

**YOUTH OF BULGARIA: SOME PROBLEMS AND
RISKS DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD**

COUNTRY PAPER

**Co-ordinator: Jaklina Tzvetkova Anguelova
National Statistical Institute, Sofia**

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Jaklina Tzvetkova- Anguelova
National Statistical Institute, Bulgaria

The children and young persons at the age under 20 constitute 21.7 % of the population of Bulgaria which at 31 December 1998 amounts to 8230371 persons (see Bulgaria'98, 1999). Young persons in the upper age interval (20-24 years of age) at the end of 1998 constitute about 7.8 % of the population. Despite the tendency of demographic aging of the population surveyed during the latest two decades, the young generations continue to be a significant part of Bulgarian population facing to specific problems and risks during the heavy period of transition from centralized to a free enterprise economy.

A state organ responsible for carrying out the state policy in the field of youth activities and children's problems is the Committee of Youth, Physical Education and Sport (Decree No. 136 of the Council of Ministers, 2 April 1997). According to the same Decree the main functions of the Committee of Youth, Physical Education and Sport in forming state policy concerning the activities related to youth are:

- Participation in the working out a national strategy on young activities and coordination of putting it into practice.
- Development of acts and programs' projects connected with youth; offering these documents to the Council of Ministers and coordination of the realization.
- Cooperation for joining this country as a full member of international programs related to youth and coordination of activities connected with execution of country's duties on these programs.
- Presentation of this country at governmental authorities of other countries and intergovernmental institutions as well as international organizations in the field of youth activity and children's problems, physical education and sports.
- Assistance to national organizations in the field of physical education and sports, youth activities and children's problems particularly in the field of international cooperation.

Aiming to carry out the state policy in the above fields the Committee grounds and offers to the Council of Ministers the amount of state subsidies necessary for the realization of the policy on youth and children's problems; distributes the approved budget subsidies and other state resources in this field and funds the approved programs; manages the state property and makes proposals connected with the rational usage of the material base, designed for youth and children's activities; takes part in the management and assists the research activity in the field of youth and children's problems; organizes and carries out specialized scientific studies on youth and children's problems aiming to their successful social integration etc.

Youth and children are also object of a purposeful state policy developed by other state bodies of legislative and executive authority, such as: Parliamentary Commission on Health, Youth and Sports; Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Justice and Legal Euro-integration; Ministry of Labor

and Social Policy etc., in the sphere of their competency.

Unfortunately, the number of studies giving an idea about the impact of the economic events and processes on state and prospects for the development of this heterogeneous age group are quite limited. At the same time an assessment of the results of every activity aiming to youth is impossible without an evaluation of the information about the results of corresponding interventions which would assist studying their effect.

During the lasting nearly a decade transition period some disturbing economic, social and demographic processes have been observed in our country. The majority of them had a serious impact on youth and children. Here we could indicate the follows:

- Continued high inflation attended by a decrease of the real households' incomes and corresponding drop in households' consumption.
- High degree of income differentiation of households.
- Restructuring of households' expenditures accompanied by very high relative share of the expenditures on foods.
- Decreasing birth rate and negative natural growth rate.
- Decreasing share of the population under the age of 18 years.
- Increase in children's and youth morbidity and socially conditioned diseases.
- Negative processes in education and health systems.
- Enlarging deviation and early alcohol and drug dependence.

According to the conclusions of UN experts 'The present young and active generation of Bulgaria pays for the privileged status of the older generation during the 70-ies and 80-ies' (UNDP, 1997).

Macro-economic stabilization achieved by the implementation of the currency board in 1997 and coping with the inflation during the second half of 1997 and 1998 began to change the above-mentioned tendency. Despite all the prolonged financial instability and decrease of the gross domestic product surveyed in previous years continue to have an unfavorable reflection on living standard of the population and especially on low income social groups among which families of unemployed and those of many children.

With the stabilization of the economy a step-by-step restoration of the real incomes is observed, but in spite of all they are still under the level of 1995. State budget for 1999 guarantees a growth of the consumer demand by means of a planned significant increase of the households' incomes – about 13-14% real rise of budget salaries and pensions. It is expected that the increasing purchase power of the population will generate a sufficient part of the growth of the economy in 1999 and therefore a strengthening activation of the state for improving of the education system, health system and social protection of the population, and of children and youth in particular.

Youth and Educational Reform

The practical realization of the right on education is a part of efforts aiming to achieve a synchrony with the processes of social reforms in our country. The efforts to develop a democratic education are directly expressed in the ongoing process of

overall reform of the education in Bulgaria in many directions among which could be indicated the diversification of educational contents, consideration with cultural and language peculiarities of population groups and individual needs and wishes as well the efforts to provide full realization of the individual.

The reform in educational system under the conditions of transition to a free enterprise economy is connected with the diversification of the forms and structures of the rest systems of the society, dynamically changing demographic situation and social necessities, as well as with the complication of the links and interrelations of the education both inside it and outside the educational system.

According to the changes and additions to the new Law of Public Education (art.7, p. 2) studying of native (not Bulgarian) language converts in a right that can be realized in the municipal schools under the state protection and control.

The compulsory age for entrance in first school class again is fixed at 7 years instead 6 years. It is connected not only with the national tradition but also with the fact that the age of 6 years proved quite premature as regard to our children both in physical and in psychical respect. At the same time the Law allows children at the age of 6 to enter first school class upon their parents' request and responsibility.

The appearance of private schools in Bulgarian educational system caused a necessity of their activity's legislative regulation, which has found reflection in art.11-13 of the Law of Public Education. These articles regulate the order of use of the state (municipality) property by private schools. Some texts of the Law aim to protect the children from private kindergartens and schools in case of closing down these educational establishments or in case of their founders' death.

The transition to 12-classes general education (art. 24, p.1 of the Law) is directed to an even distribution of the pupils' information pressure, implementation of early foreign language teaching, knowledge about main human and civilian rights.

Another new moment in the Law on Public Education is the concept about "School board of Trustees" – a public body aiming to assist the activities of a given school or kindergarten (art. 39, p.4).

The Law also protects the pupils by restriction for contact with persons having criminal or dangerous for children's life or health behavior (art. 40, p. 5).

The changes in the Law of Public Education also refer to issues of educational system's funding. They allow to kindergartens, schools and service units to acquire additional financial resources from endowments or auxiliary activities.

The efforts for democratic reforms in Bulgarian education are accompanied by a lot of difficulties - mainly financial. Financial status of a significant part of our schools hampers the payments for heating, and electricity, equipment and furniture. There is not a pupils' transport to school, that is why pupils from distant regions have to cover transport expenditures from home to school by themselves. Qualified teachers leave the public schools and pass to work at private schools which force in some cases school leaderships to appoint as teachers non-specialists or students (see UNDP,1997).

The decrease in number of pupils in preschool, basic and secondary education generally is connected with the demographic development of our country and in particular with the levels of birth rate and death rate during the period under consideration. The following official statistical data give an idea of number and relative share of the population at the age intervals 5-14 and 15-24 for 1995,1997 è 1998 (preliminary data) as well demographic projections for 2005 and 2010(see Main

Indicators 1999):

Population at school age

	1995	1997	1998	2005	2010
5-14. ('000)	1073	1021	993	724	622
Relative share (%) of the total population	12,8	12,3	12,1	9,2	8,2
15-24 ('000)	1228	1222	1214	1065	918
Relative share (%) of the total population	14,6	14,7	14,7	13,6	12,1

According to the above-cited official projections of the National Statistical Institute (NSI) for the period 1998-2005 it is expected that the population in the age intervals 5-14 and 15-24 years will thin down by 269 thousands (2005) and by 149 thousands (2010), or by 27,1% and 12,3 % correspondingly. These projections are to be carefully examined from the viewpoint of a future assessment of the resources, necessary by our educational system, because taking the adequate decisions regarding working out strategies for optimal use of material, human and information resources within it is unthinkable without it. Also in accordance with demographic projections the lowest point of birth-rate level is expected in 2003, when the number of live births will be reduced to about 57-66 thousand (average and minimum variant of the projection). After 2003 a certain increase in the annual number of live births is expected and it is envisaged that it will be between 61 and 77 thousand at 2012. During the following years till 2020 a new reduction in the number of live births is expected due to the changes in the number and structure of the fertile women contingent that at the end of the period is envisaged to drop by about 500 thousands. This will cause a reduction of the pupils' contingent at the beginning of 21 century - about 50-60 % of the present level.

