

YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPEAN BULGARIA

A SOCIOLOGICAL PORTRAIT 2014

Petar-Emil Mitev and Siyka Kovacheva



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Preface

This book is a sociological portrait of young people in present-day Bulgaria – twenty-five years after the beginning of the Change and seven years after the country's accession to the European Union. The path passed since 1989 is the result of the aspirations and efforts of several generations. Although social reality does not match the bravest expectations of the first postcommunist generation or the requirements of today's youth, it has created a qualitatively new environment for young people making their life choices. At the crossroads to adulthood, Bulgarian youth feel free to choose from a much wider array of opportunities than their parents and grandparents, even though today the risks to youth transitions are much greater too.

The co-authorship of this book is the product of a long collaboration between two Bulgarian researchers from different generations, but with a common interest in the social changes embodied in the change of generations.

The study on which the book is based was launched on the initiative of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and follows the tradition and model of the Shell Youth Studies that have been conducted regularly in Germany since 1953, every three or four years. The idea of this kind of youth studies is to predict social developments by identifying the attitudes and values of the youngest generation. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has already published youth studies based on this model in Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Slovenia; other countries in the region will follow. We are happy that Klaus Hurrelmann, Professor of Public Health and Education at the Hertie School of Governance, who was the head coordinator of the 14th, 15th and 16th Shell Youth Studies, accepted our invitation to be an academic consultant also for the Bulgarian study.

We owe special thanks to Michaela Mahler of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Bulgaria Office for the efficient organization of work and for the pleasure of our joint discussions. We thank Zhivko Georgiev and Iren Tsenkova of Gallup International for the empirical database of the study, which also allowed us to make comparisons over time and to capture the trends of change in youth transitions. We are grateful to Svetoslav Mitev for the additional processing of data from different studies. We must also note the important role of Romyana Boyadzhieva in the substantive and technical editing of the text. Our warmest thanks for sharing their opinions and time with us go to the young people who took part in the study. It is to them that we dedicate this book.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Social construction of youth in scientific research

Youth studies are one of the expanding fields of social research in modern society. Mass education and mass production, the welfare state and the penitentiary system were factors for the social construction of youth (Wallace and Kovatcheva: 1998), and their development increasingly depended on knowledge of this social category. Studies on young people's value orientations and dominant types of behaviour were inspired by their growing role both as ever more active consumers and as ever more frequent users of social services. Youth lifestyles, specific subcultures and, often, the young generation as a whole, caused a "moral panic" (Cohen: 1972) that implicitly called for saving society from youth. Research interest was also boosted further by the expressive and high-profile youth rebellions.

The events of 1968 were of key importance. Even if one does not accept Immanuel Wallerstein's interpretation (1995) that this was a "revolution of the world-system", one cannot deny that the youth rebellion initiated by the students in Nanterre, France, caused the most significant social and political upheaval in postwar Western Europe. The development of sociology of youth was called upon to give a scientific answer to those events. The question arose of why sociological studies had persistently portrayed youth as a sceptical generation sinking ever deeper into consumerism, but failed to notice the revolutionary potential growing in young people's hearts. The methodological crisis and the search for new starting points gave rise to lively discussions, including at the Seventh World Congress of Sociology (Varna, 1970) and the Eighth World Congress (Toronto, 1974), leading to the establishment of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee 34 (RC 34) – on Sociology of Youth (Uppsala, 1978). Bulgarian researchers were among the active participants in the discussions and the initiators of RC 34.

Twenty-five years after the "velvet" revolutions in the Central and East European countries of the former Soviet bloc, youth participation in mass protests no longer surprises anyone. The low levels of support for the mainstream political parties and of inclusion of young people in election campaigns do not hide the present young generation's discontent with the ruling political elites not just in this part of the world but also in Central Asia, North Africa, Western Europe – let us recall the "coloured revolutions" in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the Arab Spring in the southern and east-

ern Mediterranean countries, the street riots in London, the “Indignados” movement in Spain, the “Direct Democracy Now!” movement in Greece, and the civil disobedience protests of students in Hong Kong in the autumn of 2014. Bulgarian youth also joined this wave – from the student “occupations” of university buildings and streets in 1990, following the ouster of one of the longest-ruling communist leaders and insisting on radicalization of the change in Bulgaria, to the more recent and not less spectacular protests that led to the fall of the postcommunist governments in 1997 and 2013.

Closest to the essence of the social, and hence, a focus of research interest, is the specificity of youth as a social group within which the trends of the future development of society are contained and generated, as in a nutshell. The ontological uncertainty of youth transitions – from the dependence of childhood to the autonomy of adulthood – gives rise to a set of opportunities and risks which is telling of the state and development trends of society. Which of the coloured cloaks in the nutshell young people will choose to don determines the direction not just of their own future life path but also of the development of society – towards stagnation or progress. The forms in and the speed at which young people accomplish their journey from education to employment, from the parental family to their own home and family, from following parental models to construction of an own identity, are indicative of the present constraints and the future problems of society.

Along with the concept of youth as a social group involved in a specific network of social relations which situates it simultaneously within and in-between the different life-spheres, there are also other concepts that link it to a definite stage of the individual’s life cycle characterized by “storm and stress” (Hall: 1904) and a desire to achieve identity (Erikson: 1968). Karl Mannheim (1928, 1952) laid the foundations of another perspective on youth – as a political generation formed around the experience of a major historical event in the period when the respective age group is most susceptible to influence, and which develops its own specific worldview that remains predominant throughout its lifetime. The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies developed a new approach to the social inequalities among youth which are implicitly contained in youth subcultures (Willis: 1977; Hebdige: 1979).

The concept of “youth” is a tough theoretical nut to crack. The distinction between “young people” as a demographic aggregate of individuals and “youth” as a relatively autonomous socio-biological group is of key importance (Mitev: 1986). The transformation of the “aggregate of individuals”

into a “social group” is a long and universal historical process which takes place at a different pace and in specific ways in the different regions (Бадина: 1985). It is based on: the emergence of educational labour at the secondary and tertiary levels of education as a specific form of unproductive labour of a particular age group of the population; the transformation of young people’s traditional dependence on the parental family into a socially-mediated dependence; the intensive communication of young people with their peers in the course of education; the new access to the value system of society. The formation of youth as a socio-biological group is a universal process, but the countries in which it occurred first gained an advantage in the export of sub-cultural products (Митев: 1988; 2010). Logically, those are the countries with a higher level of industrial development and with liberal democratic systems.

The theoretical perspectives and different research approaches, in the entire variety of their contemporary interpretations, assume the existence of a connection between young people’s life experience and experiences, and the trends of social change. That is why it is no coincidence that politicians, economists, social workers and teachers eagerly anticipate the results of the Shell Youth Studies in Germany in order to fine-tune their action plans. With its accuracy and sensitivity, Hurrelmann’s research model captures the stability and change in areas of young people’s life experience, such as leisure time and cultural consumption, education and employment, politics and family relations. In their totality, they offer a comprehensive picture of the contemporary young generation. The effectiveness of the research tools, proven in surveys over many years, also determines their application in other countries. An important challenge to the expansion of those studies is that of situating the analysis of the survey data within the social context of society at a concrete moment of its development.

1.2 Bulgaria’s young generation in a European context

The young people who were surveyed in Bulgaria in June 2014 are the children of the young generation which formed its worldview under the influence of the revolutionary change that laid the beginning of the country’s transition to a multi-party system and market economy. To the present young generation, 1989 is distant history which they can learn about from books or from their parents’ stories, but which is already beyond their life experience (Roberts: 2012). The life experiences of the surveyed young people are linked to contemporary Bulgaria, twenty-five years af-

ter the political change and seven years after the country's accession to the European Union and NATO. For today's youth, the market economy and the democratic political system are something taken for granted, not achievements or losses as they may appear to be to their parents.

The social and economic situation of contemporary young people in Bulgaria is influenced by the consequences of the global economic crisis since 2008 and the slow recovery of the European economy from it. The political instability in Bulgaria in the last two years is also an important element of the social context in which today's youth are making their life choices. The public debate on youth and youth policy, in Bulgaria as in the European countries, is dominated by the problems of youth unemployment and the quality of education. They are also present in the European Union's youth strategy, Europe 2020, and in the National Youth Strategy (2012-2020). The national strategy, elaborated after the adoption of the Youth Act in 2012, defines the main tasks of youth policy: the creation of favourable conditions for school and university education; non-formal education, vocational, social and personal realization of young people; their participation in social and economic life and in governance at local, regional and national level, as well as for those studying abroad to return to Bulgaria (MMC: 2012).

Young people in the 15-29 age group constituted slightly over 17% of Bulgaria's population in 2013 (*Table 1.1*). At that, the official statistical data for the entire period since the beginning of the transition indicate a tendency towards decrease in the relative demographic weight of the young generation. Bulgaria's National Statistical Institute forecasts that this tendency will continue at least until 2020, and is expected to affect particularly the 20-24 and 25-29 age groups.

Table 1.1 Population aged 15-29 as of 31 December 2013

Population	Total	Male	Female
Total for Bulgaria	7 245 677	3 524 945	3 720 732
15-19	318 714	164 105	154 609
20-24	433 186	223 177	210 009
25-29	488 936	253 073	235 863
Total youth	1 240 836	640 355	600 481

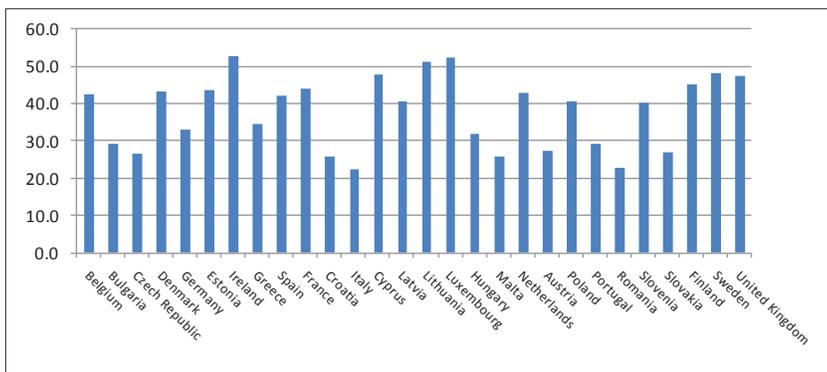
Source: National Statistical Institute (<http://www.nsi.bg/>).

The demographic problems of Bulgarian society are due to youth problems in the process of social integration and above all to young people's vulnerable situation on the labour market. If at the age of 15 almost all young people are still at school, then as they grow older all should be in employment. How, and at what pace, those transitions are effected, however, depends on the national educational systems, occupational training and employment (Eurostat: 2014). Furthermore, the transition from school to work is not straightforward and one-way, and many young people also perform the opposite transition – from the labour market back to the educational system.

Eurostat (2014) places Bulgarian youth in the group of young people who begin looking for a first job late, most often after completing their studies, and rarely combine work with studies. This group includes youth in many East European countries, such as Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, as well as some West European countries like Italy and Belgium. Those countries are characterized by a labour market with few flexible forms of work such as part-time or casual employment. In strong contrast to the Bulgarian situation are the youth transitions in two groups of countries: the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and, to some extent, Slovenia, where there is significant overlap between education and labour market participation because of the tradition for students to work in part-time or summer jobs; and Germany and Austria, with their established apprenticeship systems or vocational training in secondary education, where a significant part of young people work for pay during their studies.

A detailed look at those life-spheres reveals some other characteristics of the social situation of Bulgarian youth today. Despite the mass expansion of higher education in the first years of the transition in Bulgaria, when a number of private institutions began offering education services while the public universities opened branches across the country, the share of young people with tertiary education attainment still remains below the average for the European Union. In the group of young adults (30-34 years), the people with tertiary education attainment in Bulgaria are 29.4%, as compared with an average of 36.9% for the European Union. In Bulgaria, the share of young women with tertiary education attainment significantly exceeds that of young men – 37.6% for women and just 21.8% for men.

Figure 1.1 Population aged 30-34 with tertiary education attainment in 2013 (%)

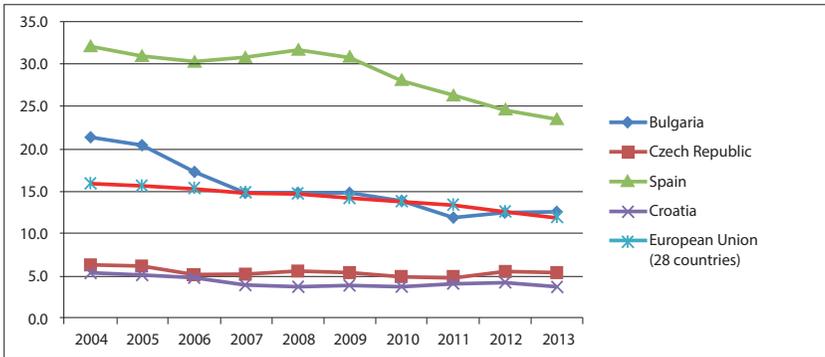


Source: Eurostat (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/database>).

Regarding the lower educational level, the Eurostat data show that Bulgarian youth's access to secondary education is comparatively high. Thus, the share of 20-24-year-olds with completed secondary education in Bulgaria in 2013 was 86%, as compared with 81% for the European Union as a whole. In many other East European countries, though, such as Croatia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia, this share is over 90% of the respective age group.

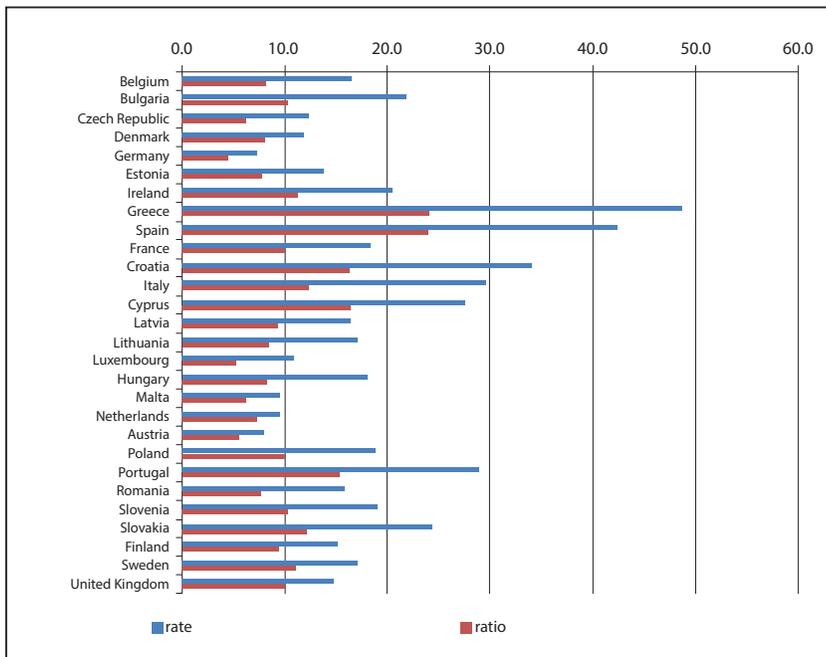
Early leavers from education and training in Bulgaria are still a significant group among youth, 12%, although there is a positive downward trend. *Figure 2.2* shows the contrasting situation in several European Union countries – whereas early leavers from education and training are 3.7% in Croatia and 5.4% in the Czech Republic, they are 23% in Spain. Bulgaria occupies a middle position, very close to the average for the European Union. The young people who leave school early in Bulgaria are mostly from rural areas and small towns.

Figure 1.2 Early leavers from education and training (%)



Source: Eurostat.

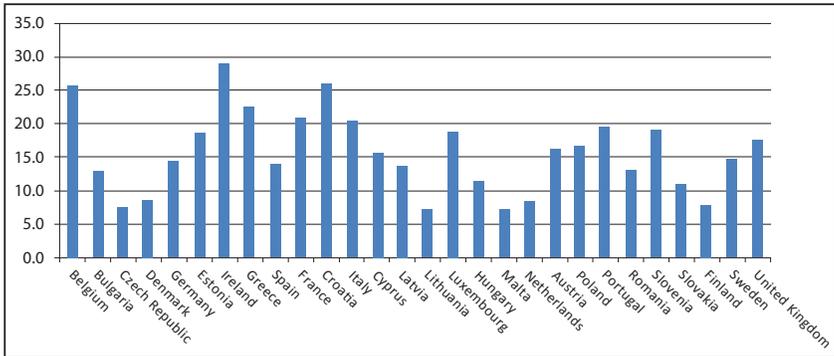
Early leavers from education and training are at highest risk of failing to enter the labour market. Whereas the youth unemployment rate for the 15-29 age group in Bulgaria in 2013 was 21.8% (according to Eurostat data), it was as high as 44.8% among young people with primary education or less (levels 0-2 according to the European standard classification system ISCED11). The unemployment rate was slightly higher among young men, 22.3%, than among young women 21%. In 2013 the youth unemployment rate in Bulgaria was one of the highest among EU member countries (*Figure 1.3*). Bulgaria is above the average EU unemployment rate, which represents unemployed youth as a percentage of the youth labour force, and slightly below the average on the “unemployment ratio” indicator which represents unemployed youth as a percentage of the total population of the 15-29 age group. The lower value of the second indicator comes from the lower level of economic activity of Bulgarian youth, especially among the younger groups, those aged 15-19 and 20-24. At that, a characteristic feature of the situation in Bulgaria is the high level of long-term youth unemployment, 8.1%.

Figure 1.3 Youth unemployment rate and ratio, 2013 (%)

Source: Eurostat.

Also indicative of the situation of Bulgarian youth on the labour market are another two statistical indicators: relative shares of self-employed youth, and of young people not in employment, education or training. By the first indicator Bulgaria is below the average for the European Union, but by the second it is among the countries with the highest shares. The low opportunities for entrepreneurship among Bulgarian youth are linked both to the state of the Bulgarian economy and to the legal regulations of the labour market, the social and political incentives for economic enterprise, and not least to the underdevelopment of educational programmes in this area. The group of those who are not in employment, education or training is very heterogeneous but, as a whole, it attests to a situation where young people are at high risk of social exclusion. This situation has a very high economic cost as well as serious social consequences for the other youth transitions – to an own home, partnership and full-fledged political participation.

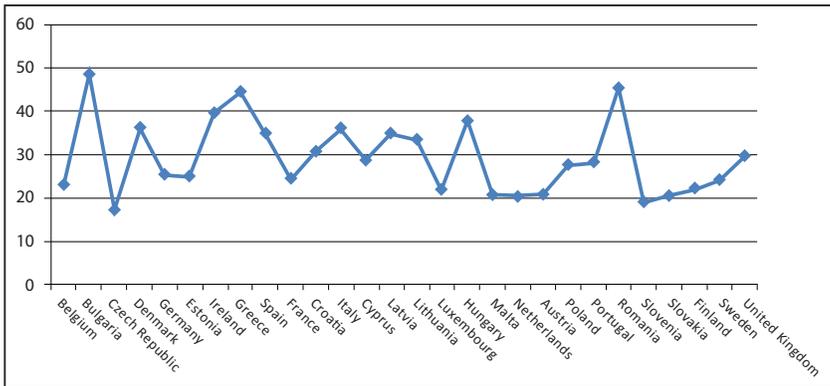
Figure 1.4 Young people not in employment and not in any education and training (%)



Source: Eurostat.

The situation of Bulgarian youth is also unfavourable by many of the indicators used by Eurostat to measure poverty and social exclusion. For example, Bulgaria has the highest share of young people with an equivalised disposable income below 60% of the national equivalised median income.

Figure 1.5 Young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%)



Source: Eurostat.

Eurostat has also found one of the highest levels of deprivation among Bulgarian youth in satisfying basic needs such as food, heating, and household items. Insofar as social exclusion is a much more diverse phenomenon than material deprivation, this process will be analyzed on

the basis of the results of this study, which include the opinions and assessments of the young people themselves. The statistical data provide only a general framework of some of the problems encountered by Bulgarian youth along the path from education to employment – a path that largely influences their transition to independence.

1.3 The Bulgarian tradition in youth studies

Ivan Hadjiyski (1907-1944) is one of the founding fathers of Bulgarian sociology and social psychology. His seminal work, *Bit i dushevnost na nashiya narod* (Lifestyle and mentality of the Bulgarian people, 1940) contains a classic description of the intergenerational relationships in the traditional society of the peasantry, craft guilds and small owners before and after Bulgaria's 1878 Liberation from Ottoman rule. Hadjiyski's analyses and generalizations enabled the introduction of a historical dimension in the studies of the postwar generations of Bulgarian sociologists.

After the Stalinist hiatus, the restoration of the sociological tradition in Bulgaria made possible the establishment of a Centre for Sociological Studies of Youth (in 1968, whose first director was Mincho Semov, later rector of the Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski"). Empirical studies focused on a multitude of topical issues, among which urban migration of rural youth (1960s), the specific characteristics of second-generation migrants (1970s), and youth subculture (1980s).

The scientific style adopted by Bulgarian youth researchers at the time was distinguished by several characteristics:

- *Interdisciplinary approach.* Youth studies brought together sociologists, statisticians, economists, psychologists, medics, cultural anthropologists, philosophers. The Centre for Sociological Studies of Youth was transformed into a Centre for Youth Studies (1974), and later, into an Institute of Youth Studies (IYS, 1979).
- *Balance of qualitative and quantitative methods.* The use of in-depth interviews allowed exploration of sensitive topics, including conducting a study on the mass reaction after the Chernobyl disaster (the only study of its kind in the Eastern Bloc) and tracing the changes in youth attitudes at several stages during the so-called *perestroika*.
- *Emphasis on international comparative studies.* Bulgarian researchers assumed coordination functions in the largest-scale

comparative study in Comecon member countries: “Influence of Higher Education on the Reproduction and Development of the Social Structure of Socialist Society” (Mitev and Filipov: 1982). Bulgaria also took part in Europe-wide studies (Hartman and Trnka: 1984; Grootings and Stefanov: 1986; and others). In the period between 1970 and 1989, annual international symposia on youth problems were held in Primorsko and Varna – initially with East European researchers, and later with the participation of scholars from Western Europe, the United States, Asia and Africa within the ISA Research Committee on Sociology of Youth.

- *Theoretical innovations.* The concept of “juventisation” (presented at the Twelfth World Congress of Sociology in Uppsala, 1978) introduced a principled correction in the understanding of social integration and proposed an explanation for the youth rebellions. The relationship between youth and society is a two-way interaction where the successful socialization of youth depends on the full-fledged juvenitisation of society.

At the end of the 1970s, these studies produced a generational portrait of the new young, distinguished by a striving for fuller self-expression in work, leisure time, premarital love and family life. The empirical data described a new stage in the emancipation of the person (Митев: 1980; Mitev: 1989). The juvenitisation potential of Bulgarian youth increased. In the 1980s, the juvenitisation deficit of institutions inspired the formation of youth groups (Експрес информация: 1986) and drove youth towards the position of a “collective dissident” (Митев: 1987).

The activity of Bulgarian youth researchers received international recognition. At the Tenth World Congress of Sociology (Mexico, 1982) Petar-Emil Mitev was elected President of RC 34 “Sociology of Youth”.

After the beginning of Bulgaria’s transition to democracy and market economy, several large-scale youth studies were conducted (1995, 2002, 2007, 2010), along with specialized surveys on the issues of young people from the ethnic minorities, the attitudes towards religion, the culture of peace and democracy, and the formation of a European consciousness.

The tradition of wide international cooperation was continued: organization of international conferences on youth issues (1993, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2007); participation in European research projects: TRANSITIONS, FATE, UP2YOUTH, SINEFOGO, and others. Bulgaria initiated a project for a study on Balkan youth with the participation of Božidar Jakšić (Serbia),

Branka Baranović (Croatia), Octav Marcovici and Anca Tomescu (Romania), Georgi Kimov and Elida Medarovska (Macedonia), and Maria Dede (Albania). The project was not implemented for financial reasons. Bulgaria continued to be active in RC 34: Sociology of Youth, in which Siyka Kovacheva was initially a member of the Executive Board and then of the Advisory Board.

Sociological studies reveal the specific characteristics of Bulgarian postcommunist youth. The new young have become a generational subject of Bulgaria's geopolitical reorientation towards the West – towards the European Union and NATO, just as under radically different conditions, Bulgarian postwar youth had become a generational subject of the opposite geopolitical orientation – towards the Eastern Bloc. The adoption of western cultural patterns and models of behaviour (*westernization*) is a huge generational fact, regardless of the differences by gender, place of residence, ethnic origin and political preferences. In the 1990s, young people in Bulgaria recognized – more quickly and more completely than older people – the cardinal meaning of the change: *the centre of weight in social life was shifted from the state onto civil society*.

The studies show in what way, and to what extent, “Europe” has acquired a dual meaning for Bulgarian youth – as a strategic prospect for Bulgaria and as an immediate, albeit difficult to achieve, opportunity for individual integration. Bulgarian youth have given – through their aspirations and behaviour – a dual answer to the new challenges. One is the readiness to realize the new opportunities offered by Bulgaria's growing civil society. The other variant – for some a reserve, and for others the main one – is emigration. Young people are exploring a *new field of opportunities*. Not just within the boundaries of the nation-state but also of the regional (European) community, of the contemporary world.

Scientific studies have pointed to a practical conclusion: the most important problem for the youth policy strategy is the optimization of the *national sector* of this field of opportunities.

After the Institute of Youth Studies, research in the area of youth problems has been continued by the *Ivan Hadjiyski* Institute for Social Values and Structures.

1.4 Methodological notes on this study

This book presents the results of the *Youth in Bulgaria 2014* study as part of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's international project on research on

youth in the Balkan countries based on a common model designed by Klaus Hurrelmann. In Bulgaria, the project was directed by Petar-Emil Mitev and Siyka Kovacheva, and the fieldwork was conducted by the Gallup International Agency: a questionnaire survey, conducted between 12 and 30 June; and in-depth interviews conducted in July and August 2014.

A major challenge to the Bulgarian study was to ensure comparability of the results in Bulgaria with those in the other countries where such a study was conducted, and at the same time, to develop research tools that would be sensitive to the local specificity and which would allow comparison by some indicators with previous studies so as to capture the trends of change in the life situation, behaviour and values of young people in Bulgaria.

The primary information collection method is a combination of a quantitative survey using a structured questionnaire, and a qualitative study using the in-depth interview method. The target group are young people aged 14-27 years; according to the national population census of March 2011, the total population aged 14-27 is estimated at 1 224 000 persons. The quantitative survey is based on a nationally representative sample; the in-depth interviews are based on a purposive sample. The representative survey used a two-stage cluster sample (206 clusters) stratified by region (28 regions) and type of settlement (capital city, regional centre, small town, and village) based on a systematic random sample of polling districts in Bulgaria. In total, 1030 interviews were realized, or 91.4% of the planned number. The final sample was not weighted, as the deviations from the structure of the population according to the census are within the statistical error margin of $\pm 3\%$. To control the survey process, 20% of the respondents from the effective sample were contacted by phone or face-to-face. After the filled-in questionnaires were reviewed, 1018 full interviews were selected and included in the further processing of data.

Table 1.2 Structure of the sample (%)

Gender	
Males	50
Females	50
Age groups	
14 – 17	26
18 – 22	33
23 – 27	41
Settlement type	
Village	22
Small town	22
Regional centre	36
Capital city	20
Social-professional status	
Pupils	33
Students	14
Employed	37
Unemployed	12
Education	
Primary or less	13
Non-completed secondary	28
Three-year secondary	7
Four-year secondary	40
Higher	13
Father's education level	
Primary or less	12
Three-year secondary	22
Four-year secondary	37
Higher	22

The mathematic-statistical processing of the quantitative data was conducted with the help of the SPSS package. The data were subjected to univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis, and hypotheses were tested by chi-square, t-test, and analysis of variance. Only statistically significant correlations between variables at .000 level are presented and interpreted in this book.

The qualitative study consisted of ten in-depth interviews equally distributed by gender and by age up to 20 and over 20 years. The respondents selected were pupils, students, employed and unemployed youth. In conformity with the expectations that ethnic differences have a significant impact on young people's orientations, interviews were conducted with six ethnic Bulgarians, two ethnic Turks, and two Roma. The interviews lasted for an hour or an hour and a half. They were recorded with the respondents' consent.

2. LEISURE TIME AND LIFESTYLES OF BULGARIAN YOUTH

Leisure time (as, for that matter, youth itself as a social category) is a product of industrial society and an indication of the modernization of social life. Today leisure time has become a major industry and contributes substantially to people's physical and mental health as well as to their overall quality of life. For young people, in particular, leisure is an additional or alternative source of identity which they construct through the meanings assigned by individuals to the activities and items used in time free from studies, paid work and housework (Roberts: 2006). Entertainment, sports and the arts are important areas of self-expression and development of an individual lifestyle, and many scholars (Miles: 1998; Jones: 2009) claim that in late modern society consumption plays a growing or even decisive role in shaping individual identity.

Indeed, leisure has become a means of personal individualization because of the wealth of goods, services and activities related to cultural production and consumption, entertainment and recreation, from which individuals can choose and develop their own style of behaviour (Roberts: 2009; Miles: 2000). Whereas in the initial periods of industrialization leisure time was largely predetermined by the source and size of income, age and family status of individuals, nowadays the cultural and entertainment industries and their products offer a wide range of opportunities for choice, allowing individuals to express their Self and often to identify with some and differentiate themselves from other groups with a specific lifestyle. The variety of tastes and preferences, enhanced and guided by more or less aggressive marketing strategies, however, does not completely eliminate the effects of social stratification factors such as class, gender or ethnicity (Wyn and White: 1997; Lawson and Todd: 2002). This dependence of individual choice on already existing or newly emerging systemic inequalities is taken into account in the concept of "structured individualization" (Roberts et al: 1994; Furlong and Cartmel: 2007). According to this concept, freedom of individual action in leisure time, as well as of young people's choices of education and employment, must be viewed in its connection with the material circumstances and the broader structure of opportunities and constraints within which those life choices are made.

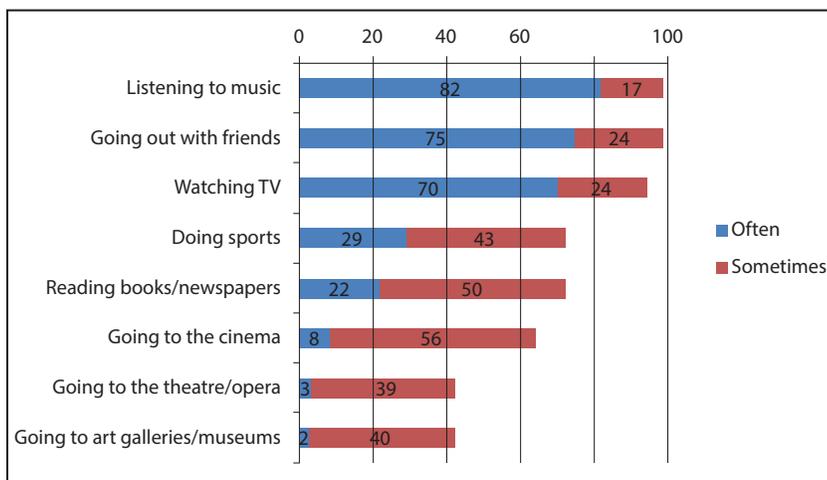
Which are the specific leisure time activities of Bulgarian youth, what are the forms of youth cultural consumption and cultural production, and what

influences the differences in the lifestyle choices of the different groups of young people in Bulgaria? This chapter seeks to answer those questions.

2.1 Main leisure time activities of young people

Sociological studies, including this one, traditionally measure the presence of several main activities in the structure of young people's leisure time (*Figure 2.1*).

Figure 2.1 How often do you engage in the following activities? (%)



The general picture of Bulgarian youth's leisure activities shows that they fall into three main groups: most frequently practiced, occasionally practiced, and rarely practiced activities. The first group comprises listening to music, going out with friends, and watching television. Three-quarters of the respondents engage in all three activities very often, which shows their leading role in Bulgarian youth's lifestyle. Listening to music remains the favourite pastime of young people in Bulgaria, as in the previous two studies conducted since the beginning of the transition (Митев: 1996; Митев: 2005).

Listening to music ranges from passive forms combined with other activities to high levels of engagement serving as the basis for the formation of youth subcultures around a particular musical style. Although the research tools used in this study do not allow us to examine this category

in detail so as to identify the preferred forms and styles, we may conclude that the comparatively passive and entertainment forms of listening to music predominate. In the in-depth interviews, most of the respondents said that listening to "*chalga*" ("Balkan pop-folk music") is decreasing, but *chalga* still remains the most popular genre and it is "the music that is played in discos". Those who said they do not listen to *chalga* criticized it above all for the lyrics of the songs, which they defined as "absurd", "vulgar", "lacking any values whatsoever". The respondents defined themselves as people who like different styles – "a little bit of everything", as a male Information Science student put it – and not as fans of a particular musical style. The preferences for this most popular leisure activity of Bulgarian youth are equally characteristic of the lifestyle of both genders and do not depend on households' economic resources. Respondents in the youngest age cohort – teens aged 14-17, mostly pupils – spend the most time listening to music, with the amount of time devoted to this leisure activity decreasing in the older cohorts. The frequency of listening to music is significantly lower among already employed youth.

Entertainment forms also predominate in watching television, which was the second most popular activity in previous years, but is now ranked third after socializing with friends. Going out with friends is a typical youth activity practiced very frequently by almost all respondents. As with listening to music, the frequency of this activity decreases with age – from 84% among the youngest to 67% among the oldest respondents. Those who most often go out with friends are pupils and students, and those who do so most rarely are, once again, employed youth. There are no statistically significant differences by social strata based on income, but there are such by social groups based on main occupation – 61% of those not in employment, education or training (NEETs) say they often go out with friends, as compared with 84% of pupils. Gender also proves to be a significant factor: 80% of men and 70% of women often socialize with friends. Young NEETs watch television most often – 82%, as against just 56% of employed youth and 51% of students. The largest shares of those who "often watch television" are found among the Roma and families with three or more children. Students watch television the least, while respondents who have left school after completing primary education are the heaviest viewers. Parents' education also plays a significant role here (Cramer's $V = .184$ for father's education level and Cramer's $V = .146$ for mother's education level). Less than half of the

respondents whose parents have academic (MA and PhD) degrees watch television often, with the share of those who do so increasing with the decrease in parents' education level and reaching up to 87% of youth whose parents have primary education or less. The poor and those living in rural areas watch television more often than those from wealthy and well-to-do strata, and residents of big cities and Sofia. In the South-East (Yugoiztochen) Planning Region the frequency of watching television is 20% higher than in the South-West (Yugozapaden) Planning Region. Almost half of the unemployed and the Roma, as well as two-thirds of those who left school before completing primary education, watch television for four or more hours per day. The common characteristic of this group of three most frequently practiced leisure activities is that they do not require significant financial resources, preparation and knowledge, although there are also some forms that presuppose high expenditure, engagement and competence.

The second group includes sports activities and reading books/newspapers, which are practiced by approximately three-quarters of Bulgarian youth, but less frequently than the activities in the first group. Every fourth respondent practices sports regularly, and every fifth reads regularly. Those two pursuits presuppose high activity on the part of young people and contribute to their physical and mental health. The shares of those who "never" read or practice sports – one-quarter each of the respondents – do not give us grounds to declare "the end of intellectual pursuits" (reading) or "victory of the healthy lifestyle" (doing sports). In the in-depth interviews, the respondents expressed opposite opinions.

I've noticed that in the last year or two there has been something like a boom: most people I know have really gotten into the fitness culture and that's because they want to turn to a healthy way of life – they are quitting smoking, cutting down on alcohol, and this is very good. There are both boys and girls who are doing that. (Pupil, female, Grade 12, high school in Sofia)

Young people aren't doing sports. Most of them spend time on computers. They get obsessed with games and withdraw into the world of Facebook, chats, what have you. They sit there like zombies, clicking away and playing games or viewing photos. (Economics student, male)

I don't read literature and newspapers. The internet is enough for me, although there, too, I only visit certain websites. (...) I'm too

stressed out as it is nowadays, in the 21st century, to stress myself out further. Least of all with news. News is among the most negative events on television. (Law student, male)

Today there are more opportunities for reading, including online. Young people read what they are interested in, not what they are assigned [at school]. (High-school pupil, female)

Sports and reading as typical leisure activities of Bulgarian youth are more strongly influenced by socio-demographic factors than listening to music. For example, women read twice more often than men. "Frequent" reading increases with age, and especially with educational attainment – from 18% of those with primary schooling to 35% of those with higher education – but it is noteworthy that even among respondents with higher education there are 9% who indicated they "never" read. Social status is a significant factor, too – half (48%) of the NEETs never read. More than half of the Roma also indicated they "never" read. Those who read "often" are more than one-third of respondents whose father (Cramer's $V = .258$) and mother (Cramer's $V = .205$) have higher education, and just 5% of those whose parents have primary education or less. Just 10% of respondents whose parents have higher education "never" read, as compared with 60% of those whose parents have primary education. There are three times as many non-readers in villages as there are in Sofia. This group includes 43% of the respondents in the North-West (Severozapaden) Planning Region (the least economically developed region in Bulgaria) and the smallest share (just 14%) of respondents from the South-West Planning Region. Regular practice of sports also depends on gender, as does reading – the share of men who often do sports is twice higher than that of women, and vice versa – 33% of women and 17% of men never practice sports (Cramer's $V = .304$ for the correlation between gender and frequency of engagement in sports activities). There is a slight decrease in the frequency of sports pursuit with the increase in age. Pupils and students "often" do sports twice more than NEETs. There is a strong correlation with the type of settlement where the respondents live: the share of those who practice sports is the highest in Sofia, dropping sharply in small towns and particularly in villages. Half of the young Roma never do sports. A noteworthy tendency with regard to sports is that this activity is becoming increasingly market-oriented, practiced in return for pay in private clubs, while opportunities and preferences for informal pursuits are decreasing dramatically.

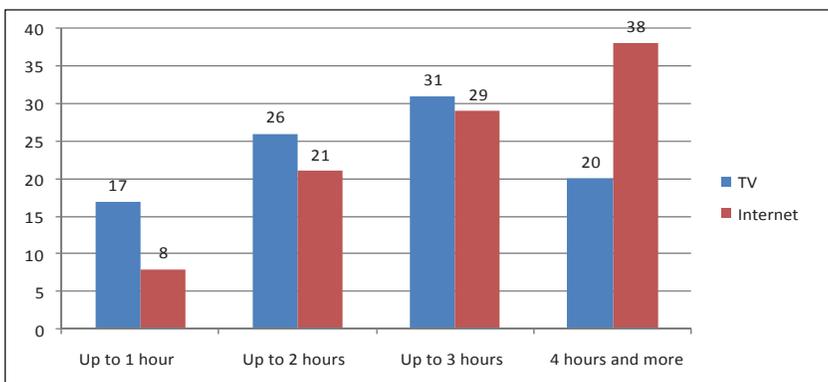
The third group comprises activities that are more rarely practiced by Bulgarian youth in their leisure time – going to the cinema, theatre, art galleries. Watching films in cinemas, which presupposes more expenses, time and a shared experience with a multitude of other people, is among the frequent leisure activities of less than one-tenth of respondents. Even fewer, less than 50%, are consumers – at that, “rarely” – of “high culture” such as theatre, opera or art exhibitions. The level of this type of “high” or “active” cultural consumption among Bulgarian youth is remarkably low – 52% of respondents have never been to the theatre, opera, a museum and an art gallery. Those who go to the cinema are just 11% of employed and just 3% of unemployed youth. More than half of the NEETs have not been to the cinema even once in the last 12 months. Students and residents of Sofia and big cities go to the cinema most often. Students are also those who go to the theatre and opera more often. More women than men say they go to the theatre, opera and concerts. The strongest correlation is that between type of settlement and frequency of going to the cinema (Cramer’s $V = .212$) and to the theatre (Cramer’s $V = .228$). Those two activities are also strongly influenced by the father’s education level (Cramer’s $V = .284$ and $.225$ respectively).

Once again, the research tools used in this study do not allow us to measure the actual number of visits meant by the respondents who chose the “Rarely” answer, but one should bear in mind that young people are increasingly turning to the internet for cultural consumption, including of high computer arts (Митев: 2005). Television also gives young people access to films, concerts and exhibitions – at that, without high financial and time expenditures. Still, the fact that 52% of the respondents say they have never been to the theatre, an art gallery or museum allows us to conclude that this form of active cultural consumption has lost its prestige for half of the young people in Bulgaria. In addition, the fact that half of all pupils have never been to the theatre or to an art exhibition shows the extent to which Bulgaria’s secondary education system has failed in providing access and encouraging interest among young people in communicating with the arts (or at least with some types of cultural products).

The most pronounced change in the structure of Bulgarian youth’s leisure time is the growing use of the internet. It has already replaced watching television as a preferred activity of youth as a whole, or as a male pupil at a high school in Sofia put it: “I haven’t watched television in the last six years – in fact, since I have internet [at home].” A comparison between those two

activities shows that “spending time on the internet” every day is practiced by more than 90% of young people in Bulgaria, and has become a preferred leisure activity which rivals watching television in terms of time spent on it.

Figure 2.2 On average, how many hours a day do you spend watching TV? / On average, how many hours a day do you spend on the internet? (%)



Young people spend a significant number of hours surfing social networks – more than two-thirds do so more than two hours a day, while 13% say they spend six or more hours online. A comparison of the number of hours spent on watching television and on computers shows that the duration of daily internet use is significantly longer than that of watching television – less than one-third of respondents watch television three hours a day, and just one-fifth do so four or more hours a day. The internet is used equally frequently by men and women, and by the different age groups among Bulgarian youth. Internet access decreases with the decrease in educational attainment, and is the lowest among those with primary education or less. Just two-thirds of young NEETs, and just half of the Roma have internet access. Internet use is also low among young people from poor families, with parents with primary education, and in rural areas. The correlation coefficient for home internet use increases from Cramer's $V = .202$ for settlement type and Cramer's $V = .217$ for social strata to Cramer's $V = .371$ for mother's education level to Cramer's $V = .536$ for ethnic origin and Cramer's $V = .576$ for father's education level.

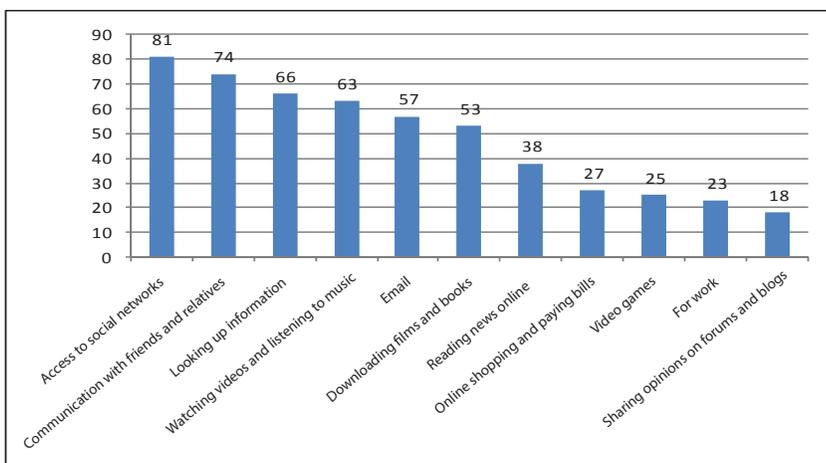
Those who spend the most time on the internet are pupils, followed by students. A female pupil in Grade 10 in the town of Peshtera said this

in her interview: "I spend little time on the internet – just [!] three-four hours a day. All my friends spend whole nights."

The internet is used by young people mostly for communication and entertainment purposes – for "leisure activities". Whereas just one-fourth use the internet for work and two-thirds for looking up information on various issues, including for school projects, more than 80% use it to access social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or Myspace.

In addition to sharing on social networks, audio and video conversations and chatting on Skype are other ways of communicating with friends and relatives. Social networks have dramatically increased young people's opportunities for communication. Whereas two-thirds of respondents said they have five "close" friends, this number doubles when it comes to "virtual friends". Furthermore, as studies on young people's behaviour on the internet show (Awan and Gauntlett: 2013, 127), social networks are used not just for communicating with those who are physically distant in face-to-face conversations, but also for supplementing and deepening contacts with those who live in the same settlement. To this we should also add email, which more than 57% of the respondents use for communication. Also significant is the percentage (18%) of those who share opinions on forums and blogs with a view to reaching a wider audience.

Figure 2.3 What purposes do you mostly use the internet for? (%)



In the in-depth interviews, the respondents evaluated the impact of the internet positively as well as negatively. A male Mathematics student said that the internet makes it easier to communicate with friends: “Take me, for example: when I organize [football] matches, I write to people [asking them] if they can take part – it’s pay-free, fast, and you can communicate simultaneously with more people...” A woman employed at a pastry workshop also pointed out that thanks to the internet, she can communicate with her friends from school:

We’ll either write or talk to each other. Since we finished school, we no longer have time. Most of us write to each other on Facebook or on Skype. Most people from the young generation are very busy now.

Young people also appreciate the greater freedom of choice in using the internet. A female pupil at a foreign-language-teaching high school explained why she prefers surfing the internet to watching television as follows: “On the internet there are more options, while with television, you sit down and take whatever’s served up. There are commercials and quite a few unnecessary things.”

The opposite opinion about the impact of the internet on communication among young people was associated in the interviews with the role of online surfing in replacing real-life communication or with the danger of psychological addiction. A working male Law student emotionally expressed his negative attitude towards Facebook, which often leads to addiction:

This is a sphere which creates a hell of a lot of problems. Seventy percent of all Facebook members are obsessed. I know people who spend much of their time there. (...) This is much worse than drugs. This may be the biggest addiction in the world at present. (...) One such live example is that when 15-20 years ago people went out [with friends], they never stopped laughing, communicating, while now you can very rarely see a group of friends who are really having a meaningful conversation and haven’t glued their eyes to their phones, aren’t browsing Facebook or something else of the sort. It’s an unavoidable social phenomenon – in the street, on the tram. People will bump into you because they have their eyes glued to their phones.

Besides an impact on communication – evaluated positively or negatively – the internet is used by young people for other purposes, too. Two-thirds of the respondents use the internet for listening to music and watching

musical videos. The internet is also a supplement to the home library, cinema and television, as 53% of the respondents download books and films, and another 38% read news online. The internet has also replaced the electronic game machines that were so popular in Bulgaria in the first years of the transition, and now one in four young people in this country play video games online. It is also used for online shopping, booking, paying bills by 27% of the respondents, while another 5% use it for online banking. Women and older youth shop online more often, while online banking is more popular among the employed and students. Young people with lower education levels use the internet more often for watching videos and especially for playing games online. Youth from rural areas and poor households use the internet more rarely for work and for looking up information.

