

WELLCHI NETWORK Workshop 2:  
“Which are the provisions in Family Law that foster children’s well-being and  
which kind of reforms should be envisaged in this respect”

**INSTITUTE FOR LEGAL STUDIES –  
BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
Sofia, 15-16 April, 2005**

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## **Changing Patterns Of Child Socialisation**

### **1. The Modern Bulgarian State and the Setting Up of Modern Socialisation**

#### **Systems**

After the Liberation, in the area of child education and upbringing, the development of the modern Bulgarian state follows the experience of the national states in Western Europe. It is responding to the situation of erosion of the characteristics of socialisation patterns traditional for the agrarian society, such as the patriarchal rural family, the church and the immediate community of the locality and neighbour organisation. The modernisation of society, which resulted from the advance of capitalism, called for the establishment of alternative patterns. And, thereby, all modernising states, especially if they faced an accelerated development, began to set up centralised systems for the education and upbringing of the younger generation. The obligatory military service, the large sports organisations, the compulsory education at various levels, specialised children and youth organisations, patriotic, nationalistic and ideological organisations began to forge the new legislative fundamentals for the individuals separated from their traditional environment.

With the acceleration of this process and the increase in the numbers of the young population in the cities, during the 30s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the state started setting up a variety of organisations focused on young people. At the beginning of the 40s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the membership in sports youth organisations was impressive, bearing in mind that Bulgaria’s society was still predominantly agrarian, and did not exhibit any lasting traditions of self-organisation. In January, 1940, Bogdan Filov’s Cabinet

promulgated the Act on the Organisation of Bulgarian Youth, regulating the matters of the establishment, the operation and the competencies of the Brannik Youth Organisation, which was placed directly under the senior supervision of the Prime Minister. Special uniforms were designed for its members and it aimed to establish a dominating influence on all students from the primary and secondary schools.

This problem was also of considerable priority in the period between the 50s and the 80s, however, within a different ideological and political environment related to the process of booming industrialisation and urbanisation and the migration of millions of people from the villages, from their traditional manner of life to the towns and cities, which required new socialisation mechanisms. Socialisation structures and ethic literature aimed at assisting the transformation of human aspirations from the patriarchal and rural reality to the situation of the urban and industrialised society. The behaviour of this individual, irrespective of the lack of elementary material incentives, was supposed to correspond to urban labour ethics, the specifics of working discipline and labour, and, during the period of collective forms of ownership and labour, stimulate and mobilise them for a maximum labour investment to accelerate accumulation. The modernisation process, which is undermining the traditional standards system of society, generating various anomies in the situation of the weakening of the formerly strong vehicles of political enforcement, called for new patterns of socialisation and control, new moral standards and abundant literature related to their ethic reflection. In this situation, a new series of child and youth organisations were established: from the communist child and pupil organisations to the youth Komsomol, covering all children and young people which, although under the flag of a certain ideology, played a socialisation role resulting in low rates of crime and little deviant behaviour among the young generation.

## **2. The Bulgarian transition and the collapse of the previous socialisation patterns, alongside the neglect for the upbringing values from the end of the 80s and the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The collapse of the preceding system of state socialism and the radical shift in the ideology and living perceptions within Bulgarian society resulted in a grievous crisis of morals and socialisation. The preceding systems of socialisation and education of children, teenagers and youth were demolished as they were ideologically and politically associated with state socialism, but nothing came in their stead. This was also

replicated in the collapse of all other controlling systems in society, from the Security Service to the Committee of State and People's Control, whereby, the established new systems, and especially the judiciary, turned out to be strongly corrupted and ineffective. The former moral paragons shaping the fundamentals of ethic education were overthrown, but the new political elite was unable to produce new moral examples, which could form the basics of new upbringing standards. They were quickly replaced by the new behavioural stereotypes attracting the attention of the media: the mafia gangster, the showman, or the illegal overnight money maker. It turned out that Orthodoxy, as a spiritual system, does not exhibit sufficient capacity to replace the crashing systems of education and socialisation.