The educational system is called to submit our children and youth with such education that will develop their abilities accordingly to the ratified by our country UN Convention on Children's Rights. In this connection very indicative are the values of the indicator "Public expenditures on education as % of GDP" during the few latest years - correspondingly 4.4% (1994), 3.8 % (1995), 3.2 %(1996) and 3.9 % (1997).

The ratio 'Number of pupils per one teacher' is also indicative for the situation of the educational system. By preliminary data for 1998 this ratio in preprimary education is 10.7, in primary school - 16.9, in basic school - 11.2, for secondary school - 11.3, for college education - 9.1 and for university education - 11.1 (see Main Indicators, 1999). These low values of the ratio under the conditions of budget financial restrictions mean only a presence of a large number of teachers having comparatively low salaries but teaching smaller average number of pupils at a class.

In official NSI analyses for the period 1995-1998 is also established a negative trend of reduction in the ratio between the average annual salary in the system of education and the country's average annual salary. This ratio declines from 74.4% (1995) to 71.3% (1998, preliminary data). The average annual salary in the system of education for 1998 by preliminary data amounts to 1768.7 thousand BGL (correspondingly average monthly 147.4 thousand BGL) while the country's average

annual salary in public sector for 1998 amounts to 2497.6 thousand BGL (208.1 thousand BGL average monthly) (see Main Indicators, 1999).

The analysis of the above data leads to a conclusion about presence of demotivation and social tensions among significant part of the teaching staff caused both by the low level of payment and by the fear of eventual dismissal which, on its turn leads to a change for the worse in the quality of the teaching process. In the opinion of the experts in the field of the statistics of education there is also a necessity to reduce the admittance of students on subjects related to Pedagogy at higher schools (see Main Indicators, 1999).

For the period 1995-1998 the following conclusions about the dynamics in the absolute number of pupils by different levels of education could also be made:

1. There is a clear tendency to a reduction in the number of pupils in pre-primary education, primary, basic and secondary school which is mainly caused by the low birth rates from the latest two decades.

2. In comparison with the 1995/1996 during 1998/1999 school year the number of pupils in basic school (1-8 class) decreased by 41 thousand (5.0 %) and in secondary school (9-12 class) by 30 thousand or by 8.0 %.

3. The scope of the pupils in the educational system for the age interval 7-14 years measured by the indicator 'Net enrollment rate' indicates a slight decrease from 97.9 % - for 1995/96 school year to 97.5% for 1998/99 school year.

4. During the transition period an intensive increase of the number of students in all educational institutions of higher education has been observed. While during the period 1990-1992 the number of students in higher education amounted to about 130-140 thousand, in 1995/1996 school year it reached 250 thousand, respectively 260 thousand in 1997/1998 school year and the has an absolute peak (270 thousand) in 1998/1999 school year. The trend is opposite to that, observed in basic and secondary education. At this moment students in tertiary education are about 20 thousand or by about 7.9 % more compared to 1995/1996 school year.

5. During the period 1995-1997 the values of the indicator 'Students per 10 000 of population' is increased almost twice compared to the period 1990-1992. This increasing demand of educational services arouse problems connected both with the state funding and keeping the quality of the tertiary education. The implementation into practice of so-called 'education against payment' did not solve the problems of higher education's financing. By data of Ministry of Education and Science for 1997/1998 school year (see Totomanova A-M, 1998) the relative shares of students admitted without payment (so-called 'state order') and those admitted against payment was correspondingly 50.6% and 49.4 % - i.e. every second student has paid for his/her education. There are fears that the relatively high share of the students against payment, especially in so-called 'specialties in demand' has a negative impact on quality of the educational process and creates conditions for rise of the corruption. That is why since 1999/2000 school year a completely changed mechanism for higher education's financing will be implemented into practice. It envisages assessment of an allowance norm per student and removal of the practice of so-called 'education against payment' in state universities. At the same time implementation of unified minimal state fees in higher education is envisaged. It is expected these measures will have an overall recovering effect on all system of tertiary education.

6. During 1998 91.6 thousand pupils have finished basic education, 37.6 thousand - general secondary education, 21.6 thousand - vocational secondary

education and 28.6 thousand pupils have finished technical schools. During the same year 6.5 thousand people have graduated by taking 'specialist' degree (college degree) and 34.0 thousand – by taking 'bachelor' and 'master' degrees.

The situation analysis can not claim to fullness if we do not consider the changes in the structure of the trained students. The available statistical data in this field for the latest few years indicate the increase in number of students is connected not so with the increase in number of the higher educational institutions, as with the enlargement of the profiles and internal structures (new faculties, chairs and subjects) and infrastructures (subsidiaries etc.) of the public higher educational institutions. The most significant increase in number of students is observed in so-called 'subjects in demand' – mainly some social sciences (Law, Management, Economics) and some humanitarian specialties. Currently about a quarter of the students are studying Economics. Law is taught in 13 universities. In some of the other fields of higher education there is a keeping of the situation typical for the previous decade but in higher technical education (Engineering) compared to the situation characteristic for the period up to 1990 there is a change to the opposite direction.

On the opinion of some of our managerial cadres in the sphere of the education (see Totomanova A-M., 1998) on the base of existing demographic projections, during the next five years the number of students will reduce by about 15 per cent. The same drop is expected as regard to the number of teaching staff which is connected both with its aging as with the lack of stimuli for the young people to dedicate themselves to academic career.

The yearly new students' acceptance during the latest few years is about 60 thousand persons which constitutes over 60% of the number of persons graduating secondary school – by this indicator data about Bulgaria are compatible with the data about the leading European countries. Even before 1990 the both branches of the higher education – university and non-university (semi-higher) education were developed in our country. According to the Law on higher education adopted in 1995, so-called 'semi-higher' institutes were officially included in the system of the higher education as its college branch. Unfortunately during the 1998/1999 school year about 90 % of the total students' acceptance is an acceptance in higher educational institutions while the share of acceptance in the colleges is hardly about 10 per cent – opposite to the processes typical for the developed European countries. The increase in the number of students in the university branch of higher education only creates a danger of worsening in the 'quality' of students at the 'entrance' of higher education. Besides that the output of a large number of specialists having university degree in some domains of the science could cause an overcrowding of labor market and to create serious problems connected with their further realization. The underestimation of the problem can probably lead to its future complication, more over if one takes into consideration the net employment rate for the population at the age interval 17-34 years in higher education has increased during the latest three years from 11.5% (1995) to 12.1% (1997) and correspondingly to 12.3 % (1998) and its values are quite higher compared to the other European countries.

The realization of the necessary connections between the education and market economy is accepted as one of the most important aspects of the reforms carried out within the system of Bulgarian education (see Zahariev Z., 1998). The author proceeds from the presumption that the labor market's needs in qualified labor force are in a close connection with the current and expected future development of the economy.

The speedy science and technical evolution requires higher level of professional and general training of the young people. Statistical data from labor force surveys also confirm the statement that higher school's training is the most asked for by the labor market as persons graduated higher schools have the smallest unemployment rate in the country.

The youth and labor market

The additional parents' expenditures on their children's up-bringing and the necessity of more incomes within the family is a strong stimulus to young people and minors to leave the school and to seek for a job at an earlier age than before last decade. Statistical data from the last five sample labor force surveys carried out by the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria evidence about the following conclusions regarding the age interval 15-24 years:

1. The **economic activity rate** of the age interval 15-24 years indicates a slight increase at four of the above-cited five labor force surveys as follows: June 1997 – 30.6 %, November 1997 – 31.6 %, June 1998 – 31.6 % and November 1998 – 32.4 %. A drop in economic activity rate for this age group (30.4 %) is only registered in labor force survey carried out in March 1999. Data about all five cited labor force surveys also show a slight superiority in the economic activity rate of males from this age group compared to females at the same age group (15-24 years).

Economic activity rates by gender for the age interval 15-24 years (%)

	Males	Females
June 1997	31.9	29.2
November 1997	33.2	30.0
June 1998	33.8	29.3
November 1998	32.4	30.9
March 1999	31.4	29.3

The lower activity of women from the age interval 15-24 years is commonly explained by typical for this age interval women's moving aside the labor market which is mainly due to childbirth and further children's upbringing (see Employment, 1999).