2.2 Young people as consumers of products of the cultural and entertainment industries

In contemporary society, a growing number of cultural products, recreation and entertainment services forming Bulgarian youth's lifestyles are obtained through young people's participation in the market as consumers. Under the previous regime, the formal youth organization, the Dimitrov Communist Youth Union, commonly known as the Komsomol, provided opportunities for participation in numerous activities free of charge. This was a comparatively limited, strictly controlled form of mass consumption. Nowadays there is a trend towards individualization and diversity of options offered by the market. It is interesting how this trend plays out, considering the comparatively low living standards of Bulgaria's population.

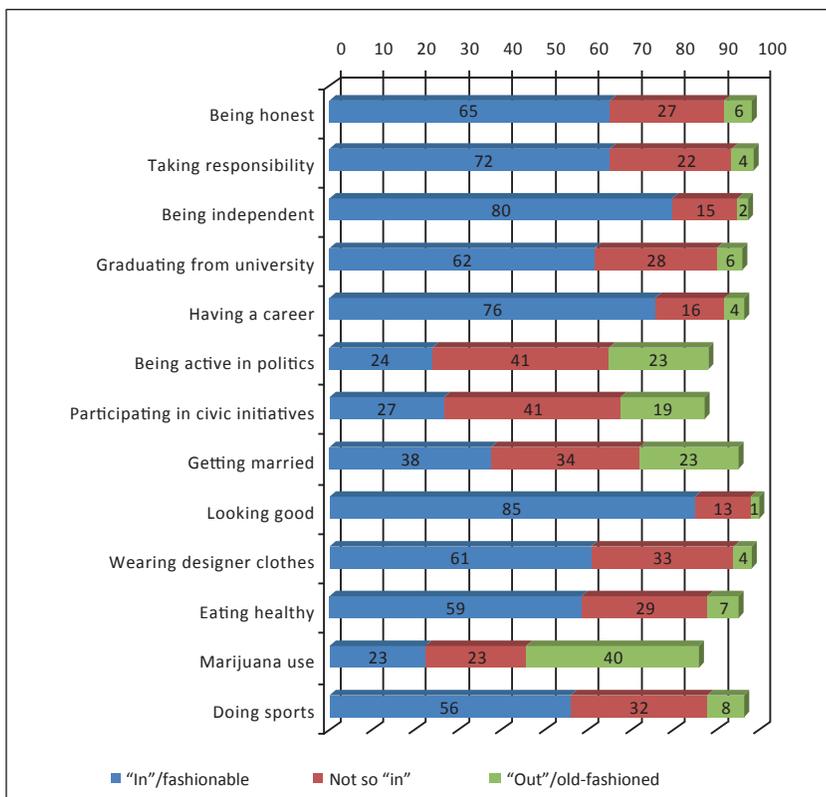
The data from this study attest to a developing market for the cultural and entertainment industries among Bulgarian youth, albeit not to the extent found in western societies. Young people in Bulgaria are still managing to engage in many leisure activities without paying for them – for example, downloading films, music and videos from the internet for free, or going on holiday in the mountains in tents instead of vacationing at a multi-starred hotel abroad. What they are willing or compelled to spend money on is above all on buying clothes, going to a restaurant or café, paying mobile phone bills. Most often, the Bulgarian respondents spend 20 to 50 BGN per month on clothes, footwear and accessories – about half of the respondents said they spend that amount, while another one-quarter said they spend between 50 and 100 BGN. Just 10% can

afford to spend more than 100 BGN on such purchases. They spend less amounts of money on going to a café, restaurant or bar, with three-quarters of respondents spending up to 50 BGN per month. With regard to the third highest expense item – mobile phone cards or bills – 80% of young people spend up to 50 BGN per month. The amounts spent on cinema tickets and buying discs and books are usually under 20 BGN per month, and not more than one in ten respondents spend over 20 BGN per month. Young women and men are equally inclined to spend money on clothes, footwear and accessories, and set aside approximately equal amounts per month, while those from wealthy households and from Sofia spend more than the rest. Expenditures on phones are higher among young people with higher education, employed, wealthy, and Sofia residents. This is also true for buying books.

In terms of structure and amount, the expenditures of Bulgarian youth correspond to their views on what is “in” (fashionable) and what is “out” (old-fashioned) today. Looking good unquestionably comes first among the listed traits of the trendy lifestyle. How you look is associated more closely with wearing designer clothes than with doing sports or eating healthy, although these last are also considered fashionable by more than half of the respondents. The shares of those who deny the importance of looking good and wearing designer clothes are negligible – just 1% and 4% respectively. At that, satisfaction with one’s own appearance – complete or to some extent – is expressed by 95% of young people in Bulgaria. The most satisfied with their looks are young people with higher education and from wealthy households. Designer clothes are equally important to men and women, and they are most important to pupils and youths from wealthy families.

Information on young people’s inclinations for cultural consumption in their leisure time is also provided by the indicator regarding which personal achievements are considered fashionable and important. According to the respondents, the most “in” things in youth lifestyle is “looking good”, “being independent”, and “having a career”. The most “out” things are marijuana use, being active in politics, and getting married.

Figure 2.4 Which of the following values do you think are “in”/fashionable in contemporary Bulgarian society, and which are “out”/old-fashioned? (%)



As a whole, Bulgarian youth consider looking good to be the most important element in developing an own lifestyle, and associate it with wearing designer clothes, eating healthy, and doing sports. A good body image and relevant behaviour are important elements of contemporary young people’s self-esteem and self-confidence. Creating the desired image often requires efforts to use goods and services that allow young people to identify themselves with show-business and fashion celebrities which, in turn, makes them a target market of the “culture of celebrity” (Schickel: 1985).

Being independent is the second most important element in the lifestyle of Bulgarian youth, which they associate with building a career and, to some extent, with having a university degree. Young people are signifi-

cantly less interested in graduating from university than in having a career – a university degree is important to 62% of them, and a career to 76%. According to young people in Bulgaria, graduating from university does not necessarily lead to the desired independence, and the connection between high education and independent social status remains invisible to a significant part of them.

Participation in politics and civic activity are seen as fashionable by just one-quarter of young people in Bulgaria – those two activities are ranked on a par with marijuana use. It is noteworthy that sports and a healthy diet are regarded as much more important characteristics of the trendy lifestyle than marijuana use. Marriage is fashionable for just over one-third of the respondents, while a university degree contributes to a “cool” lifestyle according to two-thirds of them. Getting married is seen as “in” by more women than men. Marriage is the least popular among students and youth whose parents have higher education. Eating healthy is more important to women, older age groups, students, and young people whose parents have higher education. There is no statistically significant difference in young people’s opinions on eating healthy based on social strata – a healthy diet is regarded as fashionable by respondents from poor as well as from wealthy households. The majority of those who do not regard it as such are youth with low education and Roma. Less than half of young Roma think eating healthy is “in”. Marijuana use is considered to be fashionable mostly by older youth, working students, young people with secondary education, and Sofia residents. Doing sports is popular among men, pupils and students, young people with well-educated parents and wealthy households. It is the least popular among young people from rural areas. The data on the “in”/“out” indicator also contain information about certain moral values, which is analyzed in the next paragraph.

Many of the leisure activities of Bulgarian youth involve tobacco, alcohol, and drug use. The data from this study do not allow a detailed analysis of this form of entertainment, although they show comparatively high levels of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use. Those who smoke regularly (every day) are 33% of Bulgarian youth, while another 13% say they smoke occasionally. The share of respondents who use alcohol regularly (every day) is 7%, with another 60% saying they use alcohol at weekends or more rarely. In assessing the risk of such behaviour, one should take into account the fact that half of Bulgarian youth are not convinced of the harm of smoking, and that two-thirds are tolerant

towards alcohol use. Whereas marijuana use is acceptable (to various extents) to 20% of young people, three times as many think so about alcohol use. We have grounds to presume that those who are tolerant towards the use of addictive substances have in mind above all lighter forms, such as weak alcohol (beer and wine, not spirits) and marijuana (not heroin, for example). In the in-depth interviews, both marijuana and alcohol use were defined as “normal” when having fun at a disco. The highest shares of smokers are found among older youths, employed, Roma, and young people with primary education or less. Conversely, alcohol use is most acceptable to socially more privileged groups, such as students, the wealthy, Sofia residents, university graduates, and young people with well-educated parents.

2.3 Sexual behaviour of young people

Young people in Bulgaria see sexual behaviour more as part of their lifestyle than as a step towards – and even less, after – marriage. Even the first youth studies after the beginning of the political transition in Bulgaria (Митев: 1996; 2005) found an uncoupling of sex from marriage. In the socialist countries of Eastern Europe this tendency, which began in the 1970s, was artificially restrained for ideological reasons as well as because of the paternalistic family policy encouraging marriage by granting various privileges to married couples (Можни: 2003).

Two-thirds of the surveyed young Bulgarians declared they have sexual experience and just 15% abstained from answering this question (still, this percentage is higher than that of those who did not answer the question about their experience in alcohol and marijuana use, whose share varies from 1% to 7%). One-fifth of respondents have not had sexual intercourse, with this share explicity decreasing from 64% of the 14-17-year-olds to 12% of the 18-22-year-olds to 2% of the 23-27-year-olds. The data indicate that by the age of 17 or 18 years, 50% of young people in Bulgaria have had their first sexual encounter.

Whereas sexual experience is regarded as almost equally acceptable by both men and women, this is not the case with sexual relations with more than one partner. Half (49%) of young men and just one-third (32%) of young women said they have had sexual relations with more than one partner. Sexual abstinence is approved of by one-third of the respondents. At that, young women regard sexual abstinence much more as a virtue that is

important only for women – 16% of the female respondents agreed with the opinion that sexual abstinence is a virtue important only for women, as compared to 9% of the male respondents who agreed with this opinion. Those who approve of sexual abstinence the most are the youngest respondents and those with primary education or less, and particularly the Roma.

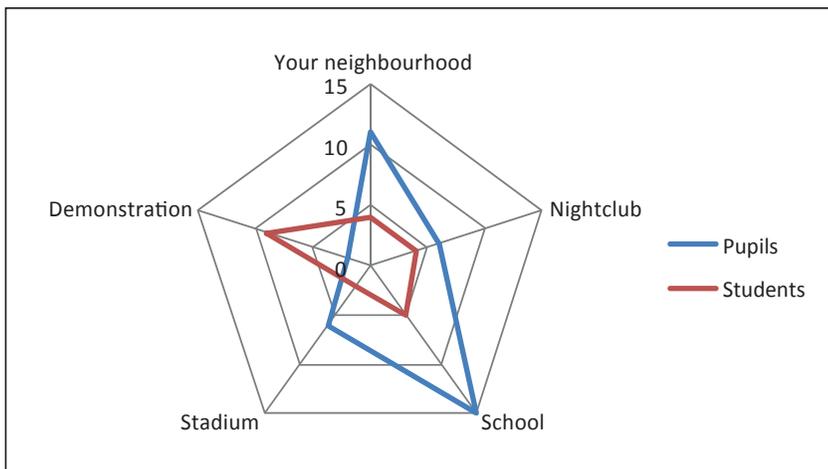
The sexual behaviour of young people in Bulgaria remains largely risky. Although all respondents declared they are familiar with the means of safe sex, at least as a term, only half of those who said they have sexual experience always use contraceptives. One-third use contraceptives “sometimes”, but one in ten respondents never use them. Safe sex is part of the lifestyle above all of students. Most of the respondents who never use contraceptives are from underprivileged groups – young people with primary education or less, Roma, and NEETs. Sexual experience and contraceptive use depend the most on age (Cramer’s $V = .470$ and $.475$ respectively), followed by mother’s education level (Cramer’s $V = .359$ and $.343$ respectively). An interesting fact, which needs further study in order to find a full explanation, is that many of the leisure activities of young people in Bulgaria – such as doing sports, reading books, going to the cinema/theatre, and using the internet – depend more on the father’s than on the mother’s education level. In the case of sexual behaviour, this correlation is reversed, depending more on the mother’s than on the father’s education level.

Bulgarian youth demonstrate low tolerance towards non-traditional forms of sexuality. Same-sex relations are considered “completely” or “mostly” acceptable by just one-fifth of the respondents, while one-third said they find them “completely unacceptable”, and another one-fifth “mostly acceptable”. Homosexual relations are absolutely unacceptable more often to men, young people with primary education or less, NEETs, Roma, and rural residents. The most tolerant towards homosexuality are Sofia residents, university graduates, and young people with well-educated parents. Whereas Bulgarian youth remain conservative in their attitudes towards same-sex relations, thereby remaining “closer to Balkan than to European standards” (Митев: 2005), their attitudes towards abortion are the opposite. The level of tolerance towards abortion is high, and objections on moral, religious and health grounds have receded. The opinion that abortion should be legal is shared by more than half of the respondents, and one-fifth think abortion is admissible in medically justified cases. The high share of those who have “no opinion” on this issue is noteworthy – 22%. Women are more in favour of the right to abor-

tion than men, while more men than women don't have an opinion on the issue. University graduates, students, and wealthy young people are the most in favour of complete liberalization of abortion. Roma, who are more traditionally-minded with regard to the other sexual behaviour indicators, are more in favour of the right to abortion. This may be due to the fact that they use contraceptives more rarely and regard abortion as a main birth control method.

Violent behaviour is found among young people in Bulgaria, although the data from the survey do not allow us to conclude whether it is increasing or decreasing in the aftermath of a series of high-profile cases involving youth violence in the past decade. The answers to the only question in the questionnaire on this topic point to the conclusion that at least one in ten young people have been involved in some form of physical (violent) conflict in the last 12 months. Fights most often break out in the neighbourhood where young people live, and at school. There have also been physical conflicts at nightclubs/cafés and, more rarely, at sports events and protest demonstrations.

Figure 2.5 In the last 12 months, have you been involved in a violent conflict/fight in any of the following locations? (%)



Lifestyles involving violent behaviour are characteristic of two groups of young people. The first consists primarily of pupils or unemployed, adolescents (14-17-year-olds), young people of Roma origin, and with parents

with low education levels. They take part in fights above all in their neighborhood and at their school. Fights during political protests and sports contests are characteristic of another social group – older youth (24-27-year-olds), students (especially, working students) and unemployed, people from wealthy families. Physical violence in most micro-environments is above all a show of a “masculine” lifestyle (the correlation between the variables “gender” and “physical violence” in the neighbourhood, nightclub/restaurant/café, stadium, and school varies from Cramer’s $V = .208$ to Cramer’s $V = .161$). For example, the involvement of men in fights in their neighbourhood or at a nightclub/restaurant/café is at a ratio of 4:1 in comparison to that of women, 2.5:1 in fights at school, and 7:1 during sports events. The two genders are “equally” involved only in conflicts with police during demonstrations. One should bear in mind, though, that conflicts during demonstrations do not always involve physical violence – the photo of a young woman trying to embrace a police officer in full riot gear in front of the National Assembly in Sofia in the autumn of 2013 went global as the “good face” of the protests.¹

2.4 Social stratification in Bulgarian youth lifestyles

The data about the variety of lifestyles of young people in Bulgaria attest to a change in their social situation, related to the greater opportunities (and pressure) for choice and the feeling that self-presentation in society is important. These trends have been recognized as definitive for youth in the developed western societies in the last thirty years, and they have been conceptualized as “individualization”, emergence of “reflexive self-identity”, and “the choice biography” (Бек: 1999; Giddens: 1991; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim: 2002). The concept of youth individualization has also been successfully applied in analyzing East European societies after the velvet revolutions of 1989 (Ule and Rener: 1998; Wallace and Kovatcheva: 1998; Roberts: 2009; Machacek: 2014). A number of sociological studies in different social contexts, however, have found that the life chances of contemporary young people are still partially subject to the constraints of the factors stemming from the social stratification in the society in which they make their choices. Whereas social background has a more visible effect on the

¹ <http://dama.bg/article/naj-vuzdejstvashtite-snimki-na-dobroto-v-protestite-po-sveta/1358/>, accessed 7 September 2014.

individuals' educational and professional choices and destinations, social inequality and different access to public goods are manifested also in young people's leisure time lifestyles. Our study gives us grounds to highlight the influence of several main factors on Bulgarian youth's lifestyle.

In the first place is gender. Although some activities are equally preferred by young women and young men, girls in Bulgaria are still socialized according to the traditional expectations regarding "due" behaviour of young women. The data show that young women are expected to stay at home more, to read books, to be interested in arts and culture rather than to practice sports. The understanding of male role behaviour includes doing sports, going out with friends, using alcohol, physical strength, and aggressiveness.

Table 2.1 Gender and lifestyle

% of respondents who:	Males	Females
<i>Say they "often" engage in:</i>		
Going out with friends	80	70
Watching TV	15	29
Sports activities	42	16
Reading books	15	29
<i>Consider it is fashionable to:</i>		
Practice sports	60	52
Get married	34	41
Eat healthy	52	67
Graduate from university	56	67
<i>Say:</i>		
They never use alcohol	25	39
Alcohol use is unacceptable	25	32
<i>Say:</i>		
They have had several sexual partners	49	32
Same-sex relations are absolutely unacceptable	40	29
Abortion should be legal	47	57
<i>Say they've been involved in a fight:</i>		
In their neighbourhood	16	4
At school	14	6
At the stadium	7	1
At a café/nightclub	12	3

Values have changed, however, and young people cannot easily find reference points as to how to develop an adequate role behaviour, especially in the conditions of dominant intolerance towards the “others”. Two of the interviewed young men and one of the young women expressed the opinion that in the present-day conditions, “men are softening”. Other traditional views are still in place, too. Although sexual behaviour is being freed from the regulations of marriage, be it religious or civil marriage, women are still expected to have fewer partners than men, and contraceptives use and abortion are regarded as a “woman’s job” and responsibility. The new communication technologies have played an equalizing role, and young women and men have equal access to the internet and spend equal time online, but the forms of use of those technologies are as gender-stratified as are reading print books or doing sports.

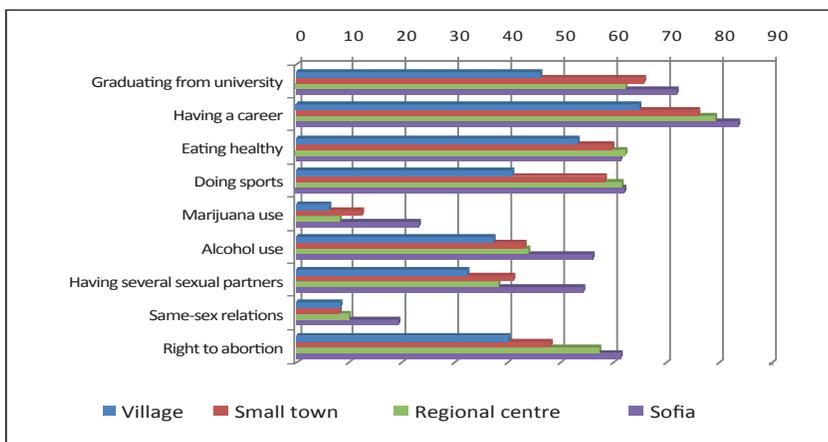
Young people’s place of residence is also a social space constituting a system of opportunities for and constraints on the choice of a personal lifestyle. The data from this study have not shown a strong effect of Bulgaria’s six planning regions upon the preferred types of leisure time activities, despite the differences in the values of the indicators of their economic development. A statistically significant difference between young people from different regions was found only in the frequency of engagement in several activities, such as watching television – an indicator by which the South-East Planning Region ranked first – and internet access, by which this region ranked last. This fact may be explained with the large share of young people of Turkish ethnic origin in the region, as well as with the proximity to Turkey and, hence, easy access to Turkish television channels. We must note the popularity of Turkish TV series in the last decade among a large part of the Bulgarian population, but mostly among older audiences. More passive and limited consumption by young people was also found in the North-West Planning Region.

What continues to have a significant impact on youth choices is the, traditional for Bulgaria, difference in the range of opportunities for employment and entertainment based on type of settlement: *capital city (Sofia)* – *big city (regional centre)* – *small town* – *village*. The capital city is the most privileged social space, offering the largest choice of high culture as well as of commercial forms of entertainment and recreation. For their part, villages do not only offer limited opportunities for access to arts, sports facilities, designer clothes; they also have a specific system of values in which young people are socialized. Although this division is also

decreasing in terms of impact on the structure of leisure time activities, significant differences were found in the case of some preferences.

Whereas gender does not play a significant role with regard to the frequency and forms of internet use, the type of settlement where respondents reside does. Young people's internet access decreases from almost 100% in Sofia to 92% in the big cities, 88% in small towns, and 82% in villages. The same tendency is true for daily internet use.

**Figure 2.6 Leisure time and settlement type
(% of respondents who consider the following
fashionable/acceptable)**



One of the main hypotheses of this study was that young people's ethnic origin would continue to influence their life choices, including their leisure time behaviour. Previous sociological studies on youth in Bulgaria (Митев: 1996; 2005) found significant differences among young people from four main ethnic communities: ethnic Bulgarians, ethnic Turks, Roma, and Muslim Bulgarians. Of course, there are also other ethnic communities in Bulgaria – such as Armenians, Jews, and Vlachs – but the four mentioned above are the largest. According to the 2011 population census,² in addition to the Bulgarian ethnic majority, which 84.8% identified themselves with, another 8.8% of Bulgaria's population identified themselves as Turks and 4.9% as Roma. The situation with Muslim Bulgarians

² http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOC52/Census2011final_en.pdf, accessed 12 September 2014.

is somewhat different, as they are above all a cultural and religious, not ethnic, community. This study did not aim to describe and reproduce the nuanced picture of youth leisure activities of each of these communities, but to establish to what extent belonging to them influences young people's choices of entertainment, recreation, and communication with arts.

Table 2.2 Preferred leisure activity, by ethnicity (%)

	Ethnic group	Bulgarians	Turks	Roma	Muslim Bulgarians
Frequent activities	Listening to music	83	80	81	73
	Going out with friends	76	69	68	86
	Watching TV	68	76	85	77
	Doing sports	34	17	14	18
	Reading books/ newspapers	25	23	6	9
	Going to the cinema	10	3	1	0
	Internet use	97	86	47	95
Risky activities	Smoke regularly	32	29	44	14
	Use alcohol regularly	7	5	13	0
	Always use contraceptives	39	30	17	23
Fashionable activities	Eating healthy	64	49	43	74
	Marijuana use	25	15	17	9
	Doing sports	61	39	33	82

The findings of this study point to the conclusion that the lifestyles of Bulgarian youth of different ethnic origins differ substantially in many respects. Whereas the differences in the frequency of listening to music are minimal (slightly less frequent among Muslim Bulgarians), they are significant in the case of the other activities. Young people from the Bulgarian ethnic majority watch television less and more often practice sports, read books, go to the cinema, and use the internet. Those who are most inclined to follow a healthy lifestyle are the Muslim Bulgarians (with the exception of regular use of contraceptives): they smoke the least, do not use alcohol regularly, do not consider marijuana use fashionable, and are the most keen on doing sports and eating healthy. Young Roma make up the largest share of those who engage in passive and risky forms of leisure time activity: they rank first in terms of watching television (including in terms of hours per day) as well as in regular use of tobacco and alcohol, and last in terms of contraceptives use. Fewer young Roma practice sports regularly and consider it fashionable than young people from the other ethnic groups. The greatest difference is in internet access – only about half of young Roma use the internet. Young people of Turkish ethnic origin have an intermediate position: in some respects (reading books, internet use, safe sex) they are closer to the lifestyles characteristic of the Bulgarian ethnic majority, and in others (doing sports and eating healthy) to the practices of the Roma community.

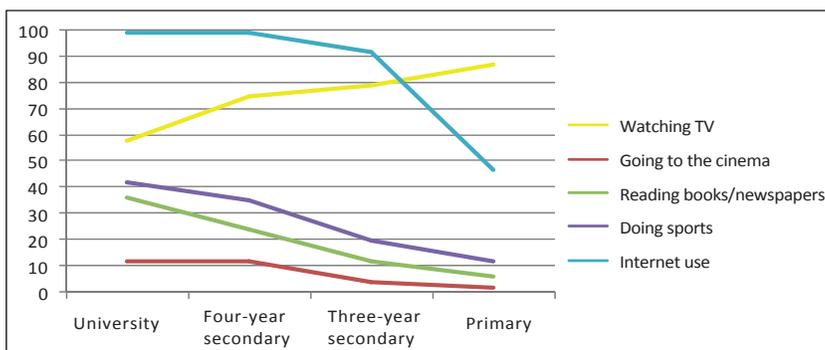
Social class may also have a significant impact on the stratification of young people's lifestyles. It is difficult to measure because social class is based on a wide range of economic differences and operates through a system of other social, political, cultural, and symbolic inequalities that are more difficult to capture (Bourdieu: 1984; Roberts and Pollock: 2009; Savage et al: 2013). In the continuing debate in sociology, there are also other views regarding the essence of this concept and its applicability in analyzing large databases (Woodward et al: 2014). One should also take into account another difficulty in studying young people's social-class status – namely, intergenerational mobility or the difference between their social-class background and their personal, attained and desired social-class status and identification.

In analyzing the personal social status of young people, we must bear in mind that the old class categories from the socialist past, based on form of ownership, are now largely blurred. At that, belonging to the working class is no longer a source of pride, just as the "intelligentsia" category has likewise lost its prestige. Most young people strive to identify themselves with "the middle class" – they consider it fashionable to have a university degree

and a job offering good career prospects. The NEETs group is very heterogeneous, consisting of: short-term and long-term unemployed; never employed; mothers raising their children on long-term parental leave; school dropouts. The same is true for those who identified themselves as private business owners – ranging from self-employed young people struggling for survival to successful free-lancers to co-owners of big family businesses.

The data from this study give us grounds to claim that some of Bulgarian youth's leisure time choices are significantly influenced by their parents' economic resources, education level and cultural preferences, which serve as indicators of the family's "economic" and "cultural" capital. Young people whose parents have higher education communicate more often with "high culture" and engage more often in pursuits that presuppose personal activity of the individual: they read more, watch television less, and practice sports more frequently. The influence of parents' material status is in the same direction. Expectedly, youth from wealthy and well-to-do families spend more money on buying items and services for entertainment purposes than those who are lower-middle or poor. Young people whose parents have university education are more inclined to follow a healthy lifestyle and to consider doing sports fashionable; they actually practice sports more, and use alcohol and tobacco less regularly. It is interesting that the household's material status does not have an impact in this case – young people from wealthy and well-to-do families use alcohol and tobacco as regularly and approve of marijuana use as much as those from lower-middle or poor families.

**Figure 2.7 Preferred activities (practiced "often"),
by parents' education level (%)**



The data from *Figure 2.7* indicate a tendency towards decrease in the activities that are practiced “often”, such as reading, going to the cinema, and internet use, with the decrease in parents’ education level; and the opposite tendency – towards increase in watching television “often” with the decrease in parents’ education level.

Young people’s personal education level, employment status and income also have an impact. Young NEETs engage in the most preferred youth leisure activities less frequently than employed youth, pupils and students: they less frequently socialize with friends, go to the cinema, and practice sports. In this group the share of those who never read books/newspapers is very high – 48%, as compared with just 11% of the employed and 10% of pupils and students. Students, university graduates, and employed youth are more likely to engage in leisure activities and to opt for a healthy lifestyle.

2.5 Material possessions of young people

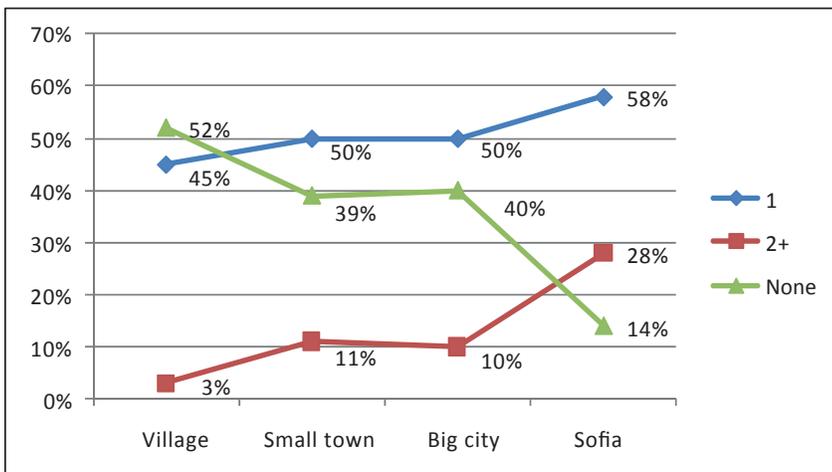
It is to be expected that Bulgarian youth’s lifestyle choices and frequency of engagement in leisure activities are connected to possession of certain items which represent relations of social inclusion or social exclusion. This study chose some pieces of new technology – desktop computers, laptops, tablets – as well as some “traditional” things such as cars and books in the household. Young people’s material resources for leisure-time consumption were also measured through possession of an own room and income from employment or entrepreneurship. The findings showed that Bulgarian youth have a new standard of living that is very far both from the modest consumption levels in the previous society and from the “survival” strategies at the beginning of the transition. Of course, the standard of living of young people in Bulgaria, measured by economic indicators such as per-capita gross domestic product or income in euros, is significantly lower than that of their peers in the European Union’s “old” member countries, and the data do not point to high levels of prosperity. Still, Bulgarian youth’s material living conditions allow them to engage in many leisure activities typical of youth in the conditions of globalization. Although we could have included in this study many other items serving as status symbols, those we did are enough to conclude that Bulgarian youth now have greater opportunities for mobility and individualization of lifestyles.

A desktop computer is owned by 70% of the respondents, and almost one in ten come from households with two or more computers. The share of computer owners is the highest in the youngest age group and among pupils. This suggests that computer ownership will increase over time not just because computers will become cheaper but also with every next generation in the family. By ethnic group (Cramer's $V = .225$), the picture is the following: ethnic Turkish households have the largest number of desktop computers, followed by ethnic Bulgarian households; just 30% of Roma households with young people have a desktop computer at home. Parents' education level also has a statistically significant effect (Cramer's $V = .225$ for father's education level and Cramer's $V = .259$ for mother's education level). Young people from regional centres have more computers than those from Sofia. There is no clear correlation based on socioeconomic status – the well-to-do have a higher share of computer ownership than the wealthy, while the share of the poor who own computers is the same as that of the wealthy. Computers have become a household necessity like refrigerators, and computer ownership does not directly depend on the household's material status.

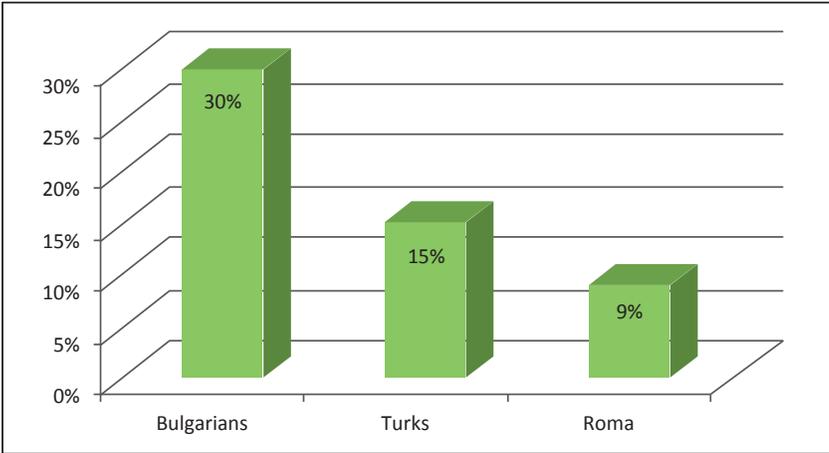
The situation with laptops is similar to that with desktop computers – a high share of respondents (63%) have a laptop, and 12% of households with young people have two or more laptops, which allows greater individualization of use. The difference is in that laptops are more of an embodiment of social inequalities today and the correlation between laptop ownership and the household's socioeconomic status is stronger than that in the case of desktop computers. In terms of laptop ownership, students (working students, in particular) rank first, ahead of pupils, while the unemployed are far behind them (Cramer's $V = .253$). Ethnic origin is a significant factor (Cramer's $V = .231$). Roma are once again the group with the lowest share – just 25%. Laptop ownership is significantly more dependent on parents' education level (Cramer's $V = .319$ for father's education level and Cramer's $V = .323$ for mother's education level). More than two-thirds of young people whose parents have higher education have at least one laptop in the household, as compared to just one-fifth of those whose parents have primary education. Two or more laptops are owned by 40% of respondents whose parents have academic degrees, and by just 1% of those whose parents have primary education. Whilst only 10% of respondents from wealthy families do not have a laptop in the household, this is true for half of the poor. The bigger the settlement

where the respondents live, the higher the level of ownership of laptops, especially of two or more laptops. While fewer than half of young people from villages do not have a laptop, in Sofia half of the households have one, and close to another one-third have two or more laptops.

Figure 2.8 Laptop ownership, by place of residence



Tablets are still a luxury item for Bulgarian youth – just one in four households has a tablet. The correlations established in the case of laptop ownership are valid for tablet ownership, too. Tablets are owned mostly by wealthier young people, with well-educated parents, Sofia residents, of Bulgarian ethnic origin. Roma are once again the most underprivileged ethnic group in this respect – just 9% have a tablet in the household. *Figure 2.9* shows the connection between ownership of this less commonplace and apparently more luxurious item and ethnic origin of Bulgarian youth.

Figure 2.9 Tablet ownership (one or more tablets), by ethnicity (%)

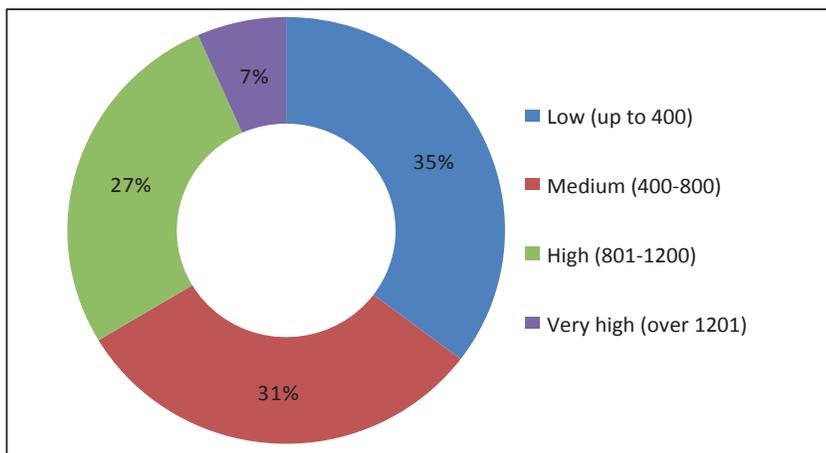
Cars are owned by two-thirds of households with young people, with 14% owning two cars or more. Ethnic Bulgarians, ethnic Turks and Muslim Bulgarians have approximately equal shares of car ownership – more than 65%. The Roma are the only group with a very low share – less than one-quarter. Still, half of the poor households have cars. Although the respondents were not asked to specify what kind of car they owned and we therefore cannot estimate how much it is worth, the very fact that two-thirds of the households with young people in Bulgaria have a car is a significant achievement in comparison with the long waiting-lists for potential car buyers in the conditions of planned economy. Socioeconomic stratification nowadays is manifested more clearly in ownership of two or more cars in the household. The data from this study show that 70% of the wealthy households have more than one car, where the second car now usually belongs personally to the young people in the family.

The housing situation of young people in Bulgaria also looks better than it did in the past. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. Here it suffices to note that almost 90% of youth have their own room. Having an own room at home gives young people greater freedom in choosing their leisure time activities and engaging in them without direct parental control. The Roma are the only group where this share is lower, at slightly over half (the correlation with ethnicity is Cramer's $V = .251$). The data on possession of an own room do not indicate any other clear correlations. Even poor parents make an effort to provide young people with a room of their own. Although there are more large dwellings in villages and small towns than in Sofia, young people

without a room of their own in Sofia do not outnumber those in villages and this is probably due to the smaller size of households in the capital city.

There are now many more young people with independent incomes, even while they are still students, than there were in the past, when they relied mostly on support from their families or on state grants and scholarships. Today 30% of Bulgarian youth work full-time, another 5% work part-time, 2% are self-employed, and 1% identify themselves as entrepreneurs – owners or co-owners of companies with employees. Almost 40% have independent incomes from employment or entrepreneurship. The strongest correlations are those by age group and place of residence – older youth have already entered the labour market and have more chances of finding a job in the big cities and in Sofia. It is noteworthy that the share of youth working part-time is low and comparable to that of the average for the employed in Bulgaria as a whole. For comparison, in the Netherlands this share is as high as 70%, allowing more young people to combine paid work with other activities, such as studies or hobbies. Full-time employment is preferred by Bulgarian youth because it ensures high incomes.

Figure 2.10 Average monthly income of employed youth (in BGN)

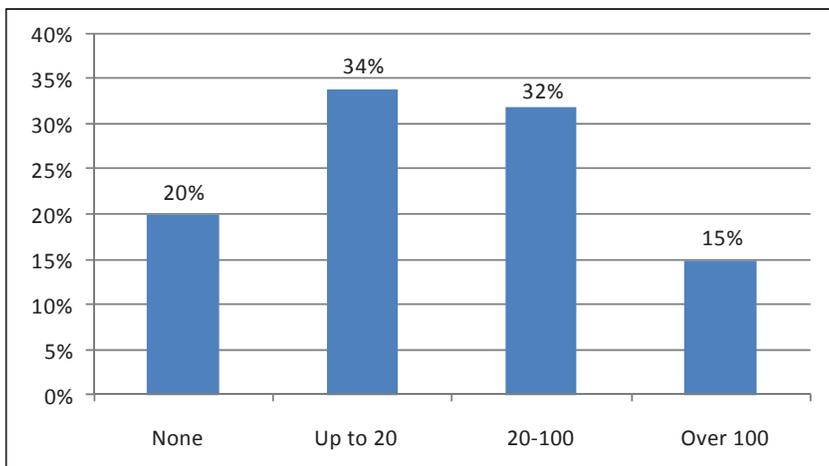


The incomes of employed youth are not lower than the national average. One-third have high or very high incomes, mostly from employment at foreign companies or participation in (big) family businesses. Those who have medium incomes are employed at private companies or in the public administration, which has the advantage of offering greater job security,

more regulated working hours, and a right to paid or unpaid leave, than employment in the private business sector.

Books have a specific place among the possessions of young people, as their number serves to some extent as an indicator (albeit an imperfect one) of the family's cultural capital. Books in the household are owned by 80% of young people in Bulgaria. One-quarter of boys (25%) and a significantly lower share (15%) of girls do not own any books other than their schoolbooks. Just 3% of students, but 16% of pupils, do not own books. The share of non-book owners rises to 23% of the employed and 45% of the young NEETs. Expectedly, book ownership depends strongly on parents' education level (Cramer's $V = .348$ for both father's and mother's education levels). For comparison, books are not owned by 5% of young people whose parents have higher education and by 78% of those whose parents have primary education. The decrease in economic status is concomitant with a decrease in the number of books in the household and an increase in the share of young people who do not own books, but the correlation is weaker (Cramer's $V = .206$). The share of non-book owners increases from 5% of the wealthy households to 11% of the well-to-do to 21% of the lower-middle and 28% of the poor households. The type of settlement where the respondents live also has a significant influence – the share of young people who do not own books is 33% in villages, 23% in small towns, 16% in big cities, and 7% in Sofia (Cramer's $V = .163$).

Figure 2.11 Books in the household



2.6 Conclusions

As a whole, the differences in Bulgarian youth's material conditions and social status influence some of their choices, without their lifestyles being strictly differentiated on a socioeconomic basis. What the data from this study allow us to conclude is that there is a significant difference in the lifestyles of three groups: the privileged minority ("the golden youth"); young people at risk of social exclusion; and the large majority in-between.

The first are students and young specialists, from families with high educational attainment and high incomes, young people employed sometimes in family businesses and more often in prospering joint companies (with Bulgarian and western stakes) which offer good career prospects and provide significant incomes. The leisure time pursuits of these young people are characterized by greater activity and a healthier lifestyle. They are often youth with an ostentatious lifestyle, who spend more than 150 BGN per month on designer clothes and cultural consumption.

The group of young people at risk of social exclusion consists mostly of young Roma, youth who have dropped from school or have only primary education and no qualifications, and parents with low education levels and low living standards. The lifestyle of this group is characterized by strongly limited – and above all, confined to the family and neighbourhood – consumption, where they spend less than 20 BGN per month on leisure goods and services. In their leisure time, they engage more in passive activities and are more prone to physical violence and health-risk activities.

We will see whether those groups will remain differentiated in the other spheres of life, analyzed in the next chapters.

3. VALUES AND BELIEFS OF BULGARIAN YOUTH

Analyzing the lifestyles and preferences of young people in Bulgaria, the previous chapter inevitably touched on the values shaping their identity. This chapter will examine Bulgarian youth's value orientations in more detail, once again using as an analytical tool the contested concept of individualization of the processes of personal identity formation among the young generation today. Here we will seek to answer the following main questions: are the personal qualities, which are considered especially valuable by Bulgarian youth, mostly related to the striving for individual independence and personal responsibility for one's own biography; do young people feel capable and ready to actively seek to achieve their goals, and to reflect on their choices; and are those choices free from or limited by the structuring influence of the traditional social norms based on gender, ethnicity, and religion.

3.1 Youth values

The World Values Survey places Bulgaria on the global cultural map in the group of countries with secular-rational and materialistic values.³ Societies with secular-rational values place less emphasis on religion, authority and traditional family values, and focus more on autonomy, rationalism and the secular principle. Materialistic values are survival values. They place emphasis on economic and physical security, rather than on tolerance of others and personal participation in civic life. Welzel and Inglehart (2009) point out the comparative stability of these cultural orientations over time and their dependence on the economic and political development of society. This study allows us to describe the value orientations of Bulgarian youth along some of those dimensions, as well as to try to identify the trends of cultural change.

The indicator used in the previous chapter (*Figure 2.4* in Chapter Two) to evaluate some of the personal accomplishments which young people consider fashionable, shows that they are oriented primarily towards values that place emphasis on their individuality and social emancipation.

The four most fashionable *accomplishments* – *values* for the respondents are the following:

³ <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>, accessed 7 September 2014.

- being independent – 80%;
- looking good – 85%;
- having a career – 75%;
- taking responsibility – 72%.

It is noteworthy in the findings of this study that young people's interest in being independent is not associated with active political and civic participation in society. Participating in civic initiatives is considered fashionable by only 27%, while being active in politics is regarded as "cool" by just 24% of young people in Bulgaria.

Honesty, as a more traditional moral value, occupies a less important place in the preferences of young people. This result corroborates the conclusion from the previous national study on Bulgarian youth (Митев: 2005): for young people in Bulgaria today, honesty is a path to success in life to a significantly lesser extent than it was for the generation of their parents and grandparents. Asked, "What is more important to you personally: success in life at any cost, even if that means moral compromise, or honesty and integrity, even if that means sacrificing personal interests?", half of the respondents in both 2002 and 2014 chose honesty, even to the detriment of personal interests, while the share of those in favour of "success at any cost" grew from 34% in 2002 to 42% in 2014.

The view that having the right "connections" is important in achieving success in life also remains widespread. Such an indicator was not included in the questionnaire, but the importance of this type of "social capital", which distorts the meritocratic principle of success depending on one's personal efforts, became obvious in the conducted in-depth interviews.

In Bulgaria, unfortunately, you can't achieve anything just by working hard. You have to be dishonest to succeed in life. (...) You need to have connections and to know quite a few people, at that, in high places – I mean directors, politicians, [someone] at a much higher level than mine who will make sure I get a job at his company. Looking for a job through interviews won't get you anywhere. (Economics student, male)

You need to have connections, or, if you have rich parents, you've already made it in life. If there's somebody to give you a push forwards, even if, say, your parents want you to become a lawyer or something. To succeed in life, no matter in what way, your parents are important. (Pupil at a high school of mathematics, male)

It's hard, it's very hard. And, unfortunately as I've recently seen for myself, that's how things are in most places – everything's done through friends and acquaintances, the so-called connections. Even [to get a job as] a simple shop assistant, you need to know someone. (Woman, shop assistant at a shopping mall)

In the qualitative data we also found another opinion, according to which personal responsibility and efforts are the most important factors for “success in life”. This liberal attitude, characteristic of countries with an established market economy (Jones: 2009), also proved widespread among Bulgarian youth.

Interviewer: In your opinion, in the near future what does personal success in Bulgaria depend the most on?

In the first place, on the person himself and how he will adjust to any circumstances. If we have to involve the State, recently, my observations on politics are that it doesn't make a particular difference for my way of life. Whether it will be one [political] party or another [doesn't make any difference]. I don't rely on a concrete party to save us or to fix life. It can't. I rely on myself and to some extent on the fact that we are in the EU. Despite everything, [EU] money is being received and something larger-scale can be realized in Bulgaria in terms of projects. (Information Science student, male)

There are few truly successful people in Bulgaria who have succeeded by honest and lawful means. But I know such people. What you need in the first place is self-appraisal, persistence and a wish to fight. As well as motivation. (Law student working in the last six years, male)

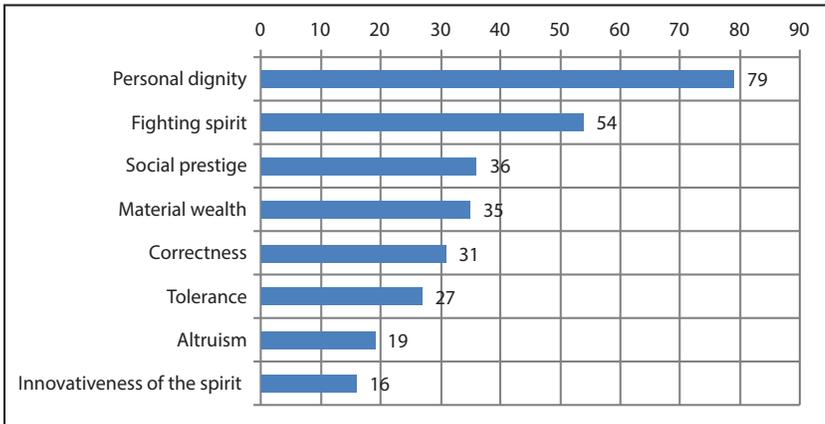
The respondents were asked to select three out of eight values listed in the questionnaire, which they consider to be the most important. *Table 3.1* shows that the top three values chosen by the respondents as a first choice are personal dignity, a fighting spirit, and material wealth. In the second and third choice, social prestige and correctness were also ranked in the top three places. These choices of Bulgarian youth form a mixed picture according to the typology of Welzel and Inglehart: material security (as an indicator of a “culture of survival”) is important, but the other values that are important to young people tend to be related to the desire for self-affirmation which Welzel and Inglehart's concept attributes to the “culture of self-expression”.

Table 3.1 “Which of the following values are most important to you?”

