activity, routine. Hence the potential risk: the likelihood of the preservation of everyday xenophobia that is present in our society, its transformation into a habitual and acceptable practice of treating people of another nation or of another faith.

6.1.4. The falling of the standards of living of the population as a factor that can lead to an increase in interethnic tension

In the course of analyzing the assessment of interethnic relations among the respondents, depending on their level of income, an alarming pattern was revealed: the lower the level of wealth, the worse the respondents assess the ethno-confessional climate.

This is explained by the fact that the perceived drop in living standards increases the degree of irritation, social anger of people and makes them more pessimistic. Social pessimism arising on this basis leads to an increase in any negative sentiments, including xenophobic ones. The potential risk is that the continuing decline in the standard of living of the population may lead to an increase in social pessimism and, indirectly, to an exacerbation of conflicts, including on interethnic and interreligious grounds. The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is favoring the falling of the standards of living and could significantly exacerbate the problem. This factor must be taken into account when implementing state national policy at the level of a constituent entity of the federation and the level of individual municipalities.

6.2. Problems and challenges of the modern Russian system of higher education

The Russian Federation, being one of the leading world powers, is a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic state, on the territory of which more than 180 ethnic groups of the population are represented. In civilizational terms, the peoples of Russia are closely connected both with the traditionally Western culture and with the traditions of other cultural and civilizational communities - Islamic, Buddhist. An important condition is the fact that at the international level at the present time Russia is actively developing scientific, technical and scientific and educational ties with the states of the Near and Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America. In this regard, the Russian system of higher education is faced with the task of ensuring a

high ability to socialize and adapt to the labor market of future specialists. As a result, the importance of intercultural and ethnocultural competences increases, implying the ability to carry out personal and business communication in a multicultural environment (Boev et al., 2017).

Today, in the context of the multicultural educational environment of a Russian higher educational institution, the role of educational work with students is increasing, ensuring the personal development of students - both Russian and foreign, their assimilation of intercultural communication skills, knowledge and mutual respect of each other's cultural traditions. Effectively and professionally organized educational work at the university makes it possible to prevent the spread of any form of destructive, extremist ideology in the student environment. And, finally, educational work objectively contributes to the popularization of the achievements of Russian culture among foreign citizens studying in Russia. The need to improve the ethnocultural literacy of students, counter the spread of negative ethnocultural stereotypes among the youth, the prevention of ethnoreligious extremism, interethnic and interfaith intolerance determine the importance of introducing technologies and methods of developing intercultural and ethnocultural communication skills among students into the educational environment of a higher educational institution.

Activities developed on the basis of a humanistic approach to building relationships in the educational process and a personal approach should contribute to the education of a citizen who is able to accept and understand the socio-cultural diversity of his country and the world around him (Grushevitskaya et al., 2002). The teambuilding of the educational team, consisting of Russian students of various nationalities and their peers - citizens of foreign countries is also an important task of educational work in the university (Koroleva, 2008,). It is important to note that in the context of the modernization of the higher education system in Russia for the effective solution of these problems, it is important to combine the efforts of the whole society within the framework of social partnership (Ganiev, 2010), including universities and civil society institutions, including ethnocultural non-profit organizations.

6.3. Legal and regulatory framework for cooperation between universities and ethnocultural NGOs to increase the level of ethnocultural literacy and the development of intercultural dialogue

The National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation states that the domestic education system is designed to ensure the education of respect for the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of Russia, as well as the education of citizens showing national and religious tolerance, respect for the languages, traditions and culture of other peoples. In accordance with this doctrine, the state in the field of education is called upon to ensure the harmonization of national and ethnocultural relations, the preservation and support of the ethnic and national-cultural identity of the peoples of Russia, the humanistic traditions of their cultures (Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation..., 2000).