2. The **employment rate** for the age interval 15-24 years fluctuates a little over twenty per cent as follows: 20.4 % (June 1997); 20.3 % (Nov.1997); 22.6 % (June 1998); 20.7 % (Nov. 1998) and 20.1 % (March 1999). Having in mind the great part of the young people at the age interval 15-24 years continue their training at some educational level, these values are quite lower compared to the values of the total employment rate that at March 1999 is 41.3%. Results from labor force surveys also show some higher values of the employment rate for males of the age interval under consideration (15-24 years) compared to females. The results also show typical season's fluctuations in the employment rates of this age group.

Employment rates by gender for the age interval 15-24 years

(%)

	Males	Females
June 1997	20.9	19.7
November 1997	21.2	19.3
June 1998	23.6	21.6
November 1998	21.4	20.1
March 1999	20.5	19.8

Quite interesting is the fact that the employment rate of girls at the age of 15-19 years is higher compared to employment rate of the boys from the same age interval. For instance, in March 1999 the employment rate of girls at 15-19 years is 7.0 % while for boys from the same age group it reaches 5.0 % only. The higher employment rate of girls aged 15-19 years is also established by the results of the previous labor force surveys. The majority of experts explain this phenomena with higher supply of job places for the girls by the private sector of the economy mainly in the sphere of services (trade, catering etc.).

Unfortunately at present there is a shortage of statistical data that could allow to see the links between the minors' labor and higher percentage of the pupils dropped out of the school.

The total employment rate registered in March 1999 for the higher age group (20-24 years) is calculated to 34.5 %, correspondingly for males - 37.2 % and for females – 31.7 %.

3. According to the results from the labor force survey carried out in March 1999 the greatest share of the employed in private sector - 59.8 % is also registered in the age interval of 15-24 years (the total share of employed in the private sector amounts to 31.8 %).

4. As regard to the indicator '**Employment status**' the results from March 1999 also evidence that hardly 0.7 % of the young people from the age group 15-24 years define themselves as employers while 5.7 % declare themselves as self-employed persons, 3.9 % as unpaid family workers. As employees declare themselves 89.2 % of young persons at the age between 15 and 24 years. 59.8 % of them are employed in private enterprises and 29.4 % - in public sector's enterprises. Among males from the age interval 15-24 years the employers constitute 1.0 %; self-employed persons - 8.6 %; unpaid family workers - 5.5 %; employees in private enterprises - 73.2 %; employees in public sector's enterprises - 38.1 %. Only 0.6 % of the females of the same age interval determine themselves as employers, 5.3 % -as self-employed persons, 3.9 % as unpaid family workers, 72.9 % - as employees in private enterprises and 33.6 % as employees in public sector's enterprises.

Very interesting is the linkage between data on "Employment status" and "Place of residence" for the inquired young persons, especially as regard to the employees at private enterprises - correspondingly 63.4 % in towns and significantly less (49.4 %) in villages and in relation to self-employed (3.2 % of the self-employed young persons (15-24 years) are residents of towns and 12.9 % - of villages (data: March 1999). The share of young people declaring themselves as unpaid family workers is significantly higher in villages (9.4 %) compared to residents of towns (2.0 % only). The same dependency is established by the results of the November 1998

previous labor force.

5. The latest published results (from the labor force survey - March 1999) also show the highest rate of unemployment at the age interval 15-24 years (33.8 %) compared to the other age groups and total unemployment rate (15.9 %). This evidences that the age group of 15-24 years is the group in the most unfavorable social position at the labor market. At the same time a decrease in the unemployment rate of this age group amounting to 2.2 % is registered in March 1999 in comparison with the previous labor force survey (November 1998). The youth unemployment is also connected with the realization of the structural reform causing closing down of enterprises having losses and dismissals of labor force. Data on youth unemployment are quite different by place of residence. For instance, in March 1999 the unemployment rate within the age interval 15-24 years registered in villages reaches 35.2 % and is by 6.5 points higher compared towns (28.7 %). The profound territorial differentiation in the level of youth unemployment turns in a very serious problem in those municipalities in which there are no possibilities for alternative employment. The differences in the levels of youth unemployment by residence are usually explained with the differences in the existing structures of education in towns and villages as the higher levels of youth unemployment in villages are predetermined by the higher relative share of the young people having lower education in villages. One of the main conclusions by all carried out in our country labor force surveys is that the highest levels of unemployment are registered as regard to persons having basic or a lower level of education.

**Unemployment rates by gender for the age interval 15-24 years
(%)**

	Total	Males	Females
June 1997	33.5	34.4	32.4
November 1997	36.0	36.1	35.8
June 1998	28.4	30.0	26.4
November 1998	36.0	36.8	35.0
March 1999	33.8	34.9	32.5

The more disturbing is the fact the unemployment rate for the group 20-24 years reaches 30.4 %, correspondingly 32.8 % for males and 27.2 % for females. At the same time these values for both genders are lower compared to the results obtained from the previous labor force survey (November 1998) showing the total unemployment rate for the same age group 31.9 %, respectively 33.7 % for males and 29.5 % for females.

6. The unemployed young people at the age 15-24 years define as the most frequent reason for youth unemployment discharge from regular military service (28.8 %, March 1999), at the second place they place the graduating secondary school or higher educational institution after which a job cannot be found (23.2 %). The places of these two reasons for unemployment vary – for instance, in November 1998 at the first place as a reason for unemployment for the age group 15-24 years was indicated graduating secondary school or higher educational institution. At the same time 14.9 % of the unemployed young persons indicate as a reason for unemployment dismissal from the work, and other 11.8 % - the ending of a seasonal or temporary work (March

1999).

Unfortunately commonly widespread is the opinion that the majority of the unemployed young people live together with their parents which, on its turn leads automatically to an underestimation of their social problems. By the results from the labor force survey carried out in March 1999 it turned out that 2.9 % of the unemployed young people at the age 15-24 years have been heads of the households, 4.2 % – husband or wife, 74.4 % – son or daughter and 8.5 % – son or daughter in law within the household.

A great part of the unemployed young people have not any working or professional experience or if this working experience is extremely insufficient. That is why the employers do not prefer them and in the majority of cases young people can find temporary or seasonal job only (usually not corresponding to their qualification).

7. Data about the youth unemployment also arouse an alarm in connection with the unfavorable changes in the structure of the unemployed persons from the viewpoint of the duration of the period of seeking a job. It is commonly known that how more durable is that period, so more passive are the adjustments of the unemployed persons as regard to the offered social re-integration programs. Data from the March 1999 survey indicate the share of the unemployed young persons (15-24 years) seeking for a job from 1 to 5 months reaches 37.7 %. The share of young persons seeking a job between 6 and 11 months is 17.7 %; between 12 and 17 months - 15.8 %; between 18 and 23 months – 4.2 % and over 2 years - 13.4 %. 14.8 % of the young people are unemployed for three or more than three years.

8. Searching the assistance from relatives and closed persons is the most frequent way of seeking a job used by 57.8 % of the unemployed young people (March 1999). At the second place is the registration at state employment offices, used for seeking a job by 41.3 % of unemployed young people. Hardly 19.4 % of them prefer direct relations with the employers. 16.2 % prefer to reply to job offers and only 7.2 % give offers for seeking a job (Note: The sum of per cents is over 100% as the inquired persons could indicate more than one way of seeking a job).

According to estimates of a sociological survey carried out By the Ministry of Labor and Social Care (see MLSC, 1994) in contrast to the other age groups, the unemployed young people have more active adjustment towards inclusion in qualification courses, seeking a job and starting the private business. Among the young people also is observed a higher share of those declaring a wish to take part in volunteer activities, such as: assistance to charity organizations, taking care for sick and old persons at home etc. (35-50% of the respondents).

9. By data from March 1999 the persons out of labor force at the age from 15 to 19 years amount to 531.0 thousand and in age group 20-24 years – to 314.1 thousand. At the same time 570.4 thousand persons out of labor force declare education as a reason for their inactivity. Unfortunately the lack of data about the reasons of inactivity broken down by age of inquired persons do not allow us to make profound conclusions in this direction.