No.	First choice	%	Second choice	%	Third choice	%
1	Personal dignity (identity/ education)	55	Fighting spirit (fighting to achieve a goal)	21	Fighting spirit (fighting to achieve a goal)	19
2	Fighting spirit (fighting to achieve a goal)	14	Social prestige (social status, social standing)	19	Correctness	17
3	Material wealth	9	Personal dignity (identity/ education)	14	Material wealth	14
4	Social prestige (social status, social standing)	6	Tolerance (acceptance of and respect for different opinions)	12	Tolerance (acceptance of and respect for different opinions)	11
5	Altruism (commitment, helping others)	4	Material wealth	11	Material wealth	11
6	Correctness	4	Correctness	10	Personal dignity (identity/ education)	10
7	Tolerance (acceptance of and respect for different opinions)	3	Altruism (commitment, helping others)	7	Innovativeness of the spirit (creating ideas, acceptance of ideas of others)	9
8	Innovativeness of the spirit (creating ideas, acceptance of ideas of others)	2	Innovativeness of the spirit (creating ideas, acceptance of ideas of others)	4	Altruism (commitment, helping others)	7

If we rank Bulgarian youth's values in a list based on the sum of all three choices (Figure 3.1), we will see that personal dignity was pointed out by more than three-quarters of the respondents, and fighting spirit by more than half. The other values were chosen by significantly fewer respondents.

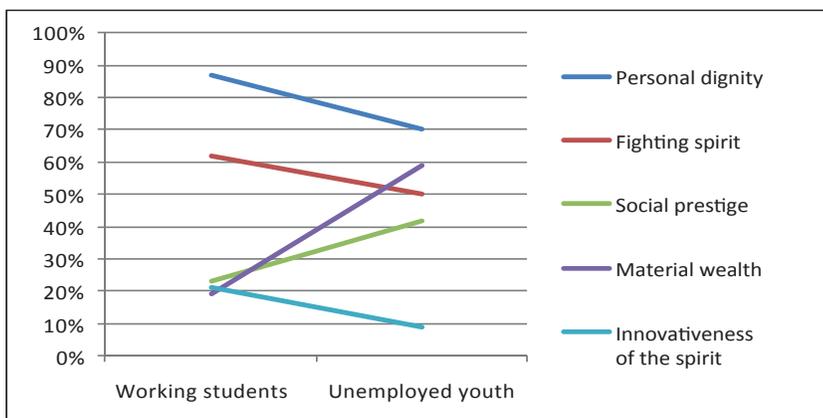
Figure 3.1 Ranking of Bulgarian youth values (%)



These results can be better understood if we examine them through Allardt's concept (1993) of the basic needs for human development which are experienced by individuals as value orientations and which determine individual well-being. According to Allardt, the basic needs for individual well-being are *having*, *loving*, and *being*. *Having* refers to material needs for survival, such as economic resources, housing conditions, employment, working conditions, health, and education. The second type of needs (*loving*) comprises relationships with family, neighbours, friends, and workmates. These indicators reflect people's need for companionship and social solidarity, which are not correlated to the material level of living. *Being* stands for the individual's need for self-expression and successful integration into society. If we apply this conceptual perspective to the values included in our indicator, we will get the following groups: material wealth reflects the values related to *having*. Correctness, tolerance, and altruism are forms of *loving*. Personal dignity, social prestige, and innovativeness of the spirit represent value orientations towards *being*. Interpreted in this way, Bulgarian youth choices indicate a predominant desire for individual self-expression – an attitude which, in turn, attests to a process of individualization among Bulgarian youth.

The value orientations of young people in Bulgaria are influenced by some main social statuses. Gender-based differences appear to be significant only with regard to some values: material wealth is more important to men, while altruism is more important to women. Examined in terms of the respondents' own socioeconomic status, two contrasting groups can be identified: working students and unemployed youth. Individualistic values (*being*) are much more important to the most active group among Bulgarian youth than to NEETs. The second group gives priority to *having*, where material wealth is ranked second after personal dignity, while the first group ranks material wealth in a low, fifth, place.

Figure 3.2 The most important values according to the most active and the most passive group on the labour market



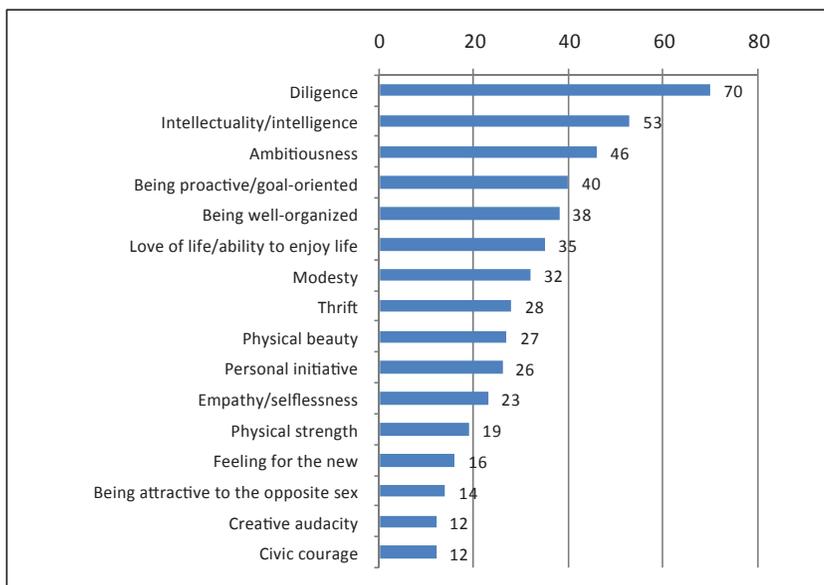
Whereas young people's own cultural capital, measured in terms of level of completed education, does not point to any predictable pattern, their parents' cultural capital has a statistically significant influence on the ranking of values. With the increase in parents' education level, there is an increase in the share of those to whom personal dignity is the most important value and a decrease in the importance attached to material wealth (Cramer's $V = .170$ and $.171$). The other indicators of economic capital – such as household income and size of settlement where the respondent resides – also influence the ranking of “material wealth”, with its declared importance decreasing with the increase in parents' income and size (and well-developed infrastructure) of the settlement where the household lives. Having a privileged social status thanks to one's family relieves young people of the burden of “survival” values and allows them to adopt a life strategy aimed at self-expression and personal growth.

Table 3.2 Importance of “material wealth”, by household socioeconomic status

Household economic status	Wealthy	Well-to-do	Lower-middle	Poor
	25%	29%	36%	40%
Settlement type	Sofia (the capital)	Big city	Small town	Village
	21%	36%	34%	45%

This study also used another indicator of values, the so-called “exemplary personality” (Митев: 2005). This indicator, elaborated as early as the 1970s and applied in previous studies, allows us to understand more accurately the importance of the different values to the contemporary young generation in Bulgaria. What is more, the comparable differences in responses can allow us to trace the direction of cultural change in comparison with the previous generations. To measure this indicator, the respondents were given a list of 16 personal qualities and asked to choose the five they appreciate the most and would like to pass on to their (own) children.

Figure 3.3 Which of the following personal qualities do you appreciate most and want your children to possess? (%)

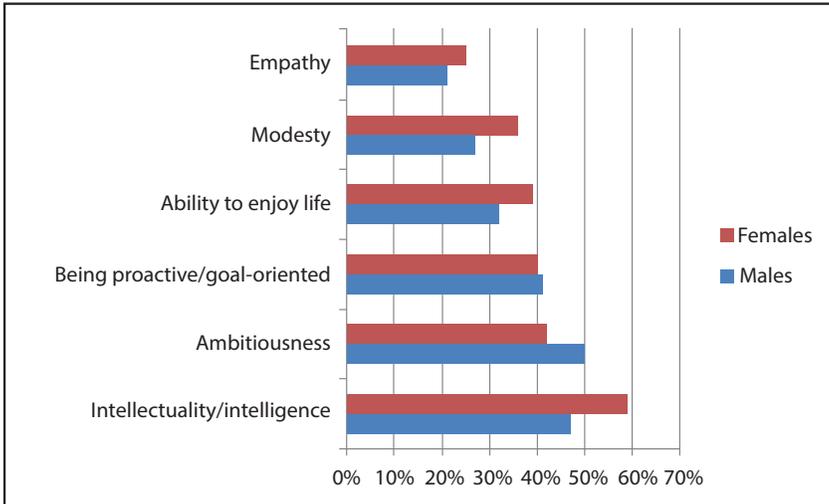


The majority of the respondents chose diligence, which is a traditional but may also be a modern value depending on the meanings attributed to it by Bulgarian youth. Combined with the next four top-ranked values (intelligence, ambitiousness, being proactive, being well-organized), it turns out that Bulgarian youth see the exemplary personality as someone who is oriented towards self-expression and advancement in society through rational and career-oriented work, and not simply by working hard, “working from dawn to dusk”. The ability to enjoy life, a quality ranked among the top six which young people would like to pass on to their children, shows that the young generation in Bulgaria believes that well-being and self-realization presuppose not just work but also achievements in other life spheres apart from work; love of life for its own sake. Values such as modesty and thrift, which may be interpreted as survival values, are ranked in the middle, in seventh and eighth place. Personal qualities oriented towards others, such as selflessness and civic courage, are ranked very low, and they will be discussed in more detail in the next paragraph. Still, these data show the low value of social solidarity in the mind of Bulgarian youth and an inclination to give priority to the desire for personal success (“being proactive”, “ambitiousness”) over values such as support and compassion for the vulnerable and underprivileged. Another peculiarity of Bulgarian youth’s value orientations is also noteworthy. Physical beauty (as well as the importance of looking good, pointed out in the previous chapter), is seen as a value which, in itself, is a source of self-esteem and self-confidence, while “being attractive to the opposite sex” is ranked far lower. It is also noteworthy that civic courage is ranked last. It is unlikely that Bulgarian youth think their career and social prosperity depend solely on their diligence, intelligence and ambitiousness, and do not encounter obstacles in the existing order and rules for professional and career growth. It is more likely that they believe there is no point in engaging in civic activities because they do not expect this will lead to change in the status quo. Citing Hirschman’s typology of responses to unsatisfactory situations in one’s firm, organization or country, (Hirschman: 1970), if “voice”, that is, civic activity and protest, are assumed to be ineffective in the country, then this leaves only two possibilities: exit (emigration) or conformism. The attitude towards those alternatives will be analyzed in Chapter Five of this book.

Gender differentiates Bulgarian youth’s value orientations in some respects. In conformity with the more traditional orientations towards how young women and men ought to behave are the differences in the shares

of those who chose *modesty* and *ambitiousness*, while in other orientations – towards *being proactive*, *being well-organized*, and *personal initiative* – no statistically significant differences were found; with regard to some values, women are more liberally oriented than men. The data from Figure 3.4 allow us to conclude that Bulgarian young women have largely accepted individualistic attitudes.

Figure 3.4 Differences in value orientations, by gender



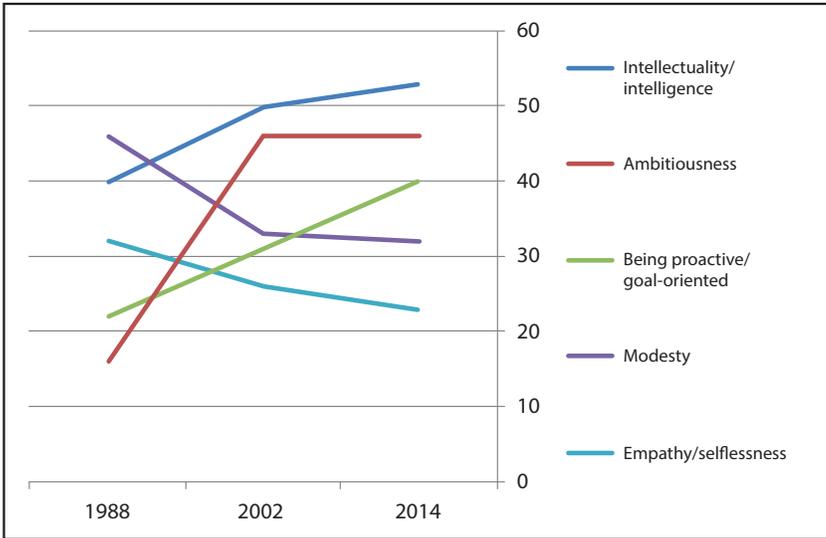
Diligence is ranked highest in the value system of young people belonging to the group of ethnic Turks and Muslim Bulgarians (Cramer's $V = .168$). They also rank the traditional qualities of *thrift* and *modesty* higher than the average level. In comparison with the other ethnic groups, the Roma attach the least importance to *intelligence*, *being goal-oriented*, *personal initiative*, *creative audacity* and *feeling for the new*. They attach more importance to *physical beauty* and *physical strength*.

Once again, non-working students and working students stand out as the group with the most individualistic orientations – most important to them are personal initiative, intelligence, being well-organized, creative audacity. The lower the parents' education level, the higher the importance attached to qualities such as diligence and thrift. It is interesting that parents' higher cultural capital is correlated to a higher ranking of social values oriented towards others, such as *empathy*, *selflessness* and *civic courage*. As found in the previous indicator, parents' social status has an

effect on the orientation of young people's value system along the axis of "fashionable – traditional". The higher the household's economic capital, the less the importance attached to diligence and the more to intelligence. *Diligence* is defined as a very important value by 76% of respondents from poor households and by 60% from wealthy households. With regard to *intelligence*, the correlation is the opposite: 42% of the poor and 73% of the wealthy chose this quality as worth passing on to the next generation. This correlation is even more pronounced with regard to place of residence: among village residents, diligence attracts the highest share, 80%, and intelligence the lowest, 38%; among Sofia residents, the share of those who appreciate intelligence is higher than those who appreciate diligence, being 70% and 63% respectively.

The "exemplary personality" indicator has been applied in measuring value orientations in three sociological studies on Bulgarian youth conducted at different times, thus allowing us to trace also the trends of change in the value system of young people in Bulgaria. These studies provide empirical information on youth values in three historical situations that are key for Bulgarian society: the end of the 1980s, the beginning of the 2000s, and today, in the mid-2010s.

The results of the comparison of three generations of Bulgarian youth – from the end of the socialist regime, during the transition before Bulgaria's accession to the European Union, and 25 years after the beginning of the political transition – are the following: self-expression values, such as *intelligence*, *ambitiousness* and *being proactive*, have become increasingly important to Bulgarian youth, while survival values like *modesty* and *selflessness* have decreased in importance. Ambitiousness has become significantly more important than it was at the end of the socialist period, outstripping all other qualities except for intelligence. Young people in Bulgaria have realized that under conditions of growing insecurity in modern society, they need to have a more proactive life strategy than did their parents and grandparents.

Figure 3.5 Trends in the notion of “the exemplary personality” (%)

The three indicators whose results were analyzed so far pertain to the value orientations towards personal qualities ensuring individual well-being. Of interest is not just their hierarchy in the mind of Bulgarian youth, but also their aggregate value as what James E. Côté (2002) terms “identity capital”. Identity capital is a value of late modern society – the individual’s ability to construct a Self-concept based on self-respect, inclination towards personal growth and pursuit of personal projects. Identity capital is not a genetically predetermined personal trait; it operates in interaction with the family’s economic and cultural capital, and is distributed differently in the structurally defined groups of youth. Whereas the need to make choices instead of to follow established group paths of transition to adulthood is “imposed” on young people with limited social resources, for those with more social resources it is “chosen” and they can invest and accumulate identity capital which will allow them to manoeuvre successfully in the conditions of late modernity (Côté: 2002, 119).

This study allows us to explore yet another aspect of Bulgarian youth’s value orientations – namely, the attitude towards European values (Митев: 2005), which will be presented in Chapter Five, together with the attitude towards the European Union and readiness for mobility.

3.2 Trust and civic engagement – the basis of social capital

The indicators discussed so far did not include a value of critical importance for the strength of the social fabric: trust. Trust is manifested both at the interpersonal level and in individual's attitudes towards the social institutions of modern society. The norms of trust and reciprocity are elements of "social capital" and they are fundamental in building social networks that allow individuals and communities to utilize their other resources more effectively and to pursue their goals more successfully (Putnam: 2000, 19). According to Robert Putnam, social capital is manifested above all in active civic participation in society based on formal membership in voluntary organizations and support for the political institutions of modern democracy.

Putnam (2000) makes an important distinction between two forms of social capital: "bridging" and "bonding". Bridging social capital is an inclusive form of social networks which are outward looking and encompass individuals from different social groups with different lifestyles. Bonding social capital is exclusive; it is inward looking and bonds specific identities into homogeneous groups. Bridging social capital allows information diffusion and provides access to external resources, while bonding social capital relies on strong in-group solidarity and mobilization of resources within the group.

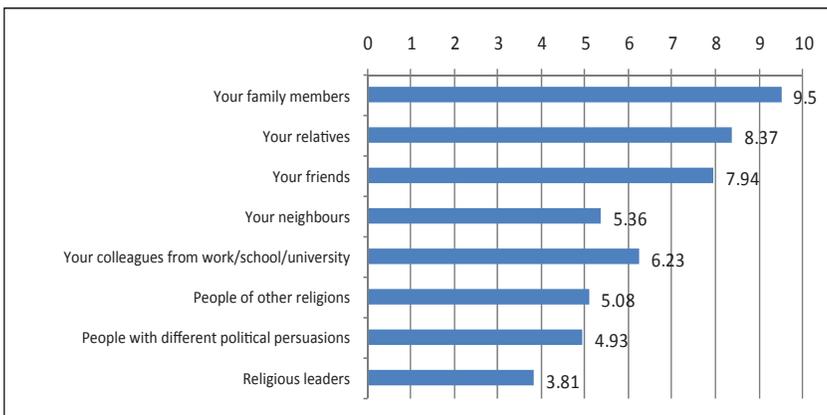
Whereas to Putnam, trust as a constitutive value for social capital is a quality of social communities, not of separate individuals, and the quantity of a family's economic and cultural resources is largely unrelated to the accrual of social capital, Pierre Bourdieu (1983) stresses the link and dynamic transformation between social and the other forms of capital that maintain and preserve social inequalities. Social capital, according to Bourdieu, can be understood in its historical context and through the social construction of relationships between individuals and the processes of identity building. To Bourdieu, it is important to reveal the significance of the motivations and meanings which individuals invest in their interactions, while Putnam satisfies himself with establishing the membership of individuals in civic organizations without examining the complexity of social interactions and the qualitative differences in the networks in which individuals are involved.

In sociological studies, trust is measured both at the interpersonal and at the institutional level – in the attitude towards social and political institutions, such as the government, police, church, educational system, and market (Aberg: 2000; Helve and Bynner: 2007; Pichler and Wallace 2009;

Eurofound: 2014a). On most indicators, Bulgarian respondents in various studies conducted to date demonstrate low levels of trust (Бояджиева: 2009; Тилкиджиев: 2010).

The results of our study corroborated this conclusion and pointed to some specific characteristics. The indicator we used did not measure abstract interpersonal trust (towards other people in general) but trust in relations with specific groups, such as parents, neighbours, friends, and people with different political and religious views. The respondents were asked to evaluate their level of trust towards those social groups on a 10-point scale. The findings show that Bulgarian youth have the highest level of trust in the members of their nuclear family, which received a score of 9.5, followed by other relatives, with 8.4 points. The top three most trusted groups include friends, with a score of 7.9 points. The levels of trust in neighbours and colleagues (from work/school/university) are significantly lower, with the former less trusted than the latter. Trust in people of other religions is higher than in people with different political persuasions – approximately in the middle of the scale. This indicator reveals an interesting fact about the value orientations of Bulgarian youth: they trust religious leaders the least (the answer to the question included the leaders of the religious communities the respondents belong to). At that, the level of trust in religious leaders is 1.27 lower than that in people of other religions.

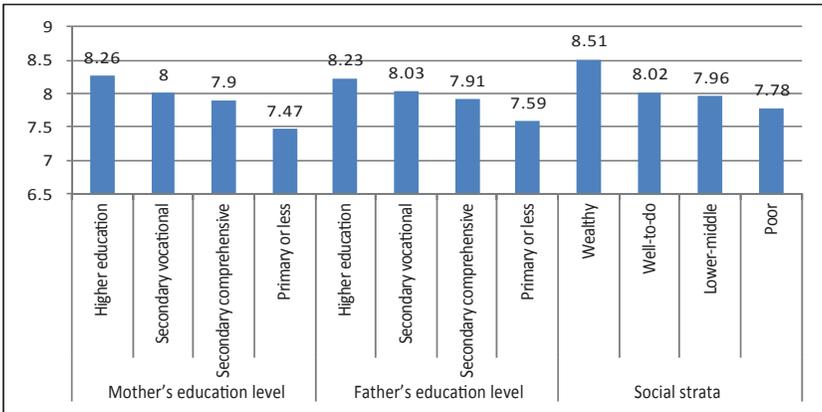
Figure 3.6 Trust in social groups from young people's milieu
(on a score from 1 to 10)



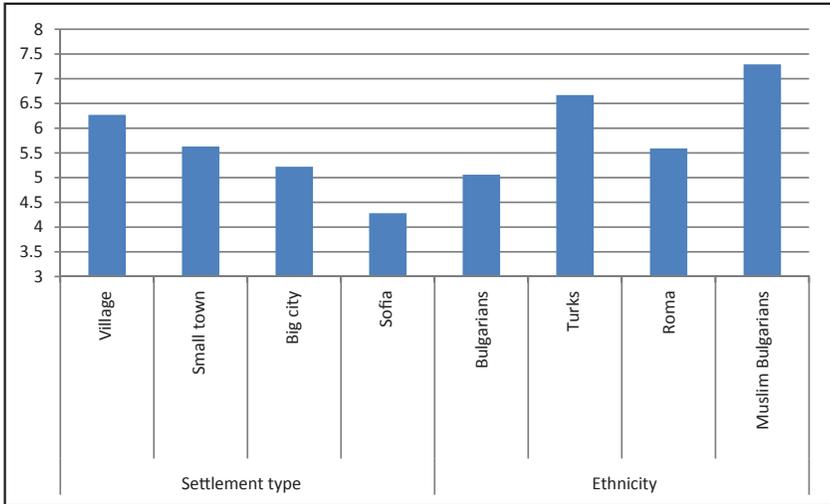
Those results cannot be interpreted as completely confirming the thesis regarding Bulgarian youth's low social capital, measured in terms of trust. They show, rather, that young people in Bulgaria are inclined to invest in one of the forms of social capital – namely, “bonding”. Bonding social capital, which is characteristic of Bulgarian youth, is built on the basis of reciprocal trust and high levels of reciprocity with people from the same social milieu – above all with the narrow circle of relatives and friends. The inclination towards creating horizontal ties and towards trust confined to one's immediate social milieu is a value orientation that ensures support in uncertain times but does not enable wider and more enriching, even if uncertain, contacts with other social groups. It is difficult for Bulgarian youth to depart from their immediate milieu and extend their trust to more anonymized and supra-individual relations, and this is one of the reasons for the difficulties in the functioning of political democracy in Bulgaria (Коев: 2009; Бояджиева: 2009). Bulgarian youth do not recognize the importance of “bridging social capital” – the relations of trust and reciprocity among individuals with different social statuses – and, to them, it has not yet become an area for social investments. As the findings of the in-depth interviews also show, they see social capital only in its negative aspect, as a basis for nepotism – the practice of giving plum jobs to friends or relatives regardless of their personal qualities.

Our main research hypothesis was that as a deeply social value, trust strongly depends on the individual's personal and family status. The very high levels of trust in the family and relatives, established in all social groups among Bulgarian youth, did not show significant differences by the main socio-demographic indicators. Trust in groups outside the family turns out to be influenced, albeit weakly, by gender, with the scores given by women being lower than those given by men all on indicators: trust in friends, colleagues, neighbours, people of different religions and different political persuasions. The level of trust in friends is significantly higher among students and pupils, and is lowest among unemployed youth. The findings corroborated the initial hypothesis that trust in friends depends strongly on parents' educational and economic status, with higher-status groups expressing also higher levels of trust.

Figure 3.7 Trust in friends, by parents' cultural and economic status



This dependence, however, is not absolute and does not hold true for Bulgarian youth's attitudes towards all social groups. We found that trust in other groups from the respondents' closer or more distant milieu does not depend on parents' material status. Parents' education level is correlated to trust in colleagues from work and school (Cramer's $V = .166$ for father's education level and Cramer's $V = .184$ for mother's education level). In many respects, the type of settlement and ethnic community of respondents have an effect on levels of trust in groups outside the family. For example, the correlation between settlement type and trust in neighbours is statistically significant (Cramer's $V = .174$). Young people from smaller settlements and from ethnic groups other than the majority express higher levels of trust in neighbours.

Figure 3.8 Trust in neighbours, by settlement type and ethnicity

In his interview, a young man of Roma origin who is studying Economics in Sofia noted this tendency of young people from the Roma communities in Bulgaria to confine their contacts to their local community and to interact only with friends and neighbours.

My Roma friends are more closed, I mean they work in one place and are more closed. (...) They are a circle, a closed [circle]. For example, [they live in] a Roma neighbourhood in Sofia and don't leave the neighbourhood, they are in a circle, a closed society, and they can't exit it. They don't have contacts with other people, they have contacts only with each other. (Economics student, male)

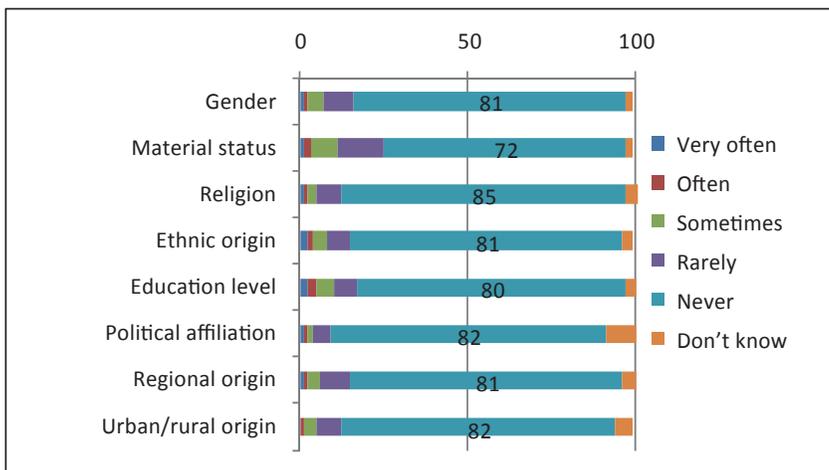
In her interview, a young woman of Roman origin also said that the Roma communities are closed communities; there is a strict division between the different clans living in one and the same neighbourhood or village, and the levels of distrust between them are often higher than those between Roma and ethnic Bulgarians.

It is interesting that according to the quantitative data from the survey this type of trust in friends and neighbours as a form of bonding social capital does not automatically lead to self-segregation of ethnic communities and isolation of the others. Young people from the ethnic Turkish and Muslim Bulgarian communities show a higher level of trust not just in their neighbours but also in people of other religions and people with different political persuasions. Bulgarian youth belonging to the ethnic

Turkish group and Muslim Bulgarians express higher trust in the others, which also presupposes a higher degree of formation of bridging social capital among them.

Additional insight into the formation of social capital in Bulgaria is to be gained from the indicator measuring the respondents' perception as to whether they have been discriminated against on various grounds (*Figure 3.9*).

Figure 3.9 Have you ever felt discriminated against on any of the following grounds? How often? (%)



The results point to the conclusion that material status is seen as the strongest factor for discrimination and more than one-quarter of Bulgarian youth have experienced such discrimination even if, for the most part, only in some or rare instances. Discrimination on all other grounds is reported by less than one-fifth of respondents. The respondents are most uncertain as to whether they have experienced discrimination because of their political affiliation. Social-class differences are felt to be the major barriers to equal communication, while political and religious differences are much less so. Expectedly, the strongest correlation turned out to be that between experiences of ethnic discrimination and minority status of respondents (Cramer's $V = .270$).

In the in-depth interviews, the ethnic Bulgarian respondents most often denied ever feeling discriminated against on some grounds, although they said there may be discriminatory practices in Bulgarian society. A young woman, a shop assistant at a shopping mall, said the following:

Is there discrimination – well, I don't know... What strikes me rather is that women who have achieved something [seem to] give men an inferiority complex. When they see a woman who can do everything and is competent in all subjects. But this is temporary and is fading away.

Respondents from the ethnic minorities were more inclined to comment on the issue. The interviewed Economics student of Roma origin declared the following:

It's bad that they lump us all together. It doesn't matter who you are, all you have to do is open your mouth [and you will be immediately recognized as Roma by the way you talk]. When they see that I'm more swarthy they think you aren't competent and so on.

The woman of Roma origin who was employed at a pastry workshop at the time of the interview said she had not felt discriminated against at school. But on the labour market, as well as later, at work, negative stereotypes became more manifest:

Most people no longer make a difference between Bulgarians and Gypsies. In my class [at school] there were just four of us Gypsies. And we got on very well [with everybody], there weren't any problems. We only have problems with skinheads on the bus, if they see we are darker-skinned. They hit, kick, throw us out from the bus. (...) It's different when you are looking for a job. When they see someone who's a bit more swarthy, they say "Well, we'll call you", and that's it. Or if someone speaks in a slightly different way, that's the end of it.

Interviewer: Was it difficult for you to find a job?

At first it was quite difficult. When I started work at [the pastry shop] Nedelya it was difficult for me. At first they didn't realize I'm a Gypsy. They thought I was Bulgarian. When I told them I'm a Gypsy they didn't believe me at first. Everyone who looks at you has one thing in mind – "Gypsy". That's what they call us. For example, I work with a hundred people and they call me "Bobby the Gypsy", not "the other Bobby". You're always the Gypsy [to them], whatever you may be. You may help them, serve them food, [but you'll still] always be "the Gypsy". That's how they call me everywhere. "Our little Gypsy" or "the minority", that's what everybody calls me. They always say something after your name.

A young man of ethnic Turkish origin who works as a driver also said he had experienced discrimination on ethnic grounds. Asked whether it is possible for young people to make a living in Bulgaria, he said the follow-

ing: “It’s difficult. I mean, I wanted to be a police officer. They told me that because I’m Turkish, there wasn’t any point in even trying. If you don’t have friends in high places, you’re out of the game.”

The respondents’ experiences shared in the in-depth interviews attest to the effects of discriminatory practices in undermining the trust of young Bulgarians from ethnic minorities, and explain why social capital is confined to one’s ethnic community for many young people in Bulgaria.

Other significant manifestations of social capital – along with trust, which makes people more tolerant towards those who are different from them – are membership in voluntary organizations and readiness to help those in need through voluntary work. A number of empirical studies have proven that trust encourages social engagement and civic activity (Pichler and Wallace 2009; Бояджиева: 2009).

The level of participation of Bulgarian youth in such forms is very low. Just 15% of the respondents are members of some formal organization and just one-fourth have engaged in some sort of voluntary work in the last 12 months.

Table 3.3 Are you a member of any of the following organizations? (%)

Sports club/association	8
Student council/youth organization	4
Political party/organization	2
Professional association/trade union	1
Other	1
No	85

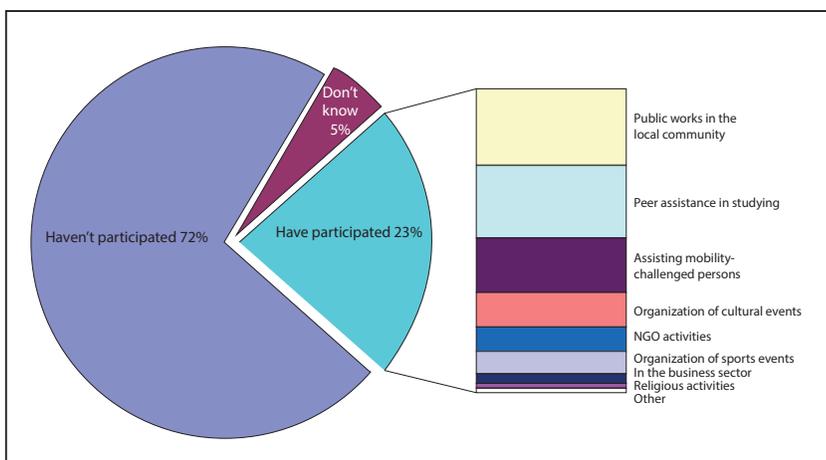
This sum total of 15% of “organized youth” may be interpreted also as a certain increase in participation in associations and clubs as compared with the five-percent share recorded in 2002 (Митев: 2005). Yet even so, the tendency towards transition from the “hyper-organization” of Bulgarian youth in the totalitarian society (over 90%) to the “hypo-organization” during the transition found in previous surveys (Митев: 2005), has not yet led to a “healthy” level of association that will allow young people to raise and seek to resolve their issues in a democratic society. The results show that even youth associations, including pupil and student councils, unite slightly over 5% of the respondents. The most widespread orientation (but still, of less than one-tenth of the

respondents) is that towards organized sports. This low level of organization of youth in East European countries is usually explained with a reaction to the excessive levels of organization in the past, and dissatisfaction with ostentatious but meaningless membership. The analysis in this paragraph also points to another significant factor – the lack of trust in others apart from one’s immediate community of relatives and friends, which is also reflected in the low inclination of youth to engage in joint activities in formal organizations.

If we interpret membership in organizations as a “formal social capital” (Pichler and Wallace: 2007), then those who are richest in this type of social capital are pupils and students, and those who are poorest – unemployed youth and youth from ethnic minorities, the Roma in particular. Formal social capital decreases with the increase in the age of the respondents. Parents’ cultural and economic capital also has a significant effect – the higher the parents’ education level and the higher the household’s social status, the higher the share of youth who are members of organizations. This also applies to the correlations between those factors and voluntary work performed both in and outside of organizations.

Distrust of people from wider communities also has an effect on young people’s attitudes towards voluntary work. The very broad indicator used in our study – “unpaid work done voluntarily over the last 12 months” – shows that only one-quarter of the respondents have engaged in this type of activity.

Figure 3.10 Participation in voluntary activities over the last 12 months

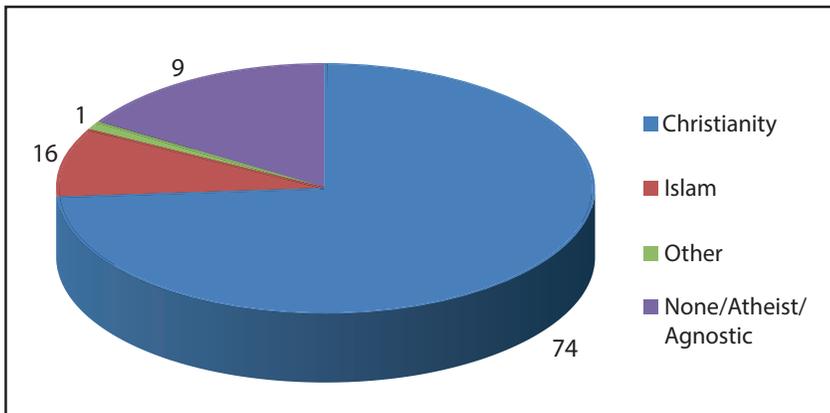


A more detailed examination of the voluntary activities respondents have engaged in reveals another specific characteristic of their value system, once again related to the type of trust that is predominant among them. Young people who trust mostly people from their immediate social milieu prove to be more inclined to assist people they know (neighbours, schoolmates) or see directly (mobility-challenged people in the street), and are much less likely to participate in NGO activities (*Figure 3.10*). The three activities which volunteers have most often engaged in are public works in the local community, peer assistance in studying, and assistance of mobility-challenged people. Less than 5% of the volunteers were engaged in charity or other unpaid religious activities. This share becomes negligible if we compare it to the totality of respondents, including those who have not done voluntary work. This circumstance determines the next research accent, on the place of religious values in Bulgarian youth's value system.

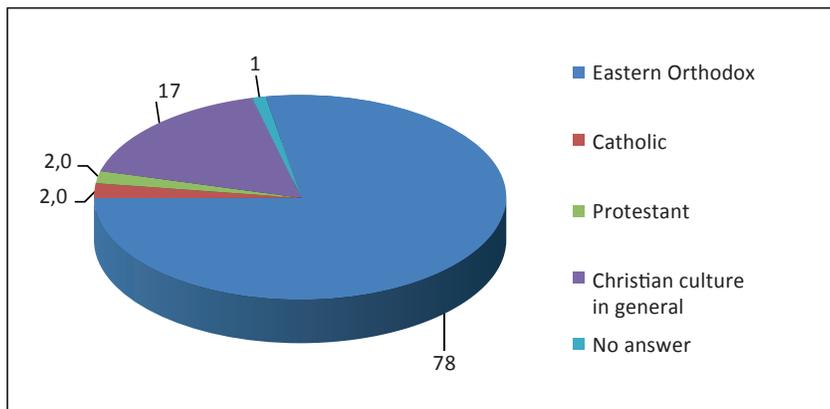
3.3 Religious beliefs and practices

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Welzel and Inglehart (2009), using data from the World Values Survey, place Bulgaria in the group of countries with predominant secular-rational values. The results of our study largely corroborate this thesis, although they point to a paradox: more than 90% of Bulgarian youth identify themselves as religious, but less than 5% go to church regularly and less than 10% pray regularly. The explanation of this paradox is to be found in the system of religious beliefs and traditional practices adopted by Bulgarian youth.

The majority – three-quarters – of Bulgarian youth identify themselves as Christian, 16% as Muslim, 1% as followers of other religions, and a total of 9% as non-religious or atheists and agnostics.

Figure 3.11 Which religious denomination do you belong to? (%)

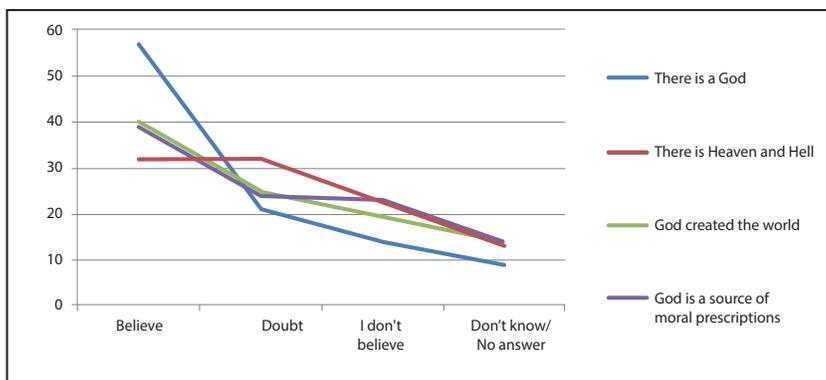
On the whole, these data correspond to the religious affiliations of Bulgaria's total population as declared in the last census conducted in 2011,⁴ except for the higher share of Muslims among our respondents – 16%, as compared with 10% of the country's total population. The majority of Muslims in Bulgaria are Sunni, and significantly fewer identify themselves as Shiite or, generally, as Muslims. The overwhelming majority of Christians are Eastern Orthodox; approximately 2% each of the respondents are Catholic or Protestant, and a significant share, 17%, said they belong to Christian culture in general.

Figure 3.12 Which of the following Christian churches would you say you belong to? (%)

⁴ See http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final_en.pdf, accessed 20 September 2014.

Having declared their religious affiliation, the respondents were given a list of statements representing basic religious beliefs and asked which ones they believe in. In this respect, only the statement, “There is a God”, got positive responses (“believe”) from more than half of the respondents. A high share – approximately one-quarter – of respondents do not believe in the existence of heaven and hell, and in God as a source of moral prescriptions and duties. Forty per cent believe that God created the world, while one-quarter each doubt or do not believe it. Doubts about the truthfulness of the different statements were expressed by between one-fifth and one-third of the respondents, while another approximately 15% did not express an opinion.

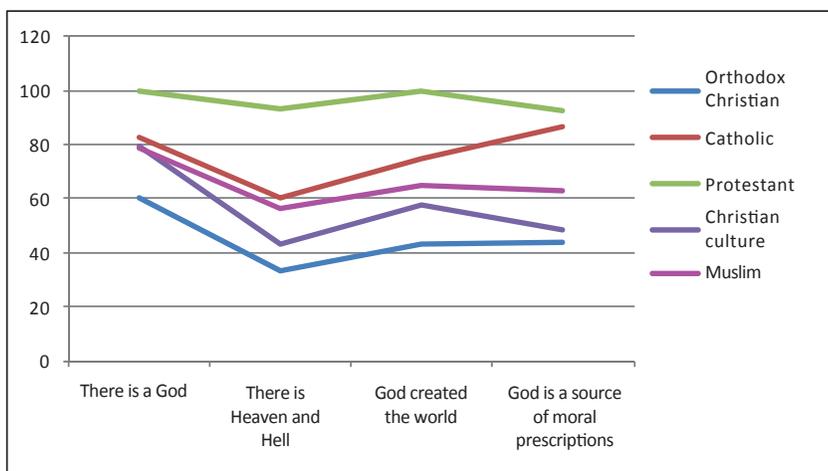
Figure 3.13 Religious beliefs of Bulgarian youth (%)



The young people’s responses on this indicator, which indicate their doubt or disbelief in basic religious tenets, may be explained with distrust of the church as an institution, and above all with non-recognition of its role as a spiritual mainstay and moral guide – a conclusion drawn in Koev’s analysis (Коев: 2009) based on data from the fourth wave of the European Values Study. The picture of Bulgarian youth’s religious beliefs becomes clearer if we introduce into it the differences by religious affiliation. The correlation between acceptance of those religious tenets and self-declared belonging to a particular religious denomination is statistically significant, with the correlation coefficients for the different statements varying from Cramer’s $V = .154$ to Cramer’s $V = .167$.

Figure 3.14 demonstrates the high level of acceptance of traditional religious beliefs by respondents who identify themselves as Protestant. The share of believers in them who declare themselves Catholic is also higher than that of those who say they are Orthodox Christian. Next are those who identify themselves as Muslim. It is noteworthy that even the rather vague self-identification with “Christian culture in general” is correlated to higher levels of belief than Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Although this indicator is by no means perfect in measuring the religious beliefs of Bulgarian youth, the findings point to problems in the dissemination of the tenets of the faith by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

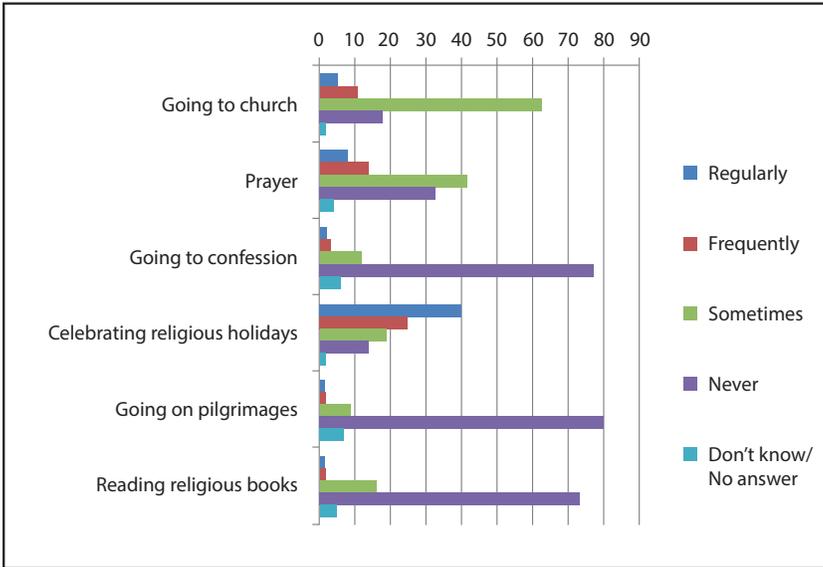
Figure 3.14 Acceptance of religious beliefs, by religious affiliation
(% of respondents who “believe”)



The interrelation of distrust of the church as an institution (as well as of religious leaders, as we saw in the previous paragraph) and disbelief in its basic tenets is also reflected in the low levels of participation in religious practices. At that, the correlation between religious practices and type of religious affiliation is much stronger. This is valid not just for some more specific practices such as pilgrimage and confession, but also for church attendance (Cramer’s $V = .186$) and reading religious books (Cramer’s $V = .263$).

As Figure 3.15 shows, the low shares of those who accept traditional religious beliefs may be connected also to the lack of knowledge about the religious philosophical system: Bulgarian youth do not read religious books and go to church too rarely to learn the religious tenets and the arguments by which they are supported.

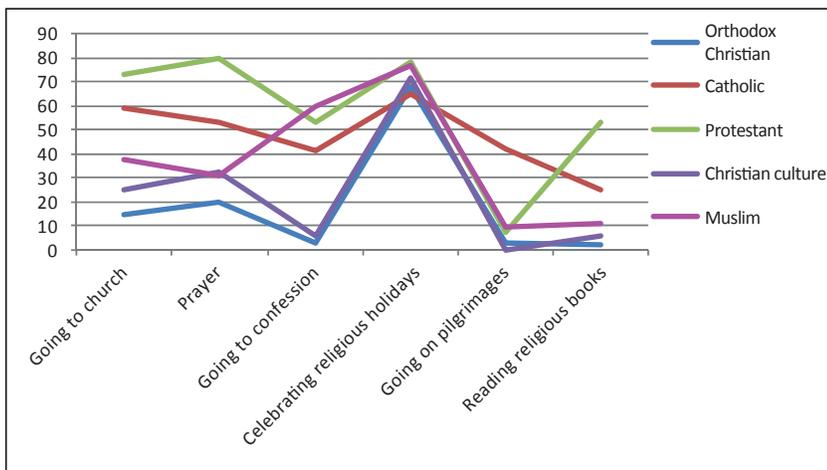
Figure 3.15 Frequency of participation in religious practices (%)



The survey shows that the most widespread practice among Bulgarian youth is celebration of religious holidays – 40% answered “Regularly” in response to this item. Just 5% regularly go to church, and 8% pray regularly. The shares of those who answered “Never” are very high: 80% of the respondents have never been on a pilgrimage, 78% have never gone to confession, and 74% have never read religious books. One-third of Bulgarian youth never pray and one-fifth have never attended church. These results indicate the specific place of religion in the value system of Bulgarian youth. On the one hand, the declared affiliation with a religion is an important source of identity for them and that is why few reject religion altogether, declaring themselves non-religious. On the other hand, they little know and accept religious values, and rarely engage in religious practices. We may conclude that Bulgarian youth’s positive attitude towards the church and religion does not lead to serious engagement with the religious practices of the church or with the dominant religious views on the world and society. On the whole, the data from the indicators included in this study attest to a more individualistic attitude towards religion and a low level of acceptance of the church as a community and way of communion with God. For young people in Bulgaria, most of the traditional religious practices are outdated. Only religious holidays serve as some common basis for engaging with religion.

If we once again look at the differences in the religious practices of young people with different religious affiliations, we will find similar correlations to those for religious beliefs.

Figure 3.16 Participation in religious practices, by religious affiliation
(% of respondents participating “regularly” and “frequently”)



Bulgarian youth who are Protestant most often participate in customary religious practices. Orthodox Christians are at the other end of the scale, with the lowest share of participants in such practices. Muslims are in the middle of scale, as in that for religious beliefs, but with regard to only four of the listed practices. They rank first in terms of going to confession and celebrating religious holidays. It is noteworthy that there is almost complete coincidence in the frequency of celebration of religious holidays by young people regardless of the differences in their religious affiliation. Reading religious books is a rare practice among Orthodox Christians and Muslims, but it is frequently practiced by one-quarter of the Catholics and more than half of the Protestants among Bulgarian youth.