The concept of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020, developed with the aim of identifying ways and means of ensuring in the long term an increase in the well-being of Russian citizens, national security, dynamic economic development, strengthening Russia's position in the world community, also contains a number of provisions related to the development of intercultural communication. In the section "Development of education", among the tasks facing Russia currently in the educational sphere, it is indicated: ensuring a competence-based approach, the relationship

of academic knowledge and practical skills and at the same time increasing the share of foreign students studying in Russia to 5 percent of the total number of students, and also the creation of conditions for training in educational institutions of students from the CIS member states. The section "Development of Culture and Mass Media" notes the preservation and popularization of the cultural heritage of the peoples of Russia; development of cultural cooperation with foreign states, primarily with the CIS member states; implementation of projects of bilateral and multilateral cultural cooperation. In the section "Youth policy" as the goal of the state youth policy, there is the creation of conditions for successful socialization and effective self-realization of youth. Achievement of this goal is supposed to be carried out by supporting the international interaction of youth, participation in international information youth projects aimed at mutual penetration of the values of Russian and world culture; fostering tolerance towards representatives of various ethnic groups, interethnic cooperation. The section "Foreign Economic Policy" proclaims a course towards the creation of a common cultural and educational space with the member states of the Eurasian Economic Community and other states in the Eurasian space (Order of the Government of the Russian Federation..., 2008).

The Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of July 21, 2020 "On the national development goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030" largely updates the above Concept. In the text of the Decree, as one of the priority tasks within the framework of the national goal "Opportunities for self-realization and development of talents", the need to create conditions for the upbringing of a harmoniously developed and socially responsible person is noted on the basis of the spiritual and moral values of the peoples of the Russian Federation, historical and national-cultural traditions (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation..., 2020).

The fundamental legislative document that establishes the principles of the state policy of Russia in the field of education is the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" dated December 29, 2012. This law defines that education is a single purposeful process of education and training, and also emphasizes the humanistic nature of education and the importance of fostering mutual respect in society (Federal Law..., 2012).

The ability for intercultural and ethnocultural communication is a prerequisite for professional training in the system of higher professional education in Russia within the framework of the competence approach (Poshtareva, 2005). In the current Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education, which is a set of requirements that are mandatory in the implementation of the main professional educational programs of Russian universities, *intercultural and ethnocultural components are included in general cultural and universal competencies at all levels of training* (bachelor's, specialty, master's, postgraduate studies). So, when considering the federal state educational standards at the bachelor's level, we can see that the following general cultural competencies are established within the framework of training in the direction of "mathematics": GC-5 - the ability to communicate in oral and written forms in Russian and foreign languages for solving problems of interpersonal and intercultural interaction, GC-6 - the ability to work in a team, tolerantly perceive social, ethnic, confessional and cultural differences. The Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education for the preparation of bachelors in the direction of "nursing", among the universal competencies (SC), establishes for graduates the ability to perceive the intercultural diversity of society in socio-historical, ethical and philosophical contexts (SC-5 "Intercultural interaction").

Similar general cultural competencies are reflected in the standards for training bachelors in humanitarian specialties (in addition to general professional competencies). Thus, in accordance with the Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education for the preparation of bachelors in the field of "foreign regional studies", graduates must acquire the ability to respectfully and carefully treat the historical heritage and cultural traditions of the peoples of Russia and abroad, tolerantly perceive social and cultural differences (GC-3) (Federal state educational standards, 2021).

Thus, cooperation between universities and ethnocultural NGOs within the framework of increasing the level of ethnocultural literacy and the development of intercultural dialogue can be carried out through joint educational activities aimed at developing general cultural and universal competencies of students, provided that the goals and objectives of these activities meet the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard.