Under conditions of stabilizing economic policy, realized by means of the currency board that leads to a closing down and restructuring of the non-effective state enterprises, the expected increase of the unemployment, including of youth unemployment is the price that has to be paid for the economic recovery. Unfortunately the new Act on protection against unemployment and employment encouragement, passed by the Parliament after the implementation of the currency

board at present is not known well both by the employers and unemployed. In this connection the envisaged in it protection measures are not applied completely yet.

Youth and social protection

The understanding about the high social price of the lasting ten years transition period to a free enterprise society is widespread. In NSI analysis 'Bulgaria' 1998 - Socio-Economic Development' (see Bulgaria' 98, 1999) is indicated a significant reduction of the annual real total household income per capita during the period 1992-1997 which in 1997 has reached just about 45 % of 1992 level. In 1998 (by preliminary data) this income begins to increase in comparison with the previous year by 35.6 %, but it still constitutes only 60.9 % of 1992 level. The increase surveyed in 1998 is mainly due to the developing the purposeful governmental policy aiming to rise of the nominal income (about 1.6 time) in conditions of a low inflation during the year (1.0 per cent only).

The official statistical data for the period 1992-1995 also evidence about some increase in the income differentiation of the households, after which a certain decrease is surveyed. The degree of income differentiation measured by 'Gini coefficient' from 0.306 for 1992 increases to 0.360 for 1995, after that in 1996 falls down to 0.340, keeps the almost same level (0.341) in 1997 and in 1998 again falls down to 0.321 (see 'Bulgaria, 1999).

Data from the regular sample households budgets' surveys also indicate that presence of the persons under 18 years of age within the household is in inverse proportion to the total average per capita income. In the most favorable position are the households without children and in most unfavorable - those of three or more children. The total average per capita income in households with three and more children for 1998 constituted only 55 % of the total per capita income calculated as average for all types of households (see Bulgaria'98, 1999).

An unfavorable restructuring of households' expenditures is also registered with a very high relative share of the average per capita households' expenditures on foods - while in 1992 this share was 43.4% in 1997 it increased to 54.4 % of the total average per capita household expenditure. In 1998 the relative share of the average per capita expenditure on food decreases to 47.8% of the total average per capita expenditure, which is considered as quite positive. Despite the decrease in share of households' expenditure on food in 1998 compared to the previous year (by about 6.5 %) it is still higher in comparison with 1992. Similarly to the previous years the relative share of the households' expenditure on food is the highest as regards to the households with three or more children, for which it constitutes about 50 per cent.

The official NSI statistical data also show the lowest total average per capita households' expenditure regarding the households having three of more children under the age of 18 years It constitutes only 63 % of the total average per capita households' expenditure of all types of households. At the households having two children at the age under 18 it constitutes 86% of the total average per capita household expenditure for all types of households.

Never-the-less registered in 1998 increase in households' consumption of main foods compared to the previous crisis 1997, data on average monthly consumption of main foods by the households with two, three or more children under 18 years of age evidence about some limitation in the consumption of some valuable for children's

and youth development products, such as: meat, milk, sugar, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables etc. The NSI experts (see Bulgaria'98, 1999) make a conclusion that in order to satisfy their needs in food the families of many children choose goods with lower prices that in majority of cases are of a lower quality. The experts within the field of social care see the exit from the situation in development of a differentiated social policy aiming to provide the biological and intellectual survival of the families with more children during the period of transition to a free market economy.

Average per capita consumption of some foods in the households by number of children under the age 18 years

Households	Year	Bread and bakery	Meat	Meat products	Milk	Eggs-pieces	Sugar	Fresh fruit	Fresh vegetables	Potatoes
with 1 child	1992	133.8	28.4	17.6	5.2	135	9.8	40.8	56.5	25.6
	1997	122.1	16.5	8.1	43.3	98	7.0	25.7	40.8	22.1
	1998	125.3	21.4	10.8	49.2	11	7.9	31.1	51.7	24.8
with 2 children	1992	130.8	26.3	6.9	59.9	121	8.6	35.2	50.8	23.7
	1997	118.9	14.2	7.2	42.1	86	6.3	21.1	35.2	19.7
	1998	126.0	18.6	9.5	43.1	98	7.0	27.2	44.9	21.9
with 3 and more children	1992	150.1	25.8	12.0	61.4	103	7.1	28.9	43.2	21.1
	1997	136.0	7.5	3.7	29.7	52	4.8	11.6	22.9	15.4
	1998	131.1	12.0	7.0	30.1	68	6.1	17.2	32.4	17.5
without children	1992	195.2	36.9	19.5	99.1	188	12.7	60.1	82.4	34.1
	1997	164.8	20.1	8.9	59.7	133	9.1	35.0	57.7	28.9
	1998	165.9	25.5	11.6	65.4	151	10.3	42.6	72.4	31.1

At the same time the results from the newest sample survey about living standard of the population conducted by the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria in April 1999, show that only 0.2% of the respondents are on opinion that their household lives 'richly', 43.5% respond 'live nor in need nor richly', 43.5% indicate 'live in need', 12.9% define their state as 'miserly'. Only 13.3% of the inquired persons can afford themselves the purchase of foods 'without difficulties', for 55.2% of the respondents purchase of foods is connected with 'some difficulties', and almost one third (31.5%) is connecting the purchase of foods with 'big difficulties'. Purchase of new clothes and shoes is connected 'with big difficulties' for 72.4% of the respondents, payments of taxes and fees - for 44.1%, payments for heating, electricity and water - for 48.2% and purchase of a new furniture - for 90.5% of the inquired. Payment on medicines or health services is connected 'with big difficulties' for 47.0% of the respondents.

Households face serious problems in satisfaction the needs of their children. Only households having children under 18 years of age and those with older children, continuing their education and supported by parents have been inquired on this problem. At the question 'Are your children needs in nourishing food fully satisfied?'

only 22.3% of the respondents give a positive answer 'Yes, fully', 54.2% - 'In some extent' and 23.5 % give a negative answer. Only 11.3 % of the inquired are on opinion their children's needs in clothes and shoes are fully satisfied, 59.0% consider these needs are satisfied 'In part' while 29.7 % respond 'No'. The most indicative in that respects are the answers on the question in what extent are satisfied the children's needs in relaxation - only 7.5% of the respondents give a positive answer while almost two thirds (64.3%) respond 'No'. At the same time children's needs in health and educational services are not satisfied in the opinion of 16.4% and 17.2 % of the respondents respectively. These needs are fully satisfied by the opinion of respectively 34.8 % and 45.2% of the inquired persons.

About one third of the inquired persons (32.0%) assess the social price of the reforms from the latest two-three years as 'unbearable', 27.8% define it as 'big', 12.8% as 'acceptable', 7.0% as 'low' and 20.4% respond 'Cannot assess'.

On the other part under the conditions of economic stagnation the financial funds in consolidated state budget intended for allowances and benefits to population during the period 1995-1998 nominally have increased permanently as their relative share in total budget expenditures reached 6.7 % for 1997 and correspondingly 6.8% for 1998 (prognostic data). During the same 1998 the relative share of monthly children's allowances within the expenditures on allowances and benefits is 23.6% which is by 8.9 points less than in 1995, but by 1.5 points more than in previous 1997. The benefits for up-bringing a child to the age of 2 years in 1998 constitute 12.8 % of the total budget expenditures for allowances and benefits. Unfortunately in real expression (at 1995 prices as a base) funds laid out for monthly children's allowances constitute only 58.3 % of those, spent for the same purpose in 1995 (see Bulgaria '98, 1999).

Youth and health services, youth morbidity and causes for death

Despite the limitation of the resources intended on health care under the conditions of financial restriction, the implementation of the currency board and the overall financial stabilization beginning since the middle of 1997 allow an overcoming of the tendency of decrease in the share of public expenditures on health in Gross Domestic Product and the gradual increase of this share. Also increasing is the share of the expenditures on health in the consolidated state budget.

Currently population needs in health care are nearly fully satisfied by the public health system. The role of the private sector in satisfying the population health needs is still insufficient.