Also of interest to this analysis is the group of non-believers and of those who have not defined themselves as “belonging” to an official religion. This group is made up mostly of men, students by current main occupation, Roma and Bulgarians by ethnic origin, from wealthy and well-to-do households, living in Sofia and in the country’s two economically more advanced planning regions: South-West and South-Central (Yuzhen Tsentralen). Parents’ cultural capital, measured only in terms of level of completed education, does not have a statistically significant effect.

3.4 Conclusions

Summarizing the results of the analysis of Bulgarian youth's value orientations, we may conclude that the tendency towards individualization, established in the previous three studies conducted in the late 1980s, mid-1990s and early 2000s, is continuing. Young people in Bulgaria are increasingly oriented towards independence and self-expression, career development and personal success. Individualistic quests prevail over community experiences and collective practices even in their communion with God. The low level of civic engagement, however, and the lack of trust both in official institutions and in people outside of one's family create obstacles to the achievement of the desired personal success. Personal success has become more dependent on the social as well as material and cultural capital of the family, more confined to the latter, and less open to and responsible for the development of the community.

4. FAMILY TRANSITIONS

Young people's transition from the parental home and family to an independent household and formation of one's own family is an important life-trajectory to adulthood (Jones: 1995; Wallace and Kovatcheva: 1998; Roberts: 2009). In traditional Bulgarian society the life-path of young people, as Ivan Hadjiyski (Хаджийски: 1974) shows, was clearly mapped out and depended above all on gender. In rural areas, youth as such was as short as "a sigh of happiness" and social norms presupposed that young men would remain in the parental home and family, while young women would join the husband's family after marriage. In the emerging new urban strata, the agencies of socialization also set limits on youth choices, where the male route of transition to adulthood was strictly mapped out: from the "weeping stone" on the outskirts of the village where boys bid farewell to their families upon leaving home, to "the stranger's home" – the craftsman's shop where they served as apprentices, toiling from dawn to dusk, to a home and shop of their own once they became masters and started a family (Хаджийски: 1974). Later, in the Bulgarian variant of modernization in the socialist society, the expansion of secondary education and the spread of higher education blurred the traditional transition patterns. The centrally planned economy and mass secondary education created new, but just as strictly differentiated, normative pathways: from vocational schools to low-skilled jobs in industrial enterprises or agro-industrial complexes; from technical colleges to higher-skilled jobs in industry or to technical higher educational institutions; and from high schools to universities and, possibly, to employment in the public administration (Митев: 1988). The transitions from the parental home to an independent household, which were connected to those social mobility patterns, were accompanied with Communist Party family and housing policies that sought to encourage birth rates (Ковачева: 2010; Коцева и Димитрова: 2014).

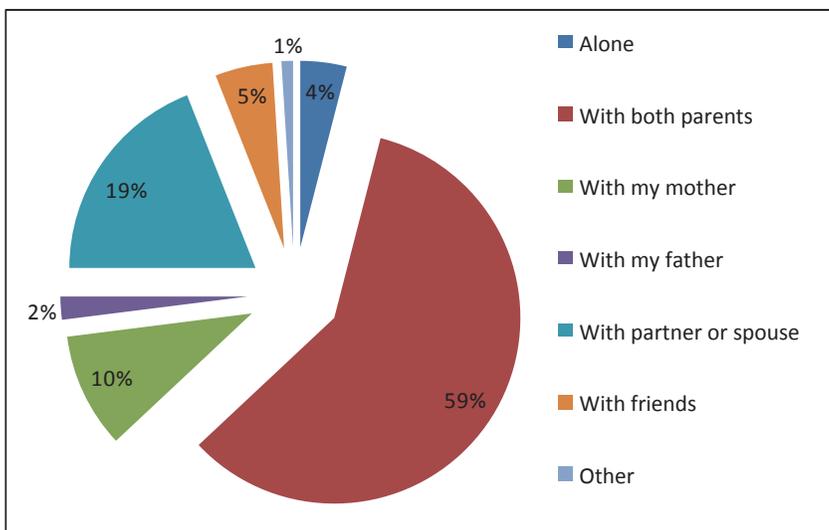
The transition to a market economy once again blurred those youth life-paths by destabilizing the former orderly transitions to adulthood (Kovacheva: 2001). In the waves of social transformation, young people's family transitions were also affected by economic hardships, high unemployment, and devaluation of traditional moral norms. In the post-socialist societies in Eastern Europe, as in the late-modern Western societies, the second decade of the 21st century has seen an increasing variety of forms of living together, leaving and returning to the parental home, new family

models which have called into question the very concept of transition (Wyn and White: 1997). In reality, however, the growing social insecurity has not eliminated the importance of achieving residential and family independence for the social integration of young people. As the analysis of the findings of this study shows, an own home and family with children remain a desired destination for most young people in Bulgaria, irrespective of the intermediate steps and failures along the way.

4.1 Transition from parental home to independent housing

The respondents in this study were found to be at different stages of the transition from the parental home to an independent household. As a whole, slightly over half (59%) are still living with both parents, and another 12% with one parent. One in ten live on their own or with friends. One-fifth of the respondents have formed their own family with a partner, without specifying the young family's housing arrangements.

Figure 4.1 Housing situation of Bulgarian youth

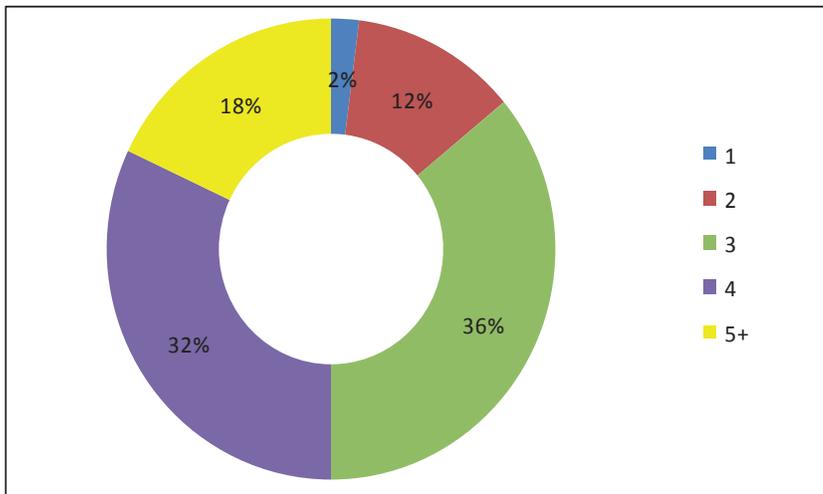


The results of the study show that whether young people will live with their parents or independently depends above all on age (Cramer's $V = .324$), gender (Cramer's $V = .177$), and ethnic origin (Cramer's $V = .167$). The share of those who have left the parental home increases steadily

with age. In an international comparative perspective, young people in Bulgaria leave home much later than those in the Nordic countries, where youth receive state support for renting independent housing and are able to choose from a well-developed and diverse housing market as early as at the age of 18. For example, the age at which 50% of young people have left the parental home is 20 years in Denmark, but 30 years in Bulgaria (Eurofound: 2014b). By this indicator, Bulgarian youth are close to the situation in the other South European countries, such as Greece (29 years), Italy (28) and Slovenia (28).

Gender also influences home-leaving patterns. Young women leave home earlier than young men, and more often to move in with a partner than to live on their own. Already living with a partner are 25% of the female respondents and just 12% of the male respondents. Partnering and home-leaving patterns are also influenced by ethnic origin. The shares of respondents living with a partner are 15% of the ethnic Bulgarians, 24% of the ethnic Turks, and 38% of the Roma. The effect of the type of settlement where the respondents live is as expected – the share of those living on their own is the largest in Sofia (17%), and only approximately 5% in villages and small towns. The effect of the household's socioeconomic status is the opposite to what was expected – the share of those living with their parents is the largest among young people from wealthy households (85%), and the smallest (62%) among young people from poor households. This result may be explained with the circumstance that leaving home leads to a decrease in young people's income and transition into another category of household. The interviewed Information Science student, who is still living with his parents, gave the following explanation: "Moving out and renting a place of your own is difficult but not impossible; there is a way. But your income will drop significantly. Now if you want an apartment of your own, it's a different story. This involves a lot of money and it's complicated..."

We know from Chapter Two that close to 90% of the respondents have a room of their own even if they are living with their parents. The typical dwelling has three or four rooms – one-third each of the respondents live in such dwellings. Those with five rooms or more have a larger share than those with just one or two rooms.

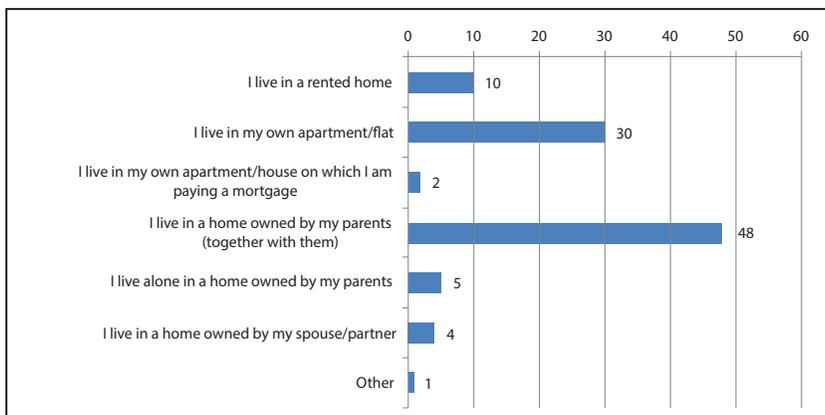
Figure 4.2 Number of rooms in household

Whereas 17% of ethnic Bulgarians live in dwellings with five rooms or more, this share is one-quarter for ethnic Turks and one-third for Muslim Bulgarians. Among the Roma, this share is significantly smaller than among the other ethnic communities, but it has increased significantly in comparison with the past: one in ten respondents of Roma origin declared their household has five rooms or more. There is no strong correlation between the size of the dwelling and the economic status of the household. None of the respondents from wealthy households live in dwellings with just one or two rooms, but just 20% of them live in apartments/houses with five rooms or more. Among the respondents from poor households, 18% live in small dwellings, but there are also 16% who live in very large ones. The size of the dwelling depends much more on the type of settlement where the respondents live. Sofia residents proved to be unprivileged in this respect. Dwellings with five rooms or more comprise 28% in villages, also higher than average – 23% – in small towns, but 14% in regional centres and just 7% in Sofia.

As for ownership of the respondents' housing, half are owned by their parents. One in ten respondents live in rented housing, and just 2% in an apartment or house of their own on which they are paying mortgage. Just 9% of the employed and 16% of students live in a rented home. Those who live in a rented home are just 2% in villages but 18% in Sofia. Among respondents from wealthy families, 60% live with their parents and 35%

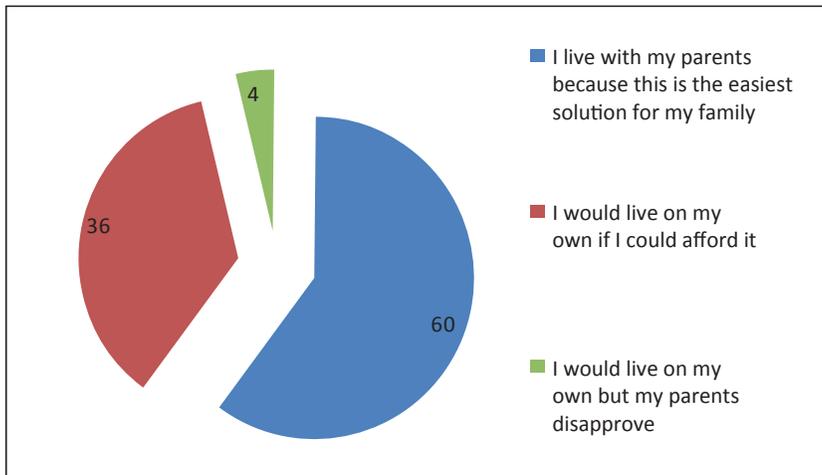
live in a home of their own. Among those from poor households, 45% live with their parents, 30% live in a home of their own, and 12% live in a rented home. No differences were found in home ownership by gender, other than that more women live in a home owned by their partner, while more men live with their parents.

Figure 4.3 Housing situation by form of ownership (%)



As a whole, we may conclude that the housing situation of Bulgarian youth depends above all on their parents' property and financial status, and not on their own income. Market relations play an insignificant role in young people's housing, and the main way they can leave home and move into a place of their own is by inheriting it or buying it with their parents' support.

The reasons why Bulgarian youth are continuing to live with their parents are not just economic ones. In our study, slightly over one-third of the respondents indicated financial difficulties as the reason why they are continuing to live with their parents. The majority cited other reasons. Most of the respondents see living with their parents as the easiest solution (60%). This answer was given most often by the younger age cohort and pupils (the correlation of explanations for the reasons for living with parents to age is Cramer's $V = .324$, and to social group it is Cramer's $V = .249$). Less than 5% of the respondents see this as an authoritarian decision imposed by parents who do not want to let their children move out, and the majority of them are women. Most of those who gave financial difficulties as the reason for not leaving home are students, ethnic Bulgarians, and Sofia residents.

Figure 4.4 Reasons for living with parents (%)

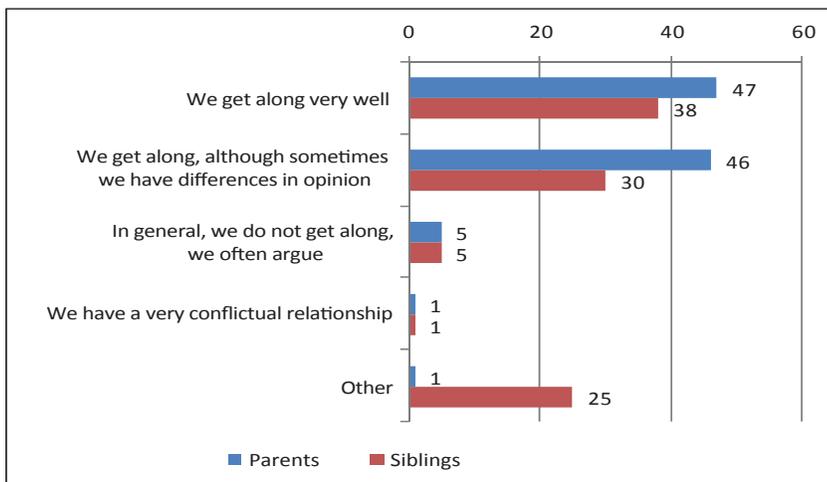
The “easy solution” of living with parents in fact reflects a cultural norm in Bulgarian society, where parents do everything they can to support their children even after they grow up – “as long as they can” (Митев: 2005, 88-89), or as a father put it in another study, “as long as my eyes can see and as long as my legs can run” (Ковачева: 2010, 343). Without being specifically indicated in the questionnaire as a reason for continuing to live at home, the harmonious relationship between parents and children is an important prerequisite. Young people are living with their parents because the authoritarian parenting style is declining and youth have more freedom to choose their own lifestyle, even if in the family home, in addition to enjoying the financial and practical advantages of living with their parents.

4.2 Relationship with parents

The initial expectations of intergenerational conflicts after the beginning of the social transition to a market economy and political pluralism in Bulgaria, have not come true (Митев: 1996). National representative surveys of Bulgarian youth (Митев: 2005, 85) have even recorded a stable tendency towards a decrease in conflicts between young people and their parents since 1987. Our study shows that Bulgarian youth’s opinions about relations in the family are divided almost equally between “total harmony” and “harmony, with some differences in opinion” (Figure

4.5). Frequent conflicts were reported by just 5% of the respondents. Relationships with siblings are similar (the lower percentage of positive assessments of sibling relationships is due to the higher percentage of respondents who do not have siblings or who gave no answer).

Figure 4.5 Relations in the family (%)



Unlike that of “total harmony”, the relationship between generations which allows for differences in opinion is an indicator of liberal attitudes and it is characteristic of families with a higher socioeconomic status: 58% for respondents from wealthy families, as compared with 47% for those from poor households; as well as 57% for Sofia residents and 43% for rural residents. The ethnic background and cultural norms of minority communities also have an effect – young ethnic Turks, and particularly Muslim Bulgarians, are more likely to choose the patriarchal attitude of having a very good relationship without differences in opinion.

In the in-depth interviews, the respondents described their relationship with their parents most often as “we get along, we respect each other, there are no problems” (high school pupil, female) or “there is disagreement, differences, but not to the point of drama or rebellion” (working Law student, male). A young woman of ethnic Turkish origin studying at a high school in the town of Peshtera, commented on the change in the relationship between generations in the family as follows:

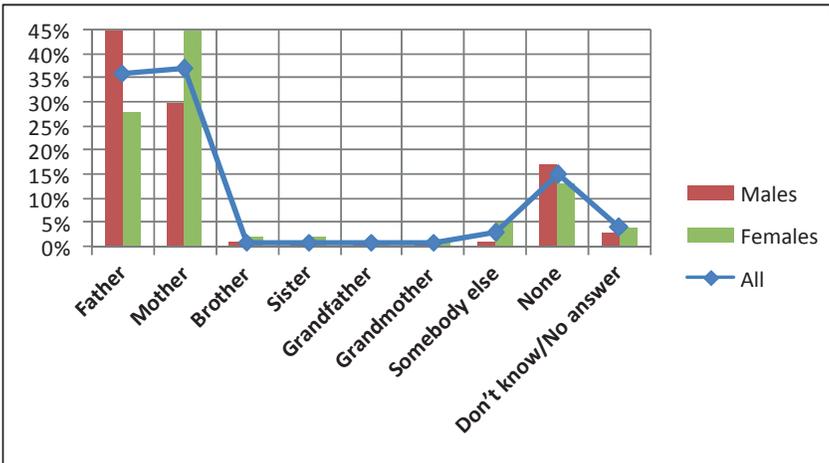
Grown-ups think that things should be the same way now as they were when they were young. (...) Back then not everyone could choose whom to marry. It was the parents who made this decision.

Interviewer: Does this still exist today?

No. Now everyone decides for themselves. The only thing I can't understand is young people insulting their mother and father, speaking against them.

The division along the lines of liberal/patriarchal model of family relationships is even clearer in the responses to the question regarding the way young people take decisions. For all respondents, the person with most influence on their important decisions is the father or mother – each pointed out by more than one-third of the respondents, approximately 36%. Other relatives were pointed out by 5% of the respondents, while 15% reported there is no such person in their life. Less than 5% of the respondents pointed out another influential person outside the family. These data confirm the strong family ties and the predominance of the exclusive, “family” form of social capital in Bulgaria established in the analysis of trust and other values in Chapter Three.

Figure 4.6 Person with most influence on young people’s decisions

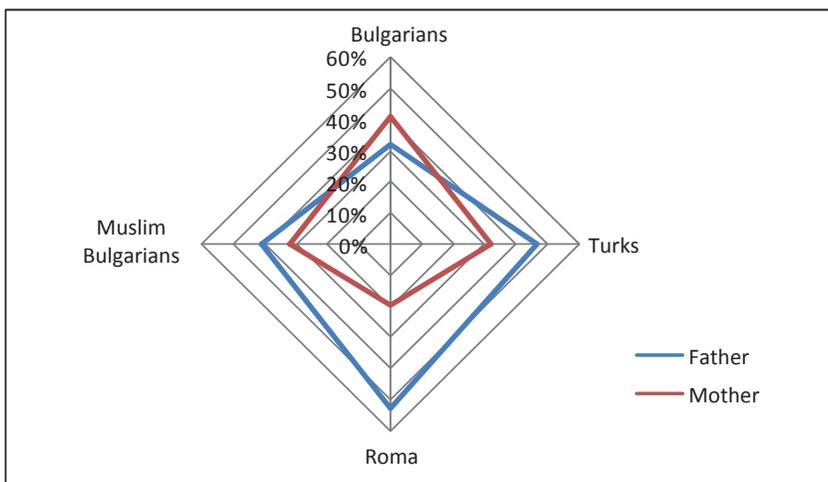


The data in *Figure 4.6* reveal another interesting fact about Bulgarian family relationships. Behind the seemingly equal influence of the father and mother on the young generation, we find a gender difference: the

most influential person for young men is the father (45%), and for young women the mother (also 45%). This difference in parents' influence on the young generation indicates a strong gender-stereotyped socialization of children which also continues into adolescence and young adulthood.

The patriarchal tendency to give the father more power in the family proves to be influenced by a number of social factors. As *Figure 4.7* shows, there is a significant difference based on ethnicity. Whereas respondents from the Bulgarian ethnic majority more often define the mother as the key person in decision-making, the father is the most influential person for respondents from the ethnic Turkish group; among Muslim Bulgarians, as well as among the Roma, the father's "say" has much more weight than the mother's, judging from the responses – 53% for the father and 20% for the mother.

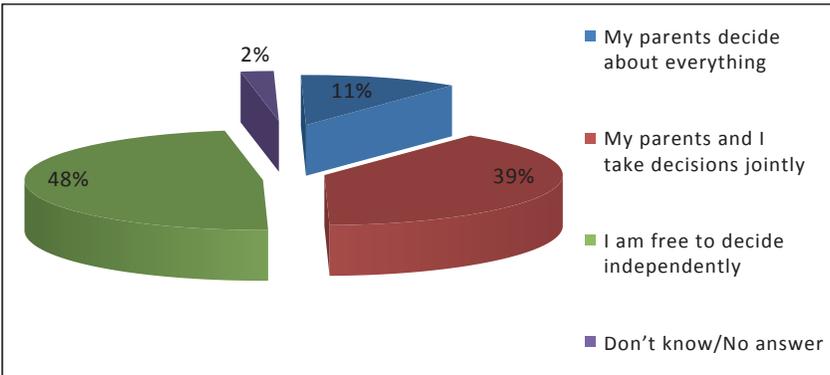
Figure 4.7 Most influential person, by respondents' ethnicity



Parental cultural and economic capital also has a significant effect on the type of family relationships – patriarch or liberal. Young people with higher-educated parents are more likely to assign a larger role to the mother. Among the respondents from wealthy households, the father is the leading figure for 20%, and the mother for 53%. There is also a significant difference based on place of residence – the father is the leading figure for 47% of youth from rural areas and for twice as little (24%) of those from Sofia.

Asked directly about how important decisions for young people are taken in the family, half of the respondents declared that they are free to take decisions independently. This liberal model is applied regardless of gender – with regard to both sons and daughters. The negotiating type of family, where young people take decisions after discussing them with their parents, is characteristic of 39% of respondents. One in ten respondents come from families where decisions are taken without their participation.

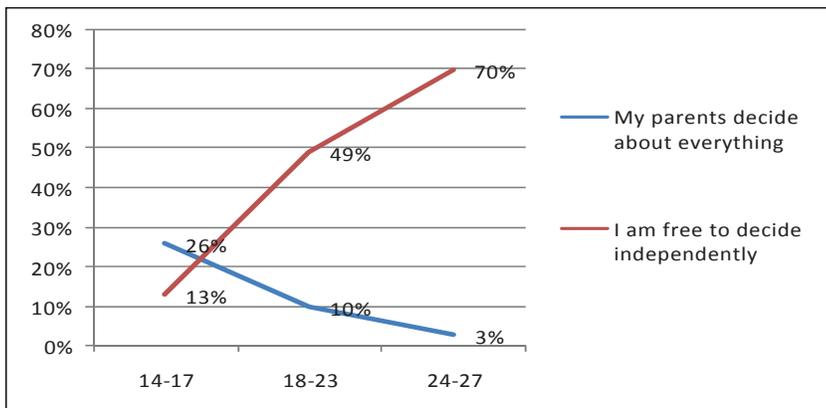
Figure 4.8 Way of decision-making in the family



A more detailed examination of the data reveals interesting correlations. Patriarchal attitudes, where young people are excluded from the decision-making process, are most widespread among Roma families. The role of patriarchal norms is especially distinct in the qualitative data from the in-depth interviews. The interviewed young woman of Roma origin described many examples of attempts by the oldest woman in the family to interfere in her choices: “Whenever she saw me studying, my grandmother would tell me, ‘Hey you, come here and start cleaning [immediately]! You aren’t going to become a director, are you?’” Later on in the interview, she once again spoke of lack of understanding and interference on the part of her grandmother: “For example, my grandmother tells me every day now, ‘You must get married, you’re a spinster, people are asking when are you going to get married? When will your boyfriend marry you? I want to see you a bride! You studied and studied and, at the end of the day, you didn’t get married!’ This [not getting married] isn’t what I want at all, but she can’t understand that my boyfriend and I simply have nowhere to live together. (...) They [adults] stick to their own [way of] life, their own mentality.”

Parental cultural capital also proves to be significantly connected to the pattern of distribution of power between generations (Cramer's $V = .149$ for the education level of both parents). The patriarchal attitudes of excluding young people from the decision-making process are characteristic of only 9% of families where parents have higher education, but of 28% of families where parents have primary education or less. Income and place of residence, however, do not have a statistically significant effect. The negotiating type of family does not have a specific profile and is equally found among all social groups. The strongest correlation proves to be with respondents' age (Cramer's $V = .336$), with the liberal model of decision-making prevailing over the patriarchal model only among youth aged 17-plus. Given such a socialization attitude in the family, it is very difficult to implement the ideas of children's participation in decision-making on all issues that concern them in the spheres of education, leisure time and social policy, which are formulated as fundamental principles in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and in the Charter on Child Participation of Bulgaria's State Agency for Child Protection.

Figure 4.9 Liberal and patriarchal decision-making model, by respondents' age

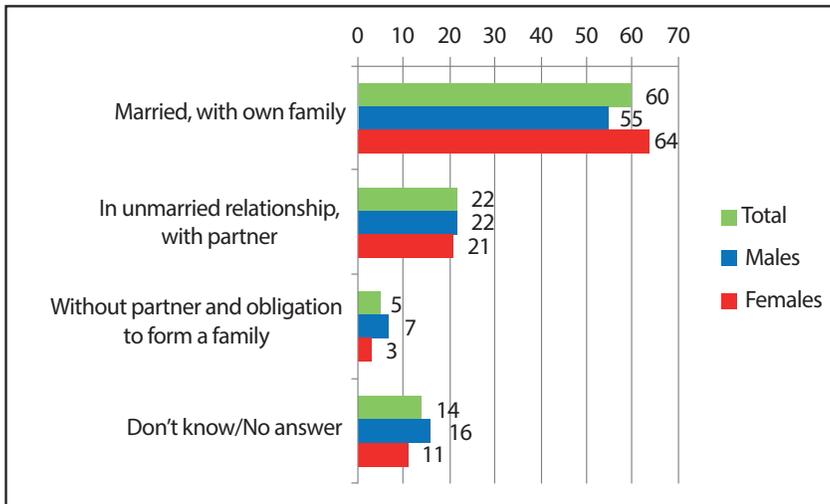


The data show also that those who are most dependent on their parents are pupils and unemployed youth, while the most independent are working students and employed youth. The fact that more than one-quarter of families with teenage pupils apply the patriarchal model, where children do not take part in decision-making, attests to a low level of democratic family life in Bulgaria.

4.3 Life plans for family formation

The results of this study give us grounds to claim that family formation is a desired life goal of Bulgarian youth today. More than 80% of Bulgarian youth wish to form their own family. Just 5% see themselves in the future without a partner and family obligations. What has changed in comparison with the previous generations of Bulgarian youth is not the desire to form a family but the desired forms of family. For young people in Bulgaria, it does not necessarily entail marriage, nor is it necessarily based on partnership between a man and a woman, or necessarily with children.

Figure 4.10 Youth plans for family formation (%)

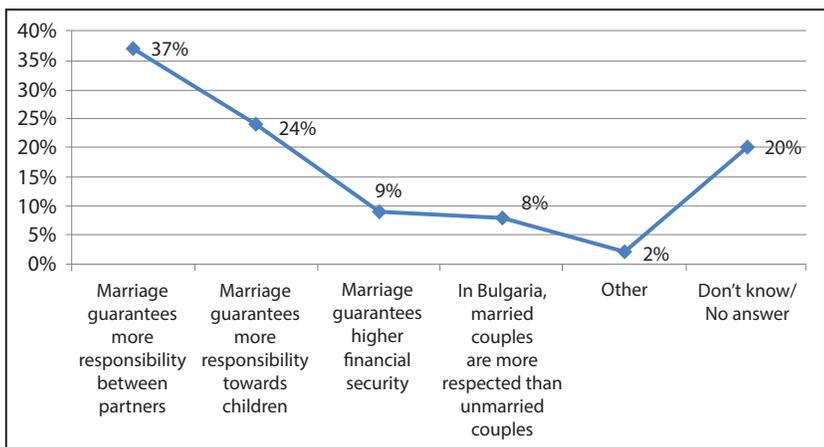


A total of 60% of respondents see themselves as married in the future, although this future is indefinite. Slightly over one-fifth imagine their future life in an unmarried relationship. Women include marriage in their life plans more often than do men, while the percentage of those who do not want family obligations in the future is twice as high among men than among women. The indefinite character of those life plans decreases with age. University graduates make up the highest share of those who wish to set up a family by getting married (69%), while this share decreases to 60% for youth with secondary education and 56% for those with primary education. Once again, there is no statistically significant difference based on social strata and settlement type, but also on parents' education level.

An unmarried relationship is least desired by ethnic Turks and Muslim Bulgarians, while Roma, followed by ethnic Bulgarians, most often see themselves in such a relationship. Here one ought to keep in mind the Roma tradition whereby young people form families after a wedding ceremony, which is an official acknowledgement of entry into marriage before the Roma community, even though it may not be registered as a marriage before the public administration (Томова: 1995). The high birth rate of children of unmarried parents in Bulgaria, 59%,⁵ is largely due precisely to the birth of children in Roma families which are not formally married. In the Bulgarian ethnic majority, just slightly more than one-fifth (22%) of young people plan to live with a partner without getting married. Comparing this result with previous studies, which have found a high level (84%) of acceptance of cohabitation without marriage as “normal and natural” (Митев: 2005: 70), we may conclude that Bulgarian youth’s plans regarding the form of their future family remain open-ended, depending on the concrete life situation in which they will decide whether to get married and when – before or after moving in together.

The results of this study also allow us to establish young people’s motives for choosing marriage or cohabitation.

Figure 4.11 Advantages of marriage



Bulgarian youth associate the advantages of marriage primarily with greater security in the relationship between partners, followed by security

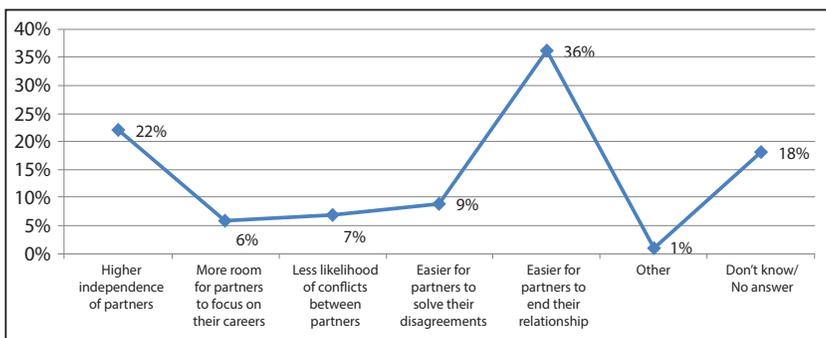
⁵ <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/6625/marital-and-extra-marital-live-births-districts-municipalities-and-place-residence>, accessed 18 September 2014.

of children, and significantly less so with financial security and social prestige. Financial security is seen as an advantage of marriage most often by young people from wealthy families, while social acceptance is the major advantage according to Muslim Bulgarians. In rural areas, marriage is perceived as guaranteeing higher security to partners and children; conversely, those expectations are lowest in Sofia.

The main advantages of cohabitation without marriage, according to Bulgarian youth, are the fewer difficulties in ending the relationship and the greater independence of partners. As a female pupil at a high school in Sofia said, "I don't want to get married officially... I don't want to because if it ends in divorce there will be a lot of trouble. Couples start quarrelling. It's disgusting. If you aren't sure, you simply must not do it. No prenuptial agreements, no nonsense [of the sort]."

Roma and ethnic Bulgarians see the easy ending of an unmarried relationship as an advantage more often than ethnic Turks and Muslim Bulgarians. As a whole, the motives for choosing cohabitation without marriage are equally distributed among the different social groups of youth, and other correlations were not found. For both forms of family, the share of those who answered "Don't know" is very high, almost one-fifth. This shows that the choice of a concrete form of family is not something fixed in young people's value system and the plans for it are comparatively open-ended. For one in five young people, forming a family with or without marriage will depend on the concrete circumstances in the future.

Figure 4.12 Advantages of unmarried relationship



Bulgarian youth plan to create a family of their own at a later age than did their parents when they were young, but earlier than most young people

in Europe (Eurofound 2014b). According to the respondents in our study, the most appropriate age for creating a family, with or without marriage, is 25 years for women and 28 years for men. It is interesting that here the “Don’t know/ No answer” responses are fewer than those to the previous question – approximately 10%. The increase in both the planned and the actual age of marriage was recorded already in the previous representative studies and is one more proof that paternalism among Bulgarian youth is declining (Митев: 2005, 72).

Perceptions of the best age for forming a family depend strongly on ethnicity. Half of the young Roma think that the most appropriate age for women is between 17 and 20, and another one-third believe it is between 21 and 24 years. For ethnic Turks and Muslim Bulgarians, the best age for women is 21-24, while ethnic Bulgarians think it is 25-27 years. The lower education levels of respondents as well as of parents “lowers” the age for women, while household wealth and residence in big cities and Sofia “raises” it. For all ethnic groups, the desirable age for men is two to four years higher. More than one-fifth of Roma think that the most appropriate age for men to create a family is 17-20 years.

The perceptions of the best age for the other transition – to parenthood – do not differ significantly from those regarding family formation. According to the respondents in this study, the most appropriate age for women to become parents is two years lower than that for men, and half a year higher than the marriage age. For comparison, according to official statistical data the mean age of the mother at first birth in Bulgaria in 2013 is 26.5 years⁶ – a year later than the perceived appropriate age. In Bulgaria, as in Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, young people become parents earlier than the average in the European Union, often before leaving the parental home (Eurofound: 2014b). In Italy, Greece and Spain young people also leave home late but, unlike their East European counterparts, they become parents at the highest age in Europe. In these countries 50% of young people have children at an age over 30 years – 32 for women and 36 for men.

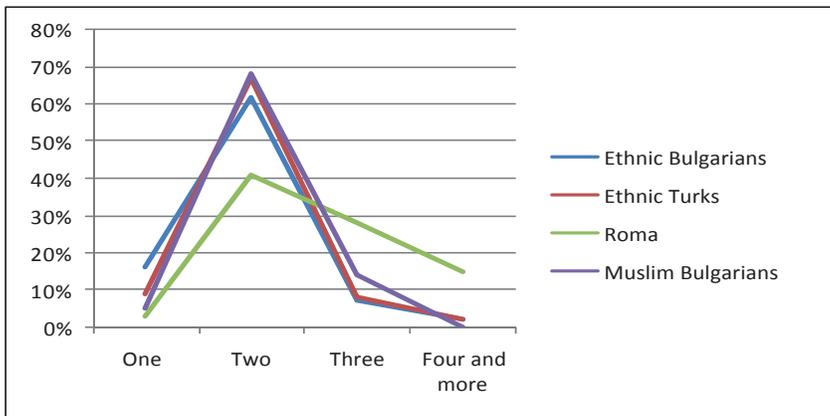
The ethnic origin of Bulgarian youth once again proved to have a significant effect in this respect. Among the Roma, one-quarter think that women should have a child before the age of 19, and more than half believe that the most appropriate age for that is between 20 and 24 years. Among the same ethnic group, one in ten think that men should become fathers by the age of 19, and another half reckon this should happen by the age of 24 years.

⁶ <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/6620/mean-age-mother-birth-place-residence-statistical-regions-and-districts>, accessed 18 September 2014.

The gender factor has an effect on perceptions not only in that men are expected to become parents at a later age than women, but also in that the respondents' gender has a statistically significant influence on opinions regarding the most appropriate age for becoming a parent. Young women think that women should have a child at a later age than that seen as most appropriate by young men. The perceived most appropriate age for motherhood increases with the respondents' education level as well as with their parents' education level. Parents' material status also has an effect, with respondents from wealthier families being more inclined to postpone motherhood. Place of residence also has a slight effect – the preferred age for motherhood is lower in rural areas and higher in Sofia. The same correlations apply to the age for fatherhood, but this question received more "Don't know" responses.

This study, as well as previous ones (Митев: 2005; Димитрова: 2011), has found that the majority of young people in Bulgaria imagine the ideal family as a family with children. The share of respondents who declare they do not want to have children is negligible. The two-child family model remains dominant, and does not depend on respondents' age, gender or main occupation (Figure 4.13). There is also a continuing tendency for the ideal number of children in the Bulgarian family to remain higher than the actual number which, measured in terms of total fertility rate (average number of live births per woman over her lifetime),⁷ is 1.48.

Figure 4.13 Desired number of children in the family



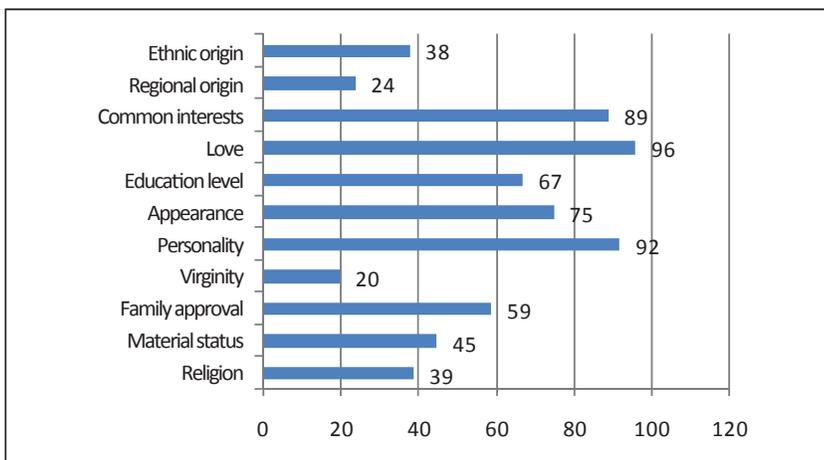
⁷ <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/6615/total-fertility-rate-statistical-regions-districts-and-place-residence>, accessed 18 September 2014.

It is noteworthy that the desired number of children is almost identical among ethnic Bulgarians, Turks and Muslim Bulgarians. The percentage of respondents who would like to have three, four, and more than four children is high (43%) only among the Roma. Still, the majority of Roma also prefer the two-child model. Youth from large households (five members or more) more often desire to have three or more children. The single-child model is desired more often by young people whose parents have a higher social status – from wealthy and well-to-do households living in big cities and Sofia.

In the in-depth interviews, the respondents repeatedly underlined the connection between achieving economic independence and deciding to become a parent. A male pupil at a high school of mathematics put it as follows: “In my opinion, I should secure a good life for myself in order to have children. I can be as old as 30-40 years [when I have children], but they will have a better life. (...) The most important thing is to achieve independence. There are football players as young as 20 who are married with children, but they can offer their children everything [they need] to feel good. This is exactly what it depends on – whether you have a career or are stuck in one place.”

Defining the factors which they consider important in choosing a marriage partner, Bulgarian youth confirm the sociological fact that with the transition to modern society, people began to form families based on love (Giddens: 1991). The three most important factors in choosing a marriage partner, according to the respondents, are love, personality, and common interests.

Figure 4.14 Ranking of factors for the choice of a marriage partner (%)



The respondents also think the prospective partner's physical appearance matters a lot, ranking it fourth in importance – ahead of education level. In the middle of the ranking list is family approval, chosen by slightly over half of the respondents. Also in the middle, but after family approval, is the partner's material status, assessed as important by 45% of the respondents. Ethnic origin and religious affiliation are ranked far lower, having been chosen by one-third each, while the least important factor – virginity – is important to one-fifth of the respondents.

As a whole, the chosen factors indicate a growing liberalization of youth choices. Most important to Bulgarian youth are personal achievements: the character of human relationships and the individual's acquired statuses. Far less important are the assigned socio-biological statuses, such as ethnic origin, religious affiliation, and place of residence. Those factors, however, are more important to the religious and ethnic minorities. For example, religion is important to the religious minorities, and especially to Muslims. It is also a very important factor to people with low education. Religion as a factor in choosing a partner is least important to young people with higher education and to those living in Sofia. The prospective partner's material status is more important to the unemployed and the poor. It is also important to twice as many Roma as ethnic Bulgarians. Half of the respondents from villages and small towns consider the prospective partner's material status to be important or very important, as compared with just one-quarter of Sofia residents who think so. The most traditional factor, virginity, is most strongly influenced by the respondents' ethnic origin (Cramer's $V = .231$) and parents' education level (Cramer's $V = .190$ for both parents). Virginity as a factor in choosing a partner is important to one in ten ethnic Bulgarians and one in two respondents from the other ethnic communities.

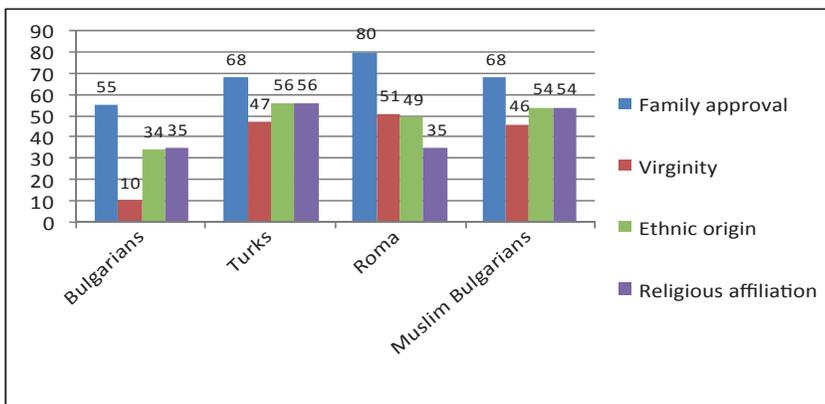
The young woman of Roma origin who took part in the in-depth interviews explained that losing one's virginity before marriage means being excluded from the community:

There's no such thing among us, there's no such thing even in Fakulteta [Roma neighbourhood in Sofia]. It may be possible somewhere else, but [not] in Fakulteta [where] word will get around. People will say, "Those two are living together, they didn't get married, they didn't have [a band of musicians] play for them [i.e. a proper wedding ceremony]!" That's how things are. You have to reckon with everything. If you aren't chaste, the whole neighbourhood will learn about it. "O my God, that one isn't chaste!"

None of the respondents from wealthy households chose virginity as an important factor. Young people whose parents have primary education or less are more likely to consider virginity important than those whose parents have secondary or higher education. Place of residence also has an effect – virginity is defined as important or very important by one-third of the respondents from rural areas but by just 5% of those from Sofia.

The data on youth choices also show that the level of liberalization of values is higher among young people from the Bulgarian ethnic majority, but significantly lower among the Roma, ethnic Turks and Muslim Bulgarians.

Figure 4.15 Importance of traditional factors in choosing a partner, by ethnicity (%)



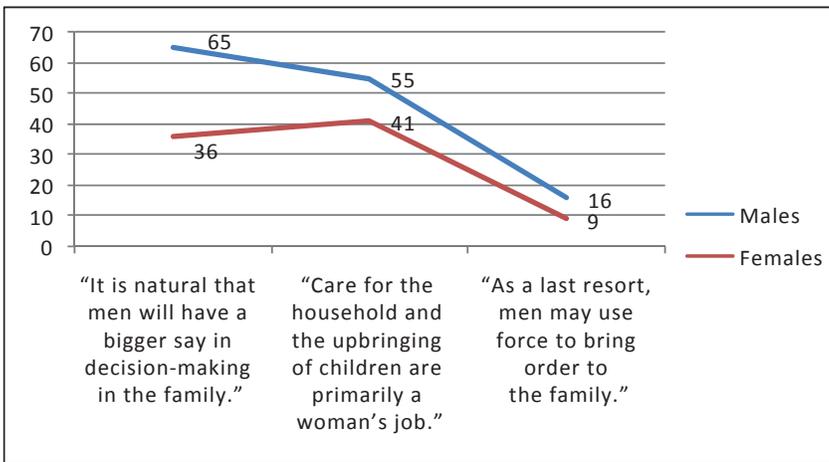
The data from *Figure 4.15* show that the marriage partner’s ethnic origin and religious affiliation are “very important” or “important” to more than half of the ethnic Turks and Muslim Bulgarians, but to only one-third of the ethnic Bulgarians. The ethnic minorities are more reluctant to accept partners from other ethnic and religious communities. Family approval is considered important or very important by half of the ethnic Bulgarian respondents, two-thirds of the ethnic Turks and Muslim Bulgarians, and as many as four-fifths of the Roma respondents. As a whole, the ethnic minorities are much more traditionally-minded on all factors in choosing a marriage partner than is the Bulgarian ethnic majority.

4.4 Notions of gender equality in the family

So far the data from this study indicate that Bulgarian youth envisage the ideal family as a family based on love and mutual understanding with the partner, with or without marriage, but with two children. It is also interesting how young people in Bulgaria conceive of the relationship between the two partners. The findings of this study show that this is the area with the highest gender-based differences in the respondents' opinions and the highest levels of paternalism. Young men accept gender equality to a far lesser extent than do young women, but the traditional notions of asymmetrical relations in favour of the man in the family are also widespread among women.

The attitudes towards the distribution of power and duties in the family were measured through a set of three statements with which the respondents were asked to agree or disagree. All three statements were formulated so as to correspond to the traditional notions of the roles of women and men. This indicator was also used in the representative study conducted in 2002, which found a strong presence of the "paternalistic legacy" both among the population as a whole, as well as – albeit to a lesser extent – among youth in Bulgaria (Митев: 2005: 72).