6.4. Legal and regulatory framework for cooperation between universities and ethnocultural NGOs in the field of countering extremism and terrorism

The interaction of ethnocultural public associations of the Sverdlovsk region with universities in the capital of the Middle Urals has a long history. After the closure of the House of Peace and Friendship in 2010, many Ural national and cultural organizations were literally left without a roof over their heads, and the rector of the Ural State Mining University Nikolai Petrovich Kosarev gave them the opportunity to gather and hold their events within the walls of the university. To interact with them, the Sverdlovsk regional public organization "Center for Assistance to National-Cultural Associations at the Ural State Mining University" was even created. For many years, the university celebrated Navruz, Maslenitsa, New Year's holidays of different peoples, festivals of the culture of the Finno-Ugric peoples, expert round tables on the preservation of national culture were held. After ethnocultural public associations acquired permanent registration in the "House of the Peoples of the Urals" (Yekaterinburg, 8 Marta St., 33A) and the creation of the Association of National Cultural Associations of the Sverdlovsk Region, many universities followed the example of the Ural State Mining University and began to cooperate with leaders of ethnocultural associations in holding various events of ethnocultural orientation within the walls of their educational institutions. To date, the most active work in this direction is carried out by the Ural State Economic University and the Sverdlovsk Regional Medical College. And at the Ural Federal University, the first President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin, where the largest number of foreign students' study, with the assistance of the administration of the university, a variety of student communities were created, united in the Student Organization of the United Nations (UNION). Relevant communities, for example, Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek students, when holding any of their events within the walls of the university, actively interact with the relevant ethnocultural associations, and also participate in external events, for example, help to organize farmsteads on the Day of the Peoples of the Middle Urals (every first Sunday September).

In the context of the growing extremist and terrorist threat on an international scale, as well as the spread of ethno-religious conflicts, the development and implementation of measures aimed at developing intercultural dialogue and increasing ethnocultural and ethno-confessional literacy among young people correspond to the tasks of preventing extremism. The Federal Law of July 25, 2002 "On Countering Extremist Activity" determines that state and local government bodies in the Russian Federation, within

their competence, *in a priority order, carry out preventive, including educational, measures aimed at preventing extremist activity* (Federal Law..., 2002). Among the main sources of threats of extremism in modern Russia are: persuading, recruiting or otherwise involving Russian citizens and foreign citizens in the country in the activities of extremist communities and other illegal activities, as well as the formation of closed ethnic and religious enclaves. The Strategy for Countering Extremism in the Russian Federation until 2025, approved on May 29, 2020, lists the development and implementation of a set of measures to improve the effectiveness of prevention, the adoption of appropriate target programs at the regional and municipal levels, and the development of social and cultural adaptation of foreign citizens in the Russian Federation and their integration into society. In the field of education and state youth policy, the Strategy defines the following tasks: *conducting classes in educational organizations to foster interethnic (interethnic) and interfaith friendship; inclusion in curricula, teaching materials of educational subjects* aimed at the education of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, the culture of interethnic (interethnic) and interfaith communication. In the field of ensuring the participation of civil society institutions in the implementation of state policy in the field of countering extremism, the priority tasks are: *state support of civil society institutions and the use of their potential in order to ensure the unity of the multinational people of the Russian Federation; involvement of non-profit organizations in the implementation of projects aimed at strengthening interethnic (interethnic) and interfaith harmony; participation of public councils and other advisory bodies created under state bodies and local self-government bodies in activities to harmonize interethnic (interethnic) and interfaith relations* (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation..., 2020).

Based on the above, the authors note that, in accordance with the current anti-extremist legislation in force in the Russian Federation, the potential of non-profit associations (including those of an ethnocultural nature) is an important element of joint activities with government and local authorities to prevent extremism among youth.

7. Conclusion

The carried-out research shows that the cooperation of institutions of higher education with ethnocultural NGOs is regulated by a number of regulatory sources and program documents. The relevance of this cooperation is determined by the current situation in the field of education and related areas of the national economy, such as the economy, culture, youth policy, international cooperation and national security. The interaction of ethnocultural NGOs and universities within the existing regulatory framework covers two main areas: 1) increasing the level of ethnocultural literacy and the development of intercultural dialogue; 2) countering extremism and terrorism among the youth. In accordance with the current legislation, cooperation between universities and ethnocultural NGOs in the framework of increasing the level of ethnocultural literacy and the development of intercultural dialogue can be carried out in the format of joint educational activities aimed at developing general cultural and universal competencies of students in accordance with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard. On the other hand, the potential of ethnocultural non-profit associations can be used in preventive work to prevent extremist sentiments in the student environment.