At the same time the measures on practical implementation of the health insurance system within the currently conducted health care system's reform aiming to improve the quality of health services, at this stage (taking into consideration comparatively low possibilities of the population to cover expenditures on health care) excite apprehensions of greater inequality and corresponding limitation of the access to health care of some social groups. The insufficient activities for explanation of the new system cause a lack of understanding among a great part of the people as regards to the actual results of the implementation of health insurance system which, on turn arouses some negative adjustments.

Very indicative about the health status and its connection with the unfavorable changes in living conditions of the population as a whole, and children and youth in

particular, are data on registered cases of different socially dependent diseases in health establishments. The latest published statistical data show both a rise in the total morbidity of the population during the period and an increase in some socially dependent diseases, such as malignant neoplasm, active tuberculosis, syphilis, mental disorders etc. that are strongly influenced by stress factors, inadequate nutrition, impoverishment etc.

By data for 1997 the greatest relative share among the typical for the children and minors up to 17 years diseases have the diseases respiratory system (69.9 %), followed by the diseases of nervous system and sense organs (6.5 %), dermal diseases and diseases of hypodermic tissue (6.1 %), traumas and poisonings (4.2 %) , infectious diseases and parasitoses (3.9 %).

The absolute number of registered in 1998 malignant neoplasms among the children and youth under the age of 17 years is 814 cases compared to 855 cases registered for 1996. Respectively the absolute number of the newly registered cases of malignant neoplasms among children and youth under 17 for 1998 amounts to 117 compared to 140 cases for 1996. The most frequent among the malignant neoplasms for this age interval are the malignant neoplasms of the lymph and blood organs.

By official statistical data for 1998 are registered 978 cases of active tuberculosis among children and minors up to the age of 17 years. 280 cases of them are newly registered. During the latest three years (1996,1997 and 1998) is registered a tendency of a weak, but permanent increase in morbidity of active tuberculosis both among adults, and children and minors.

From 9205 total registered cases and correspondingly 2694 newly registered cases of syphilis in 1998, 536 are registered in the age interval up to 17 years and correspondingly 273 of them are newly registered.

Data about absolute number of the death cases among the young people in the age interval 15-19 years caused by accidents, poisonings or by violence (homicides and heavy injuries caused to death, suicides and self-injuries) indicate that after the greatest absolute peak, registered in 1992 –1994 (466 cases (1992), 457 cases (1993) and 485 cases (1994), certain drop is registered during the following two years - 439 cases in 1995 and 399 cases in 1996 correspondingly. In 1997 there is some increase compared to the previous year - 424 cases.

The absolute number of death cases caused by the above-mentioned reasons for the upper age interval (20-24 years) fluctuates between the highest value of 608 cases registered in 1994 and the lowest 521 cases registered in 1996. Again in 1997 is registered an increase in comparison to the previous year - 594 cases.

At the same time data for the period 1989-1997 evidence that the yearly number of death cases among young people from the two age intervals (namely 15-19 years and 20-24 years) as a result of suicide or self-injury fluctuates between 48 and 65 cases yearly (15-19- years) and between 38 and 69 cases yearly for the age interval 20-24 years. The absolute peak for the age group 15-19 years is registered in 1994 (65 cases) and for age group 20-24 years - in 1993 (69 cases).

Demographic trends and changes in the young people's adjustments

We have already indicated some disturbing conclusions about current status and future development of the demographic processes based upon available data and projections about the number of the population of Bulgaria till 2020. These projections

envisage further decrease both in absolute number and relative share of the young people in our country. The economic and social instability during the latest decade led to a significant births' reduction. Birth rate per thousand of population fell down from 12.5 per thousand in 1989 to 7.7 per thousand in 1997 and in 1998 rose to 7.9 per thousand. Since 1990 a negative natural growth rate is registered and its lowest negative value (-7.0 per thousand) was calculated for 1997. It is positive that in 1998 there is some decline of the negative natural growth rate (-6.4 per thousand).

At the same time the total fertility rate fell from 1.90 children per a woman in fertility age for 1989 to 1.09 children for 1997. A slight increase (1.11) is calculated for 1998 (preliminary data).

Studying the fertility rates by age for the period 1985-1996 some authors (see Kaloyanov T., 1999) establish the most significant negative changes in females' fertility among the age groups having the greatest contribution to the reproduction of the population - age intervals 20-24, 15-19 and 25-29 years.

The decrease in the total and age fertility rates is connected not only with the decline in number of females in a fertility age but also with the postponement in birth of the first child. While in 1990 the average mother's age at birth of a first child was 22.0 years, in 1997 it reached 22.7 years and by preliminary data for 1998 – 22.9 years. This trend is more disturbing if one takes into consideration the traditionally low for our country average mother's age at first child's birth compared to the developed European countries.

The biggest decrease in the absolute number of live births is surveyed among women from the age group 20 - 24 years. While in 1989 the number of live births of the women from this age group amounted to 49802 in 1998 it fell down to 26391. In other words the decrease in number of live births for the age interval 20-24 years constitutes 47.0 %. The decrease trend is also characteristic for the other age intervals including the age group of young mothers (below the age of 20). While in 1989 the number of live births of mothers below 20 years of age was 23495 by preliminary data for 1998 it amounts to 12747, or the registered decline is over 45.8 % compared to 1989. The decline in number of the live births of the mothers from the age interval 25-29 years constitutes 31.8 % compared to 1989.

Analyzing the decrease in births surveyed in our country during the latest decade the majority of authors connect it with: the drop in real incomes of the families (and especially of young families); high level of unemployment and unfavorable prospects for professional realization for a great part of the young people; increasing expenditures for upbringing children; difficulties in solving of housing and social problems of the young couples and the handicaps in front of social protection system connected with its possibilities for family's assistance as regards to children's upbringing and education (see Belcheva M., 1996). The decrease in the number of births in some cases is also explained with the ambitions of a part of the young parents to search ways for a more successful professional realization and providing better living conditions for their children, which, on its turn also leads to a limitation in number of children in the family.

The surveyed significant decrease in number of births is also connected with the gradual decrease in number of the marriages. While in 1989 63263 marriages have been contracted in 1997 their number has felt to 34772 and only in 1998 is observed a certain increase in comparison to the previous year - 35582 marriages (preliminary data). Therefore, the registered decrease in the number of marriages in 1997 reaches

45.0 %, and in 1998 - 43.8 % compared to 1989.

Data from the regular statistical surveys also indicate quite significant increase of the average age at first marriage. While in 1989 the average females' age at first marriage was 21.5 years, in 1997 it is already 23.4 years and reaches 23.5 years in 1998 (by preliminary data). Even more visible is the increase of the average males' age at first marriage - while in 1989 it was 24.7 years, in 1997 it is 26.5 years and continue to increase in 1998 - 26.6 years (preliminary data). In other words taking a decision for first marriage for both genders is postponed by about two years.

A fact that speaks for itself is the decrease in the number of females who got married at the age between 15 and 19 years. The registered decrease on this indicator in 1998 is more than three times compared to 1989 (respectively 23254 cases (1989) and only 7110 cases (1998). Among males from the same age interval this decrease is over five times (correspondingly 3713 cases (1989) and 808 cases (1998, preliminary data).

More disturbing is the decrease in the number of young people getting marriage at the 20-24 years. While in 1989 the number of females getting marriage at the age 20-24 years was 25312, in 1998 it has fell down to 16567 (or there is a decrease of 34.6 % compared to 1989). The figures also show even more visible postponement of marriage for males at the age 20-24 years - in 1989 the number of males getting marriage at the age of 20-24 years was 31893 and correspondingly 13335 in 1998 (a decrease of 58.2 %). The above data could be treated as an evidence for changing marital patterns, having in turn potentially negative impact on future demographic, social and economic development of our country.

At the same time in 1996, 1997 and 1998 the average females' age at first childbirth is quite lower compared to the average females' age of getting first marriage. This could be explained by the significant rise in relative share of the non-marital births in the total number of live births. While in 1989 the relative share of the out of wedlock births constituted to 11.4 % of the total number of live births, in 1998 by preliminary data it reaches almost one third (31.5 %) of the total number of live births.