Figure 4.16 Attitude towards the traditional gender roles in the family (%)



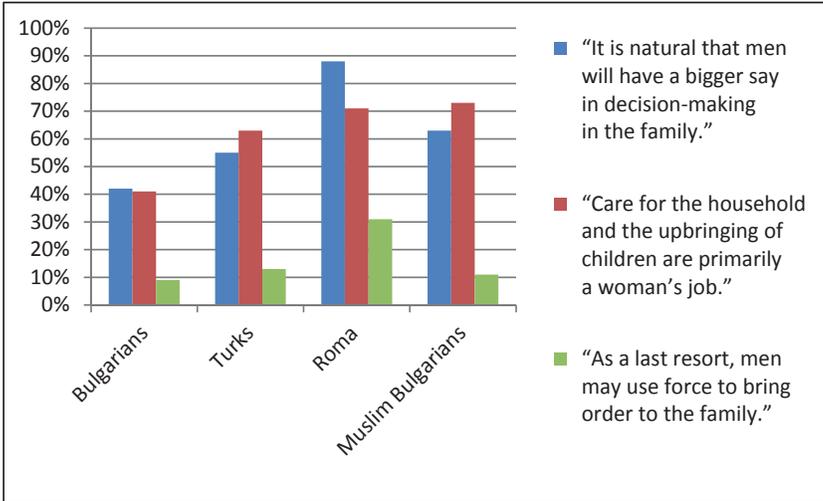
Two-thirds of the male respondents and one-third of the female respondents agree that men will have a bigger say in the family. The gender-based difference in opinions decreases when it comes to agreement with the statement that care for the household and children are primarily a woman's responsibility, and is even smaller with regard to agreement with men's "right" to use force in imposing order. Although the paternalistic attitudes are stronger among men, it is noteworthy that many young women also have such attitudes. The most widespread notion among young women is that housework and the upbringing of children are primarily a woman's responsibility – 41% of the female respondents agree with this statement. We may expect that if the statement had been formulated so as to include care for young children, such as is the situation of young families, and not the general "upbringing of children", the percentage of those who agree with it would have been even higher. Traditional attitudes are encouraged by the long (more than 36 months) parental leaves in Bulgaria, of which six months are reserved for the mother and which are commonly referred to as "maternity leave", as well as by the statutory entitlement to high-paid leave to care for a sick child for up to 60 days a year. For comparison, in Sweden there is no period of parental leave reserved for the mother, but there is a 60-day quota reserved for the father, which is used in practice by more than 80% of fathers, while the remaining 18 months are divided between the partners at their own discretion (Ковачева: 2010).

As a whole, the paternalistic attitudes towards a gendered division of work in the family in the Bulgarian sample are very high, with more than half of the respondents agreeing with the first two statements, and more than one-tenth accepting men's use of violence against women in the family. Those findings also corroborate conclusions drawn in other studies (Златанова: 2001; Стоилова: 2012).

As many other value orientations, Bulgarian youth's notions of the desired model of distribution of power and responsibilities in the family are influenced by a number of social factors. After the already noted gender-based correlation, the second strongest correlation is between the patriarchal notion of the roles of men and women in the family and the respondents' ethnic origin. For example, the correlation between ethnicity and the statement regarding "the man's bigger say" is Cramer's $V = .285$. The correlation is even stronger between the responses to this question and the father's education level (Cramer's $V = .320$) and the mother's education level (Cramer's $V = .326$). The influence of the respondents'

cultural capital, present status and place of residence was also found to be statistically significant. Those who hold the most traditional views of gender roles in the family are Roma, young NEETs with primary education or less, who live in rural areas and whose parents have primary education.

Figure 4.17 Patriarchal attitudes, by ethnicity



The data from *Figure 4.17* show the dependence of acceptance of the traditional division of work in the family on the respondents' ethnic origin. Whereas the first two statements are accepted by 40% of young ethnic Bulgarians, they are accepted by more than half of young ethnic Turks, two-thirds of young Muslim Bulgarians, and three-quarters of young Roma. The view that it is primarily a woman's responsibility to care for the household and children is shared by almost 90% of the Roma. They also show the highest level of tolerance towards men's use of force against women – 31% of the Roma respondents agree with the third statement approving violence on the part of men in the family. The keepers of traditional morals and instruction as to "the due behaviour" of women and "the due behaviour" of men in the Roma community once again turn out to be the women from the third generation in the family. As the young Roma woman employed at a pastry workshop in Sofia explained:

In our community, it is the man who has the say. This is the law. If I have a child and fall out with my husband and want to go to my mother's place, he won't give me the child. In our community

things are a bit stricter. We are like slaves, us women. A man may go out and not come home all night, but if a woman goes out even just for an hour, everybody will start saying: "O my God, she went out, that one! She doesn't cook, she doesn't clean." They will be talking all over the neighbourhood.

Interviewer: You mean public opinion comes mainly from grandmothers and women.

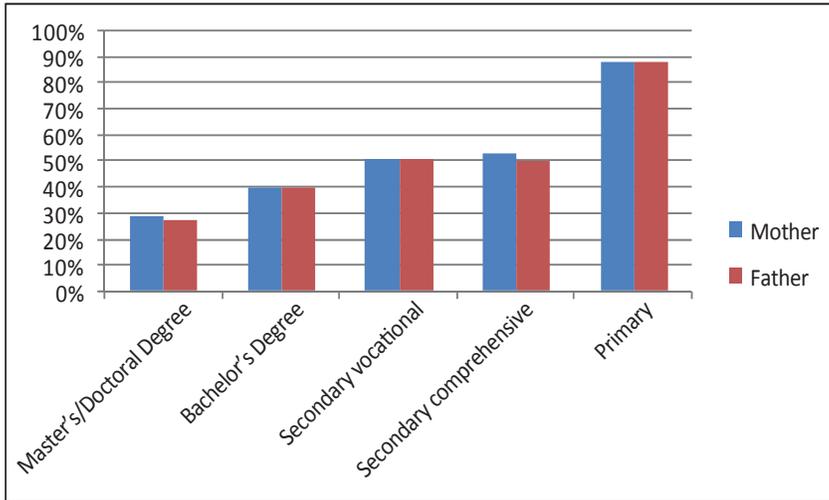
Yes. Gossip and intrigue are their thing. But on principle, it's the Gypsy men [who have the say] – women are expected to do whatever they say.

Interviewer: In families with boys and girls, do the boys take part in housework?

No. On principle, only the girls do. The boys play football. At the most, they will get sent to do some shopping. Our boys aren't taught to cook, to clean, to respect women.

The power inequality between men and women in the family is also influenced by the family's economic capital. Only 15% of the respondents from wealthy households and over 60% of those from poor households agree that men must have the say. This is accepted by two-thirds of the respondents from rural areas and by just one-quarter of those from Sofia. Parents' education level – at that, not just the mother's but also the father's – has an even stronger influence.

Figure 4.18 Agreement with statement, “It is natural that men will have a bigger say in decision-making in the family”, by parents’ education level



The view that men should have more power in the family is shared by slightly more than one-quarter of the respondents whose parents have a Master's/Doctoral Degree, by 40% of those whose parents have a Bachelor's Degree, by half of those whose parents have completed secondary education, and by almost 90% of those whose parents have primary education. The same correlations, albeit to a lesser extent, apply to the respondents' view regarding the role of women. Analyzing differences in value orientations based on parents' education level, we must note that the acceptance of gender inequality in family decision-making by one-third of respondents with highest-educated parents, and the acceptance of violence of men in the family by one-tenth of the Bulgarians is an indication of a highly patriarchal mindset that is untypical of 21st-century European culture in general.

4.5 Conclusions

The social change towards a higher level of individualization among Bulgarian youth, which we found in the analysis of leisure time and value orientations, has also affected youth transitions to an own home and family. The long waiting lists for housing, as well as low-interest bank loans, are a distant memory for their parents. Although the majority of Bulgarian

youth are continuing to live with their parents, they enjoy greater freedom at the parental home and postpone leaving it not so much due to financial considerations than for the sake of convenience. Relationships with parents are based on mutual understanding and support, whose importance grows in the conditions of social insecurity. There is a tendency towards mobilization of resources, influence and trust within the family, and this creates an exclusive type of family social capital which relies on strong ties of support but at the same time limits the ability of young people to explore new opportunities (Kovacheva: 2004).

According to some authors, the shortage of housing, employment and income creates structural constraints for the individualization of young people and gives rise to a trend towards retraditionalization (Tomanovic and Ignjatovic: 2006). In Serbia this is manifested in a growing share of extended families, overcrowded housing in urban areas and a return to the subsistence economy in rural areas. Although on a much smaller scale, such practices are to be found in Bulgaria, too. According to the data from our study, however, in Bulgaria the main change in the young generation is towards independence, an own lifestyle even at the parental home, as well as an own choice of partner and responsible parenthood.

As in Slovenia (Ule and Kuhar: 2008), in Bulgaria young people likewise highly value family life and plan to create their own family. They view family formation in a responsible way and are inclined to postpone it until they feel they are ready for it. According to them, the concrete circumstances will show whether the young family will have a legally registered marriage or not, and they are aware that both forms have certain advantages. Love and mutual understanding between the partners are important to Bulgarian youth, and the most desired is the two-child model.

Along with the tendencies towards social change, the family proves to be the most conservative institution with regard to the division of gender roles. According to Bulgarian youth's expectations, women may study and work away from home as may men, but at home "things fall into place" and the power relations between partners are strongly asymmetrical. The patriarchal attitudes towards gender roles in the family prove to be strongly stratified depending on the ethnic origin, place of residence, economic and, especially, cultural capital of families.

5. YOUTH AND EDUCATION

5.1 The problem situation

The social value and significance of education is growing as the world moves towards a knowledge society. The questions are: how Bulgaria's educational system is responding to the new requirements and the institutional challenge, and how the young generation is responding to this life challenge.

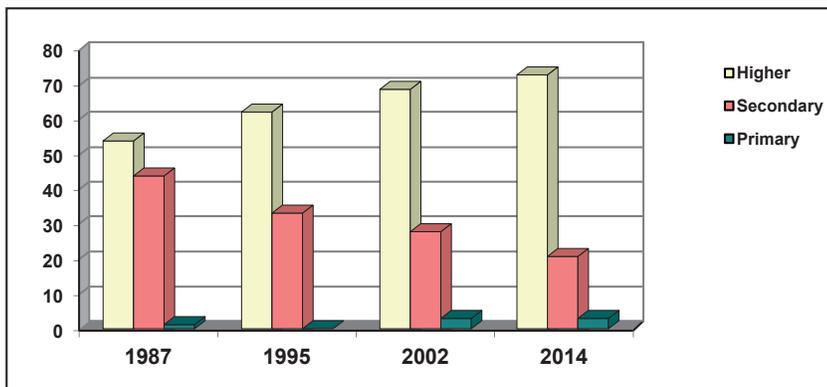
The transition to democracy and market economy created new motives, but also new constraints in the education of the young generations in Bulgaria. The network of educational institutions was expanded with the establishment of new public and private universities and secondary schools. Alternative opportunities were created for studying abroad. At the same time, a number of village schools were closed, and access to educational institutions in the country became difficult for children and young people from low-income families. Using the internet and learning western languages became fashionable codes of education. New forms of teaching, learning, and assessment were introduced. A tangible process of "McDonaldization" of education also took place. Pupils and students were given a new freedom in their education as well as in their public behaviour. We witnessed a collapse in school discipline; liberty turned into licentiousness in the educational system, too. From a sociological perspective, what is especially important was the change in the functions of education in the reproduction and development of social relations. Before the beginning of the changes, education had a homogenizing function. During the transition, it began to serve more of a differentiating function. School became a factory of inequality – as sociologists established at the end of the 1990s (Колев, Райчев и Бунджулов: 2000). Now we have an opportunity to check the validity of this conclusion and, possibly, to correct it.

In this study, we tried to identify the educational aspirations of young people in Bulgaria and the financial difficulties on the road to their fulfillment. We paid special attention to the relationship between the factors for obtaining the desired education and the young person's potential. The theoretical concept of individualization served as a starting point in this case, too. Special attention was paid to the ethnic aspects in the young generation's education.

5.2 Educational aspirations

Educational aspirations are expressed in terms of: education level (higher, secondary, primary), type of education (vocational/applied or general), study programme.

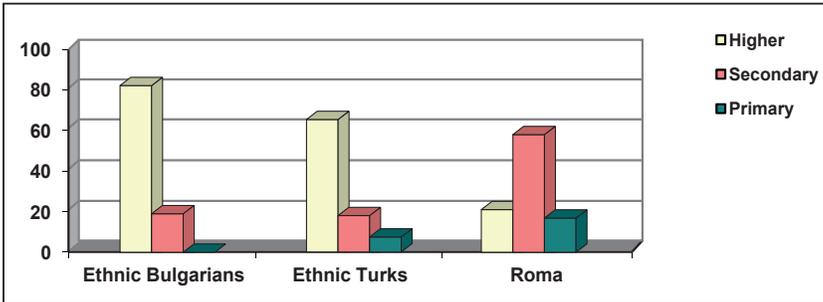
Figure 5.1 If you could choose, what education level would you like to complete? (%)



Note: Data for 1987, 1995, 2002 and 2014 refer to persons aged 15-25.
Source: IYS, 1987; Gallup International, 1995, 2002, 2014.

Higher education serves as an ideal of sorts for Bulgarian youth. Back in the 1970s-1980s more than half, and today more than two-thirds would like to obtain higher education. There are differences based on the type of settlement where the respondents live (Cramer's $V = .171$) – from 50% of those from villages, 71% from small towns and 75% from regional centres to 86% of respondents from Sofia – but still, the majority would like to complete higher education. It is noteworthy that there is a significant difference by gender (Cramer's $V = .202$): higher education is significantly more important to women (76%) than it is to men (65%). One of the reasons for the feminization of higher education, a much-discussed issue in Bulgaria, is found already in young people's aspirations. There is only one aspect in which the desire for education does not predominate in all groups among Bulgarian youth: ethnicity.

Figure 5.2 If you could choose, what education level would you like to complete? / Ethnic origin (%)



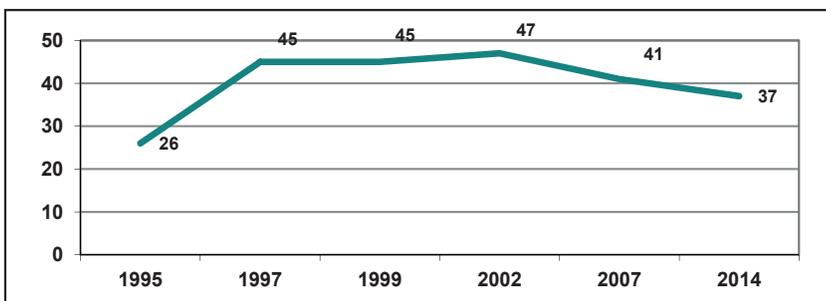
The difference is striking (Cramer's $V = .327$): the Roma aspiring to higher education are three times fewer than their ethnic Turkish peers and four times fewer than the ethnic Bulgarians; the majority of Roma would like to complete secondary vocational education. It is especially telling that a not insignificant share of Roma would like, at best, to complete primary education. Even those modest aspirations remain unfulfilled in quite a few cases, though. There are subjective reasons for this, as found in the in-depth interviews.

In a Gypsy family, they will tell their children: "Come on now, you aren't going to become a director, are you!" They urge them not to study. (Roma male, 22, working student at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia)

However, it would be rash to draw the comforting conclusion that the main social problem comes from the fact that some families simply don't want their children to study. The data show that financial difficulties – roughly speaking, poverty – remain a significant problem in this respect.

5.3 Financial difficulties

According to the country's democratic Constitution adopted in 1991, Bulgaria is a social state and education is free of charge. In practice, however, higher educational institutions have introduced various tuition fees, while facilities for students (such as accommodation and food) have been cut back. The rise in education costs coincided with the mass impoverishment of the population in the 1990s. The dynamic of the clash between educational aspirations and affordability can be seen in *Figure 5.3*.

Figure 5.3 Financial difficulties in obtaining desired education (%)

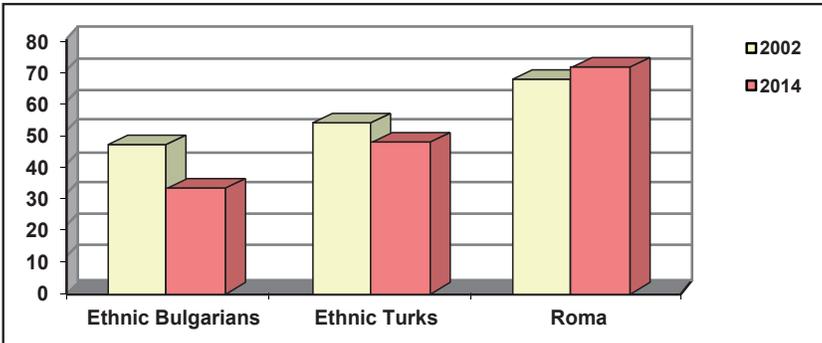
Note: Data refer to persons aged 15-25.

Source: Gallup International, 1995, 2002, 2007, 2014; IMIR, 1997, 1999.

Figure 5.3 shows the drastic increase in financial difficulties after 1995 due to the hyperinflation and the collapse of the financial system in Bulgaria during the winter of 1996/97. This led to a peak in the early 2000s, with every second person experiencing financial difficulties. In the next years, the situation improved – slowly but steadily. The level of differentiation, though, has remained significant. In 2014, financial difficulties were experienced by every fourth respondent in the North-Central (Severen Tsentralen), every third in the South-West, and every second in the North-West planning regions. To this we should add the difference between the settlement systems. Finding money for education is difficult for 48% of the respondents from villages, 45% from small towns, 32% from regional centres, and 29% from Sofia. Those figures are relative to the extent that, as we have seen, the aspirations towards higher-level education increase proportionally with the size of the settlement. This, however, increases the differentiating function of education even further. This function is most significant in an ethnic aspect (Cramer's $V = .274$). Once again, the Roma are a big exception when it comes to finding money for education (Figure 5.4).

There are differences not just in the level of financial difficulties among the different ethnic groups but also in the trends themselves – for the Roma, this trend is negative and, moreover, it pertains to all three levels of education. This issue is not of secondary importance. Roma literacy is a national issue which has been acquiring also a European aspect in recent years: Bulgaria has begun “exporting” low-educated Roma (along with high-educated specialists). The marginalization of the Roma has as its equivalent an illiteracy rate that is unusually high for a European country.

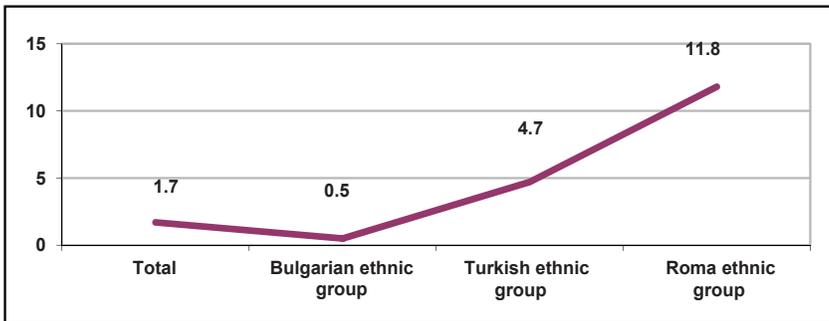
Figure 5.4 Financial difficulties in obtaining desired education / Ethnic origin (%)



Source: Gallup International, 2002, 2014.

The 2011 census showed the following picture:

Figure 5.5 Illiterate population aged 9+ in 2011 (%)



Source: National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2011.

The demographic situation in Bulgaria is changing; the share of Roma – and particularly of Roma children and young people – is increasing. The problem is not in that the number of Roma is growing but in that the share of the potentially illiterate population is increasing. Low education and, in a number of cases, lack of education drastically reduces the possibility of finding a job and drives people towards the grey and black economy.

One may suppose that financial problems are highest for young people who *have obtained/wish to obtain* higher education. The data disprove such a hypothesis: financial difficulties are in inverse proportion to

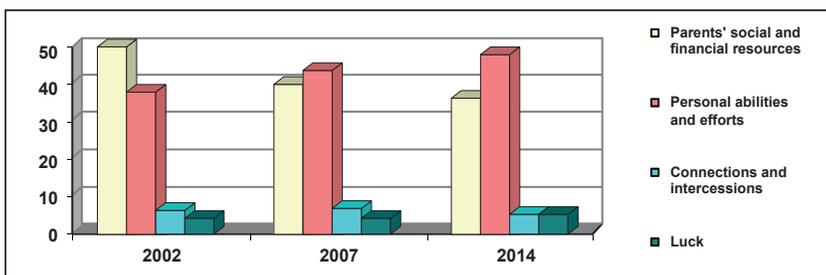
educational aspirations; they are lowest at the level of higher education. Whereas one of the reasons for this may be that there are working students, the main reason is that aspirations towards higher education are stronger among young people from well-to-do and wealthy families. This is true even for the Roma: those who want to complete primary education have more financial difficulties than those aspiring to higher education. In this way, inequality is reproduced and deepened.

5.4 Factors for obtaining desired education

The transition to market economy changed the role of the main factors for obtaining desired education: impoverishment limited the role of personal abilities and efforts, and increased that of the resources of one's parental family. This meant that generational dependence was growing, and was interpreted as probably the most unfavourable fact in the whole picture of the development of the young generation in Bulgaria (Митев: 2005).

The post-transition development in the 21st century has seen a slow but steady change in this situation.

Figure 5.6 Most important factor for obtaining desired education (%)



Note: Data refer to persons aged 15-25.

Source: Gallup International.

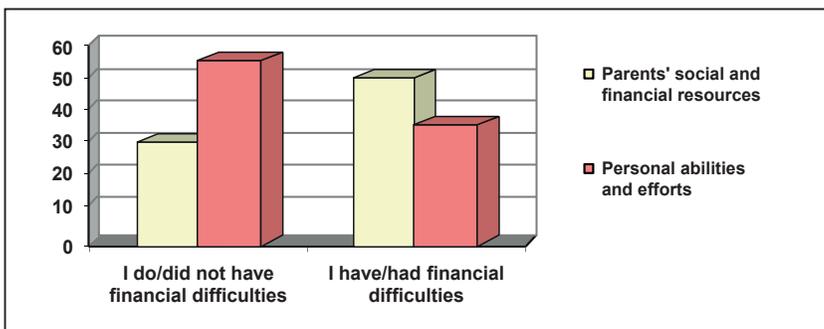
The direction of the changes is clear: personal abilities and efforts, seen as secondary in importance as a heritage of the transition, are now duly ranked first. It is noteworthy that women rely more on personal abilities and efforts (52%, as compared with 48% of men). In 2002 the situation was different: men still had a lead in this respect, albeit an insignificant one (35%, as against 34% of women). In a sense, this trend may be seen as a victory of feminism: young women in Bulgaria have become more independent. The

inversion of the role of the different factors is indicated by the circumstance that it applies both to the poor (50% as against 40%) and the wealthy (55% as against 33%). This difference, however, also shows that the higher level of financial security is a prerequisite for placing greater emphasis on the role of personal abilities. The same dependence is manifested on a negative plane: for the Roma, parents' resources continue to be the most important factor. Yet we should not forget that their educational aspirations are much more modest. "Personal abilities and efforts" are the most important factor according to 52% of ethnic Bulgarians, 53% of ethnic Turks, and just 29% of Roma. "Parents' resources" are most important to 36% of ethnic Bulgarians, 38% of ethnic Turks and 44% of Roma (Cramer's $V = .113$).

Some other differences are also noteworthy. Most dependent on their parents are young people from the North-West, and least dependent those from the South-West and South-Central planning regions, explicitly more in villages (42%) and small towns (42%) than in regional centres (35%) and Sofia (31%).

This study offers direct proof of the objective meaning of parents' resources as a factor for obtaining desired education.

Figure 5.7 Factors for obtaining desired education / Financial difficulties in obtaining desired education (%)

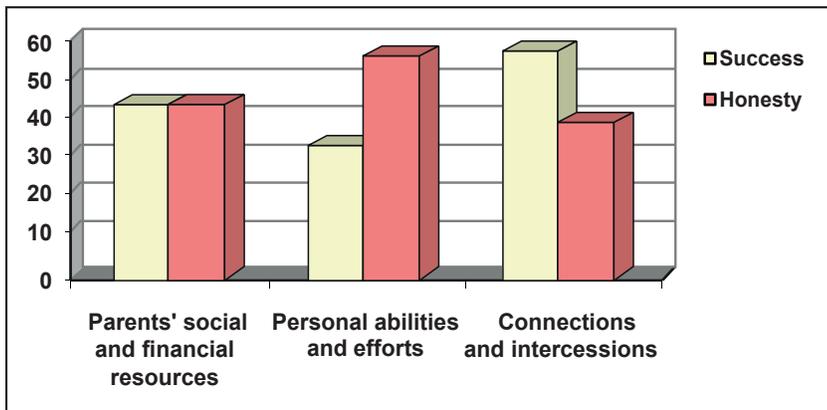


Financial difficulties are personalized in intergenerational relationships (Cramer's $V = .229$). Poverty supports paternalism. At the same time, this dependence is not absolute. Every fourth respondent who relies on his/her personal abilities has had financial difficulties, while every second who relies on parents' resources has not had such difficulties. The meaning of this subjective moment can be better understood if we look at the picture of everyday life at school/university.

Life at school/university proves to be most hard and stressful for respondents who think connections and intercessions are most important (30%), followed by those who count on parents' resources (18%), and least hard and stressful for those who rely on personal abilities and efforts (8%). These responses are entirely logical, as they overlap with the significant differences in academic achievement: expectedly, the top achievers are those who rely on personal abilities and efforts. All this shows something very important in the subjective aspect in ranking educational factors. Personal abilities and efforts are ranked first more often by young people who have such qualities themselves. The differences also point us to the sphere of moral philosophy. This is indicated by the connection between the responses to two questions: "In your opinion, which is the most important factor for obtaining one's desired education today?" and "What is more important to you personally: success in life at any cost, even if that means moral compromise, or honesty and integrity, even if that means sacrificing personal interests?" (Cramer's $V = .161$).

We have good reason to ponder the different elements in young people's responses. Attaching primary importance to one factor or another reflects, to some extent, one's social observations, but it is also an expression of one's own orientation which also contains subjective aspects. It is only among those who give top priority to personal abilities and efforts that the responses, "honesty and integrity, even if that means sacrificing personal interests", predominate.

Figure 5.8 Educational factors / Value orientations (%)



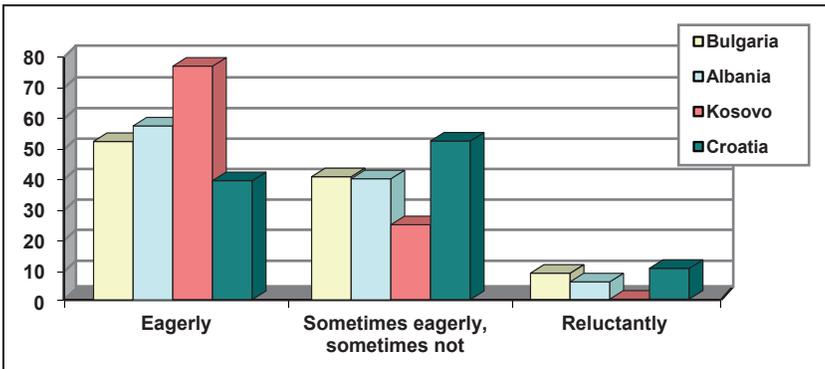
Conversely, attachment of primary importance to connections and intercessions, as well as reliance on luck, is combined with “success in life at any cost, even if that means moral compromise”. Understanding the importance of connections and relying on one’s connections to get on in life are different things but, to some extent, they may overlap or coincide.

5.5 Everyday life at school/university

The representative sample includes pupils and students at different levels of the educational system. There is a small group (6%) who are still in primary education (Grades 5-7). The largest group comprises those in secondary school (28%). Those in higher education are in Bachelor’s Degree programmes (20%) and Doctoral Degree programmes (3%). All interpreted responses referring to the respondents as a whole are relative to one extent or another, insofar as they contain also internal differences between those groups.

Efficiency and effectiveness of education at every level depends significantly on motivation for attending school/university as an attractive place. The Bulgarian educational system largely meets this requirement.

Figure 5.9 Motivation for attending school/university (%)



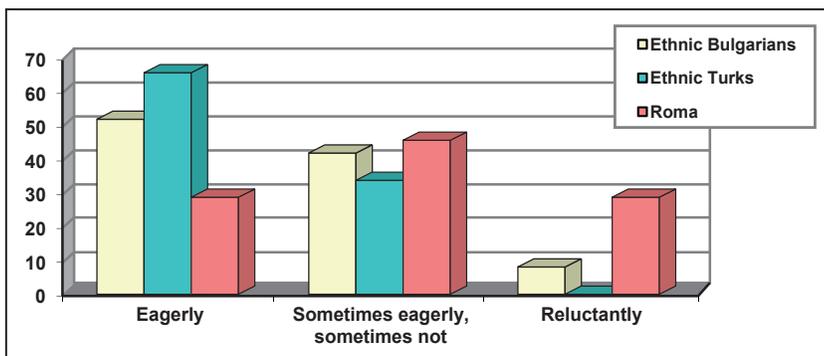
In Bulgaria, the majority (51%; pupils – 46%, students – 54%) of young people in education go to school/university “very eagerly” or “eagerly”. This is almost equally true for the poor and for the wealthy. Women definitely feel happier at school/university (55%) than men (47%). It is noteworthy that the responses in rural areas (60%) and small towns (58%) are significantly more positive than in Sofia (42%). It is interesting that the same differentiation is found in the responses recorded in different

countries: in the most urbanized country (Croatia) the responses are most reserved, and in the most agricultural one (Kosovo) they are most positive.

The motivation for attending school/university has different psychological components: intellectual – desire for knowledge; communicative – communicating with peers; volitional – achieving a particular goal in life. Although this study does not allow us to explore this complexity, it still points to some hypotheses.

The most significant are the differences in an ethnic aspect. One is struck by the exceptional motivation of ethnic Turks (32% “very eagerly” and 33% “eagerly”) and the reluctance of Roma (7% and 21% respectively), to attend school. It would be logical to expect an explanation from the responses regarding young people’s experiences of life at school/university. One may suppose that life at school is more hard and stressful for the Roma and that is why they go to school less eagerly. The data, however, are different: everyday life at school is hard and stressful for 13% of ethnic Bulgarians, 13% of ethnic Turks, and 13% of Roma. What is more, it is precisely the majority of the Roma (59%) who find life at school easy or very easy, unlike the ethnic Turks (44%) and ethnic Bulgarians (43%).

Figure 5.10 Motivation for attending school/university (%)



This comparison is important as it indicates motivation – not efforts and obstacles in the teaching and learning process, but the very motivation and desire to participate in it efficiently and effectively. This is also indicated by data on the grade point average in the last school year.

Parents’ education levels have a significant effect on young people’s attitudes towards education and the teaching and learning process. It is noteworthy that the highest education level of the father as well as the

mother (Master's/Doctoral Degree) does not correspond to the son's or daughter's easy or very easy life at school/university; it is found in the balanced response "hard and stressful to some extent". It is likely that this result points to a serious attitude towards the teaching and learning process, an attitude that is neither problematized nor frivolous.

5.6 Academic efforts and achievements

The academic achievement of Bulgarian pupils and students, as found in this study as well as according to the official data of the Ministry of Education, attests to good standards of teaching and learning: the academic achievement of more than one-third (38% of pupils and 40% of students) is Very Good to Excellent; it is Average to Good or Poor to Average for just 15% of respondents. Of course, it is questionable to what extent the grades awarded by teachers correspond to their pupils' or students' real knowledge. This question, however, is beyond the scope of this study. Still, it is important to note that the teaching and learning standards in the Bulgarian educational system have often been criticized in the public sphere. Such critical assessments were also found in the in-depth interviews.

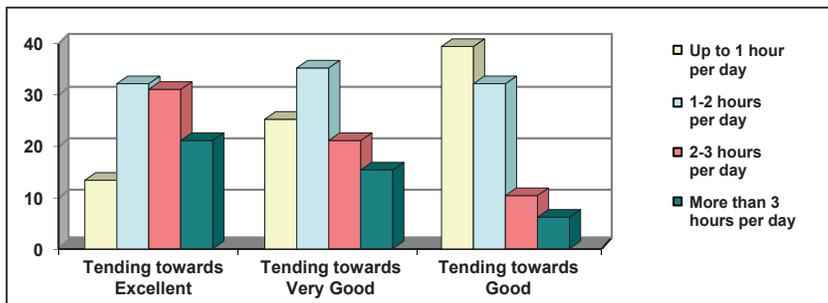
There are people who don't feel like studying at all and start work immediately after completing [school]. It's not that they are stupid – they simply don't feel like studying. In general, the attitude towards education is that it is good to be [well-]educated... (Information Science student, male, Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

Our school is nice. But there are two groups of people, regardless of gender or age. The ones don't feel like studying at all and they come to school simply to pass to the next year with a 3 [the pass mark on a grading scale of 2-6]. Naturally, when the teachers see that they can't be bothered [to study] and well-nigh don't know why they are in school, they give them a 3. Just so that they will pass. It's simply that the teachers, too, can't be bothered. While the other group want to study very much, they know why they are in school, they want to improve their future. (Male pupil, 17, Sofia)

To my mind, education is valuable but it depends on the person. There are those who are studious and those who aren't. The studious tend to be avoided, I don't know how to explain it exactly... I have quite a few friends who have high education but... their education serves only like some sort of souvenir. (Ethnic Turk, male, 24, driver, town of Peshtera)

The time spent by Bulgarian youth on studying is comparable to the data for other countries: in Bulgaria 55%, and in Croatia 52% spend up to two hours per day on studying outside of school/university. Young women spend much more time on studying than young men (Cramer's $V = .205$): just 38% of them devote the minimum time to studying, up to one hour per day, as compared with 62% of young men. Students study more than pupils, which is natural. Most of those who spend up to one hour a day studying are wealthy, which is explicable: they have the largest number of other options. The least time to studying is devoted by Roma (48% of them up to one hour), and the most by ethnic Turks (Cramer's $V = .114$). The family milieu is a prime factor (Cramer's $V = .105$): those who study most are those whose parents are highly-educated. In Sofia – as compared with the rest of the country – we found two extremes: the largest shares both of those who study a little and those who study a lot. Young women study significantly more than men (29% of men and 17% of women study for up to one hour a day).

There is a direct correlation between academic efforts (time spent on studying) and academic achievement (Figure 5.10; Cramer's $V = .204$). Those who have the highest grades spend the most time on studying. Private lessons are taken mostly by pupils/students who have excellent or very good grades. Private tutoring is used comparatively more rarely than in other countries, mainly in foreign languages and in exact sciences (76% have not taken private lessons in the last year). Private lessons are used above all by pupils and more rarely by students. Interest in private tutoring may have declined because of the fact that admission to higher education is no longer based on highly competitive entrance examinations as it used to be in the past. The establishment of many higher educational institutions, including private ones, has led to a situation where many student places remain vacant. This is a radically different picture from that in the recent past.

Figure 5.11 Academic achievement / Academic efforts (%)

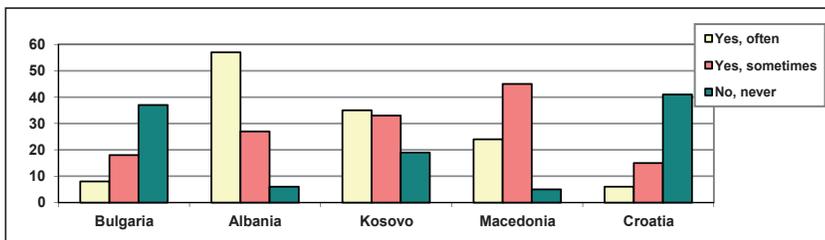
A comparison with other countries shows that Bulgarian and Croatian pupils spend approximately the same number of hours on studying (up to two hours – 56% in Bulgaria and 53% in Croatia; more than two hours – 39% in Bulgaria and 39% in Croatia). At the same time, everyday life at school/university is hard and stressful for 14% of young people in education in Bulgaria and for twice as many – 28% – in Croatia; it is easy for 44% in Bulgaria and 14% in Croatia. The fact that life at school/university in Bulgaria is easy for three times as many young people as in Croatia may be explained with two reasons: different levels of requirements and/or existence of corrupt practices.

5.7 Corruption in the educational system

Corrupt practices in the educational system are recorded in the study through respondents' reports about buying grades and exams. The comparison of data from different countries from the region shows striking differences.

The "birth marks" of the transition are characteristic of countries with more preserved kinship ties – the level of corruption in them is much higher. The differences are determined not by the market as such but by the historical context in which it develops and the specific path followed by the respective country. The comparison confirms the thesis of Hungarian-born American sociologist Ivan Szelenyi regarding the differences between the neoliberal transition in Central Europe and the neo-paternalistic transition in Southeast Europe and Russia (Eyal, Szelenyi, Townsley: 1998).

Figure 5.12 Do you think that grades and exams are being bought at your school/university? (%)



Note: Data for these countries refer to different age groups: for Bulgaria and Croatia, 14-27 years; for Albania and Kosovo, 16-27 years; for Macedonia, 15-29 years.

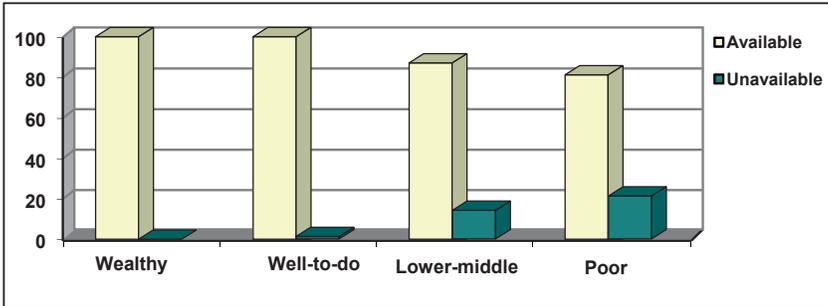
In the Bulgarian study, cases of corruption are reported more often by the wealthy than by the poor; perhaps the wealthy are judging from personal experience. Such cases are more frequent at universities than at schools.

It is noteworthy that the majority (52%) of working students gave positive answers as to the existence of academic corruption (“often” and “sometimes”). They comprise the majority from a group that has independent incomes and, at the same time, little time for studies, a group where corrupt practices are most tempting. Bulgaria is paying part of the price of the transition: marketization of society.

5.8 Fashionable codes

After the beginning of the changes, the educational aspirations of Bulgarian youth focused on mastering key codes: a western language – above all, but not just – English, and computer literacy. The sociological analyses showed that this was giving rise to new, prominent dividing lines: generational, social, and ethnic (Колев, Райчев и Бунджулов: 2000). The opportunities of older generations, the poor, and ethnic minorities proved to be additionally limited. At the beginning of the 21st century, 52% of the poor, 65% of the middle-income, and 91% of the well-to-do young people were computer-literate. The ethnic divide was even more striking: in 2002, a representative study did not find a single Roma person using the internet at home (Митев: 2005).

The present study shows that there has been a radical turn in the last decade: the differentiating functions of computer literacy and internet access are being replaced by predominantly homogenizing functions.

Figure 5.13 Social strata / Home internet access (%)

One may add that the differences between settlement systems have also acquired a new character: the share of young people who have internet at home is 80% even in rural areas, and as high as 98% in Sofia (Cramer's $V = .188$). The most significant differences remain ethnic-based (Cramer's $V = .519$) but they, too, have changed: the difference between ethnic Turks and ethnic Bulgarians has been radically reduced, and 40% of Roma have home internet access. Of course, the availability of home internet access does not have positive sides only. It accounts for one of the lines of the "McDonaldization" of education. The copy-paste function is used widely by pupils and students in preparing "their" reports and essays, which are not infrequently accepted favourably by teachers.

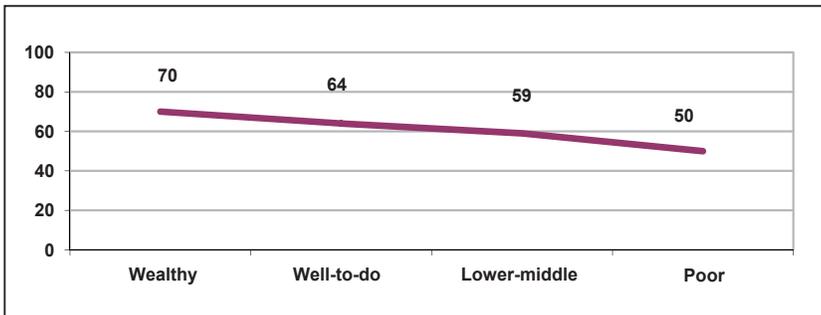
As for the other key code – learning a western language – this study shows that it is the most common reason for taking private lessons. Insofar as private tuition presupposes additional expenses, it is obvious that here the differentiating function of the key codes in education remains in place.

5.9 Educational preferences and satisfaction levels

Upon enrolling in educational institutions young people are faced with several options: optimal choice (desired study programme with prospects for self-realization), realistic choice (study programme that secures employment), and forced choice (study programme that is accessible and enrolment into it is certain although this is not what the person wishes to study). The decision young people take in practice shows that the optimal choice prevails (58%; more characteristic of women – 61%, than of men – 55%; of students – 84%, than of pupils – 68%). There is a strong dependence between material status and the choice made.

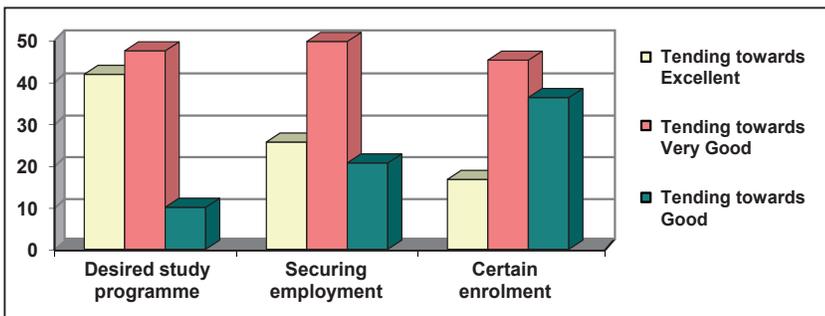
Figure 5.14 Choice of desired study programme and material status (%)

“Study programme I wish(ed) to enrol into”



Enrolling into the desired study programme looks – at least to half of the poor – as a luxury that can be afforded by the wealthy. Of course, the subjective factor plays a role in this case too. One can say for certain that there is a direct connection between academic achievement and type of study programme chosen (Cramer’s $V = .176$). The majority of top achievers are among those who have enrolled into the desired study programme.

Figure 5.15 Academic achievement / Chosen study programme (%)



The other typological choice is that of *place of education* – in Bulgaria or abroad, in a public or private educational institution. It is typical of the post-transition situation as an indication of the new conditions in which the young generation is growing up in Bulgaria as well as in the other postcommunist Balkan countries. At the same time, the data show that the choice itself differs significantly. In Bulgaria, the majority (52%) of young people prefer to study in a public educational institutional in their home

country. When we add the share of those who prefer to study in a Bulgarian private educational institution (9%), we get a total of 61%. The situation is the opposite in Albania and Kosovo, where the same majority (61%) prefer to study abroad, be it in a public or private educational institution. The reason for this difference is probably connected to the assessments of education in the home country: in Bulgaria 44% of young people are satisfied with the quality of education, as compared with just 19% in Albania and 24% in Kosovo. It is also likely that the undoubtedly much larger Albanian and Kosovar diaspora abroad provides more points of support for pupils and students from these countries. The picture in Bulgaria is comparatively close to that in Croatia, where the largest share of youth, albeit not as categorically (41%), prefer to study in an educational institution in their home country. The difference is that twice as many Croatian youth prefer a national private educational institution. This may be due to the lower level of development of private educational institutions in Bulgaria, on the one hand, and on the other, to the smaller material resources of the Bulgarians. Such a hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that wealthy Bulgarian youth demonstrate the same preference for studying in a private educational institution abroad as that seen in Croatia. The new range of opportunities, which are in principle common to this young generation, also reveals the new forms of social-differentiating functions of the educational system.

Another significant dependence is that on parents' cultural capital (Cramer's $V = .160$ for mother's education level; Cramer's $V = .166$ for father's education level). Almost half (40%) of respondents with the highest-educated fathers prefer to study abroad – be it in a public (28%) or a private (21%) educational institution. The contrast with the lowest-educated families is striking (a total of 11%; of them 8% in a public and 3% in a private educational institution).

The level of satisfaction with the quality of education in Bulgaria (44%) is close to that in Croatia (40%) and it is comparatively high. One may raise the question, though, as to whether the level of satisfaction is higher than that of the real quality of education. An answer to this question is partially found upon comparing the opinions of pupils/students with different academic achievement levels. The largest share of those who are satisfied is not found among the top achievers, who have higher requirements, but among those who are in the middle of the scale, those with a grade point average between 4 (Good) and 5 (Very Good), "the mediocre". The in-depth interviews shed further light on this matter.

I don't like [the quality of] education in Bulgaria. While I was studying at the foreign-language-teaching school, some of the teachers were up to the mark but others weren't. For example, I got away quite easily in some subjects, all I had to do was copy a page from the textbook, hand it in to the teacher and she would give me a 6 [Excellent]. While in other subjects I had to study and cram more in order to get a 5 [Very Good]. This is something I don't like in general. It's the same at university – plagiarism is a mass practice. A mass practice. (Roma male, 22, working student at the University of National and World Economy)

There's no way you can get a good education at schools like mine. Even those that are regarded as "elite" schools don't offer very good education. People spend money on private lessons. You can't rely on this institution. (Female, 19, enrolled in a university in Germany)

Maybe the best variant today is to obtain education abroad, because it is no doubt better if you can afford it. (Male, 22, working Law student at Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

Bulgarian youth differ not just from Croatian youth but also from their peers in Albania and Kosovo, who prefer to study in a public educational institution abroad. The critical opinions may be interpreted above all as a challenge to the constantly discussed, but still uncompleted, educational reform in Bulgaria.

5.10 Conclusions

The results from this study show that a number of characteristics of the functioning of the Bulgarian educational system during the transition period still remain in place, but at the same time, are changing and intertwining with new phenomena.

- The aspirations towards higher education are characteristic of the majority of Bulgarian youth, and they are homogenizing the two genders, with a certain prevalence of young women. At the same time, a definite, not large but ethnically differentiated, group are limiting their educational aspirations to the acquisition of primary education.
- The educational system is continuing to reproduce the social inequality typical of the transition period, but this trend has weakened in some respects.

- Internet access no longer differentiates but, rather, homogenizes the young generation.
- Lack of sufficient financial resources for obtaining the desired education is personified in intergenerational relationships, and is conducive to paternalism, young people's dependence on their parents.
- Motivation of young people to attend school/university is highest among ethnic Turks and lowest among Roma.
- There are corrupt practices in the educational system, although not to the extent found in other Balkan countries.
- The level of satisfaction with the quality of education is comparatively high, but this is not due to high criteria with regard to quality.

6. YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT

6.1 The problem situation

The transition from school to work is a crucial moment in the social integration of the young generation. The way in which this transition is effected is a measure of the level of independence achieved by young people; viewed from a historical perspective, it signifies the overcoming of paternalism.