In these circumstances, the need for moral educational efforts and special mechanisms for the socialisation of the younger generation is actually higher than ever before in history, but their lack and overall disregard shown thereto are also more evident than ever before in the history of the state. Here are some of the summarisations of the Annual 2003 Report on Youth of the Ministry of Youth and Sports with regard to the moral values of today's young generation: "Adolescence is gradually populated by a generation, which has never been through organisational forms of socialisation, whose members are forging their own value system, which is marked by aggressive mercantilism and egocentrism bordering on extreme individualism. The values adopted by our society, such as freedom, responsibility, justice, solidarity, strong morals are getting scarcer and scarcer."

In 2000, the State Agency for Child Protection was established and started operating in 2001, pursuant to the special Child Protection Act, but it has a predominantly protective function not related to the policy of developing socialisation mechanisms, which presupposes a comprehensive approach on the behalf of numerous state institutions and a super-departmental complex programme. As a rule, the overall current practice of the Agency focuses on children's rights and their possible protection, whereas the problems of socialisation and education are almost missing or have been touched upon only within the context of the rights, but, actually, there are no profound social mechanisms to carry them out. Unfortunately, irrespective of the fact that there are over 300 political parties, each bearing their name and ideological identifications, none of them has initiated any serious discussion or forged any reasonable programmes such as those of the American Neo-Conservatives focusing on public education and the

socialisation of the young generation, and this omission will have disastrous effects on the education and the socialisation of children and the younger generation.

An education and socialisation programme needs to pay special attention to the activity of educational institutions and the Ministry of Education, which are the backbone of education in our social system. However, the review of the documentation of our education from the beginning of the 90s, shows a thorough neglect for the issue of moral education and upbringing. Education has been regarded as technologies, criteria, institutions, etc., but the problem of values and the shaping of the personality is lacking. During the period of the so called educational reforms, the issue of moral upbringing has just been overlooked in the activity of the educational system, which has always been characterised by two aspects: tuition and moral upbringing. The educational reform of the last fifteen years was following the course of value disregard and the establishment of a foundation for the forming of particular qualities in the upbringing process. There is a lack of state policy and strategy for the upbringing of the children from the younger generation. The state has assumed some responsibility for the education, the possible opening of jobs, but is paying almost no attention to the formation of values.

Some extreme reformers suggest extreme forms of a market mechanism treating education as a commodity just like all others, which can be the subject of sale transactions, and all that, at a time when governments are concentrating greater and greater effort in education. Thus, the traditional value system of the Bulgarian teacher, with their noble mission was destroyed. This has resulted in a situation transforming the teacher in a merely conductive agent for specific knowledge input, but not a human being with his/her own values, norms, standards, who can offer them to the younger generation.

The moral-political unity based on a single party, its ideology and the omnipresent state just fell apart in the 80s and so did the existing moral political identities. The outburst of the political clash just resulted in the formation of new negative identities, through opposition and the identification of the enemy's image. The coming into power of Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha in 2001, with him overthrowing the then bipolar model and demonstrating tolerance to differences, put an end to the former negative identities. Under these circumstances, the question arises as to which are the factors forming a person, where do they originate and who is supporting the value orientation of the individual. Market economy and democracy are related to

instrumental rationality, but a society holds together around the existence of an aggregate of ultimate values formed by certain socialising institutions. These are lacking, however.

In the past, there was a nation-wide programme for aesthetic education, for a harmonious and multifaceted personal development. Heavy subsidies were provided thereto. During the last 15 years, we disposed of this content as ideologically permeated, but it was not replaced by a new educational system and universal values. Neglect was demonstrated for anything related to schoolchildren's moral upbringing and to the fact that schools do not merely offer classes, but also have a cultural role and a share in the individual's ethic perception of the world. Students' moral upbringing was unforgivably neglected, underestimated and derided in the years of our unique transition. We even had the deplorable situation of a Minister of Education (Veselin Metodiev) stating that schools will no longer provide moral upbringing, but the family. Disregard was shown for the fact that the school has always been associated with moral upbringing.