Number and relative share of the non-marital live births in the total number of live births during the period 1989 -1998

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Number	12851	13052	14888	16448	18659	19467	18519	20284	19253	20562
Share (%)	11.4	12.4	15.5	18.4	22.2	24.5	25.7	28.1	30.0	31.5

As one can see the process is extremely dynamic. By results from a sociological survey about non-marital births in Bulgaria carried out by NSI in 1995 (see Belcheva M., 1996) a systematically and fast increase of the number of non-marital live births is observed both in towns and in villages. The share of the non-marital live births in villages is even significantly higher than in towns. While in 1989 the share of the out of marriage live births in towns represented 9.8% of the total number of the live births, in 1994 it has already reached 20.5%. At the same time the values of this share in villages are correspondingly 15.2% in 1989 and 31.0 % in 1994.

Another disturbing result of the above cited survey, representing negative

changes in the youth' reproductive behavior is the conclusion that every fourth girl who has born a child out of marriage, is at the age of 15 or below 15.

The latest data from the current demographic statistics also confirm one of the main conclusions of the above-mentioned survey, namely concerning the highest relative share of the non-marital births of females at the age below 20 years compared to the other age intervals. While in 1989 the relative share of the non-marital births of females below 20 years constituted 30.7 % of the total number of live births of mothers at the age under 20 years, in 1998 it reaches 65.8% (preliminary data).

The authors of the cited sociological survey (see Belcheva M., 1996) connect the observed growth in the share of non-marital births with the lower educational level of these mothers - a great part of them have not finished their secondary school. In the majority of cases these births are result of the improvident reproductive behavior of non-married girls from marginal social and ethnic groups (more of them of Roma origin) who have not necessary adjustment and knowledge on family and childbirth planning. Also a great impact have both traditions and low level of education. As a result, the non-planned pregnancy usually finishes with abortion or non-marital birth and the newborn child is often abandoned in state care system. Children are placed in infants' institutions, often without official refusal of parental rights which handicaps their future adoption and in some cases such child has to spend its childhood out of family with all unfavorable consequences of the collective manner of up-bringing.

The authors of the survey also maintain that while during 70s and early 80s the non-marital birth for a predominant part of non-married girls has been a non-expected and casual event and realized by the interviewed as a personal drama for the rest of their life, the results of 1995 sociological survey indicate that the extra-marriage child-bearing for a greater part of non-married girls is not so a traumatic event. About 64.7 per cent of them have not interrupted the non-expected pregnancy because they had not wanted that and only 18.3 per cent - because it had been late or they had not received a permission for abortion; only 5.6 per cent had relied on marriage.

Also there are significant changes concerning the decision about the future of new-born child: while in 1987 only 25.9 per cent of interviewed have declared they would up-bring their child, in 1995 the share of girls decided to a single motherhood reaches 81.9, respectively the per cent of those decided to leave the child in infant home for future adoption has fallen down from 54.3 in 1987 to 9.6 per cent in 1995 (see Belcheva M., 1996).

From economic and social point of view the young mothers (and especially those under 20 years) are not ready for adequate parenthood as they (and their eventual spouses) in the most cases have not the necessary economic independence and often have to interrupt their education. In many cases such mothers (or couples) need a special social protection the society in period of crisis is not in a position to provide to them. This, on its turn leads to instability of such unions. Especially urgent is the necessity of special social protection as regards to young lone mothers who have taken the heavy decision for lonely parenthood.

Under the conditions of economic stagnation and shortage of sexual knowledge and knowledge in the field of family planning (especially in case of ethnic groups) the abortion still is a main instrument for interruption of non-expected pregnancy in our country. In 1998 as in previous years the number of abortions continues to exceed the number of live births. Certain optimism arouses in connection

with the latest values of the ratio ‘abortions per 100 live births’, which after a serious increase observed from 1989 to 1997, at last in 1998 show a significant decrease even more 1989 level.

**Abortions
(per 100 live births)**

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Abortions	118	138	144	149	127	123	135	137	135	115

At the same time quite disturbing are the data about permanent increase of the share of abortions of young women under 20 years of age in the total number of abortions - from 9.1 % in 1989 it rises to 12.1 % in 1998 (preliminary data). These values are another strong evidence about insufficient sexual culture of the young generation of our country. They are even more disturbing if one takes into account the fact that 7378 abortions (or 81.2 %) of the total number of abortions of young women under 20 years in 1998 have been abortion upon wish.

Relative share of abortions of young women under 20 years in the total number of abortions for 1989-1998 by years

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Share	9.1	9.9	9.2	10.6	11.6	11.2	11.4	11.6	11.4	12.1

The unfavorable tendencies in demographic development of our country have its negative impact on social risks for youth mainly in two main directions:

- the reduction of the share of young people in total country’s population makes troubles and will continue hamper the balance between different generations in the field of social protection;

- the dramatic decrease in the number of births is accompanied by new unfavorable structural changes, such as significant relative share of non-marital births and a sufficient share of children born in problematic families being under the conditions of potential risk since the moment of their birth.

After the period of a fast decline in number of marriages and increase in the divorce number since 1993 a stabilization of marriage rates is observed - correspondingly 4.3 per thousand in 1996, 4.2 per thousand in 1997 and 4.3 per thousand in 1998 (preliminary data). These data could be considered as an indicator about the role of the family for improvement of the possibilities for an individual adaptation and successful overcoming of economic difficulties. Since 1993 similar stabilization is also observed as regard to the divorce rates.

Here I will cite some very disturbing, even not new results from the above-mentioned sample sociological survey of the Ministry of Labor and Social Care about the population impoverishment, carried out in 1994, especially as regards to the following results: non-full families represents 16.7 % of the total poor families and 6.3 % of them are families of lone mothers, and 10.4 % - of widowed or divorced parents with children. 24 % of these parents are men and 39 % - parents under 22 years.

Discussing the problems of demographic situation and decreasing share of

children and young people during the latest decade we also have to point out some data illustrating changes in the youth's adjustments concerning eventual emigration abroad. According to the results of the sociological survey of the young personality, carried out by NSI in 1995 among the students graduating secondary school, 63.2 % of the inquired young persons answer they wish to emigrate abroad and over 22.2 % declare they would do the best to realize this intention (see Social price, 1996). Comparing these data with the results from a similar survey carried out in 1992, the authors of the survey make a conclusion there is no change in the share of the young people graduating secondary school who intend to emigrate abroad and find their realization outside our country.

Social risks and antisocial offences

Institutionalization Risk

The analysis of statistical data for the period of transition indicates a tendency to a rise of social risks and delinquencies both of adults and children and minors. These processes are undoubtedly connected with the dropping out of children and juveniles from basic and secondary education. The share of pupils dropped out of basic school during the latest three years fluctuates a bit over three per cent – correspondingly 3.4% (1996), 3.3 % (1997) and 3.2 % (1998, by preliminary data). The net enrollment rate about the secondary school for the age group 15-18 years is fallen down to 62.1 % (1998, preliminary data).

A great part of orphans, children of problematic families and criminal acts' offenders are educated in different child institutions – by preliminary statistical data the number of children placed in infants' homes, children and juveniles, placed in children's homes, educational boarding schools and socio-pedagogical boarding schools at 31 December 1998 amounts to 15166 persons. All they are in conditions of limited social contacts and potential risk for their future development.

Especially vulnerable are children and minors physical and mental disabilities. The predominant part of them do not live in a normal family and social background and by data as of 31 December 1997, 2346 of them are placed in social care establishments (homes for children with physical and psychical disabilities). Separately from them in 1997, 10261 children and juveniles under the age of 18 years and correspondingly 10101 in 1998, (preliminary data) have been educated in special schools by specialized educational programs for children with physical and mental disabilities. Unfortunately, the insufficient possibilities and programs for integrated education of these children and minors is a prerequisite for their future social isolation.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Risk behavior of the young people in Bulgaria is connected at a first place with the alcohol and drug abuse and smoking which in turn creates additional risks for their health status. Drunk and narcotized children and young people very often become victims of criminal acts or offenders of such acts. In this sphere there is a visible interweaving both of impacts of social background and psychological reasons, such as: feeling of loneliness, personal dissatisfaction, lack of understanding within the

family, school and background, troubles in adaptation etc.

On the opinion of Dr. Nayden Mirtchev, a national consultant on toxicology (see Sega, 1999) the large-scale alcohol abuse among the children and youngsters is a very serious problem. Every week at the Institute for urgent medical aid “N. Pirogov” are placed at least few children in a state of alcohol poisoning. Very disturbing is the lower age of children with alcohol dependency and more and more frequent are the cases when 12-13 years old teenagers need a special medical assistance.