The problem situation caused by Bulgaria's transition to market economy includes several significant generational aspects:

- Problematic *labour market participation*; existence of youth unemployment. In June 2014, the number of registered unemployed persons aged up to 29 was 59 000 out of a total of 359 000 unemployed, 10.5% of Bulgaria's labour force.
- Problematic *individualization* of the path to employment. Significant factors in finding a job are not just one's personal abilities and efforts but the social and financial resources of parents, and connections and intercessions.
- Problematic *personal self-realization*. As money has become a universal measure of success, most young people prefer a better-paid rather than a more interesting job.
- Problematic *work and life ethic*. The way in which the Bulgarian transition took place was far from the historical model of the Protestant ethic. "*Dalavera*" – or easy money through dishonest means – has become a key word in Bulgarian youth language. Young people prefer an easier job with fewer responsibilities. They prefer success, even if that means moral compromise.

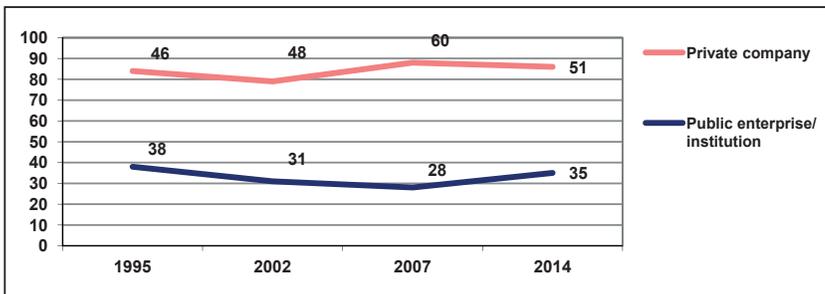
The findings of this study enable us to compile a picture of a moment in a historical process: the generational changes caused by the transition to market economy in Bulgaria.

6.2 Preference for private sector employment

Already in the 1990s, when public enterprises prevailed in Bulgaria, sociological studies found a characteristic phenomenon: a generational difference in preferences for employment in the public and in the private sector. Whereas most young people preferred private companies, older

people preferred public institutions/enterprises. Not less interesting was the next finding, made in the early 2000s when the private sector had become dominant in Bulgaria: older people continued to prefer public enterprises, while youth were even more oriented towards the private companies. The 2014 study yielded characteristic results.

Figure 6.1 If you could choose, would you prefer a job in a public enterprise/institution or in a private company? (%)



Note: Data refer to persons aged 15-25. Data for 2014 on the 14-27 age group coincide, with 1% difference: those who wish to work in a private company are 51% of 15-25-year-olds and 50% of 14-27-year-olds.

Source: Gallup International.

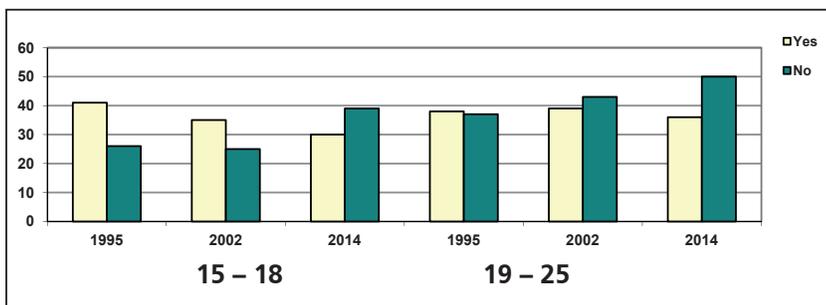
On the whole, the proportions show that preferences for employment in the private sector are stable; in Bulgaria in 2014, they are significantly higher (51%) than in Croatia (32%). Seen in retrospect, the 2014 study attests to a certain decline in the market euphoria and higher interest in employment in the public sector. It should be borne in mind that the privatization process in Bulgaria was accompanied by a “siphoning off” of public enterprises. The enterprises that have remained public-owned after the completion of the privatization cycle are stable. Conversely, the private sector is more uncertain and vulnerable to the effects of the global economic crisis. The differentiation we found is most significant in terms of planning regions: whilst in the South-West Planning Region 60% of youth prefer to work in a private company, in the North-Central Planning Region their share is just 37%. In the North-West and North-Central planning regions private investment is lower than in other regions. This explains the higher preferences for employment in the public sector.

One change is especially noteworthy. The 2002 and 2007 studies found a significant difference between ethnic communities. In 2002, 58%

of Roma and 49% of ethnic Turks preferred to work in the public sector, as compared with a total share of 31% of Bulgarian youth who preferred public sector employment. According to the interpretation offered at the time, this was probably less an effect of generational backwardness than of a lower level of social protection of workers and employees from the minorities in the private sector (Митев: 2005). The present study shows that the shares of young people from the different ethnic groups who prefer to work in the public sector are almost equal (35% of ethnic Bulgarians, 35% of ethnic Turks, and 39% of Roma; there are differences only in the preference for employment in an executive position – which can be explained with the differences in educational attainment). One may conclude that the hypothesis proposed in 2002 has been corroborated, as the social protection of minorities in the private sector has improved.

The market economy attracts with the “attractive force” of the subject position.

Figure 6.2 Have you any plans to start your own business? / 15-18 and 19-25 age groups (%)



Source: Gallup International.

Although the business aspirations of teenagers have declined in the last 20 years, they are still impressive. And they have remained almost at the same level among the older age group. Business ambitions increase proportionally with the size of the settlement where young people live as well as, but to a lesser extent, with the level of education. The 2014 study shows an interesting dynamic in the level of business ambitions with age: business ambitions start from a definite, comparatively lower, level, reach their peak upon the completion of education and biological maturity (18-

22 years), and then decline upon encountering reality (23-27 years), but remain at a higher level than the initial one.

It is noteworthy that those who prefer to work in the private sector spend less time on studying for school/university (Cramer's $V = .152$). This is also true for those who would like to work in an executive position in a public enterprise/institution. The most diligent prove to be those who prefer to work in a non-executive position in a public enterprise/institution.

There is a significant change in the profile of aspiring businesspersons. In 2014, as in 2002, those who plan to start their own business are more willing to take on a difficult job demanding responsibility. There is also a significant difference, though. In 2002, when respondents were asked, "What is more important to you personally: success in life at any cost, even if that means moral compromise, or honesty and integrity, even if that means sacrificing personal interests?", those who planned to go into business chose "success" more often than the others. In 2014 the picture is the opposite: it is they who chose "honesty" more often. This cannot but be seen as a symptom of normalization of the business environment in Bulgaria. The time of "cut-throat private business", of shady deals and easy money through dishonest means, is on its way out, although it is too early to pronounce it over.

Sociological portrait of the typical young person who plans to start their own business. Male, aged 18-22, working student, ethnic Bulgarian, Sofia resident, not poor but not necessarily rich, may be lower-middle. More independent from parents in taking important decisions. Appreciates personal dignity, but attaches importance to altruism less than the others, is keen on designer clothes but is less interested in material status when choosing a prospective marriage partner.

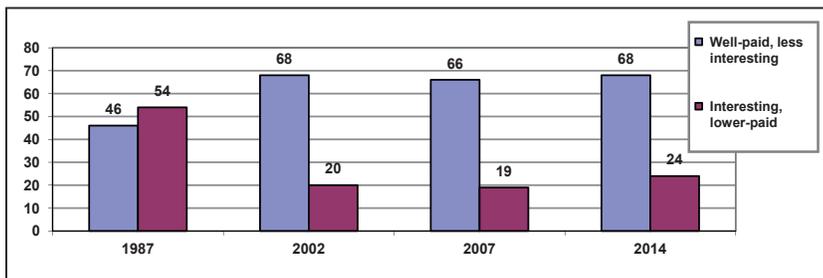
6.3 Labour market participation and personal self-realization

Orientation towards the private sector is an expression of motivation which directly concerns the content of labour. Bulgaria is characterized by comparatively low salaries in the public sector. Even the highest salaries, those of the President of the Republic and government ministers – are incomparable to the salaries of their counterparts in the other EU member countries. The Bulgarian private sector offers better opportunities in general, although they are by no means always realized in practice. In this particular case, though, we are interested in the motives for choosing

different types of employment. The majority of the new generation are characterized by a desire for success in life, measured in terms of monetary income. The dilemma between “a better-paid but less interesting, or a more interesting but lower-paid job” is resolved by the majority through an instrumental approach to employment.

The choice of a more interesting job may be seen as an expression of a desire for personal self-realization. It was characteristic of the period before 1989, in the conditions of a wage-levelling system and a specific idealistic value system. The transition to market economy has radically changed both the labour remuneration system and the value system. The orientation towards better-paid jobs is, to a large extent, an unavoidable consequence of this change. The problem is that it comes at the cost of sacrificing personal self-realization.

Figure 6.3 If you could choose, what kind of a job would you prefer: a better-paid or a more interesting one? (%)



Source: IYS, 1987; Gallup International, 2002; 2007; 2014.

In this context, the change we are witnessing is a step in a positive direction. The in-depth interviews shed further light on the issue.

Everybody needs different things. For example, to find a profession that is satisfying to you. For me personally, money is not a major factor as long as I have enough. I'm not talking of greed. (Female, 19, enrolled in a university in Germany)

Successful professional development means not being stuck in one place for life. If you are working for money, at some point, in the good case, you will start earning [enough] money to live [well] and have fun outside work, but it's not good to work in a job you dislike in order to survive. (Information Science student, male, Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

Working out of necessity is depressing. It makes you feel like... I don't want to use the word "nonentity", but like someone who has no future. (Male, 22, working Law student at Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

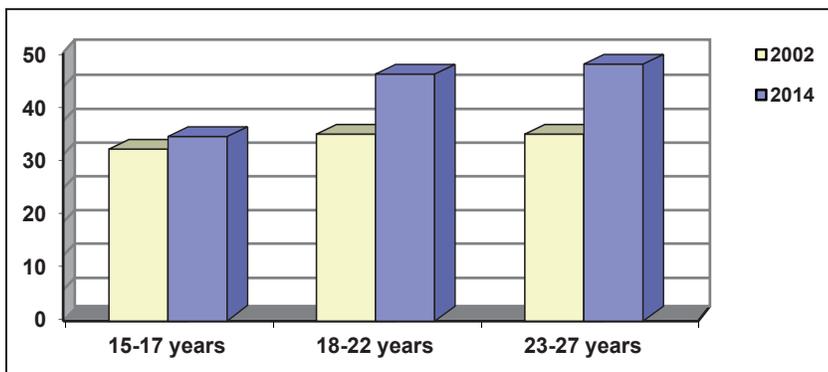
Young people who prefer a more interesting job spend more time on studying (Cramer's $V = .124$). The correlations with other factors are very significant (Cramer's $V = .173$ for education; Cramer's $V = .181$ for region; Cramer's $V = .182$ for status; Cramer's $V = .200$ for father's education level; Cramer's $V = .287$ for settlement type). Higher education is the path to professions which reveal the creative potential of the individual. Also obvious are the dependences not just on material status (poorer respondents prefer better-paid jobs) but also on the character of the job. Just 17% of respondents from rural areas prefer a more interesting job, as compared with 47% from Sofia. This is not just because material standards are lower but also because it is more difficult to find an interesting job in rural areas.

Sociological portrait of a young person likely to choose a more interesting, even if lower-paid, job. Female, aged 18-22, student, ethnic Bulgarian, with highly-educated parents – father with Master's, Doctoral, and/or Bachelor's degree; with high material status, Sofia resident. Those who would choose a better-paid job attach greater importance to personal qualities such as ambitiousness, thrift, feeling for the new, physical strength, and physical beauty. Those who prefer a more interesting job appreciate more diligence, being goal-oriented, intellectuality, creative audacity, modesty, and ability to enjoy life.

The aspiration towards self-realization can be measured by the wish to take responsibility by preferring a more difficult rather than an easier job demanding less responsibility. One may assume that the respondents were tempted to choose the more prestigious answer. The context shows that this indicator "works": those who would prefer a more difficult job work harder at school, spending more time on studying (Cramer's $V = .193$).

Figure 6.4 If you could choose, what kind of a job would you prefer? (%)

Answer: "Difficult job demanding responsibility"



Source: Gallup International, 2002; 2014.

The change is positive, Bulgarian youth's self-confidence has grown and, what is especially important, it has acquired a normal dynamic: willingness to take a more difficult job increases with age. Naturally, the ambitions to take a more challenging job increase with educational attainment: they predominate among university graduates, they are equal among secondary school graduates, and they are lowest among the low-educated. They do not always meet with understanding and support.

I want to do sciences, more specifically, the difficult ones. I am talking about quantum physics. When I mention this to someone from my family or to a friend they think I'm crazy. Why would I take on something that difficult? They imagine I'm something like a nerd with huge glasses who studies all the time. It seems this is something people can't accept. They don't think it's normal for me to say something like that. But this is my dream. (Male pupil, 17, Sofia, Nadezhda Quarter)

Work motivation is strongly influenced by the low levels of remuneration.

Most young people try to dodge work. This comes first. Next, if you can't dodge work, you resort to cunning. There is [enough] work. It is another matter that there is no desire for work. [The level of] pay doesn't motivate you to start work. (Ethnic Turk, male, 24, driver, town of Peshtera)

In Bulgaria, unfortunately, you can't achieve anything just by working hard. You have to be dishonest to succeed in life. (Roma

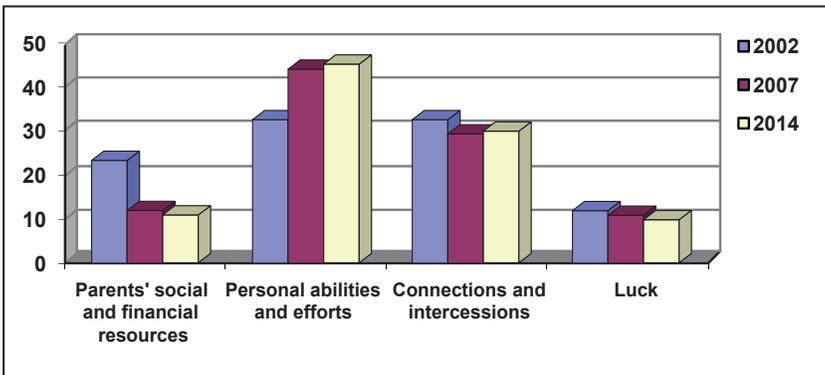
male, 22, working student at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia)

There is a maxim inherited from the past that goes, “Working hard will make you hump-backed, not rich”, and some people still believe in it. Its relevance was reinforced by the “*dalavera*”, the making of easy money during the transition period. This attitude is visibly losing its appeal among the young generation.

6.4 Factors for transition from school to work

The question of the factors that are of crucial importance for the transition from school to work introduces the key topic regarding the level of independence upon the social integration of young people. It is logical to expect that the level of young people’s independence is higher upon looking for a suitable job than upon obtaining education. Young people looking for a job already have an asset of their own: the certificate of education. Competition on the labour market, which is much higher in the conditions of unemployment, makes it necessary to use, to a greater or lesser extent, one’s parents’ resources as well as one’s own connections and intercessions. Those factors – as well as luck – have undergone dynamic changes in the conditions of the transition and the post-transition process.

Figure 6.5 Most important factor for finding a suitable job and succeeding in employment today (%)



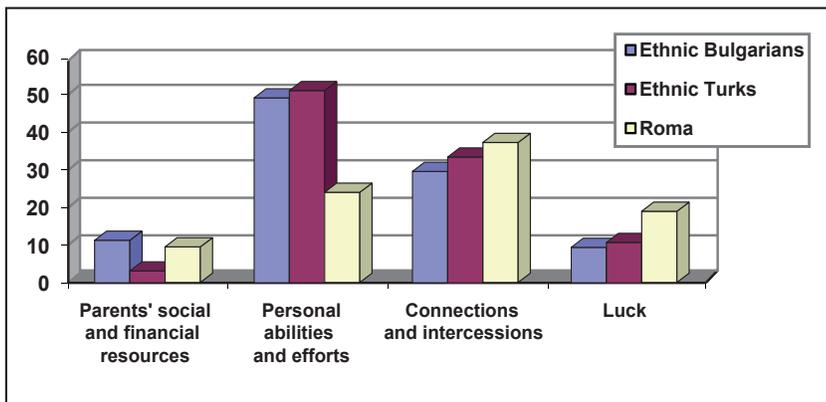
Note: To ensure full comparability, the data presented above refer to persons aged 15-25. In 2014 the 14-27 age group differs insignificantly from the 15-25 group: -1% with regard to parents’ resources and +1% with regard to connections and intercessions.

Source: Gallup International, 2002, 2007, 2014.

The 2014 study found an almost complete overlap with the data from 2007 and a radical change in comparison with 2002. At the beginning of this century, the external factors (parents' resources, connections and intercessions) were crucial according to the majority of respondents. Now the emphasis is on personal abilities and efforts. The process of individualization of the transition from school to work is underway. It is important to note that the influence of social stratification is much lower now – it applies equally to the wealthy and to the lower-middle. In 2002 the ratio between the wealthy and the poor who placed emphasis on personal abilities was 2:1. Today it is 5:4.

Against this background, two aspects revealing difficulties in the transition from school to work stand out. The first is the ethnic one (ramer's $V = .104$).

Figure 6.6 Most important factor for finding a suitable job and succeeding in employment today / Ethnic group (%)



The ethnic aspect is quite interesting (*Figure 6.6*). Young Bulgarian Turks have shaken off paternalism and are as independent as the ethnic Bulgarians. Already at the beginning of the transition, researchers (the International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations in Sofia, directed by Antonina Zhelyazkova), drew the conclusion that the shock change of the names of Bulgarian Turks (the so-called “Revival Process”) and the resistance it caused led to a generational revolution in the Turkish family, radically increasing the role of young people. Today we are witnessing a new move away from paternalism.

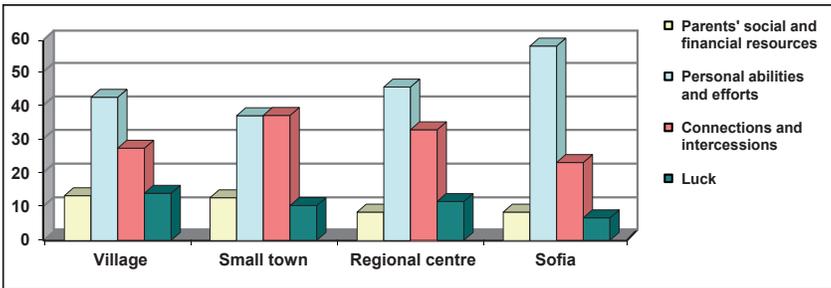
The picture among the young Roma is radically different. Just one in four Roma rely on their personal qualities and efforts, but do not find the

necessary points of support in their parental family. The majority rely on connections, intercessions, or simply on good luck. For every fifth Roma respondent, luck is the most important factor. Of course, it would be more logical to find “luck” at the labour office. But the main precondition for success through the labour office is educational attainment and, besides, there are also discriminatory attitudes.

When they see someone who’s a bit more swarthy, they say “Well, we’ll call you”, and that’s it. Or if someone speaks in a slightly different way, that’s the end of it. (Roma female, 19, Sofia, Fakulteta Quarter, employed at a pastry workshop)

The other aspect is the type of settlement (Cramer’s V = .105).

Figure 6.7 Most important factor for finding a suitable job / Settlement type (%)



Sofia is the only place where personal abilities and efforts predominate categorically; good luck is relied upon twice less often in Sofia than in villages. The importance of connections and intercessions in small towns is exactly the same as in the Roma community: everybody knows everybody else, and the second network is as important as personal abilities.

The in-depth interviews place emphasis on connections and lend colour to our findings.

You need to have connections and to know quite a few people, Bulgarians, at that, in high places – I mean directors, politicians, someone at a much higher level than mine who will make sure I get a job at his company. Looking for a job through interviews won’t get you anywhere. (Roma male, 22, working student at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia)

You need to have connections, or, if you have rich parents, you’ve already made it in life. If there’s somebody to give you a push for-

wards, even if, say, your parents want you to become a lawyer or something... (Male pupil, 17, Sofia, Nadezhda Quarter)

In most cases everything's done through friends and acquaintances, the so-called connections. Even [to get a job as] a simple shop assistant, you need to know someone. (Female, 25, shop assistant at a shopping mall, Sofia)

At present connections are very necessary, more than anything else. Even money doesn't count so much. (Ethnic Turk, male, 24, driver, town of Peshtera)

Ivan Szelenyi, cited in the previous chapter, distinguishes between the "neoliberal" and the "neo-paternalistic" approach in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. The road passed by Bulgaria provides offensive proof of the heuristic power of this thesis. In the 1990s, "circles of friends" became a political concept during the government of socialist Zhan Videnov, as did "cousins" during the government of democrat Ivan Kostov. Relative, neighbour and friendly connections are typical of a society urbanized just two decades before the beginning of the change; on the other hand, the governance mechanisms of state socialism were strongly personalized and therefore modified the networks based on kinship and common regional origin.

After the beginning of the transition, political connections did not only not disappear – they became pluralized, acquired a multi-party character and, in the context of large-scale privatization and "appointed capitalists", increased their importance. The post-transition picture shows that their importance has decreased. In Bulgaria they are less important than in Croatia: young people in Bulgaria rank them in the top two places among the important factors for finding a job much more rarely (18%) than their peers in Croatia (30%).

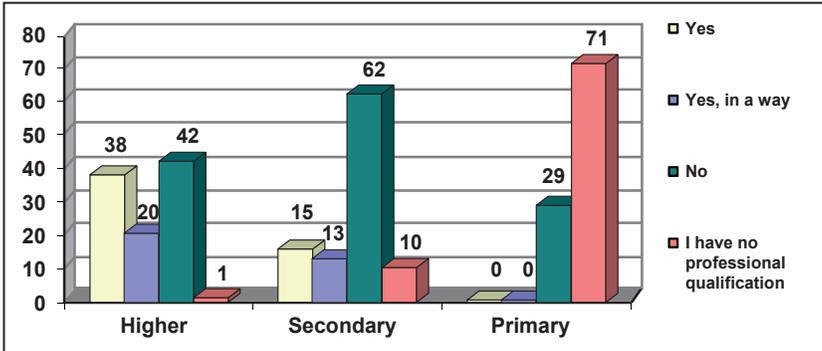
6.5 Employment and education

A prerequisite for the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational system as well as for labour productivity is the correspondence between young people's education and their employment in the profession for which they were educated. The study found a very serious mismatch in this respect.

The total share of young people without professional qualifications and those who have such qualifications but do not practice them is alarmingly high: 62% of employed secondary school graduates and 42% of specialists with higher education! The comparison with Croatia shows a more unfavourable picture, although the situation in that country is obviously not perfect either.

Figure 6.8 Are you employed in the profession you were educated for? (%)

Answers only of employed respondents



The high level of differentiation based on educational attainment (Cramer's $V = .349$) does not blur the general problem. It is obvious that the workforce in Bulgaria is not utilized effectively. There are no particular differences based on gender (Cramer's $V = .065$). We find a significant differentiation based on type of settlement (Cramer's $V = .132$) and region (Cramer's $V = .161$). The share of young people who are not working in their profession is 63% of respondents from small towns (76% together with those who have no professional qualifications) and 39% of those from Sofia. Nowadays Bulgarian youth are not inclined to wait until they find a job in their profession, as they were in the 1990s (Ковачева: 1998). Without giving up the idea of finding the desired job, they will take any available job because they value their economic independence.

The high dependence on the factor "father's education level" (Cramer's $V = .230$) is indicative. The share of young people working in their profession is 39% of those with the highest-educated fathers (Master's/Doctoral Degree) and 17-20% – or twice less – of those whose fathers have completed secondary education. None of the young people whose fathers have primary education or less work in a job they were educated for. This shows that the inadequate connection between education and employment is reproduced generationally.

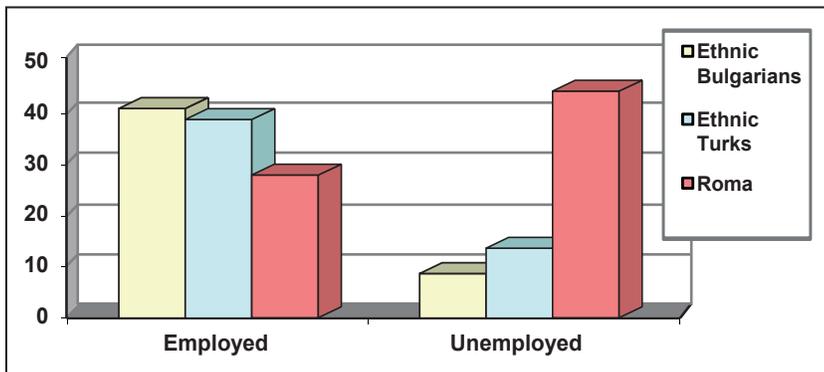
6.6 Employment levels

The share of unemployed youth in the representative sample is 12%, equal for young men and women. They come from parental families at all

levels of educational attainment, but the majority (45%) are those whose parents have primary education or less.

The difference between the employment levels of the different ethnic groups is shocking.

Figure 6.9 Employed and unemployed among the different ethnic communities (%)



The Roma's early dropout from the educational system is compounded by their unfavourable situation on the labour market. Those are two main factors that lead to the formation of an ethnic underclass (Селени: 2013). There is also evidence of ethnic discrimination.

I wanted to be a police officer. They told me that because I'm Turkish, there wasn't any point in even trying. If you don't have friends in high places, you're out of the game. (Ethnic Turk, male, 24, driver, town of Peshtera)

Everyone who looks at you has one thing in mind – "Gypsy". That's what they call us. For example, I work with a hundred people and they call me "Bobby the Gypsy", not "the other Bobby". You're always the Gypsy [to them], whatever you may be. "Our little Gypsy" or "the minority", that's what everybody calls me. (Roma female, 19, employed at a pastry workshop, Sofia)

The (un) employment of Bulgarian Roma is an indication of their problematic social integration, which also has an adverse effect on Bulgaria's relations with other countries of the European Union. As is well-known, France repatriated illegally residing Roma on two occasions, asking the Bulgarian administration to make more efforts in ensuring the social integration of ethnic minorities. Youth unemployment is unevenly distributed

among the different types of settlements and regions: the ratio between unemployment in villages and in Sofia is 8:1 (24% in villages and 3% in Sofia). In a regional aspect, unemployment is lowest in the South-West Planning Region (6%) and highest in the South-East (18%) and North-East (20%) planning regions.

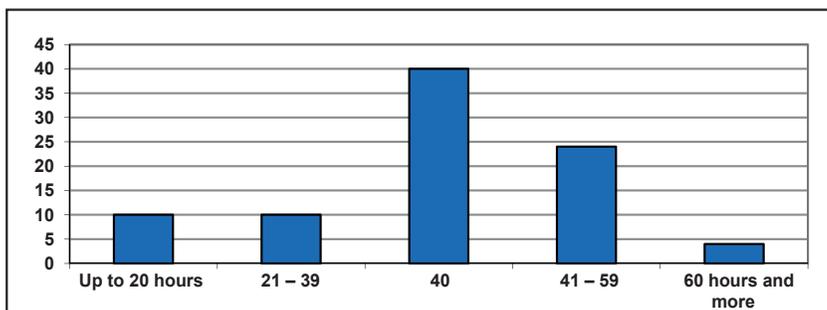
On the labour market, young people encounter a specific problem: the not infrequent requirement of previous work experience.

There are jobs for people who have already completed higher education and have some work experience. For [people] my age, 20-21 years, who are still studying, there's no variant. They want to know if you've been employed in this sphere and they turn you down just because you haven't. You want to start [work] and gain experience, but you get turned down. There's no way. (Female pupil, 18, Sofia)

They want you to have previous work experience. How can I have such experience when I have to study for another year but they want me to have, say, five or six years of previous work experience? How can I possibly have it? Otherwise, I've been on internships at the National Audit Office, at the Ministry of Agriculture. (Roma male, 22, working student at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia)

Employed youth work most often for an average of 40 hours a week, the standard number of hours for full-time employment according to Bulgaria's Labour Code, but a significant part of them also work longer hours. The respondents' answers are distributed as follows:

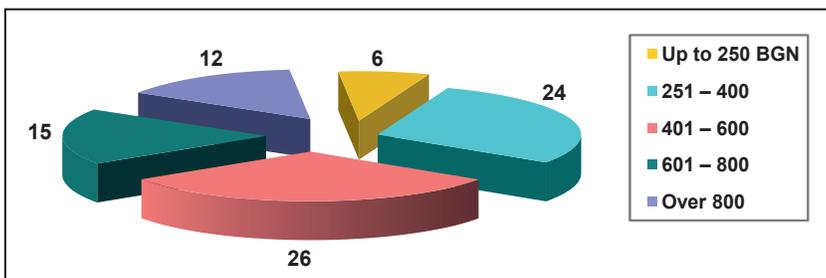
Figure 6.10 Employed youth's working hours per week (%)



The share of young people working part-time is comparatively low. Most of them are working students; those working part-time are just 11% of permanently employed youth.

Low pay is a problem for employed youth. More than half of the employed respondents (56%) earn up to 600 BGN per month, or approximately 300 euros. The following figure gives a fuller picture:

Figure 6.11 Average monthly income of employed youth in BGN (%)



The comparatively low level of pay is particularly obvious among specialists with higher education: almost one in five (18%) university graduates earn up to 400 BGN (200 euros) a month, and just 7% earn over 1000 BGN (500 euros). We should not be surprised that young specialists are looking at the European countries with higher living standards and more adequate remuneration of skilled labour.

6.7 Conclusions

On the whole, the conditions for Bulgarian youth's transition from school to work are changing in a positive direction. The dependence on external factors is declining. Connections and intercessions remain important, but do not have a leading role.

There are several main problems in the transition from school to work.

- Significant levels of youth unemployment, especially in some regions in Bulgaria.
- Education-job mismatch.
- Relatively low pay of young people, including of specialists with higher education.
- Limited, albeit higher in comparison with previous studies, self-realization of young people.
- The level of Roma youth unemployment, a logical consequence of lower education levels, is abnormally high. The complaints about ethnic discrimination should not be ignored.

7. YOUTH AND POLITICS

7.1 The problem situation

In 2013-2014 Bulgaria experienced – and has not yet recovered from – its most serious post-transition political crisis. In February 2013, mass social protests (against the oligarchs) broke out, leading to the resignation of the right-wing government of the GERB party and early elections. The summer of that year saw the outbreak of political protests (against backroom politics and the new centre-left government of the BSP [Bulgarian Socialist Party] and the DPS [Movement for Rights and Freedoms]), which continued in waves over the next months, parallel with counter-protests in defence of the government. After the European Parliament elections in May 2014, the government resigned and early elections were called yet again. This study was conducted in June 2014 – the BSP/DPS government's last month in office – in the complex and controversial situation of expectation of changes. It is important to note that the long-lasting protests had a generational aspect: the majority of young people supported them, while the counter-protests in defence of the government were supported above all by older people and pensioners.

The history of Bulgaria's transition in the 1990s was an alternation of revolutionary systole and institutional diastole. Young people were the heroes of the streets, the barricades, the sit-ins, and were then systematically ignored by institutions. Civic enthusiasm and political apathy alternated in Bulgarian youth's attitudes: the most active in the streets, they ranked last in voter turnout. This contradiction was the subject of sociological analyses (Mitev: 2001).

This study provided an opportunity to seek an answer to the question of whether, and to what extent, the political behaviour of Bulgarian youth in the post-transition situation is repeating or moving away from the scenario of the 1990s, and to establish the levels of interest in politics and of trust in institutions and political parties. Another important task was to shed new light on intergenerational relationships in this sphere. As well as, last but not least, to establish how Bulgarian youth position themselves on the left-right scale.

7.2 The new young and the political past

This study was not concerned with the issue of Bulgarian youth's attitudes towards the political past – the years of socialism and of the transition. But the interpretation of its findings requires that they be taken into account. To this

end, we can use the latest data on public attitudes in their generational aspect, provided by Gallup International, the agency that conducted the youth survey.

Figure 7.1 Attitude towards Bulgaria’s social development in the period between 9 September 1944 and 10 November 1989

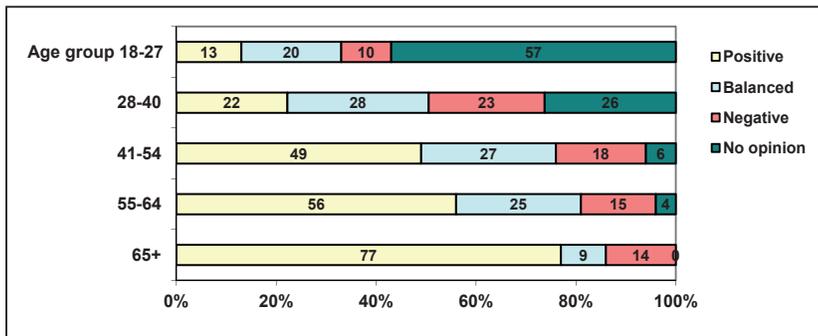
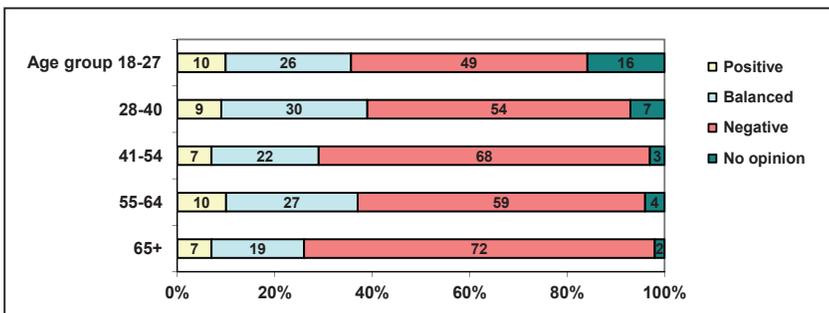


Figure 7.2 What is your assessment of the period since 10 November 1989?



Source: Gallup International. National representative survey (1010 respondents; September 2014).

These data point to conclusions that are important for this analysis.

(1) Lack of social competence among the majority of Bulgarian youth about the entire period of state socialism. This means that the “repulsion” of the communist past, the main motive factor in the political intrigue of the transition, is losing its relevance. Political socialization is effected with insufficient political knowledge.

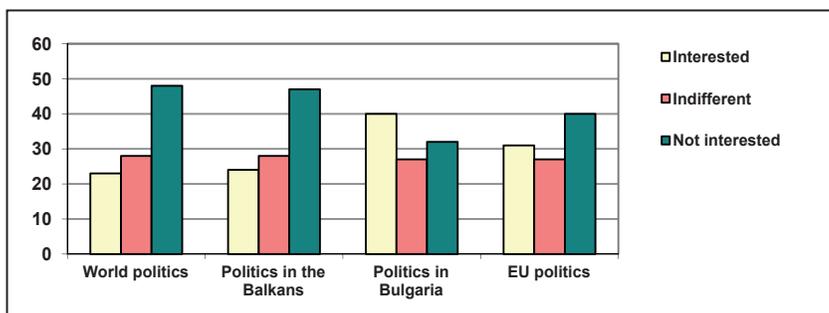
(2) Lack of a significant positive assessment among Bulgarian youth about the entire period since the end of the Second World War. This means that their political views are formed in a distinctly negative context.

There are significant generational differences – and even polar oppositions – between the youngest and the oldest with regard to their assessments of state socialism. At the same time, there is a generational consensus in assessments of the political process since the beginning of the changes in Bulgaria.

7.3 Political interest

The disappointment caused by the way the Bulgarian transition occurred has a direct effect on young people's interest in politics. Their political alienation begins with a decreasing interest in political events in Bulgaria and abroad.

Figure 7.3 Interest in world politics, EU politics, politics in the Balkans, and Bulgarian politics (%)



The picture in Bulgaria is comparable to that in the other Balkan countries. In Bulgaria, too, the level of young people's interest is the highest with regard to national politics (40%), the same as that in Albania (41%), higher than in Croatia (36%), but lower than in Macedonia (51%) and in Kosovo (55%). The levels of interest in world politics are amazingly similar: in Bulgaria, 23%; in Macedonia, 23%; in Kosovo, 23%; higher than in Croatia, 19%, and in Albania, 15%. The level of interest in politics in the Balkans is the same as that in world politics in all countries except for Macedonia, where it is higher (29%). European Union politics is of interest above all to young people in Bulgaria (31%) – where it ranks second after national politics – followed by recent EU member Croatia (27%) and Macedonia, which has long been in the EU “waiting room” (25%).

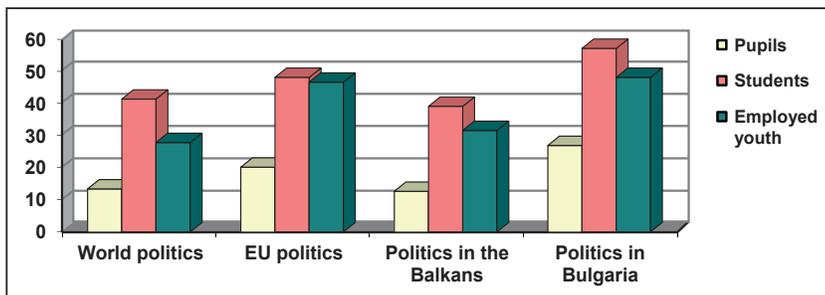
Educational attainment is a strong differentiating factor. For example, the level of interest of university graduates in world politics is four times as high as that of young people with primary education or less. What is more important

in this particular case, though, is that there is a significant difference between pupils and students. It, too, is at a ratio of 4:1. A democratic political culture cannot be formed effectively if an interest in politics is not cultivated and satisfied effectively among young people in secondary education.

The difference in political interest is smallest at the level that is closest to young people, that of Bulgarian politics, and highest at the level of world politics. The most significant correlations are those with respondents' education level (Cramer's $V = .285$ for interest in world politics, and Cramer's $V = .252$ for interest in Bulgarian politics) and father's education level (Cramer's $V = .203$ for world politics and Cramer's $V = .134$ for Bulgarian politics).

Figure 7.4 Levels of political interest among the main groups of youth (%)

Answers "Very interested" and "Interested"



Bulgarian youth's main sources of information about politics are two: television and the internet. Television predominates, but among university graduates, and especially among students, it faces stiff competition from the internet. Next are another two sources: discussions in the family, and discussions with friends/acquaintances. Newspapers and radio are in the third place – ranked first until recently, they have now obviously been displaced by television and the internet, and are even less important (unlike in Croatia, for example) than personal communication.

The comparatively low level of political interest in a country that is once again at a political crossroads requires further study. The in-depth interviews give us some insight into the psychology of political disengagement. Whereas some young people have not developed an interest in politics, others may be said to have simply excluded politics from their interests.

I've been listening to talk about nothing but politics at home ever since I was a child. I can't stand it anymore. I'm not interested and

I don't turn on the news. I don't want to be interested. To me, it's like an infectious disease. It's disgusting. Considering that some fireman can hold one of the highest offices and turn up at an official meeting in undervests and a leather jacket and, besides, everyone will be waiting for him. (Female pupil from Sofia)

Such attitudes are already also an act of political behaviour.

7.4 Electoral participation

The 2014 European Parliament elections, conducted in a situation of political crisis in Bulgaria, were a test of conscious political participation. The exit polls showed that young voters were the most passive age group. This study corroborated and expanded this information. It seems surprising, considering that as in the 1990s, young people were the face of protest activity. Indeed, the in-depth interviews also shed light on a dark side of the protests, without providing enough evidence to generalize the latter.

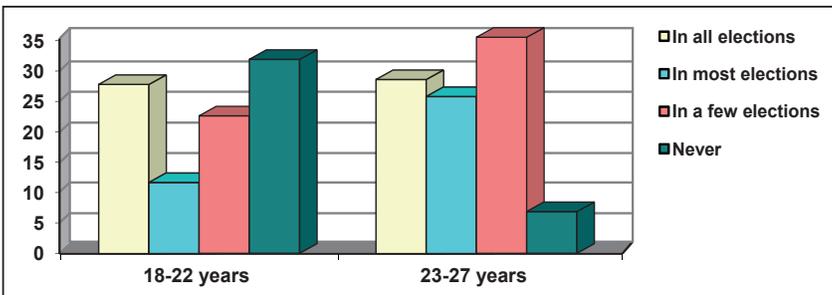
Most young people from my circle aren't interested. Otherwise, at the time of the protests, many people I knew took part in them.

Some went [to the protests] to earn the money for their seaside holiday. It was an absolute parody. (Female pupil, 18, Sofia)

The results of the last elections are no coincidence and they are no exception. This is shown by the indicator regarding young people's frequency of voting in elections since they became eligible to vote (Figure 7.5).

The share of unemployed youth who have never voted in elections is twice higher than that of employed youth. Unemployment has a definite de-socializing effect.

Figure 7.5 Electoral participation since becoming eligible to vote (%)



A characteristic negative symptom at the 2014 European Parliament elections is the fact that the younger respondents (18-22 years) voted significantly more rarely, 37%, than the older ones (23-27 years), 49%. This is yet another argument in support of the conclusion regarding Bulgarian youth's insufficient political socialization. There are young people who did not wish to show enough curiosity to go to the polling stations and vote for the first time in their lives. The differences by educational attainment are striking: the ratio between voters with higher education and voters with primary education or less is 5:1 (55% as against 11%). It is interesting that the level of electoral participation of ethnic Bulgarians and Roma is the same, while that of ethnic Turks is significantly higher. We will find an explanation for that in the attitudes towards political parties and the functioning of the Bulgarian ethnic model. Bulgaria's democratization ensured an unprecedented (according to nationalists – excessive) level of effective participation of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria's governance (through the Movement for Rights and Freedoms). It is hardly surprising that voting in elections makes more sense to young ethnic Turks than to the other ethnic groups.

The findings of this study suggest that for the majority of Bulgarian youth, non-participation in elections is a form of protest of sorts, an expression of dissatisfaction with the state of democracy in Bulgaria in general.

Satisfaction with democracy means belief in the effective operation of the democratic political mechanisms, and above all of the electoral procedure. We may assume that the connection indicated by *Figure 7.6* (Cramer's $V = .130$) is natural. The problem is that this pertains to young people who are now entering political life. One of the most important conclusions suggested by this study is that Bulgarian youth's political scepticism is to a large extent a priori in character; it is arguably equivalent to political prejudice acquired in various ways from the dominant atmosphere of political negativism in Bulgaria.

Figure 7.6 Satisfaction with democracy / Voting in 25 May 2014 European Parliament elections (%) (18 – 27 years)

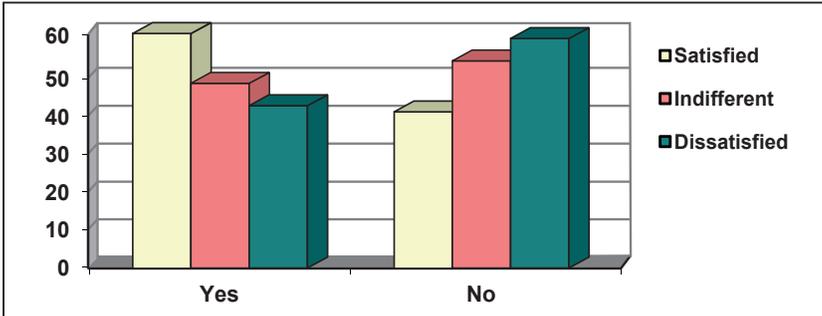
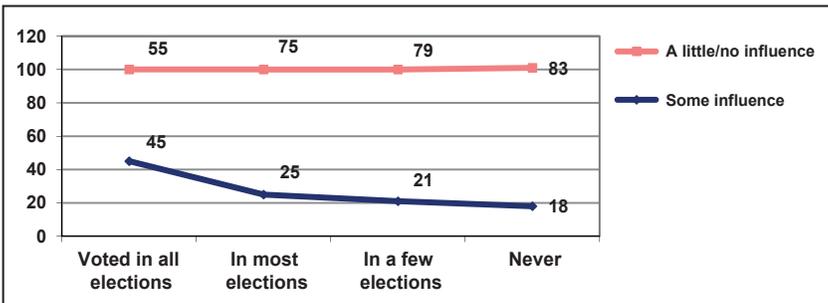


Figure 7.7 Opinion about the influence of one’s vote upon parliament and the government / Electoral participation (%)



It is clear that 83% of Bulgarian youth who have never voted in elections believe that electoral participation is of little consequence (Cramer’s $V = .245$). This belief does not come from personal electoral experience, it is not, so to speak, something learned first-hand; it comes from observation of the experience of others and from external influence.

Among the youngest age group who are still not eligible to vote (14-17 years), a large share (45%) have no opinion on whether voting has an influence upon affairs in parliament or the government, while among those who have an opinion, most think that it has no influence (28%) or a little influence (10%).

Social incompetence among the youngest respondents may be assumed to be a natural characteristic of their age, a consequence of the lack of personal political experience. However, the relative share of those who have an answer to the question regarding the value of their future vote, and this answer is

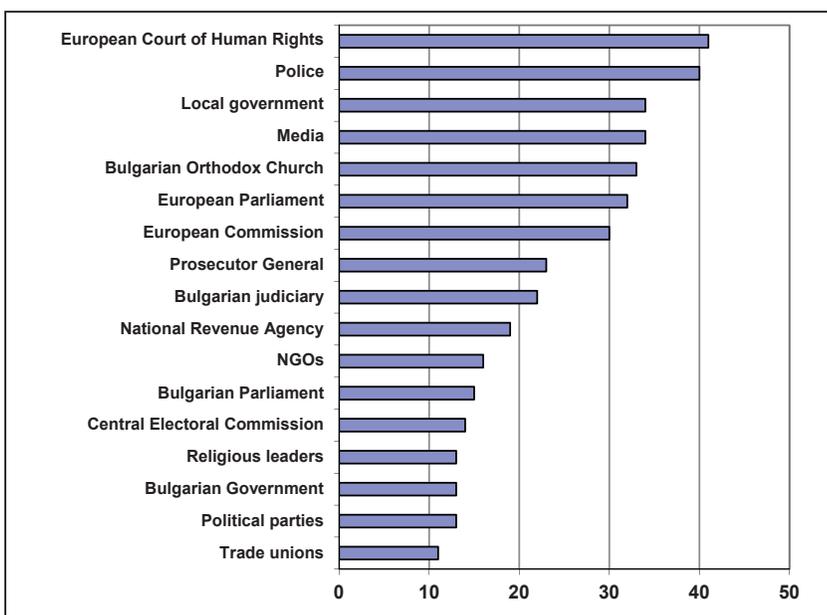
negative, is too large. Obviously, young people consume accumulated political negativism, which affects their attitude towards democratic institutions.

7.5 Trust in institutions

Trust in institutions is a major factor for political stability in a country, while the level of institutional trust among the young generation is indicative of the prospects for political stability. This study shows the actual state of political crisis in Bulgaria and gives an idea about the difficulties in overcoming that crisis.

Figure 7.8 Trust in Bulgarian and EU institutions (%)

Answers "Trust very much" and "To some extent"



Several reasoned conclusions may be drawn.

- Complete distrust and very little trust are a predominant attitude towards *all* democratic institutions. This is true for all three branches of government in Bulgaria: the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.
- There is a complete lack of trust on the part of the majority of Bulgarian youth in two main institutions: parliament and the government.
- The highest level of distrust is that towards political parties, which are a main instrument in the reproduction and development of the political system.