Additional complications resulted from the fact that the work of the media is no longer subjected to terminal values, but rather to the instrumental rationality of finding a consumer. Some time back, media activity was dominated by the respective ideological and educational standards. Their disregard, however, effected the opposite extremity. The new environment of the media, whose main goal is to attract readers and viewers and sell the their release, does not at all have a positive effect on the socialisation of the young generations. We are witnessing an uncontrollable invasion of violence, sensation, pornography, the extreme hedonisation of human behaviour as an ultimate value. This is an additional factor for the collapse of the public system of values.

What sells in the information and cultural market is that, which affects most strongly the primitive needs and baser instincts, which has the biggest impact on human psychology or, respectively, pleasure and pain (passion/suffering), in the most primitive forms of sex, death, crashes, black and white magic, pornography, sensational pseudoscience, crime. The preceding positive images of socialisation are missing and the child's, adolescent's and youth's cultural and media environment is invaded by spectacular presences like the pop folk performer Azis, countless gangsters bearing exotic nicknames of animals or mutually derogative politicians accusing themselves of any and all mortal sins. These are the individuals, setting up the standards of conduct and forming the perceptions of success and the living visions of a human being.

We are witnessing the helplessness of the key institutions and mechanisms for the full socialisation of the individual. The mass impoverishment, the shock marginalisation, the lumpenisation, the radical shift in social standing of a large number of Bulgarian citizens and the focus on subsistence result in the overall downfall of values in society, and, thereby, in the degradation of all upbringing mechanisms in human beings. The result is a boom of teenage crime, children murdering children, two schoolgirls strangling another, tens of thousands of alcoholics and drug addicts among children and adolescents.

This is, in fact, the external sensational manifestation of the final effects of a process typical for the last fifteen years – the full abandonment and disregard for the socialising and upbringing functions of society addressing the young generation, leaving the trends in their own course, even being aware that no society in history ever made progress without specialised and effective mechanisms for the social integration of children and the young generation.

### **3. The liberal or the neo-conservative approach to socialisation and values?**

In this situation, the developed states are advancing new ideological and value processes. Agitated discussions and sharp political oppositions have been initiated with regard to society's response to the changes of values and socialisation patterns. In states like the US, this causes particular "cultural" and "moral wars", countering the views of liberals and neo-conservatives and occupying a greater share in the pre-election programmes and visions as to where and how society has to go. In their programmes of each of the parties lays a special emphasis on the education and the upbringing of the young generations and on its cultural policy with regard to the formation and the instilment of particular values.

The liberal vision as to what should form the fundamentals of education and upbringing is related to the traditional idea of a liberal upbringing with a high degree of freedom in a person's development and a reinforcement of artistic creation, self-development and rights. Among the classics of this liberal upbringing model will be Dr. Spock's book for the infant's early upbringing, with a stress on the process of development. As a whole, the liberal vision is based on methodological individualism and the priority of human freedom. It perceives society's best intervention in the provision of equal chances for the development of children and young people and the abolishment of any discrimination in gender relations, ethnic groups, religions, races. It will impose in the USA the so-called positive discrimination to provide chances for the

development of the Afro-American population. It focuses on individual and collective rights of groups. Therefore, this liberal vision, accentuating on the rights, for instance, provide special treatment to the individual's right of own discretion of oneself and one's capacity and the hot debates in the area of bioethics are regarded from the perspective of women's right to abortion, the individual right to euthanasia, private life, confidentiality. From the 80s onwards, this view provides an active covering to both individual rights and the rights of any minorities: sexual, gender, ethnic, religious cultural, etc., turning them into one of the pivotal action-makers in multiculturalism.