1. Interethnic and interreligious relations are steadily outside the main problematic background of the region.

2. Ethnicity is perceived by the majority as an important trait of a person, the same as gender or age. But it is not perceived as a marker of social distance or controversy.

3. Interethnic and interreligious relations in the region are developing favourably. If there is no significant deterioration in the social, economic, political situation, their aggravation is unlikely. The situation around ethno-confessional relations in the region in 2017-2020 generally stable.

4. Risks of aggravation of interethnic and interreligious relations create fragility of national identity, migrant phobia, everyday contradictions and a decrease in the standard of living of the population.

5. Unclear risk factor - the consequences of quarantine measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Their current impact on interethnic and interreligious relations is minimal. But the economic problems and conflicts that quarantine creates can quickly translate into an increase in social pessimism and xenophobia.

6. The request for state participation remains. But first of all, the state is expected to take targeted and delicate measures.

Acknowledgments

The study was carried out within the framework of the Program of Fundamental and Applied Scientific Research "Ethnocultural Diversity of Russian Society and Strengthening the All-Russian Identity" 2020–2022. with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia.

References

- Boev, E. B., Sokol, M. A., Kurbonov, B. D., Turakhanov, E. Kh., Sharifiyon, M. A., & Kuzieva, F. Sh. (2017). Formation of interethnic harmony in the educational environment of a higher educational institution. *Actual problems of teaching the disciplines of the humanitarian cycle in higher education: a collection of articles and abstracts of the X International scientific-practical conference dedicated to the 100th anniversary of agricultural education in Nizhny Novgorod*, 18-20).
- Chuprikov, P. B. (2016). Religious and political communities in the process of forming political strategies. *"Russian universe in the context of globalization: a collection of articles by the participants of the All-Russian scientific and practical conference (October 26-28, 2016)*, 112.
- Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 474 of the Russian Federation dated July 21, 2020. (2020). "On the national development goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030". Official website of the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/63728?fbclid=IwAR1jXfgS9Frl_1rNYHQptvs97yOLB9qfnosmJiOI9kGEIGVgTdxIVYiVWPk
- Federal Law No. 114-FZ of July 25, 2002. (2002). "On Counteracting Extremist Activity". Information and legal portal "Garant.ru": <https://base.garant.ru/12127578/>
- Federal Law No. 273-FZ of December 29, 2012. (2012). "On Education in the Russian Federation" (as amended, effective from August 1, 2020). Codex Consortium. Electronic fund of legal and scientific and technical documentation: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/902389617>
- Federal state educational standards. (2021). *National Association for the Development of Education and Science*: <https://fgos.ru/>
- Ganiev, E. R. (2010). Social partnership in higher professional education: models and forms of implementation. *Social and humanitarian knowledge*, 6, 342-349.

- Grushevitskaya, T. G., Popkov, V. D., & Sadokhin, A. A. (2002). *Basics of intercultural communication: Textbook for universities*. UNITI-DANA.
- Koroleva, G. M. (2008). Ethnocultural competence as one of the factors of successful activity in the structure of professional competence of a social teacher. In the book: *Family in the modern world*. (pp. 21-27) MSGU named after M. A. Sholokhov.
- Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1662-r of November 17, 2008. (2008). "On approval of the Concept of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020" (as amended on September 28, 2018). Retrieved from: Codex Consortium. Electronic fund of legal and scientific and technical documentation: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/902130343>.
- Poshtareva, T. V. (2005). Formation of ethnocultural competence. *Pedagogy*, 3, 35-42.
- Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 751 of October 4, 2000. (2020). "On the national doctrine of education in the Russian Federation". Internet portal of the "Russian newspaper": <https://rg.ru/2000/10/11/doktrina-dok.html>