- There is a lack of trust in the Central Electoral Commission, which plays a key role in the electoral renewal of the most important institution in a parliamentary republic.
- Trust in EU institutions is higher than in national institutions.
- Local government is more trusted than central government.
- Trade unions, which are meant to defend people's interests, are trusted very little.
- Media are trusted by just one-third of Bulgarian youth, although they play an important role in the formation of their political attitudes.
- The Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which suffered a collapse in trust in the 1990s as the result of the split in the Church, has partially recovered its positions.

The general picture is impressive. The most trusted institution is the European Court of Human Rights, which regularly convicts the Bulgarian state. In a parliamentary republic, the national parliament proves to be the least trusted institution along with the Central Electoral Commission, which is meant to guarantee the observance of the law in the formation of parliament. After 25 years of building the rule of law in Bulgaria, three out of four young Bulgarians do not trust the Bulgarian judiciary and the Prosecutor General. After a quarter of a century of democracy, respect for the police predominates.

Each concrete answer contains two different components: general attitude towards institutions and specific attitude towards a concrete institution. The extent to which those two components are intertwined is suggested by the statistically significant correlation (Cramer's $V = .138$) between electoral participation and trust in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Among those who trust the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the share of those who have never voted is 20%, while among those who do not trust the Bulgarian Orthodox Church it is 80% – that is, four times as high. It is reasonable to assume that we are witnessing the emergence of something like a generalized negative background of attitudes towards institutions. The critical attitudes interfere and lead to a general political scepticism.

The high level of trust in the police, ranked second by respondents, is noteworthy. A survey conducted by the European Foundation (Eurofound: 2014b) found a similar attitude in the EU context: in 2014, young people's trust in all political institutions has decreased in comparison with 2007, except for trust in the police.

The in-depth interviews show that the crisis of institutional trust among Bulgarian youth has grown into distrust not just in the state of democracy, but also in the demos itself.

It is us who are the problem. I don't know, I'm not particularly competent. Why do we elect those guys? We get taken in very easily, we are very naïve. We listen to the beautiful words with some hope, but no one thinks that things may turn out the way they did in the previous mandate. The same simplicity. Yet it's simply glaringly obvious, can't you see? Then there are the usual things that are always talked about but naturally no one does anything about them because it's easier that way. (Female pupil, 18, Sofia)

The main problems at the moment? A flock of sheep. This problem isn't a new one. Too many people have become susceptible to anything. (Male, 22, working Law student at Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

Whereas those judgements refer to the Bulgarian ethnic majority, judgements regarding the Roma ethnic minority are even more critical.

For example, I'm a Gypsy and I go to the Fakulteta [Roma neighbourhood in Sofia] and start telling people, "Vote for me! I'll fix you, I'll work for you, I'll fix your situation here, I'll make sure that your children are better integrated, that they go to school..." Do you know what they will tell me? "Give me money." They are a simple lot. They aren't united, they won't say, "Let's get together and do this or that." They don't have the brains for it, they don't have this way of thinking. They will ask me, "What will you help me with? Give me some money." That's what they are accustomed to – to "dalavera". That's why they are sinking. (Roma male, 22, working student at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia)

Such generalizations do not diminish, they highlight even more the critical attitudes towards the political class, and crystallize in an assessment of the professional politician as a person and of politics as a profession.

Political life is lived by the politicians, it's best for them. While they are at some high level, we, the other people, are down below... They throw us the crumbs, they don't give us a chance, they won't help us even a little. There's nothing, no development at all... (Roma male, 22, working student at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia)

One may conclude from all this that young people do not want to have anything to do with politics because of its immoral ways. But this is not true for everybody. Asked whether a political career is a good thing, and whether he would go into politics, the same respondent answered: “Yes, why not. To my mind, politics is the best business, the best environment, and that’s where the connections are...”

I think politics is the place where easy money can be made. I don’t know exactly what they deal with, what they do, and exactly what those politicians have studied. I would very much like to go into politics here. It sounds like a very good job. You can see what salaries they take, what holidays they have, fancy business suits, cars. It’s true that the media will get in your way, but still... (Male pupil, 17, Sofia)

Politics has begun to be perceived as a sort of “*dalavera*” and is attracting candidates for “easy money” who are not interested in politics itself but in the personal gains, the bonuses it brings. This conclusion brings us to another circle of problems. During the transition period, an “anti-natural selection” of sorts came into play, ejecting the carriers of political morality from the political sphere. We now find a willingness to continue this line. It will inevitably lead to the repulsion of the mass of people parallel with the entry into politics of new candidates for getting rich quick. This leads to a vicious circle.

7.6 Political views and attitude towards political parties

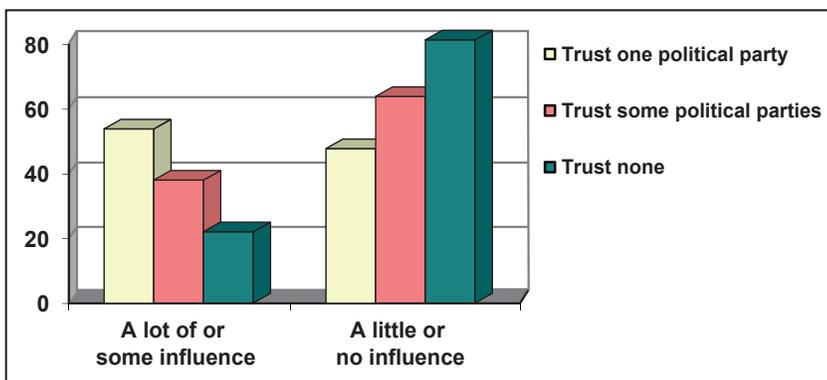
This study shows very clearly that the attitude towards political parties is of crucial importance for the level of trust in the main mechanism of representative democracy, electoral participation (*Figure 7.9*).

The statistical dependence is high (Cramer’s $V = .261$). Young people are aware that their vote is not utilized directly but through the political parties they have voted for. Political parties are the bridge between the individual and institutions. They are the main instrument for bottom-up influence, for exercising an impact upon what is happening at the highest levels of the executive and legislative branches of government. And we see that it is precisely here where the link gets broken.

Whether it will be one [political] party or another [doesn’t make any difference]. I don’t rely on a concrete party to save us or to fix life. It can’t. I rely on myself and to some extent on the fact that we are in the EU. (Male, Information Science student at Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”)

Political parties have begun to play a key role in Bulgarian youth's political alienation, as indicated also by the fact that they are ranked last in terms of trust in institutions.

**Figure 7.9 Do you trust or distrust political parties?
/ How much influence does your vote have
on parliament and the government? (%)**



The general conclusions illustrated by *Figure 7.9* ought to be differentiated. The respondents were asked to position themselves as “left” or “right” on a 1-10 point scale. If we assume that values 1 to 4 stand for left, 5 and 6 for centrist, and 7 to 10 for right, we get the following distribution: left, 12%; centrist, 57%; and right, 23%. In the other Balkan countries we find two types of political scales: a balanced scale, with an equal weight of left and right – in Albania (27% left and 28% right), in Kosovo (21% left and 20% right), and in Croatia (16% left and 15% right); and a non-balanced scale – in Macedonia (15% left and 24% right) and in Bulgaria (12% left and 23% right). Macedonia and Bulgaria are the countries where right-wing populist parties play a dominant role. To this one should also add the influence of the political conjuncture. The European Parliament elections showed that in Bulgaria, “the wind of change” fills the sails of the right wing. One can also add other considerations, but this is beyond the tasks of this analysis. Here it is important to note several things.

Firstly, this differentiation is to some extent arbitrary. Some of the respondents who positioned themselves in the centre as moderates are practically indifferent to political life. It is precisely among them that we find the highest level of non-participation in elections.

Secondly, this differentiation makes it possible to identify a characteristic, important syndrome: a generational, supra-ideological and supra-party attitude towards the functioning of the political system. There are no statistically significant differences (over Cramer's $V = .100$) between respondents with left-wing, centrist, and right-wing political views on issues such as trust in parliament and the government, in the Prosecutor General, in the Bulgarian judiciary and the police. Nor are there such correlations in the attitude towards EU institutions. One may assume that left-leaning young people will trust trade unions more, but this is not the case. In sum, dissatisfaction with the state of Bulgarian democracy is not typical of left-wing or right-wing young people, but of *the young generation as a whole*. Those who are satisfied with the state of Bulgarian democracy are just 11% of the left-wing, 13% of the centrist, and 14% of the right-wing young people.

Thirdly, there are also significant differences on some points. The media are not trusted at all by 34% of the left-wing, 28% of the centrist, and 20% of the right-wing young people (Cramer's $V = .102$). Those who are left-wing suffer more from a lack of media they can trust. Probably the most indicative is the attitude towards political parties. Distrust in political parties prevails among all groups, but young people with left-wing views are more disappointed than those with right-wing views (Cramer's $V = .124$). The left-wing party is trusted less by its potential electorate. Distrust is highest in the centre, which can be explained with the overlap of two different circumstances: the political void after the NDSV (the party founded by Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha) was left out of parliament, as well as the identification as centrist of moderate views which are essentially apolitical.

Trust in political parties has an effect on political behaviour. The comparison of voting in the European Parliament elections and political views shows that both the left-wing and the right-wing parties have a potential youth electorate which they have failed to mobilize.

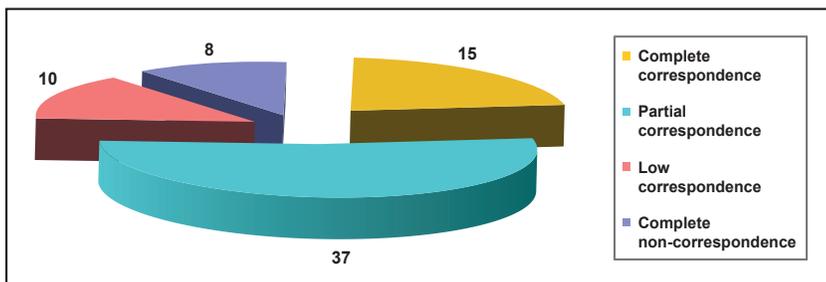
7.7 Generational continuity

In the 1990s, it seemed that the dialogue between generations had become very difficult or even impossible. The picture revealed by the present study is quite different. It may be described as *post-transition restoration of intergenerational communication in the political sphere*, while noting explicitly that this refers to the relationship between young people and their parents. Whereas it is true that discussions of politics in the family are not frequent (those who report-

ed that they “never” or “rarely” have such discussions are 59% in Bulgaria; in Croatia they are 60%), this is due above all to the overall low interest in politics.

The level of correspondence between the political views of young people and those of their parents significantly exceeds that of their immediate communication. Generational continuity seems to be quite significant and one may say that it is true for the majority of Bulgarian youth, albeit to some extent.

Figure 7.10 Correspondence between political views of youth and their parents (%)



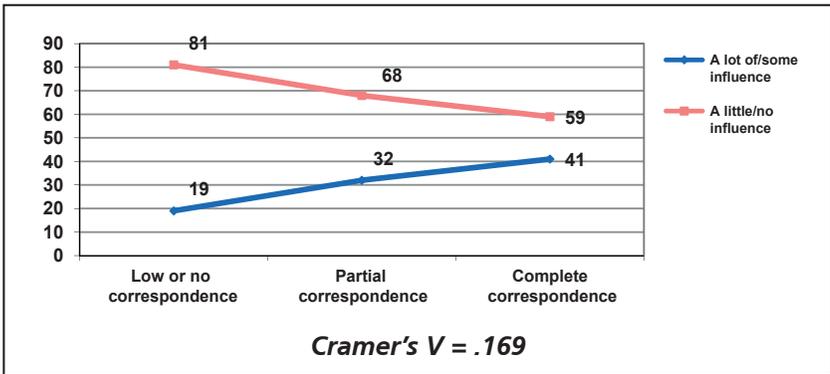
Judged by the standards of the 1990s, the findings seem unexpected, but they have a logical explanation. If we assume that the average age of the parents of today’s respondents was 30 years at the time of their birth, we will find that their mothers and fathers were between 20 and 34 years old in 1990. Today’s youth are descendants of the youth and of the young adults from the beginning of the transition.

To this one must add that the level of correspondence between views increases with parents’ educational attainment. There is a correspondence (complete or partial) of views among two-thirds of the respondents whose parents have a Master’s Degree, and among half of those whose parents have a Bachelor’s Degree. Among respondents whose parents have primary education this share is slightly over one-third. In other words, the differences in views are determined less by generation than by parents’ education level. Surprisingly, the dependence on mother’s education level (Cramer’s $V = .144$) is higher than that on father’s education level (Cramer’s $V = .109$).

There is a correlation between correspondence or non-correspondence of political views and discussions of politics in the family. Among 80% of respondents who discuss politics with their parents often or very often, there is a correspondence also between political views; this is true for just 32% of respondents who rarely or never discuss politics with their parents.

There is a close connection between generational continuity in political views and young people’s behaviour. The share of those who have voted in all elections is 45% when there is a complete correspondence with parents’ views, and just 17% when there is complete non-correspondence (Cramer’s $V = .151$). Political communication in the family is an important part of the overall multi-factor process of political socialization. This general conclusion, which can be found in textbooks, acquires new meaning in the context of strong political scepticism. The question is: what role does the dialogue between generations play? This study gives an answer. The correspondence between the political views of young people and those of their parents creates prerequisites for political participation.

Figure 7.11 Opinion about the influence of one’s vote upon public institutions / Correspondence between political views of youth and parents (%)



An understanding of the significance of one’s vote is formed in the family. At the same time, communication with parents is a factor for conformism. There is a connection between the level of satisfaction with the state of democracy in Bulgaria and the correspondence of political views (Cramer’s $V = .105$): the most satisfied are the respondents who hold the same views as their parents, while the least satisfied are those whose views are at odds with their parents’. Such a dependence becomes even more obvious when we look at trust in political parties. Those who trust one political party are twice more likely to have the same views as their parents. It is evident that political persuasions are passed on from one generation to another. At the same time, we have an interesting opportunity to see also the differentiation in this respect. The answer indicating

“partial correspondence” also presupposes differences, generational innovations. Such are to be found more on the right than on the left. It is possible that the analysis of the generational political distance may be indicative of the existence of a certain generational capsulation on the left.

This study also found attempts on the part of the new young to break the vicious circle.

There is always hope. There must be more organizations for young people. There is a need for collective action. (Female pupil, 18, Sofia)
There is some positive change in Bulgaria. There is an association called “United Ideas for Bulgaria”. Young people are trying to give their ideas, to make improvements for politics, the economy, sciences and other such things, and they get together [to discuss them]. I don’t attend [their meetings] but I’ve seen this on the social networks, from friends of mine, and this is a plus. (Student at Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”)

7.8 Conclusions

This study has found a picture that marks a new point in processes observed since the very beginning of the transition in Bulgaria.

- Post-transition political alienation expressed in the form of young people’s distrust in the democratic institutions. More than half of Bulgarian youth are not interested in national political life, and two-thirds are not interested in EU politics. Just one-third of the 18-22-years-olds have voted in all or most elections since they became eligible to vote.
- Institutional distrust stems from a democratic deficit, the insufficient effectiveness of the institutions themselves: young people do not feel represented at the political level, and believe that their vote has little or no influence on the work of the main democratic institutions.
- Distrust is focused on political parties. Bulgarian youth do not feel represented in political parties, which ought to express the part of the political spectrum – left or right – youth identify themselves with.
- The youth potential of social activity, proven in periods of street protests, remains unutilized at the institutional level.
- Negative political prejudice is growing in Bulgaria. Young people acquiring the right to vote for the first time do not exercise this right, as they believe that nothing depends on their vote.

- The family, communication with parents, plays a heightened role in the formation of interest in politics – contrary to the situation in the 1990s. Political continuity stabilizes the attitude towards institutions.
- The new means of communication enable young people to advance and share their ideas about public life.
- The lack of a long-term national youth strategy is also manifested in the limited, insufficiently effective political socialization of the new generations.

8. BULGARIAN YOUTH AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

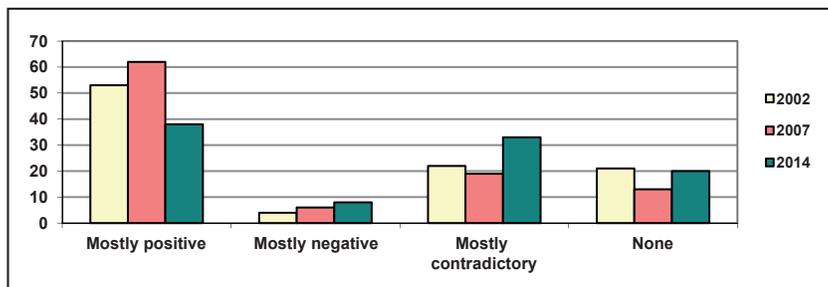
8.1 The problem situation

Bulgaria's orientation towards European Union membership enjoyed enormous popularity and consensus among political forces during the transition period. The mass perception of "Europe" was as "a light at the end of the tunnel". The prospect of EU accession helped people to endure the hardships of the 1990s, which were excessive for many. It is precisely Bulgaria's EU accession that was perceived as "the end of the transition". The mass "Euroutopia", though, was also used by some as a smokescreen for abuse, corruption and plunder of the national wealth. Bulgaria's admission as a full member of the EU on 1 January 2007, predictably, did not bring about a "European miracle". Despite the country's upward development already in the pre-crisis period, but especially during the crisis, disappointment with the transition became the dominant sentiment and led to a collapse in trust in the political elite. In 2005 a nationalist Eurosceptic party entered parliament for the first time, and went on to win more seats in the next parliamentary elections in 2009. The attitude towards EU integration could not have remained unaffected by the growing social pessimism.

This study sought to establish how the new young assess Bulgaria's seven-year membership of the EU, whether there is Euroscepticism among them, how they view the benefits and risks of EU integration, and how their attitudes towards the values shared by the EU have changed.

8.2 Perception of the EU

At the beginning of the century, sociological studies in Bulgaria showed a significant generational difference in the perception of the European project. More than half of young people but just one-quarter of those aged over 60 had a positive vision of the EU. In 2007 the positive perception of the EU was even more pronounced. The picture today is the following:

Figure 8.1 Perception of the European Union (%)

Note: Data refer to persons aged 15-27; those for 2014 coincide with data for the 14-27 age group.
Source: Gallup International, 2002; 2007; 2014.

The EU's positive image has faded somewhat; contradictory aspects stand out, although they are not dominant. It seems surprising that the relative share of Bulgarian youth who have no perception of the EU has increased. This is probably due to the fact that the EU has become part of everyday life, fusing with the latter – especially in the eyes of those who are less socially competent (31% of 14-17-year-olds and just 13% of 23-27-year-olds). What is perhaps most significant is that the future young specialists, students, see the EU in the most positive light (every second student, as compared with every third pupil and 36% of employed youth). It is also noteworthy that there are no significant differences based on ethnicity (the EU has a positive image for 38% of ethnic Bulgarians, 40% of ethnic Turks, and 34% of Roma). The visions of young men and women have become the same: whereas in 2002 one could draw conclusions about men's imagination and women's realism, today those differences have disappeared.

The sociological data also provide an insight into how the vision of the EU is constructed and deciphered (*Table 8.1*).

All studies show that positive synonyms clearly predominate over negative synonyms; in 2014, even the most rarely pointed out "harmony" ultimately outweighs the most common negative association, "unemployment". At the same time, we find an interesting evolution. After the euphoric "progress" (1997) and the pragmatic "employment" (2002), the turn has now come for the realistic "travel" (2014) – ranked first by youth at all education levels, from all types of settlements and all ethnic communities; by the wealthy (70%) just as much as by the poor (70%). "Employment" remains a significant, albeit not dominant, synonym.

Table 8.1 In your view, the European Union is synonymous with... (%)*Positive synonyms*

1997		2002		2014	
Synonym	Percent	Synonym	Percent	Synonym	Percent
1. Progress	45	1. Employment	54	1. Travel	66
2. Well-being	42	2. Travel	46	2. Employment	44
3. Peace	37	3. Well-being	42	3. Peace	28
4. Employment	31	4. Progress	37	4. Well-being	26
5. Travel	30	5. Peace	25	5. Progress	22
6. Harmony	20	6. Harmony	10	6. Harmony	11

Negative synonyms

1997		2002		2014	
Synonym	Percent	Synonym	Percent	Synonym	Percent
1. Risk	8	1. Risk	11	1. Unemployment	10
2-3. Uncertainty	5	2. Unemployment	7	2. Uncertainty	10
2-3. Inequality	5	3. Uncertainty	6	3. Inequality	9
4-5. Conflicts	4	4-5. Inequality	3	4. Risk	7
4-5. Unemployment	4	4-5. Sacrifices	3	5. Conflicts	6
6. Sacrifices	1	6. Conflicts	2	6. Sacrifices	3

Note: Data for 1997 and 2002 refer to persons aged 15-28. Those for 2014 refer to persons aged 14-27.

Source: IMIR, 1997; Gallup International, 2002; 2014.

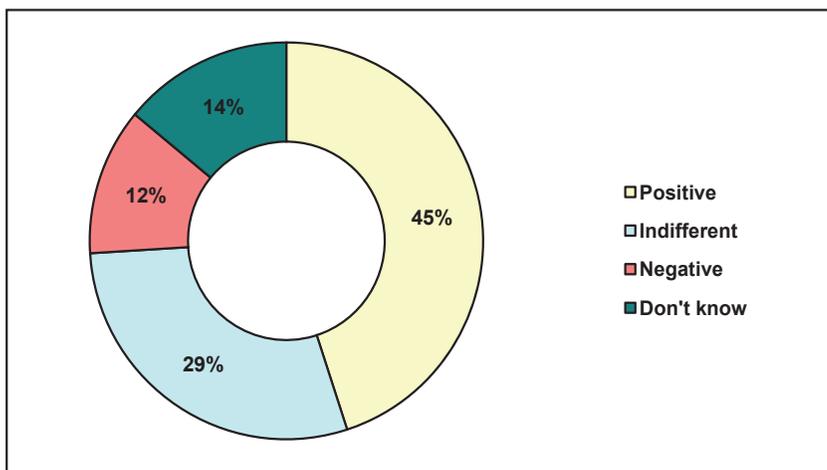
The European Union is associated with the European labour market – almost as much as with easier, visa-free travel. “Peace” is pointed out as a synonym more frequently than in 2002, obviously in connection with the hostilities near the EU borders. As a whole, we see a shift from macro-social indicators (“progress”, “well-being”, “peace”) to individualized indicators such as “travel” and “employment”, to which is added the macro-condition for their validity – “peace”.

8.3 Attitude towards EU integration

Bulgarian youth's general attitude towards the country's EU membership cannot be measured precisely with a comparative measure based

on sociological studies, because the indicator used in 2014 contains an additional answer option that was not included in previous studies (the indifferent “neither positive nor negative”). With this reservation in mind, we may say that the share of respondents with a positive attitude towards Bulgaria’s EU membership has decreased significantly (77% in 2007, 45% in 2014), but that of respondents with a negative attitude has not increased considerably (8% in 2007, 12% in 2014). Of course, we must also bear in mind the fundamental ontological change: now the EU is a given, it is not a “bright future”. The findings show the following picture:

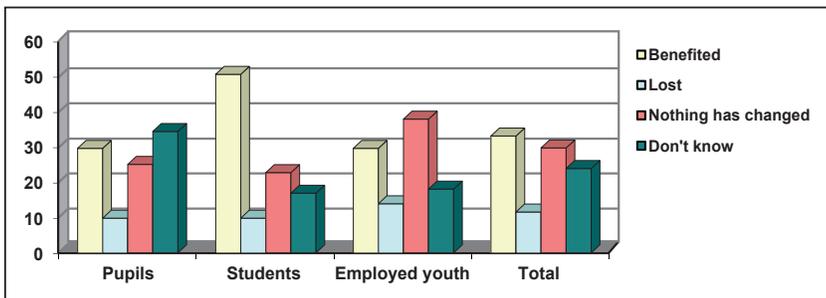
Figure 8.2 Youth attitude towards Bulgaria’s EU membership



The positive answers outnumber the negative ones by almost four times. There are significant differences based on education level: the share of those who have a positive attitude is 56% of university graduates, 46% of secondary school graduates, and 40% of youth with primary education or less. The attitudes of students are distinctly pro-European (57%, as compared with 41% of pupils and 42% of employed youth).

The disappointment with the EU is manifested in respondents’ assessments of Bulgaria’s benefits or losses from EU integration less in negative answers regarding EU membership itself than in indifference and in answers that “nothing has changed”.

Figure 8.3 In your opinion, has Bulgaria benefited or lost from EU membership? (%)

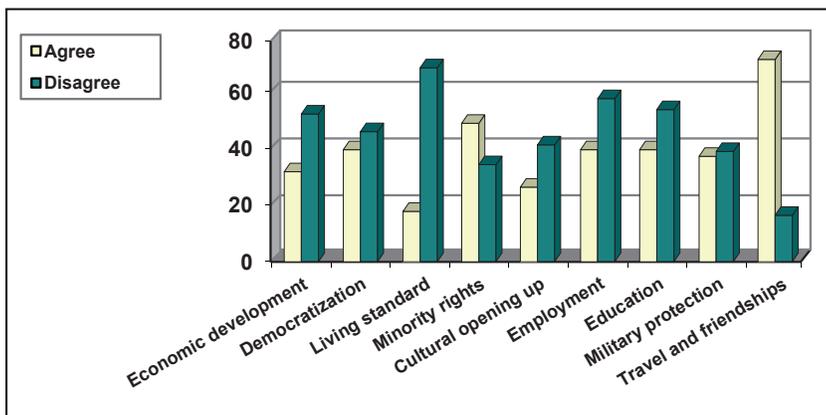


Opinions that Bulgaria has “benefited” predominate, but they are shared by just one-third of respondents. The explicitly sceptical answers (“lost”) are not many, but they should not be ignored. On the other hand, almost one-third of respondents do not feel that anything has changed. The EU has become part of the general disappointment with the transition for quite a few young people in Bulgaria, too. The “light at the end of the tunnel” is lost.

This study makes it possible to give a clear answer to the question of what has caused this disappointment. *Figure 8.4* shows the positive (“completely agree” or “mostly agree”) and the negative (“completely disagree” or “mostly disagree”) answers to the question regarding the areas in which Bulgaria has benefited from EU accession.

Figure 8.4 Bulgaria has benefited from EU accession in the following areas: (%)

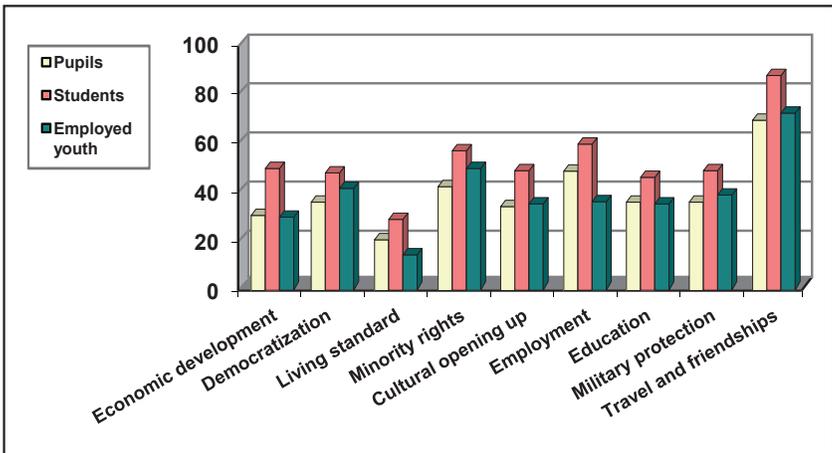
Agree / Disagree



In the answers of the respondents as a whole, there are significant differences between pupils, students and employed youth. Bulgarian youth as a whole express a predominantly positive attitude only with regard to two things – travel and minority rights; on one point – democratization – the shares of positive and negative answers are equal. Among students, the picture is the opposite: there is only one point on which the majority of students disagree that Bulgaria has benefited from EU accession – living standards.

Figure 8.5 Bulgaria has benefited from EU accession in the following areas: (%)

Agree – among pupils, students and employed youth



The differences in the opinions of students and employed youth seem natural with regard to some areas: students are in a better position to see the benefits from EU accession in the areas of education and the widening of the cultural horizon, while employed youth are more sensitive to the low living standards. In interpreting data on issues such as economic development and employment, it would be one-sided to reduce differences merely to employed youth’s “clash with reality”. It is likely that another aspect is also at play – the temporal aspect. In the 2007 study on Bulgarian youth’s attitudes towards the EU, respondents were asked three different questions about the benefits from EU accession – about the effects in the short term (three-four years), medium term (five-ten years), and long term. The responses were significantly different. Expectations of positive effects in the short term were shared by 28% of respondents, in the medium term by 47%, and in the long

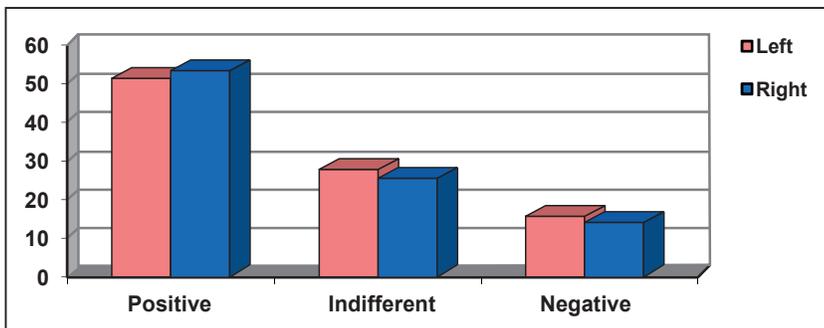
term by 61%. In 2014, it is reasonable to assume that in responding on issues such as economic development and employment, students were more aware not just of the present but also of the longer-term effects, while employed youth focused comparatively more on the present reality. Employment is a prospect for students and a tangible immediate reality for employed youth.

It is very important to note that young people from all ethnic communities recognize the EU's positive role with regard to minority rights. The assessments of democratization are not adequate to the realities of the political process: positive opinions predominate only among students, while the negative attitude has an absolute majority among employed youth. There are sufficient grounds to assume that in the absence of EU orientation, a left-wing or right-wing authoritarian regime might be established in Bulgaria. The obtained results of this study, however, are not coincidental – they have to do with the dissatisfaction with the state of democracy in Bulgaria, as noted in the previous chapter. The in-depth interviews reveal that disappointment with the Bulgarian political elite is so strong that hopes for improving the situation in the country are now pinned on Brussels.

If not our politicians, then [let's hope] at least the Europeans will fix us. Take Greece, with such a lazy people. So many loans; they faced bankruptcy. The European Union fixed them. Let's hope we, too, will have the luck of them pushing us [forward]. But as long as these [Bulgarian] politicians are pocketing funds, that will be impossible. Someone must come from the EU, specialists, for things to move forward. (Male, working student at University of National and World Economy, Sofia)

Political consensus on Bulgaria's EU membership has not changed; the study shows that it is being reproduced also through Bulgarian youth's assessments.

Figure 8.6 Attitude towards Bulgaria's EU membership / Respondents with left and right political views (%)



There is no difference in the attitude towards Bulgaria's EU integration between young people who define their political views as left or right.

8.4 Attitude towards European values

The indicator used in this study is borrowed from French researchers, and it is formulated as "values defended by the European Union". It was used repeatedly during the transition period and in the first decade of this century. The evolution is significant and indicative.

Table 8.2 Importance of European values to Bulgarian youth (%)

Values	1997		2002		2007		2014	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Freedom	37	III	37	III	34	III	43	I
Democracy	42	II	38	II	43	II	40	II
Market economy	53	I	47	I	53	I	39	III
Equality	30	V	36	IV	29	IV	36	IV
Free enterprise	33	IV	30	VI	28	V-VI	28	V
Solidarity	15	VIII	8	VIII-IX	11	VIII-IX	20	VI
Profit	20	VI	35	V	28	V-VI	18	VII
Tolerance	15	IX	8	VIII-IX	11	VIII-IX	15	VIII
Competitiveness	16	VII	15	VII	19	VII	14	IX

Note: Data refer to persons aged 15-25.

Source: IMIR, 1997; Gallup International, 2002; 2007; 2014.

In the 1990s, the formulation of Bulgaria's social development was clear and categorical, it was supported by the different political parties and popularized by the media: "transition to market economy and democracy". This definition became a cliché and it certainly influenced Bulgarian youth's understandings. However, it also has an ontological aspect, which is also reflected in the respondents' answers. In a situation of mass impoverishment and struggle for survival, it was widely assumed that "everyone should fend for themselves". Thus, the transition from an over-collectivized socialist society to liberal democracy devalued solidarity, which is essential for the functioning of the democratic system itself. It is also indicative that profit and free enterprise were valued more than tolerance and solidarity. And perhaps most importantly: since freedom lends meaning to democ-

racy, it is unnatural for it to be ranked lower in a value system. Thus, the assessments that stand out in 1997 and 2002 reflected the deviation of the Bulgarian path from the optimal variant of the transition.

In this historical context, the data from this study are especially significant and interesting. We see that the distinct economization of consciousness has been reduced, and Bulgarian youth's value orientations are becoming normalized. The "market" is now ranked in the third not in the first place, "democracy" is not ahead of "freedom", and "solidarity" gets more recognition than "profit".

8.5 European identity

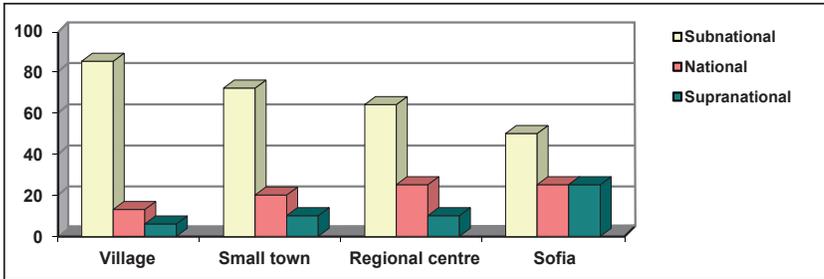
The civilizational process may be defined as consistent formation of different identities, accompanied with a change in their ranked importance. Generally speaking, this is a process that evolves from primary, initially exclusive, local identities, to a level where the national plays a central role, and then on to an ever more significant regional and, in the long term, supreme global level – the level of human community. Identities are not mutually exclusive; they overlap, they may rival, replace, and in conflicting situations, clash with each other. It is well known that in wartime, national identification is realized to the detriment of the human – the other is not a "human being" but an "enemy".

Bulgaria's accession to the European Union is not just a political, economic and cultural, but also a social-psychological process of acquisition of new identity. In a sense, the entire integration process crystallizes at the personal level in European identity.

It was not the task of this study to examine all aspects of this sufficiently complex problematics. However, it identified several points that can be significant for generalizing conclusions as well as for further studies.

Bulgarian youth still have significant local (particular town/village, region in the country) priorities. At the same time, there is a process less of their displacement by national than of acquisition of supranational (the Balkans, Europe, the world) priorities.

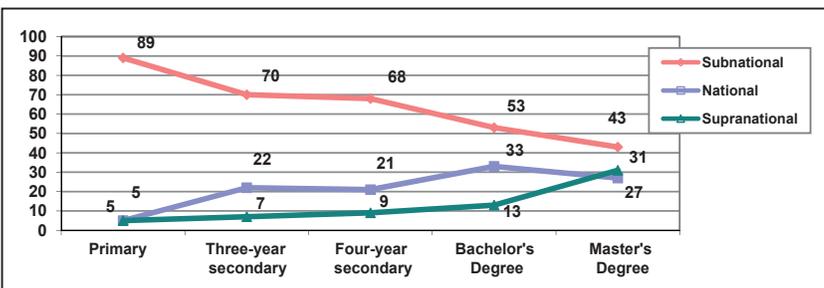
Figure 8.7 Level of self-identification / Settlement type (%)



The small-owner traditions in Bulgaria and, on the other hand, the presence of significant ethnic minorities, play a basic role in these attitudes (Cramer’s $V = .190$). An equal percentage of ethnic Turks and Roma, 89%, pointed out as their priority identity their town/village or region. It is noteworthy, however, that more than one-quarter of students (27%) pointed out Europe and the world as their priority identification. In fact, the share of those who gave priority to national identification is the same.

One may recall that in the first postwar years, Bulgaria was still a mostly rural country: in 1946, a total of 78% of the country’s population was rural and consisted mainly of small landholders. We should not be surprised that the prime factor for the level of self-identification is the father’s education level (Cramer’s $V = .216$), the culture of the parental family.

Figure 8.8 Level of self-identification / Father’s education level (%)

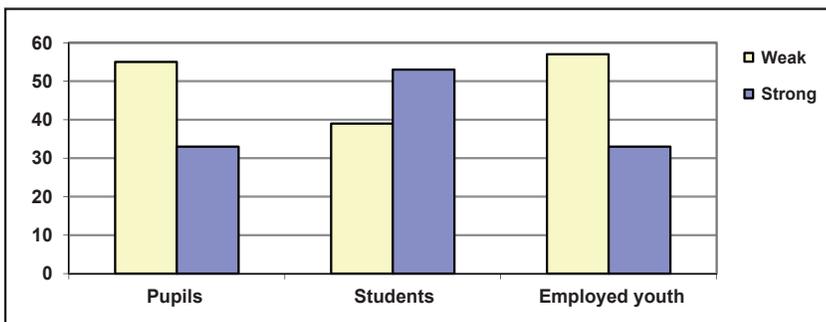


The alternative approach touches on a sensitive issue. Other indicators shed light on the national and European identity, taken in themselves. The sense of belonging to Bulgaria is strong, although the content of this self-identification is visibly changing, as the in-depth interviews show.

Things like "I'm proud to be Bulgarian" or you are this or that, are not very relevant [at present]. Generally speaking, all sorts of divisions – borders and religions – should exist more for the sake of diversity. They shouldn't be something that sets you apart. (Male, Information Science student at Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

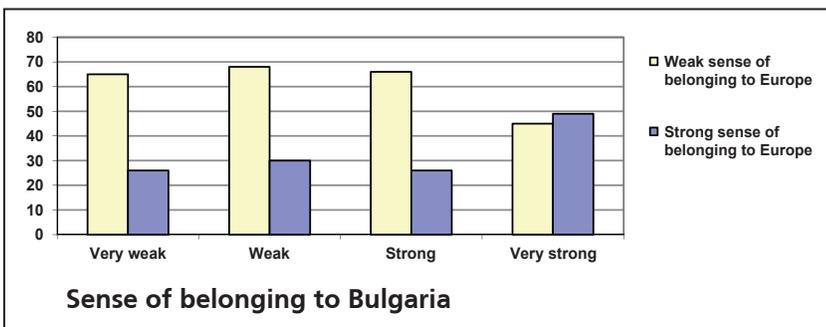
We should also bear in mind the relative character of self-identifications when we interpret the sense of belonging to Europe.

Figure 8.9 Sense of belonging to Europe (%)



Every third respondent defined their sense of belonging to Europe as strong ("strong" or "very strong"); this is the perception of the majority of students (Cramer's V = .147). National self-identification is stronger, but what is most important is that the national and the European identity do not rival but even stimulate each other.

Figure 8.10 Sense of belonging to Bulgaria / Sense of belonging to Europe (%)



Those with the strongest sense of belonging to Bulgaria also have the strongest sense of European identity; the latter is even dominant. A series of other data corroborate the fact that this dependence is not coincidental. Thus, in answering the question, “In your opinion, has Bulgaria benefited or lost from EU membership?”, the respondents with a weak sense of belonging to Bulgaria were more likely to say that Bulgaria has “lost”. The prevalent answers among respondents with a weak sense of national identity are that “nothing has changed”. Among youth with a strong sense of belonging to Bulgaria the share of those who think that “nothing has changed” is the same as the share of those who believe that Bulgaria has “benefited”. And it is only among those who have a very strong sense of belonging to Bulgaria that the majority believe that the country has “benefited” from EU membership. This enables us to make important generalizations. Bulgarian patriotism is pro-European.

8.6 Conclusions

The seven years since Bulgaria joined the European Union as a full member may be regarded as a sort of test of the pro-European sentiments that were predominant during the transition period. The findings of this study point to some main conclusions.

- As a whole, Bulgarian youth have kept their pro-European orientation. There is no ground for successful Euroscepticism. The disappointment with the outcomes of the transition, with the unfavourable situation in various spheres of social life, and especially with the material standards of living, motivates the opinion that “nothing has changed”. Of course, when it is deciphered, this belief contains above all critical attitudes towards national governance. At the basis of Eurosceptic attitudes is a sort of “Bulgaroscepticism”.
- The elite of Bulgarian youth – specialists with higher education and students – are the most pro-European.
- A European identity is being formed among the new generation, and especially among students. This identity is not displacing the national identity; it overlaps with it, lending Bulgarian patriotism a European dimension.
- The attitude towards European values is leaving the zone of deformations, such as excessive economization of consciousness, and indicates a definite increase in democratic political culture.

9. MIGRATION INTENTIONS

9.1 The problem situation

High geographical mobility has become part of the *differentia specifica* of societies in the 21st century. Choice of place of residence – of location and country – is one of the important decisions taken by young people today. The globalization of cultures, mass study of foreign languages, and relaxed visa regulations have expanded the range of opportunities available to the young. Life choice acquires special importance and additional motives when it coincides with a pivotal moment in the development of the country itself.

Historically, Bulgaria has experienced two waves of youth migration. The first was during the accelerated socialist industrialization and urbanization in the 1960s and 1970s. The second was during the transition period in the 1990s. The first wave of migration was mostly within the country's borders, above all from villages to cities, and it was administratively regulated. The second was from the Bulgarian to the "global" city, from Bulgaria to Europe and North America, and it was economically and psychologically self-regulated.

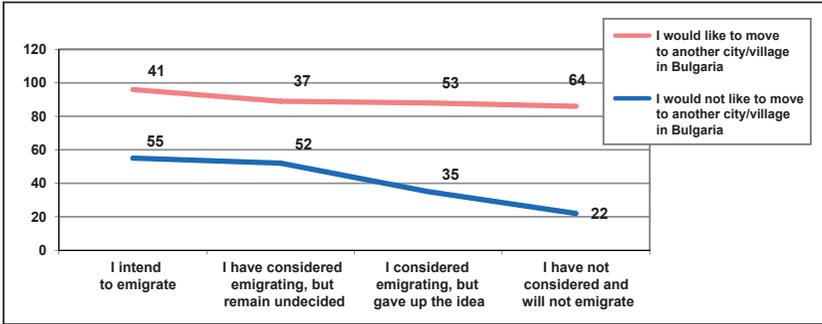
In both cases sociologists contributed to the study of and rational approach towards the situation that had emerged at the time. The beginning of institutionalized sociological studies on youth in Bulgaria was laid by a large-scale study on potential migration of rural youth (Семов: 1973). Already in 1990, sociologists forecast that there would be a new emigration boom (in a study conducted by Zhivko Georgiev).

This study sought to establish the changes in Bulgarian youth's migration intentions after the country's integration into the European Union, and to test the following hypothesis: similarly to other countries in Southeast Europe, in Bulgaria, too, there is a new phenomenon – post-transition migration processes with specific characteristics, which do not constitute a migration boom.

9.2 The two types of migration

The major characteristic of the new situation is the overlap of internal and external migration, the relative nature of the boundary between them. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s migration was mostly internal and in the 1990s mostly external, now we find a willingness for migration among Bulgarian youth that can be internal as well as external.

Figure 9.1 Intentions for internal migration and emigration (%)



The majority of those who would like to move to another city/village in Bulgaria intend to emigrate, or have at least considered emigrating but have not yet taken a final decision to leave the country. Most of those who are undecided (52%) would like to move to another city/village in Bulgaria. There is a definite connection between those two types of migration intentions and it can be seen both directly and indirectly. It seems paradoxical that young people from the North-West Planning Region (the poorest in Bulgaria) are less inclined to emigrate than those from the South-West Planning Region (the richest in Bulgaria). Potential internal migration explains this apparent anomaly. Youth from the North-West Region (and from the North-Central Region) are the most willing to relocate to another city/village in the country, while those from the South-West are the least willing to do so. It seems simply that while some young people wish to look for “the good life” abroad, others hope to find it in Bulgaria. It is a matter of one’s resources and criteria. Respondents from the most developed South-West Region, with the most favourable conditions for self-realization, most often pointed out as a reason for emigration the “unfavourable conditions in Bulgaria”. Obviously their requirements regarding the social environment are higher.

The final decision on where to go – to another Bulgarian city/village or to another country – definitely depends on factors that are of different importance to different individuals. What is sociologically significant is the mutual replaceability of the two types of migration. This may be the reason, or one of the reasons, why the level of potential emigration is limited. As we shall see, the main motives for internal and external migration are the same.

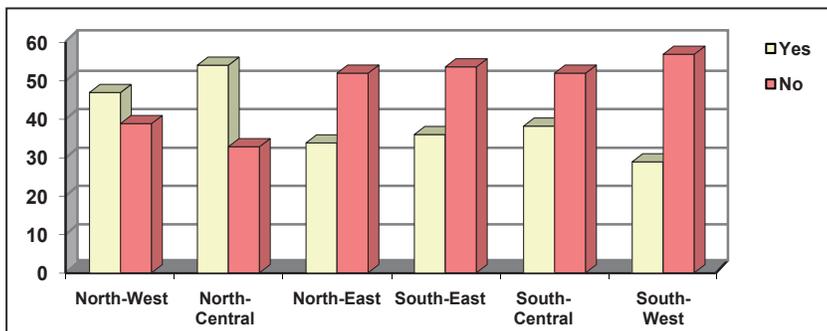
9.3 Potential internal migration

This study reveals an important sociological fact: a significant level of potential internal migration. Just half of Bulgarian youth (50%) do not intend to move somewhere else in their home country (as compared with 69% of Croatian youth); more than one-third have such intentions. Especially noteworthy is the desire for change among pupils, and particularly among students. Employed youth are comparatively “anchored” in their present places of residence.

The data contain some unexpected results. It turns out that those who are least willing to relocate are Roma (29%), while those who are most willing are ethnic Turks (45%); ethnic Bulgarians are in-between these two groups (37%). An explanation may be found in young people’s attitudes towards their studies: young ethnic Turks are the most diligent and spend the most time on studying for school. It is logical to assume that they are also more ambitious. Those who spend the least time on studying for school and, often, in school education itself, are young Roma. If they move somewhere else, they may lose their clan’s support without finding a point of support in their own educational attainment. There is no difference in potential internal mobility between young men and women (Cramer’s $V = .008$), despite the traditional notion that men are more willing to take the risks of change. The differences by education level (Cramer’s $V = .136$) are expected. The differentiation by type of settlement is more significant (Cramer’s $V = .158$) and it is situated between two extremes. At one extreme are small towns (44%), and at the other Sofia (25%). Many of the small towns in Bulgaria suffered particularly from the economic collapse during the transition period.