In its efforts to create a purposeful policy combating against the drug abuse in our country was established a National Council for Struggle Against the Drug Abuse and Drug Traffic. This body coordinates the activity of state organs and works out national programs in this domain. Its President is the minister of health and Vice-president – the minister of education and science. Members of the Council are also the President of the Committee of the Youth, Physical Education and Sports. One of the main tasks of the Council is the collection, analysis and storage of information about the control on drug abuse and drug traffic, as well as a building-up of a unified data base in this field.

During the first half of 1999 the government adopted a draft of the Law on prevention of children’s and minors’ delinquencies and criminal acts. The draft of the Law prohibits the sale of spirits to persons under the age of 18 years. As a punitive measure the retail trade outlets and catering establishments, overstepping the prohibition will be closed down by a seal. The draft also envisages forced labor in favor of the corresponding municipality as a punitive measure applied to parents of children – authors of criminal offences. The same measure is envisaged to parents of children who have been caught at a state of spirits’ or drugs’ use. It is expected that the Law will be passed by the Parliament and will come into force since 1 January 2000.

Due to its sensitivity data about the scope of alcohol and drug dependency among the young generation at this stage are mainly indirect or obtained as a result of some sample surveys. In this respect we will indicate some results of the carried out by NSI in 1995 sociological survey about the youth, its religiousness and religious sects in our country (see Social price, 1996). A survey object was a representative sample of 2.8 thousand secondary school students (VIII-XII class) at the territory of the whole country. All types of secondary schools in the country were covered by the survey (see Belcheva M., 1996).

The results of the survey indicate the alcohol abuse is widespread among the secondary school students - 8.0 % of the inquired answer they use spirits frequently, 56.8 % - rarely and 35.2 % declare they do not use spirits. In other words about two thirds of the secondary school students use spirits - a quite disturbing fact if one relates it with the latest expert opinion of the World Health Organization that considers the alcohol dependency as a kind of a drug dependency. At the same time the results from the survey show almost equal incidence of the alcohol use by the students from both sexes, as well as by the type of the place of residence - capital city, big city and little town (see Social Price, 1996).

Very indicative are data about the differences in alcohol use by age. In the age group of 14-15 years 5.4 % cent declare a frequent use of spirits, 47.5 % answer they use spirits rarely, and 47.1 % - they do not use spirits. The share of those declaring a ‘frequent’ use of spirits increases in parallel with the age – 7.4 % of the group at the age of 16-17 years and 10.6 % of the students at and over 18 years. Even more

alarming is the increase of the share of students declaring a 'rare' use of spirits, correspondingly 58.7 % of those at the age interval 16-17 years and 61.3 % - at and over 18 years. The problem is connected with the self-assessment what everyone of them understands as a 'rare' use of spirits.

A question "Do you use drugs" was also included into the questionnaire for 1995 survey among the students from secondary school. The distribution of answers to this question is as follows: 0.5% of the inquired students declare they use drugs regularly, 1.2% answer they use drugs 'sometimes', 4.8 % share they have tried drugs and 93.5 % deny use of drugs. But these data is very sensitive, as it is hard to admit use of drugs in public. That is why the survey's authors are on the opinion that a lot of the inquired students have tried to belittle the seriousness of the problem and have not been absolutely outspoken in their answers about the frequency of the drugs' use. Never-the-less in total 6.5 % of the secondary school students had been in touch with the drug substanciess (see Social price, 1996).

The study's authors consider the above percentage as lower than real compare it with the answers to the question 'Do you know other youngsters using drugs?'. 12.7 % of the respondents answer they have such friends, while 30.1 % - they know youngsters using drugs but they are not their friends. Therefore almost 42.8% of the students from secondary school have been in touch with youngsters using drugs. The drugs are more tempting for the boys than for girls. Very disturbing are the results by age – 4.3% of the age interval 14-15 years acknowledge they have used drugs and 3.3% that they would like to use drugs. Among the upper age intervals (16-17 years and 18 and over years) the shares of the students who have used drugs constitute correspondingly 7% and 5%. The greater share of students using drugs is registered in Sofia – 11.0%, correspondingly 7.3% in big cities and 6.5% in little towns. The authors of the survey explain the lower share of the juveniles using drugs in little towns chiefly with small scale of drugs' supply there. Among the main grounds which urge the young people to drugs the experts emphasize the following: lack of close people, they could refer to in heavy moments, insufficient time for dealings with the parents, poor relations and conflicts within the family, awareness about the lack of parental love, understanding the parents do not express their love to the child, dissatisfaction by the atmosphere within the family or school etc. (see Social Price, 1996).

The Youth and Smoking

By other data from the same survey 26.3% of the inquired students smoke regularly and 17.3 % - occasionally. There are not sufficient differences by sex or by type of the place of residence. The regular smokers are least of all in the age interval 14-15 years (18.4%), but the share of regular smokers increases in parallel with the age increase - correspondingly 26.0% of the age group 16-17 years and 33.2% in the age at and over 18 years. In other words every third juvenile graduating secondary school is already a regular smoker. Comparing these data with the results from another NSI survey about health care of the population (1990) one could make a conclusion that share of the regular smokers in the secondary school graduates is higher compared to the share of regular smokers in the adult population(24.7 %).

Youth, Religion and Religious Sects

On the background of the observed increasing interest to the religion a serious risk that disturbs the parents and society is the invasion of the religious sects among Bulgarian youth. The results from the above survey indicate that almost three fourths of the secondary school students are interested to the religion. 6.2 % of the respondents assess they have a great interest to the religion, while the interest of 65.4 % is moderate. At the same time there are negligible differences by age of the inquired students. The groups of 14-15 years old and 16-17 years old declare an equal interest to the religion (correspondingly 7% of the both groups display a great interest and 67% - a moderate interest to the religion). The share of the students manifesting an interest to the religion reduces in the upper age group (at and over 18 years). 5.0 % of the students at the age of 18 years and over display a great interest to the religion and 60.8 % declare a moderate interest. The authors of the survey conclude the interest to the religion is almost equal among the students both of Bulgarian and Turkish origin. But the share of students of Turkish origin displaying 'a great interest to the religion' is three times higher compared to the share of students of Bulgarian origin declaring the same great interest (Social price, 1996).

At the same time the majority of the inquired young people (63.7 %) are on the opinion that religious education has to be implemented in the school for those pupils who are interested in it, only 6.8 % consider that religious education has to be implemented as obligatory for all students, while 29.5 % are on the opinion there is no need of religious education in the school (see Social Price, 1996).

At the background of the registered significant youth's interest in religion the survey's results about the students' interests to the activity of the religious sects are quite reassuring (only 1.5 % of the inquired manifest a great interest to sects' activity and 6.4% define their interest to sects as 'moderate' while 92.1 % declare a lack of interest to the activity of religious sects (see Belcheva M., 1996). There are not surveyed sufficient differences by sex. The interest to the religious sects' activity increases in the upper age intervals. While only 0.8 % of the students at the age of 14-15 years manifest 'a great interest' to the sects' activity, their share among 16-17 years old increases to 1.5 % , and among the students at the age of 18 and over it reaches 2.0 %. It is interesting that the greatest interest to the activity of the religious sects display the students of Turkish origin (5.1 % of them manifest great interest to the activity of the religious sects and 29.2 % declare a moderate interest. Among the students of Bulgarian origin only 1.2% declare a great interest to sects and respectively only 5.0% - a moderate interest to their activity. The results of the survey also evidence there are not sufficient differences in the students' interest to the activity of the religious sects by the type of place of residence (respectively capital city, big city and little town).

Concerning the real participation in the sects' activity only 0.6 % of the inquired students answer they take real part in a religious sect. But 18.3 % of the answers to the question: 'Do you have friends participating in a religious sect?' are positive, so almost every fifth student has friends taking part in the activity of religious sects. This fact is very disturbing taking into account the strong impact of the friendly terms in the period of adolescence.

At the same time the family takes the first place in the values' system of the inquired young people. About the half of the inquired students have placed the family

on a first place in their answers to the question: ‘What, in your opinion is the most important thing in your life?’.