The neo-conservative vision, which enjoys a special support in the US, raises the acute question that the liberals' overemphasising on the rights of individuals and minorities actually results in their neglect for responsibilities and on the need for uniform values bringing people together as a majority, which is required for the existence of the state. They have started a fight for the targeted role of the state and for the boost of the collapsing traditional socialisation institutions, which they perceive as the chance for the survival of society at all. Among these, they prioritise the strengthening of the family and family values, the resistance to the erosion of the traditional family through the grant of rights to homosexual minorities. Together with the family, special attention is paid to religion and religious communities, religious education and faith as the foundation of morals and a human being's feeling of commitment. They are fighting for the reinstatement for religious education at school. They plead for the increase of community control over human conduct, including the personal and the sexual aspects, for the ban on abortions and euthanasia, for the priority of the public security and the individual's public responsibilities over individual rights. However, they believe that it is impossible to preserve the nation without patriotism, concerning the disintegrating influences of multicultural diversity and the numerous minorities. Unlike the liberal vision on upbringing and its mechanisms, the neo-conservatives believe that public control and censorship is required on cultural products, the harnessing of the content shown on TV and censorship on Internet content in view of the moral health and the socialisation of the young generation.

It is exactly due to the power of this neo-conservative wave in the USA, which has set up the last decades' trends and patterns of socialisation and control on children and youth, intended to combat the disintegrating tendencies resulting from the global processes in the recent decades. Under their pressure, hundreds of US cities have imposed an evening curfew for children and youth under 18, whereas those under 21

can be arrested if caught buying or consuming liquor. The role of local communities is increasing in the exertion of influence on the individual. Schools have introduced a full-day tuition in order to provide for the adequate socialisation impact. Thus, children are not left in the street when out of school, and families and schools are taking shifts in exerting influence on them and this organised control aims at the overcoming of arbitrary street influences. This is combined with a broad range of opportunities and practices of early labour socialisation – providing jobs at schools and universities outside the working hours from a comparatively early age, which encourages students to feel autonomous and cover some of their expenses. Thus, a vehicle is provided for the blocking of dangers generated by the prolonged period of education and, actually, the continuous education, as, from a very early age, education has not been isolated from working socialisation and the qualities it forms. In parallel, there is a variety of civil organisations, including children and youth, which play an especially strong socialisation role, contribute to the development of altruistic behaviour, collective awareness, and the readiness to assume commitment. A significant role in this respect can be attributed to a number of religious communities – the Mormon practices being the most renowned, whereby children having completed their high school are sent somewhere around the world to perform missionary activities, which shapes important ethic qualities in them.

The Bulgarian society is in need of a neo-conservative revolution in the area of morals and upbringing as the neo-conservative parties are vigilant about the society's values and the mechanisms of their enforcement, they fight against pornography, prostitution, violence and primitivism in the media, against Big Brother, for the upbringing of our children a curfew up to the age of 21 and the ban on the use of alcohol before this age, so that anyone would be arrested for consuming a single beer, even if being the daughter of president Bush.

It is obvious that a series of activities is required, through which the public could intervene additionally in the process of child socialisation:

- The setting up of a state strategy and policy for the instilling of specific values with the young generation and the main methods, tools and mechanisms for attaining this.
- A much more active role of the state in the exercise of control on the media environment, Internet clubs, Internet service providers from the perspective of

decency and indecency, and compliance of the offered content with certain ethic norms.

- Intense action of the state in the establishment of children's, teenage and youth organisations of various standing, which would develop artistic and social self initiatives and would contribute for the assumption of social roles by the children.
- Subjection of Bulgarian schooling curricula to such key upbringing objectives as ethic socialisation and national identity.
- The introduction of a system for the quality evaluation of the schools and of the teacher's activity on the level of moral upbringing of their children.
- Development of the legislative regulations for extracurricular and out-of-school activities. Experts on upbringing issues and activity have to be appointed at the various levels, up to the municipal, and each school needs to have a pedagogical adviser and a psychologist.
- Introduction of school insignia such as uniforms, school flags, badges, divisions, etc.
- Full-day attendance, especially for the children from poor families, which are most affected by the problems of school preparation and socialisation. In addition to the solutions for school dropouts, improvement of educational quality and the issues of socialisation, especially until the eighth grade.
- An obligatory curfew for school children in all cities and towns (villages).
- Review of the major humanitarian school courses: literature and history, from the perspective of perfecting their impact as value formation tools.