Figure 9.2 Would you like to move to another city/village in Bulgaria? (%)

Responses by region



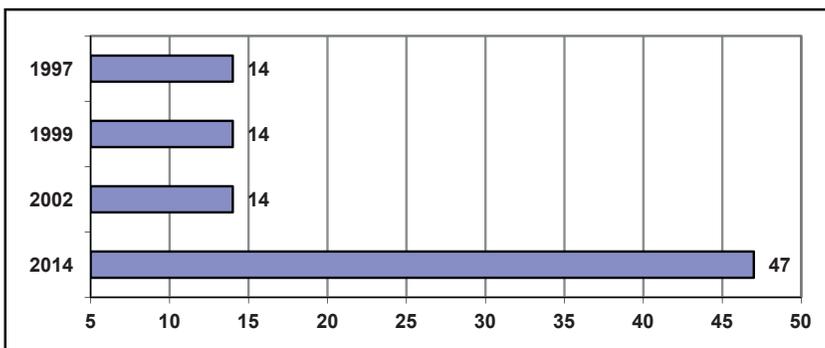
The differences between the regions are the most significant (Cramer's $V = .183$), up to 25%. In four of the regions, the majority of young people do not intend to move to another city/village. This, however, is not true for two – the North-West and the North-Central planning regions. The reasons are well-known: the process of Bulgaria's de-industrialization during the transition period was extremely uneven and affected those two regions particularly badly. They are the two poorest regions in the whole European Union.

As a whole, the findings reveal a picture which is not just different from but also opposite to potential migration during the period of industrialization in Bulgaria. In the 1950s-1970s young people migrated from rural to urban areas, attracted not just by the new professions and jobs but also by the opportunities for youth communication and personal development. Sociologists established an unexpected result: migration intentions were most influenced by the desire to find better opportunities for choosing a marriage partner. Nowadays the conditions for youth communication are radically different: new means of communication, internet friendships, a modern road network, mass car ownership... Now, at the time of de-industrialization, the motives for internal migration are less lyrical and more ontological – they are related to better employment opportunities and living standards.

9.4 Emigration intentions

Here we use as a basis for comparison not the more distant but the more recent past. The study found a significant change.

Figure 9.3 Unwillingness to emigrate (%)



In 2014, the share of respondents who declared that they “have not considered and do not intend to emigrate” is 39%, while another 8% admitted that they had “considered emigrating, but gave up the idea” – in other words, almost half of Bulgarian youth are unwilling to emigrate. Of course, between the clear intention (12%) and the firm rejection (47%) there is a large share of “undecided” which, however, has also decreased in comparison with data from 1999/2002.

This change is entirely comparable to the findings of Croatian youth studies. Whereas in 1999 only 18% of Croatian youth explicitly rejected emigration and 61% expressed the desire to move abroad, today 70% do not want to move abroad and slightly over one-quarter wish to emigrate (Ilišin, Bouillet, Gvozdanović, Potočnik: 2013). The tendency in both countries is the same. As the post-transition normalization and EU integration have calmed down the situation, the migration wave is abating and giving way to moderate migration flows. In Bulgaria they are more prominent. The push factor for emigration is different: in Croatia it was above all the civil war, while in Bulgaria it was mass impoverishment. Whereas the war has ended, exiting poverty is harder.

In 1990 Bulgarian researchers found that youth emigration, potential as well as real, was driven more by the desire to escape from the real hardships of everyday life in Bulgaria than by illusions about a carefree life in another country. In this respect, things have not changed. The main motive for emigration continues to be not so much the “pull” but the “push” factor. Unemployment (69%) is a stronger factor than the quest for a better-paid job (57%); low living standards motivate more (62%) than life in a country with higher living standards (39%). One may say that the main positive and negative factors are two sides of one and the same coin. They are different dimensions of the *opportunities* opening up before young people. Their psychological value, however, is not the same and this is obvious in the in-depth interviews.

The majority have set their sights abroad, there won't be any young people left in the country and this is sad. A small percentage will remain [in Bulgaria]...

Interviewer: Because [life] abroad is...

Because of what [life] here isn't. Everyone is aware that there's no development here. I've spoken [about this] with many people. (Female pupil, 18, Sofia)

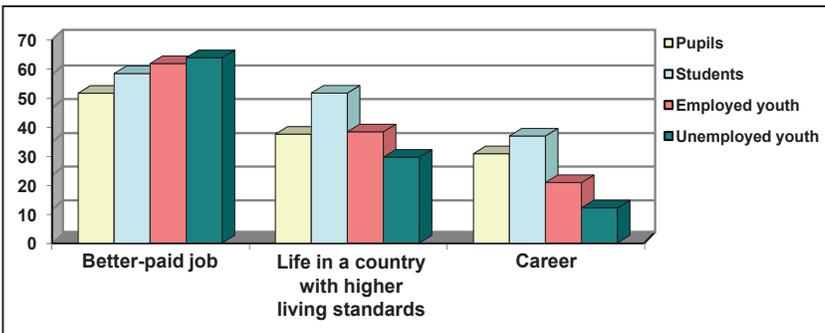
Other people leave also because of the [general] atmosphere [in Bulgaria]. I've heard some say, "I don't like it here. The people you see in the streets are vulgar." Such young people will go to

Germany and say, "Everything's wonderful here, well-organized" and so on. There are people who also leave because they think that everything here is degrading. (Information Science student, male, Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

Emigration is easier for those who have a weak sense of connection to Bulgaria. Among the respondents who intend to emigrate, 47% answered "Rather yes" when asked, "If you could choose your country of birth, would you choose Bulgaria?"; among those who have not considered emigrating, 74% chose this answer (Cramer's $V = .204$). There is also a positive connection. Among potential emigrants, 26% declared a supranational priority identity, as compared with just 6% among those who have not considered emigrating (Cramer's $V = .154$).

The main push and pull factors for potential emigration remain economic. To them we must add social mobility, opportunities for a career that ensures higher pay and higher living standards. But also the opportunity for personal self-realization. The relationship between these factors – motives for emigration – is different among the main youth groups.

Figure 9.4 Which of the following opportunities abroad would attract you? (%)



The importance of social mobility increases with respondents' education level. It is prominent among students and young specialists, and is pointed out as a motive for emigration in Sofia twice more often (38%) than in rural areas (15%). For university graduates, "career" is as important a motive as "life in a country with higher living standards". This brings us to a question of prime importance for Bulgaria: the continuing brain drain. The opening up of the EU labour market is especially attractive to specialists with higher education because of the better opportunities for upward social mobility. Intentions to emigrate are

formed already at school and at university. Here, too, we find a characteristic difference: among those who intend to emigrate, the majority (53%) have a grade point average tending towards Excellent, while among those who have not considered emigrating they are one-third (Cramer's $V = .138$).

Among the economic reasons for emigration, crime and social uncertainty continue to be a push factor, albeit of significantly less importance: pointed out by 46% of respondents in 1997, 34% in 2002, and 27% in 2014. Violation of civil rights also continues to be one of the push factors – indicated by every fifth respondent. What is new and curious is that it is pointed out above all by ethnic Bulgarians (in absolute numbers, by 198 ethnic Bulgarians, seven ethnic Turks, and nine Roma). *Ethnic (8%) and religious (3%) intolerance* are less important. Religious intolerance is a push factor for more ethnic Bulgarians (4%) than ethnic Turks (1%) and Roma (1%), while ethnic intolerance is an equal motive for respondents from the different ethnic communities (for 8% of ethnic Bulgarians, 7% of ethnic Turks and 10% of Roma). Bulgaria is the country which, in the second half of the 1980s, experienced a unique ethnic experiment tantamount to an ethnopolitical crime (the so-called “Revival Process”) – the forced name change of Bulgarian Turks. This caused the exodus (the so-called “Grand Excursion”) of approximately 360 000 ethnic Turks to the Republic of Turkey. It is against this background that one should evaluate the present-day picture, which visibly reflects the success of the so-called Bulgarian Ethnic Model. The emigration intentions of today's young ethnic Turks do not differ from those of young ethnic Bulgarians in scale or destination. The absence of ethnic motives redirects their gaze towards the West.

Interviewer: Where do they [Bulgarian Turks] most often emigrate to?

Greece, and above all Holland.

Interviewer: Aren't there good conditions in Turkey?

I don't know anyone who has emigrated to Turkey. (Male pupil, 15, ethnic Turk, town of Peshtera)

The decision to leave the country is a volitional act which presupposes not just definite professional qualifications but also self-confidence and resolve. This is an important dividing line which should be taken into account in interpreting migration intentions.

The ambitious people are leaving Bulgaria. For example, I have graduated from the German[-language-teaching high school] in Sofia. Maybe more than 100 people, if not even 150, out of the 180 who graduated in the same year as me have gone either to

Germany or to Britain. This is a lot of people who were among the "best", at least if we judge from their grades. (Information Science student, male, Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

In my class [at school] we have [two] groups: one wants to go to study outside Bulgaria, while the other wants to stay and to fix Bulgaria. Those who want to fix Bulgaria aren't attending classes – they go and have coffee near our school. They don't study at all; they say they aren't interested. And this same person will ask me, "Why do you want to leave Bulgaria? Stay here like us, so that we will fix the country." When they tell you this, you can't argue with 20 people. They have their own way of thinking. [I get upset at] the thought that this person will stay to fix Bulgaria when I know how lazy he is... (Male pupil, 17, studying computer technology, Sofia)

In some cases, parents push their children to leave the country.

The bad thing is that many parents demand from the young that they go abroad after completing their education. It's horrible, because you are [treated] like a slave [abroad]. Despite this, a co-worker of mine went [to work abroad under pressure from her parents]. (Female, 25, shop assistant at a shopping mall, Sofia)

In essence, however, migration intentions are an expression of youth aspirations. They include the romanticism of youth, expressed in classic Bulgarian poetry in the words of a young sailor who "wildly yearned for the Philippines / For the thick stars above Famagusta". Now the young sailor's dreams of traveling around the world are recreated in pragmatic intentions for life in developed countries, with a wider field of opportunities for pursuing one's ideals in life.

Interviewer: How do you imagine the ideal life?

Not being oppressed, because here, for example, [all you can do is struggle] to survive. The ideal life... a life that is dynamic, thrilling, with [opportunities for] development, adventurous in some way. (Female pupil, 18, Sofia)

Migration intentions intensify the aspiration to learn foreign languages. Priority is given mainly – but not only – to English, German, French.

I'm also learning Swedish. As well as German and English. My mother enrolled me to study Swedish because it is a rare language, and Sweden is indeed a very developed country. [It offers] lots of opportunities. And it's good that she decided to enroll me because I was younger at the time and didn't understand things very well. (Female pupil, 18, Sofia)

Bulgaria's membership in the EU has significantly restructured the orientation towards a preferred country of destination among Bulgarian youth who would like to emigrate. In 1997 the ratio between Western Europe and North America (the USA and Canada) was 3:2. In 2002 it was approximately 3:1. Now it is 4.5:1. This dynamic is entirely logical in view of Bulgaria's growing EU integration. It should be noted, rather, that even though it is not as much preferred as it used to be, North America has not lost its appeal as a destination for emigration. This is probably due to the already quite large community of Bulgarian emigrants working in the USA who, moreover, are concentrated in particular cities.

EU integration offers a wide range of opportunities for choice between different countries, therefore the future emigrant may be wondering which one to choose. The preferred countries of destination pointed out by the respondents in the representative study include cold Iceland, hot Dubai, gambling Monaco and workaholic Singapore; the developed western countries predominate, although there are also East European exceptions.

In general, I very much want [to emigrate] to Switzerland. Or to Germany. Not to Britain, or to France where I've heard [life] is quite expensive and [the country] isn't a very nice place to live in. In Spain there is a crisis. Last summer I had an opportunity to go to the Czech Republic, but something happened and I didn't. (Roma male, 22, working student at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia)

The preferred countries of destination pointed out by more than 10% of the respondents are five: Germany (36%), the USA (23%), Italy (12%), the UK (11%) and Austria (10%). The German-speaking countries are particularly attractive for Bulgarian youth – they are preferred by almost half of the potential emigrants. The latter are found above all in two regions, the South-Central and the North-East, which are home to Bulgaria's two largest cities after Sofia – Plovdiv and Varna. The young people who are likely to buy a one-way ticket to Germany or the USA differ significantly. Germany is preferred by men, while the USA is preferred equally by men and women. Germany is attractive above all to 18-22-year-olds, and the USA to 14-17-year-olds. Most of those who would like to move to Germany are students and employed youth, while those who would prefer the USA are more likely to be pupils and working students. The majority of potential emigrants to Germany are from regional centres and villages, while that of potential emigrants to the USA are from Sofia and small towns. Germany is the preferred country of destination for well-to-do and poor, and the USA for wealthy respondents.

The representative study did not include a question about what would stop young people from emigrating. Interesting information about the realization of emigration intentions is offered by the in-depth interviews. In addition to professional qualifications and knowledge of a foreign language, personal points of support are also important to potential emigrants.

I've decided [to emigrate], but I need a hand. Someone there. If I work there I'll get proper pay and a proper pension. I want to be a miner in Germany. (Ethnic Turk, male, 24, driver, town of Peshtera) It all boils down to knowing people. If I know someone there who will hold out a hand to me... I speak languages – I speak English, I speak French, a little German – I went to [language] courses. If there's someone to hold out not even a hand but just a finger to me, someone who'll tell me, "Come here, I'll give you lodgings," I'll start looking for a job on my own and I'll make my own way. But you can't go to a foreign country if you're all on your own... (Roma male, 22, working student at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia)

Reasons why respondents are unwilling to emigrate are also found in the potential countries of destination. Young people also encounter psychological barriers to adaptation, which may discourage them.

To be honest, I wanted to go to work, to study abroad. But I've given up the idea for the time being. I went on a trip to Britain in January and I was very disappointed with the attitude towards the Bulgarians. They were regarded as slaves, as people who owed something... I was very disappointed. This got me thinking. (Female, 25, shop assistant at a shopping mall, Sofia)

The decision taken by young people contains an element of conditionality. Emigration intentions do not rule out the possibility of returning to Bulgaria.

I don't have any concrete plans yet, but I definitely want to see part of the world. I don't know yet if I will return. There's time. It's not impossible that you may return and work in Bulgaria. (Female, 19, enrolled in a university in Germany)

The realization of opportunities abroad is also a loss of chances in Bulgaria. At least some of the respondents are clearly aware of that.

This is a problem of [Bulgarian] people abroad – they think they must stay there because that is where the high standards and salaries are, and no one realizes that they have a better chance to develop their talent here than abroad. (Male, 22, working Law student at Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

Emigration also has a downside.

9.5 Conclusions

Bulgarian youth's wishes and intentions to live in a city/village and country which correspond to their notions of a better life reveal an ambiguous migration situation.

- A significant part of young people are potential internal migrants as a result of the continuing and growing inequality in the socioeconomic development of the different regions and settlements in Bulgaria.
- The emigration boom of the 1990s remains a phenomenon of the transition period. Now there are post-transition emigration flows. The emigration wave was caused by the sudden mass impoverishment. The factors at play now are the stagnation of poverty and low living standards, the job losses due to Bulgaria's de-industrialization.
- Ethnic motives have lost validity as a result of the normalization of ethnic relations. The emigration motives of the Roma are not ethnic, they are economic and social. The main emigration flow is towards the countries of the European Union. Interest in North America has declined, but it has not disappeared.
- The risks of potential emigration to Bulgaria's development are less quantitative than qualitative: emigration of specialists with higher education.
- *Sociological portrait* of the potential emigrant: male/female; university graduate; Sofia resident; unmarried; feels European more than the others; is more sensitive to the low living standards in Bulgaria; is oriented towards private business; prefers to be employed in management.

10. OPTIMISM AND FEARS OF YOUNG BULGARIANS

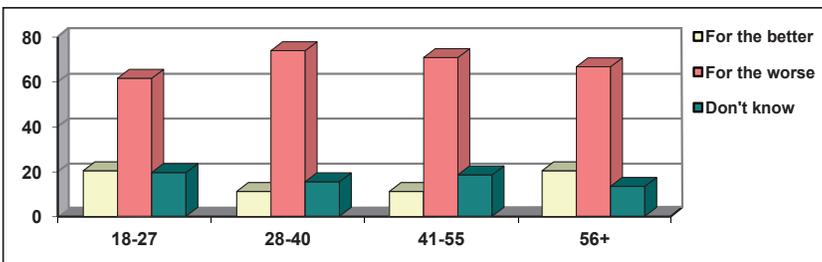
10.1 The problem situation

Optimism is an attitude characteristic of the young, which comes from their high vitality, the self-confidence acquired with maturity, and from the aspiration to, expectation of and first step towards future self-realization. At the same time, these attitudes are formed in a concrete historical context which may contain positive as well as negative impulses. The complex interaction of the socio-biological and social factors can lend specific characteristics to a whole generation despite the inevitable, significant individual differences. Scientific labels such as “the sceptical generation” (Schelsky: 1957) or literary epithets such as “the angry young men” are well known.

Bulgaria’s transition, which began in 1989, was a very dynamic process in the course of which public attitudes changed, too. The crises of the 1990s were perceived as “shock without therapy”, unlike the “shock therapy” applied in Poland. The hardships of the transition themselves, though, were perceived as temporary and there were public expectations for speedy normalization provided that suitable people took over the country’s governance. The alternation of different governments – of the left, the right, and the centre – exhausted this optimism. This led to a strange, at first sight, turn – growing public scepticism and pessimism precisely during the period of stabilization of the economic situation in Bulgaria in the first decade of the new century.

The situation in which this study was conducted in June 2014 was characterized by a political crisis that threatened to upset Bulgaria’s financial stability. The survey literally coincided with a panic withdrawal of deposits and the closure of one of the country’s leading banks – Corporate Commercial Bank. It is not clear whether, and to what extent, respondents were influenced by those current events.

Figure 10.1 Where is Bulgaria headed for? / Age groups (%)



Source: Gallup International, July 2014.

The omnibus surveys in June-August (when the in-depth interviews were conducted) show that there is a public consensus of sorts on the negative trend of Bulgaria's development. Young people seem to be less pessimistic than the middle-aged, but then they are also less socially competent. The lower pessimism of those aged 56+ reflects the sentiment of the counter-protest in support of the outgoing government.

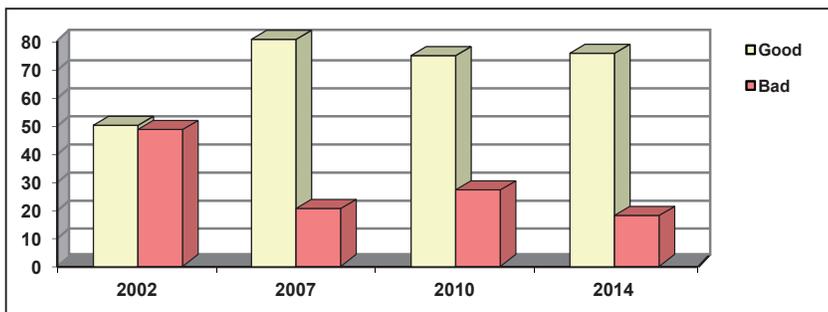
The youth study makes it possible to examine the socio-psychological situation in more depth and to establish the level of youth optimism as well as the impact of the socioeconomic and political situation.

10.2 Personal prospects

Sociological studies reflect significant changes in youth assessments of their personal and family prospects in the post-transition period (*Figure 10.2*).

The dynamic is impressive and requires explanation. The scepticism found in 2002 reflected the thorny path of the transition in the 1990s. At the same time, 2002 was a milestone year: that is when Bulgaria was recognized as a functioning market economy; national reconciliation was an official government policy. The sentiments in 2007 reflected the normalization which had taken place in the country; the global economic crisis had not yet begun. In 2010 the crisis had a limited impact in Bulgaria. The year 2014 is a post-crisis year, but the country's economic growth is insignificant. In 2007-2014 youth attitudes varied, but within a relatively narrow margin, and they were not particularly influenced by the economic situation.

Figure 10.2 How would you assess your personal and family life-prospects at present? (%)

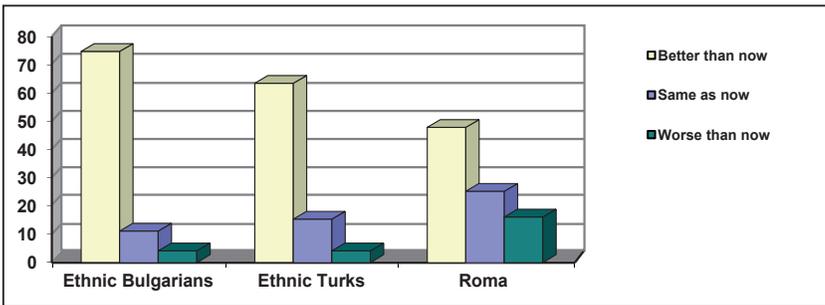


Source: Gallup International, 2002, 2007, 2014. Mediana, 2010.

In 2014 we do not find significant differences by gender; optimism is slightly higher among women (Cramer's $V = .060$). Young people at all education levels, and especially those with higher education (Cramer's $V = .225$), believe that their life will improve. Employed youth are particularly optimistic (74%), but so are even the majority of unemployed youth (51% when asked how they see their prospects at present – Cramer's $V = .195$; and 74% when asked how they envision their future in ten years – Cramer's $V = .127$). Positive attitudes predominate regardless of the type of settlement (60% in villages, 72% in regional centres, and 80% in Sofia) and material standing, despite the explicable differences (78% of the wealthy, 71% of the well-to-do, 71% of the lower-middle, and 65% of the poor).

Against this background, the pessimism of young Roma stands out. Ethnic differentiation is particularly significant (Cramer's $V = .190$).

Figure 10.3 How do you see your future in ten years? (%)



We see the only typology of those used in the study where optimists are not the majority. This finding ought not just to give food for thought, but also to stimulate governance decisions. We find that marginalized youth from one ethnic group feel they are doomed.

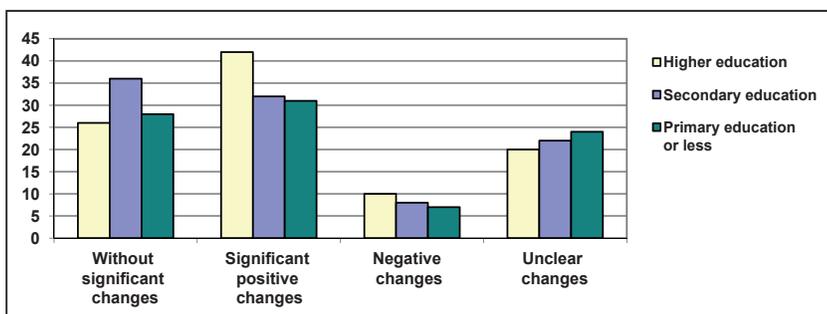
10.3 Bulgaria's future

Bulgarian youth's public opinion about the country's future is divided in three: one-third (33%) believe that there will be significant changes for the better in the short term, another third (31%) do not think that life in the country will change substantially in the next few years, and the remaining one-third are sceptical or pessimistic: some think that "there may be changes, but it is not clear if they will be for the better or for the worse" (16%), or that there will be negative changes (6%). As we can see, few are complete pessimists; yet

we should not forget that the absence of changes may seem positive to some (for example, to the wealthy and the well-to-do) but negative to others (the lower-middle or the poor). It is important to note that young specialists with higher education have the most positive vision of Bulgaria's future.

It is noteworthy that the main socio-demographic indicators – with the exception of educational attainment – do not cause significant differentiation. The visions of young men and women are the same (Cramer's $V = .014$); they are almost the same in the different types of settlements (Cramer's $V = .035$); social stratification (wealthy-poor) does not have a significant effect; even ethnic differences are not significant (Cramer's $V = .040$).

Figure 10.4 Vision of Bulgaria's short-term future / Education level (%)



One may say that it is not so much life in its various dimensions than the information horizon which differentiates youth visions within the framework of a generational vision taken as a whole.

10.4 Ontological optimism

In the in-depth interviews, one respondent said the following:

One may say, "You are young, you haven't seen the bad things in life." This may be true, but for the time being I am an optimist and I hope to remain such even if I see unpleasant things in life. (Information Science student, male, Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski")

This statement cannot be generalized to all young people, many of whom have encountered serious difficulties in life. However, it suggests a more general psychological problem which lies at the core of youth optimism. It is well-known that negative attitudes are generalized and transposed from one sphere to another (pessimism), and vice versa –

positive thinking is extrapolated. This study offers interesting opportunities for conclusions.

There is a natural and logical connection between the answers to the questions, "How do you see your future in ten years" and "Which of the following statements about Bulgaria's future best describes your views?". Unsurprisingly, among those who believe there will be significant positive changes in Bulgaria the overwhelming majority (85%) think that their personal future will be better than the present; less than 1% think it will be worse. It is interesting, though, that the other connection is even stronger: those who are optimistic about their future are incomparably more likely to believe in the positive changes in Bulgaria. There is an interdependence, but the transfer from personal to social optimism appears to be stronger.

Young people who assess their prospects as "very good" are most satisfied with their appearance (Cramer's $\kappa = .170$); they are most satisfied with their friends (Cramer's $V = .163$) and have the best relationship with their parents (Cramer's $V = .177$). Undoubtedly, a certain level of psychological comfort and positive thinking influences visions of the country's future. One may go beyond the purely psychological sphere – the attitudes towards oneself, one's friends and parents. The majority of those who believe their prospects are very good rely on their personal abilities and efforts to obtain the desired education. And there is something else, too. We find them mostly among those who are enrolled into a desired study programme. The readiness for self-realization and the first step in that direction are a source of self-confidence.

We also find an analogous connection in a European aspect. Those who are most optimistic about their personal prospects also have a more positive perception of the European Union. But the reverse connection is not true: a more positive perception of the EU does not produce a more optimistic vision of one's personal future. One may conclude that personal optimism contributes to a positive perception of the EU. However, there is another unquestionable connection: between expected positive changes in Bulgaria and the positive perception of the European Union. One may say that there is an emphasis on the EU in the optimism about Bulgaria's future.

It seems that there is an anomaly in the correlation between responses regarding one's personal future in ten years and the region where respondents live (Cramer's $V = .143$). One would expect that least optimistic responses would be found in Bulgaria's poorest and relatively more backward regions, the North-West and the North-Central. This is not true. The share of optimistic responses in the North-West Region (66%) is higher than in the

North-East (58%) and the South-East (58%), and the same in the North-Central (72%) and the South-Central (72%) regions. An explanation may be found in the higher willingness of respondents in those regions to look for better opportunities in another city/village in Bulgaria. The direct comparison between willingness to migrate and responses regarding one's personal future confirm this hypothesis. All this means that the generational optimism is comprehensive in character. Bulgarian youth's vision of their future takes into account the fulfillment of their plans, including the possibility of finding a better place to live in. This is a specific characteristic of the young generation.

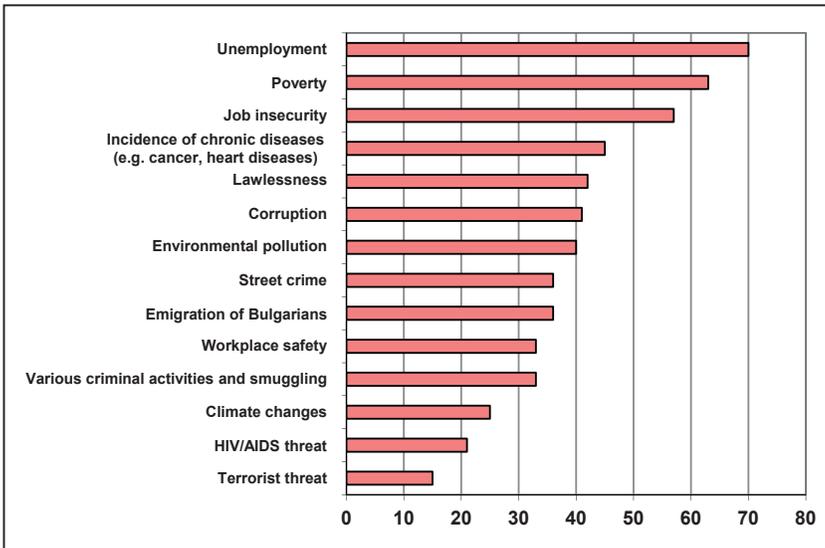
10.5 Ontological fears

Fears are a complex social phenomenon accompanying the development of European civilization – from Phobos and Deimos in Antiquity to the fear of God in the Middle Ages to the culture of fear in contemporary times. There are fears which are essentially individual even when they have a mass character. The level of danger in such cases is measured by the probability of an individual's becoming its victim. There are also fears which are essentially universal. Unlike unemployment, the ozone hole or nuclear war cannot affect some without affecting all. Fears from the first group are felt much more acutely because they are closer to the everyday consciousness and imagination. But fears from the second group are potentially the most destructive. In the conditions of the transition period, fears from the first group were activated most strongly, to a different extent and in different ways, while those from the second group were reformulated. In 1997/98 Bulgarian participation in an international study on "Catastrophic Consciousness in the Modern World", directed by American sociologist Vladimir Shlapentokh and coordinated by Michigan State University, made it possible to see what was general and what was specific to Bulgaria in this respect (Шляпентох, Шубкин, Ядов: 1999).

The present study sought to establish the level of anxiety in Bulgarian youth consciousness, expressed in general fearful attitudes, in concerns about the aggravation of particular problems in Bulgarian society, about unfavourable consequences of EU integration, and about the vision that destructive trends are becoming dominant in the global world. The indicators used enable comparison with previous studies in Bulgaria as well as with data from other Balkan countries.

The notion of the disturbing problems for Bulgarian society shows a clear ranking of youth anxieties. Economic fears predominate.

Figure 10.5 Disturbing/alarming problems for Bulgarian society (%)
 Answer "Very alarming"



The configuration of Bulgarian youth's fears reflects the results of the transition and its rationalization. In the recent past, fears played a prime role in the regulation and reproduction of the social relations of state socialism. The greatest fear was of the state's repressive bodies. By way of ideological propaganda influences, this fear was transformed into a socializing fear of the ruling party. In the social and political system that emerged as the result of the transition, most fears are not of the state but, rather, of the violation or even destruction of statehood. There are laws, but they are not observed. Corruption extends to the highest levels of government. The main source generating fears has become the market, which brings risks of unemployment, impoverishment and job insecurity. It underlies the risks of corruption, of smuggling.

The data from this study categorically show that in the general picture of anxiety, there are only three problems which the majority of Bulgarian youth consider to be very alarming: unemployment, poverty and job insecurity. They are immediately followed by healthcare. The fears of chronic diseases – cancer and heart diseases – are twice as high as the fear of AIDS. This is probably not just because those diseases are widespread but also because of the fact that the prime role in this respect is played by the healthcare system, which is only partially reformed and ineffective.

The activity of the judicial system is also regarded as highly problematic. We have already noted the low level of trust in the Bulgarian judiciary and the Prosecutor General. Analysts have pointed out that among the main goals Bulgaria set out to achieve at the beginning of the transition – market economy, pluralistic democracy, rule of law, and EU integration – the least progress has been made on rule of law. In the 1990s corruption extended to the legal sphere, too. It is precisely through it that the abuse and plunder of state-owned property was legitimated. The following detail is noteworthy. Corruption causes greater alarm than street crime and other criminal activities, including smuggling. Bulgarian youth public opinion on this point coincides with the European Commission's regular criticisms regarding Bulgaria's insufficient efforts to combat corruption, including among the ruling elite.

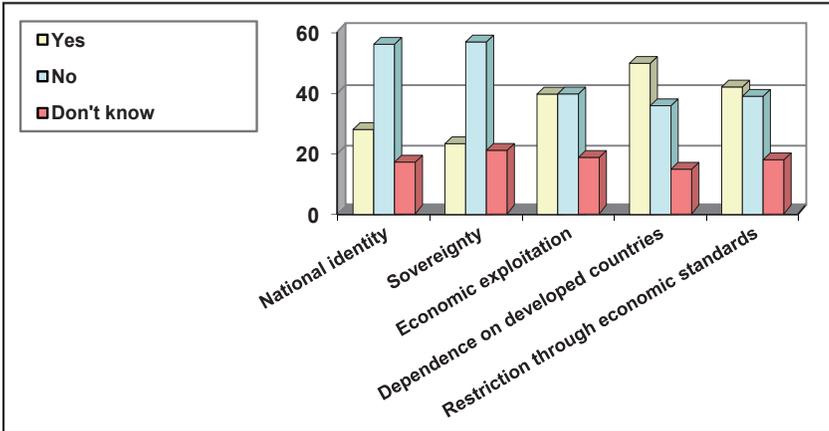
The terrorist threat is perceived as the least alarming. This may appear to be somewhat surprising after the terrorist attack at the Burgas international airport in 2012, which caused a wide international reaction and lively internal debates. If, however, we look at the ranking list of Bulgarian youth's fears, we will see that those ranked in the top four places are fears that can be felt as a direct individual threat, while those in the bottom four places are universal threats. Of course, terrorism can also be felt as an individual threat if it is more intense. In Bulgaria there is a significant difference between the perception of crime in the street we move along every day, and of a terrorist attack at an international airport against foreign citizens.

The present picture of Bulgarian youth's fears points not just to the acute problems of the transition, such as poverty and unemployment, but also to its achievements. It is especially noteworthy that there are no significant fears of ethnic conflicts. And perhaps even more importantly, there are no differences among the different ethnic groups in this respect. Also obvious is the feeling of international security. The aggression of neighbour countries, so characteristic of the Balkans throughout the 20th century, is obviously on its way to being consigned to history. Despite the heightened geopolitical tension, there are no fears of nuclear war. Bulgaria's opening up to the world has not caused growing concern about the Americanization of public life. This trend is even more evident in the assessments of the unfavourable consequences of EU integration.

10.6 Does EU integration pose risks?

This study provides an answer to the question of whether, and to what extent, Bulgarian youth see downsides of EU membership.

Figure 10.6 Does Bulgaria’s EU membership pose threats to/of... (%)



The problem is situated at two different levels. One is the threat to national identity and sovereignty, and concerns Bulgaria’s EU membership itself. The other level – economic problems, common EU standards, and dependence on the developed countries – concerns Bulgaria’s policies as a member of the EU. As we can see, the respondents’ answers are very different. The majority of respondents do not see a threat to Bulgaria’s sovereignty and national identity. These answers can be added to the already discussed dominant pro-European attitudes. At the same time, the mass attitudes show a heightened sensitivity to concrete policies and, at that, especially in the sphere of economic relations.

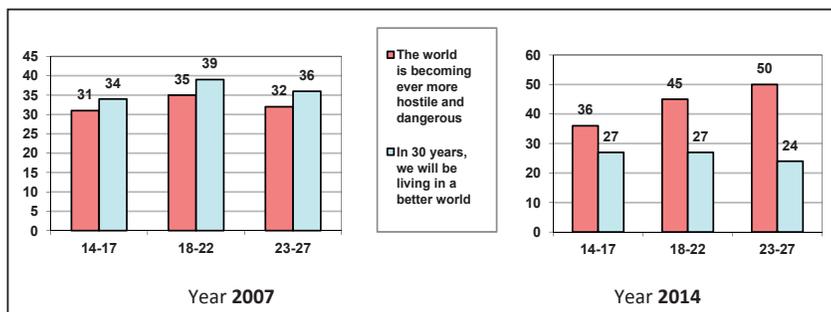
Of course, the threats specified in this indicator do not cover all issues discussed critically among the Bulgarian public. This is also indirectly evident from the indicator regarding public concerns. The emigration of young Bulgarians, and particularly of specialists with higher as well as with secondary education (such as nurses) is also commented critically in the context of EU integration. The fact that young Bulgarian doctors are leaving the country to work in Germany is seen as de facto subsidizing of the economy of the EU’s richest country by the poorest country. A comprehensive review of the issue of Bulgaria’s EU integration in its youth aspect requires further, and

more comprehensive, study. Such studies were conducted before Bulgaria's EU accession and allow tracing the changes that have taken place over time.

10.7 Global fears

Already in the 1980s, researchers of youth in Bulgaria used an indicator borrowed from the Japanese global youth survey in order to establish the geopolitical optimism/pessimism of the young generation in different countries. We will compare the data from the last two studies, in 2007 and 2014.

Figure 10.7 Which of the following two statements is closer to your opinion? / Age group (%)



Source: Gallup International.

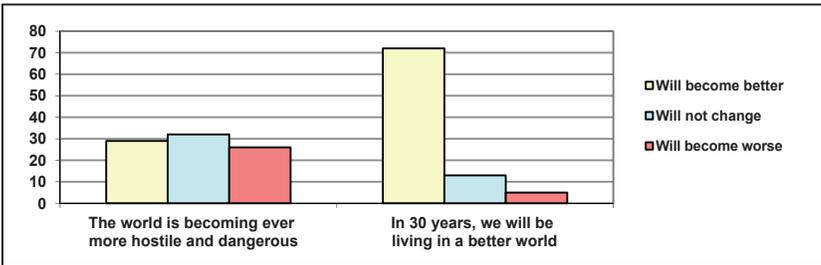
Geopolitical pessimism is growing, but not to the point where there are fears of nuclear war. In 2007, the belief that in 30 years we will be living in a better world prevailed in all age groups. In 2014 the situation is the exact opposite; furthermore, in the older age group (23-27 years), the opinion that the world is becoming ever more hostile and dangerous is twice stronger than the optimistic expectation of a better world. The final answer as to whether this pessimism is unfounded or realistic will come in 2044. In 2044, the oldest of today's respondents will be 58, and the youngest 44 years old.

Undoubtedly, this change reveals sensitivity to the geopolitical tension in the last year, which led to comments regarding the beginning of a new cold war. At the same time, in Bulgaria as in other countries, it shows general attitudes, be they optimistic or pessimistic.

The correlation of global optimism/pessimism with the surveyed views regarding different threats is situated at three levels. At the first level there is no connection between global and concrete optimism/pessimism. There are no

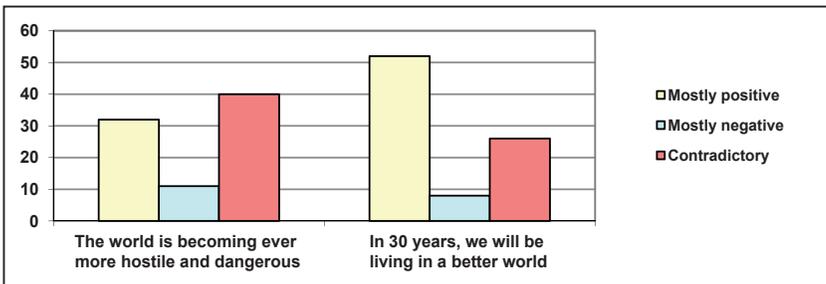
differences on the issue of threats such as nuclear war, ethnic conflicts, and Americanization of public life, between the concerns and fears of the optimists who believe in the future better world, and of the pessimists who think the world is becoming ever more hostile and dangerous. At the second level there is some correlation between the two types of global attitudes regarding threats such as environmental pollution, terrorism, aggression of neighbour countries, and loss of national traditions. At the third level there is a strong correlation between the global vision and concrete threats like unemployment and poverty. It is at this level that it becomes evident that those are not particular rational views but general attitudes which reflect a definite feeling of a connection between the global and the Bulgarian perspective (Cramer's $V = .462$).

Figure 10.8 Global perspective and view of the economic situation in Bulgaria in the next 10 years (%)



Those who believe that in 30 years we will be living in a better world are much more confident that the economic situation in Bulgaria will improve. We have reason to decipher the indicator itself: for young people, "the world" has to a large extent immediate, national dimensions. The global view is linked not just to the Bulgarian perspective but also to the attitude towards the European Union (Cramer's $V = .205$).

Figure 10.9 Global perspective and perception of the European Union (%)



The attitudes towards the global world, EU integration, and the situation in Bulgaria are partially interconnected, but not absolutely interdependent. There is a – rational and emotional – logic to the optimistic and the pessimistic visions.

10.8 Conclusions

The findings of this study point to several conclusions.

- As a whole, Bulgarian youth are optimistic about their personal and their family's future. This optimistic attitude has a generational character and is shared by pupils, students and employed youth, and even by the majority of the unemployed, by young people with different educational attainment, place of residence, and social status. The only exception are young people of Roma origin.
- Bulgarian youth's public opinion about the country's future is divided in three: one-third believe that there will be significant positive changes in the short term, another third do not think that life in Bulgaria will change substantially in the next few years, and the remaining one-third are sceptical or pessimistic.
- The optimism of young people has a generational character and takes into account plans for self-realization, including the possibility of moving to a better place for living and working.
- The fears of Bulgarian youth reflect public sentiments in the country. Economic problems predominate categorically – unemployment, poverty, job insecurity.
- The fears related to the violation of the legal order and the rule of law – crime, lawlessness, corruption – are quite significant.
- The results of the transition have found expression in toned-down fears of ethnic conflicts and in the dominant conviction regarding Bulgaria's international security and absence of significant concerns about aggression of neighbour countries.
- EU integration does not cause significant concerns about Bulgaria's sovereignty and national identity. The existing concerns are related to a critical attitude towards concrete policies, especially in the economic sphere.
- There is a predominant global pessimism, unprecedented since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and it is an obvious expression of the tension that emerged in international relations in 2014.

11. CONCLUSION

The empirical data obtained from this study outline the sociological portrait of a new generation.

Young people in Bulgaria aged 14 to 27 do not have personal memories of the time of state socialism. They are growing up in, mastering, and fitting into a new information environment. Home internet access has become a generational characteristic and privilege in comparison even with young people at the beginning of the century. Bulgarian youth are entering into a new communication environment. Internet friendship is widening and changing the very character of youth communication, emphasizing and increasing its significance. The dilemma faced by Bulgarian society at the beginning of the transition in the early 1990s – “democracy or communism” – is no longer valid. The achievements of the transition – a functioning market economy and liberal democracy – are taken for granted and constitute the basis of the new historic access. One of the most important findings of this study is that the ethnic conflict, which was the most severe obstacle in Bulgaria’s democratic development, is a thing of the past for the young generation. Orientation towards employment in the private sector and private business enterprise was also characteristic of Bulgarian youth in the 1990s. There is a very important difference, though. In the 1990s, “business” was associated with “*dalavera*”, easy money through dishonest means. Now we see an essential change in aspiring young businesspersons: they value honesty even more than do the others. The attitude towards the EU continues to be a generational characteristic, but it has now also acquired post-transition overtones. “Europe” is no longer “a light at the end of the tunnel”, it is a reality, a given. This study has not found sufficient grounds for Euroscepticism among Bulgarian youth, but neither has it found idealization. The attitude towards the European Union is positive as well as critical.

Already in the 1990s, when Bulgarian society was bogged down in heavy ideological battles between “rightists” and “leftists”, young people from the generation of the transition drew the practical conclusion that the centre of weight in public life was shifting from the state to civil society. In sociological analyses, this phenomenon of anticipatory realism was defined as “generational inversion”. In the second decade of the new century, one cannot speak of inversion, but the trend towards an unusual “civic pragmatism” of the young remains in place. Its dimensions include the

orientation towards the public sector of the economy, the distancing from partisan-political conflicts, and the rational choice of the form of family life.

During the transition period, “market economy” and “democracy” were pointed out as priority European values. The new historic access shows definite reassessments. A distinction is being made between *market economy* and *market society*. Democracy is not perceived only as a norm but also as a status quo which, in its Bulgarian variant, causes explicitly expressed disappointment. The value that is recognized as the most important one is not democracy but *freedom*. The changes in value orientations can be seen as a step forwards in the development of a democratic political culture. It places emphasis on direct civic participation in political protests and other social initiatives, even though it still does not include recognition of the benefits of membership in civic associations.

In the 1990s, Bulgarian youth began to impose a new form of family life which is not legitimated by the Church and the state. This is a typical phenomenon of youth social creativity, or, if we use the concept introduced in the 1970s by Bulgarian researchers of youth, of *juventisation*. The present study shows that living in partnership, without legal marriage, has become a legitimate norm and the new young are making a conscious choice between the different options with a clear awareness and judgement of their pros and cons.

Against the background of the general characteristics of the young generation, a number of differences also stand out. Between the lifestyle of the privileged minority (“the golden youth”) and the lifestyle of young people at the bottom of society there is a stratificational chasm. The educational system continues to reproduce, albeit in mitigated form, the social inequality typical of the transition period. The level of unemployment among young Roma continues to be shocking. Bulgaria has joined the societies of high mass consumption, but the majority of its citizens are forced to tighten their belts to one extent or another. This study has shown, from various angles, the power of differentiating factors such as gender, age group, family milieu (parents’ education level), type of settlement, region, ethnic origin, and social status. Generally, one may say that the distance between student youth (secondary school/university students) and employed youth is increasing and, furthermore, that the group of unemployed youth is acquiring specific characteristics of its own. The question arises: to what extent does the correlation between homogenizing and differentiating factors allow us to draw conclusions about the formation of youth as a relatively autonomous socio-biological group.

The findings of this study categorically attest to a distancing from the paternalistic tradition, and to a new phase of *individualization* and personalization in the development of the young generation. The majority of Bulgarian youth are *home-stayers* not *home-leavers*; they are continuing to live with their parents but without being particularly dependent on them in their way of life and thinking. Leaving home is postponed not because of financial considerations but, rather, for the sake of convenience. There is incomparably greater freedom in the relationship with parents. Also decreasing is the importance of the factor *parents' social and financial resources* in obtaining education and in finding a job. As a rule, young people are free to choose not just a partner but also the form of family life. In the 1990s, young people and their parents often differed in their political views to the point less of conflict than of absence of dialogue. Now we find that the family is once again assuming its role as a factor of political socialization. The very basis of family communication is changing, and it includes the personal autonomy of the young. Social inequality, and especially poverty, are the main obstacle to this process. The poorer the family, the more young people prove to be dependent on their parents in their educational prospects and transition from school to work. Whereas under the conditions of socialism state paternalism was a restrictive factor, now, *mutatis mutandis*, a restrictive role is played by low economic status and poverty. This study shows that the majority of young people are also focused in this direction – on the economic problems of society and the material standing of the individual. Characteristic, albeit not surprising, are the findings of the study: a definite level of economic resources is a prerequisite also for a free attitude towards post-materialistic values.

A relative counterweight to the differentiating economic inequality is found in the sphere of communication. The young generation's access to the internet has de facto introduced a new phase of youth communication, encouraging the establishment of youth subcultures and turning into an important homogenizing factor.

Strange as it might seem, in contemporary Bulgaria there are still quite a few people who think that the transition is not over. It is not difficult to see the reason for this: the transition is perceived as a transition to something better, which they themselves have not felt yet. But if we assume that the transition has a sufficiently precise social identification, as a transition from totalitarian/authoritarian socialism to democratic capitalism, then one may also give a precise answer. In this case, an anthropological answer.

This study is a sociological portrait of the first post-transition Bulgarian generation.

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