The insufficient communication between parents and children is the factor which in the greatest extent predetermines students’ interest to the activity of the sects (50 % of the young people who are sects’ members and 15% of those who eventually would like to become members of religious sects share they do not talk with their parents on problems they are interested in. Only 6% of the young people who has not interested in the activity of sects declare they do not talk with their parents on problems of interest. About a quarter of sects’ members and 10% of those declaring a wish to become sects’ members assess the time for contacts with their parents as extremely insufficient.

Also 25% of the inquired students, joining the sects, share their parents have never expressed a love to them.

The authors of the survey also make a conclusion that the level of material satisfaction has an impact in this respect – more often members of sects want to be young persons who estimate their money, clothes or belongings insufficient, as well those who assess the family’s incomes as extremely insufficient. The impoverishment and feeling of dead-lock are also of importance for the young people’s joining to the activity of the religious sects. The inquired students give the reasons for eventual joining the sects’ activity as follows: 63.9% motivate eventual joining to sects by the real life dissapointment, 13.3% - by the curiosity, 7.8% - by the loneliness, 7.4 % by the necessity to satisfy their intellectual interests and studiousness.

The Youth and Crimes

In 1998 there is a significant fall in the number of registered crimes committed with the participation of children and juveniles (up to the age of 18 years) compared to the previous 1997. After the great peak in the number of crimes committed with the participation of children and minors registered in 1997 (18019 cases) in comparison to 1989 (6022 cases) - an increase of 199.2% in 1998 the number of these crimes decreased to 14223 cases, so the decrease in comparison to the previous year amount to 21.1 %).

Unfortunately we can not maintain the same regarding the number of registered crimes against children and minors. Their values are quite higher in comparison to 1989 and 1990:

Registered crimes against children and minors

(number)

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Registered crimes against children and minors	1708	1426	2277	2643	2497	2335	2040	2119	2449	2300

The carried out by NSI in 1997 sample statistical survey of persons and

households - victims of the most frequent crimes in 1996 and 1997 (see Baev St., 1998) also aimed to analyse the victimization among children at the age interval 3 - 15 years as regards to thefts and robberies and intentional body injuries. The results of the survey show the relative share of children - victims of crime at the age interval 3 - 15 years amounts respectively to 2.4 % in 1996 and to 2.2 % in 1997. On the base of these data the authors of the study make a conclusion there is not a serious change in the children's level of victimization in the above years.

The number of crimes committed with the participation of young people from the age group 18-24 years during the period 1991-1998 also registers its absolute peak in 1997 (26351 cases), which represents an increase of 63.3% compared to 1991 (the first year for which we have fully available data). As a positive could be assessed the fact that the number of the crimes committed with the participation of young peoples from the age group 18-24 years in 1998 by preliminary data has decreased to 18131 cases which represents a decrease of 31.2 % compared to the previous year.

The latest available statistical data for 1998 also indicate a significant rise of the absolute number of the children and juveniles sentenced for criminal acts compared to the previous year - see correspondingly 1734 sentenced minors in 1989, 1673 sentenced minors in 1997 and 2605 sentenced minors in 1998 (preliminary data). Or the rise in the number of sentenced minors in 1998 constitutes 50.2 % compared to 1989 and 55.7% compared to the 1997 respectively.

By final data for 1997 (see Crimes, 1998) the most frequent criminal act committed by the sentenced young persons in the age group 14 - 29 years is the theft. From the totally 1673 persons of the sentenced in 1997 minors (below 18 years old) 1309 have been sentenced for a theft, which represents 78.2 % of the total number of the sentenced minors and is by 2.0 % more in comparison to the previous 1996. The share of persons sentenced for theft on the age interval 14-29 years is 59.4 % of the total number of persons sentenced from this age group and it is by 0.8 % more compared to 1996.

In 1997 77 persons at the age 14-29 years have been sentenced for commitment of intentional homicides and this represents 30.7 % of the total number of persons sentenced for this crime. The minors sentenced for commitment of intentional homicide constitute 6.0 % and the share of persons at the age 18-29 years is 24.7% of the total number of sentenced for commitment of intentional homicide.

Also by final data for 1997 there is an increase in the share of young people from the age group 14 - 29 years sentenced for a rape – while in 1996 were sentenced 108 persons, in 1997 are sentenced 127 persons, or the increase constitutes 17.6 %. The share of minors sentenced for a rape in the same 1997 reaches 8.7% of the total number of persons sentenced for a rape and has decreased by 2.5 % compared to the previous year.

One of most typical for the youth age crimes is the misappropriation of motor vehicles. The share of persons from the age group 14 - 29 years sentenced for this crime constitutes 84.1 % of the total number of sentenced for criminal act.

The final 1997 data also show that the young people at the age 18 - 29 years are quite active as regard to some economic crimes. The share of young people from the above-mentioned age group constitutes correspondingly 20.8 % of the total number of persons sentenced for embezzlement and 36.2 % of those sentenced for documentary crimes. The share of young people from the same age interval sentenced for offences against the customs' regime (contraband) reaches 28.6% (see Crimes,

1998).

A special attention has to be paid to the high share of the recidivists in the age group of the 18-29 years old, which represents 23.4 % of the total share of recidivists.

After the sufficient drop in the number of the young people at the age of 18-29 years, sentenced for commitment of criminal acts in 1992, 1993 and 1994 (which by common opinion due to the great delays in the Court procedure in these years) since 1995 their number permanently increases and in 1998 13594 persons have been sentenced, which is by 318.8 % more compared to 1993. During the all years of the period the number of males sentenced for commitment of crimes prevails over that of females. It also refers to the age group under consideration (18-29 years) for which sentenced males represent 93.7% of the total number of persons sentenced for commitment of crimes from the same age group in 1998 (preliminary data).

At the same time the number of imprisoned minors (below the age of 18) reduced from 400 persons in 1989 to 210 in 1998 (preliminary data). 371 of them in 1989 (92.8 %) and correspondingly 199 in 1998 (94.8 %) are boys.

The number of the imprisoned young people in the age interval 18 - 29 years during the years of transition is quite lower compared to the number of sentenced. By preliminary data for 1998 only 1926 persons of the above age interval are imprisoned and 1877 (97.5%) of them are males.

Suicides

Another sad phenomenon of the youth age are the suicides and attempts for suicides of the juveniles and young people. Data about the suicides of young people at the age from 15 to 24 years show 116 cases registered in 1990, 131 cases in 1993, 111 cases in 1995, 120 cases in 1996 and 117 cases in 1997. Here the investigation of reasons for accomplishment of this act that are typical for the youth age are of a great importance. On the opinion of the specialists the majority of them are connected mainly with the specific for the youth age difficulties and problems of adaptation and socialization. A lot of suicides are caused by reasons inside the family, such as: failure to understand one another, conflicts with the parents, fear of punishment troubles in school, disappointment in love etc.

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Undoubtedly all indicated data substantiate the thesis that crisis which caught all Bulgarian society during the period of transition to a market economy fell down most heavily on the young generation of our country. In maintenance of this opinion evidence the decreasing number and relative share of children and young people that accordingly to the existing demographic projections will also decrease in future. As a main factor in this respect is considered the decrease in the number of births. The economic and social problems which our families are faced to, make on its turn the up-bringing and education of children more difficult and problematic. A number of new processes and phenomena, taking place in our society, changes in the system of values, the feeling of inability to adapt themselves to the new social reality make parents to feel a helplessness in their efforts on up-bringing and education the children. The school enrollment rates declines systematically, which causes these children and young people fall at labour market without necessary educational

minimum and professional qualification. The payment of the personal within the sphere of education does not motivate it enough and, in the long run leads to a formalism of the educational process and causes a discontent among the students. Also very disturbing is the relatively high share of the young people who see possibilities for their future realization outside the country. There are serious problems in the moral education of Bulgarian youth for which evidence both the early births and the high share of the children born out of marriage. Also there is registered a serious increase in the number of young people exposed to specific social risks, such as alcohol and drug abuse, smoking, commitment of crimes. The all cited facts lead us to the thought about the necessity of developing special strategies and programs aiming to achieve coordination and purposefulness in the efforts of the state, family and society for effective solution of the problems of young people in our country.

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