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Graduate School of Development Studies

**'Social orphans' in institutional care in Bulgaria:  
Voices from children in the orphanage in Plovdiv**

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## Abbreviations

CEECs: Central and Eastern European Countries

CPA: Child Protection Act

CPD: Child Protection Department

ECT: European Children's Trust

EU: European Union

INGOs: International Non Governmental Organizations

MES: Ministry of Education and Science

MOH: Ministry of Health

MOLSP: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

MOSS: Ministry Office of Social Support

MSAS: Municipal Social Assistance Service

NCCP: A National Council on Child Protection

NGOs: Non Governmental Organization

SACP: State Agency for Child Protection

UNCRC: The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fun



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## Chapter 1. Introduction

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### 1. General statement of children in institutional care and the focused area in this paper

Children who cannot live under the same roof of a house with their families, whatever reason they have, are considered as vulnerable. The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) declares that:

*“State parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subjects to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.”* (UNCRC, Article 9.1)

Children who are separated from their parents or guardians normally grow up in ‘institutional care’. According to the report by Save the Children, more than 8 million children are living in institutional/residential care all over the world (Save the Children:1<sup>1</sup>). Reasons why children live in institutional care are diverse and complex, including HIV/AIDS, armed conflicts, and socio-economic problems. This paper illustrates the situation of children in institutional care in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), particularly the Republic of Bulgaria. This region has been facing the problem that number of children in institutional care has been increasing after the collapse of the communist regime. The main reason could be dramatic restructuring of socio-economic environment and conditions over the last decades.

### 2. Problem statement

Bulgaria has one of the highest numbers of children in institutional care among CEECs. Population at age from 0 to 17 has been decreasing after the collapse of communist regime - from 2,273 thousands in 1989 to 1,459 thousands in 2003 (UNICEF Innocenti

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<sup>1</sup> This document does not mention the year publishing.

Research Center, 2004:56). Yet, the rate of children in institutional care has been increasing from 1,281.4 per hundred thousands populations at age from 0 to 17 in 1990 to 1,466.6 per hundred thousands in 2002 (UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, 2003:84). While the total number of children in Bulgaria may have decreased, the rate of children who are not cared by their parents has increased. This trend indicates that there may be systematic failure in the domain of care for children and youth in Bulgaria.

According to Children and residential care, 31,102 children lived in institutional care in 2001, which counts for 1.93 percent of total child population (The Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection: 33<sup>2</sup>). In particular, the number of children in infant homes is the highest in CEECs, and 30% of them were born to teenagers and 64% of them belonged to ethnic minority, especially Roma origin<sup>3</sup> (Gantcheva and Kolev, 2001: 35). Almost all children in institutional care are 'social orphans' whose parents are unable or unwilling to take care of them because of many reasons such as illness, lack of means, etc. Many teenage parents are themselves abandoned or imprisoned. According to the World Bank's survey<sup>4</sup>, 95% of children in institutional care are handed over by their families, while real orphans are less than 1 percent. This survey also mentions that 67 % of interviewed children in institutional care can keep in touch with their parents. According to the instructor of an orphanage in Bulgaria, the majority of children in this orphanage can go back and stay with their parents during weekend, summer vacations and/or Christmas holidays. These facts show that orphanages may be functioning as childcare centers for parents who are able to perform their duties only temporarily as well as who do not wish to serve tie with their children altogether.

The increasing problem of children in institutional care may be seen from the standpoint of 'transition'. Since 1989 when the state-led communist regime collapsed in Bulgaria, this county has been facing major structural change in many areas such as the state,

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<sup>2</sup> This report does not mention the year.

<sup>3</sup> According to UNDP survey, around 8 million Roma live in Europe. 70 percent of them live in CEECs and the Balkans. 2001 census of Bulgaria shows that 365, 797 people, 4.7 percent of total population identify themselves Roma (UNDP, 2002: 24-25).

<sup>4</sup> This survey, "Social assessment of child care", is included as additional annex 13 in the project document of the World Bank (the World Bank, 2001a: 92-104).

households and institutional care. In Connell's article (1994), the state is considered as a gender regime. He mentioned that "the state engages in considerable ideological activity on issues of sex and gender; this very diverse activity ranges from birth control in India and China, [...] to the Soviet efforts to increase the number of women in paid work" (Connell, 1994: 34). We can see this gender regime in Bulgarian during both the communist and the transition period. Under the communist regime, the state encouraged women to enter the labor force and provided them maternity benefits and subsidized childcare. During this period, women had two images; one is "a woman android, the mechanical woman, woman-heroine of a socialist modernization project"; and the other is "national heroines' as mothers, toilers and social activists" (Kotzeva, 1999: 83-84, 86). Women's participation in the labor force brought about the increase in their incomes and their activities outside households. This resulted in women's empowerment within household and society. Under the transition, Bulgaria, like other CEECs, has experienced "an abrupt shift from model of gender equality based on sameness derived from a communist ideology, to a new bipolar sex/gender system characterized by difference" (Holzner and Truong, 1997, Truong, 2003: 42). This shift of gender ideology makes women hard to enter labor force. Not only have women difficulty in earning money, but they also have less access to health and education because the costs of these public goods have been shifted from the state to the household (Truong, 2003: 43). Public expenditures for social assistance were reduced. This reduction caused the increase in women's unpaid domestic work. Also, men have been suffering from unemployment. It causes a high rate of alcoholism, depression and suicide among them. It also resulted in the change of gender relations.

This change in gender regime leads to changing configurations of family such as decreased rate of marriage and fertility, and an increase in single-parent households and the divorce rate. These changes in households have affected the welfare of children and contributed to the phenomenon of 'social orphans'. Increased demands for care services for 'social orphans' also stress the resource of care institutions to the limits in view of state budget cuts in the social sector and the lack of experience of the communist countries in finding alternatives in which responsibility can be distributed more evenly

between the government, care institutions, families and other organizations in civil society. Burke stated in the UNICEF working paper that:

*“[O]ne of the principles of the communist regimes was that the state would provide care ‘from the cradle to the grave’ rather than supporting individuals to care for themselves and their families.”* (Burke, 1995: 34)

If families could not take care of their children, the government did not support them but remove their children from home (Burke, 1995: 34). This policy resulted in “a massive over-reliance on institutional care and upbringing at the expense of services to help families in their own homes” (UNICEF, 2001: 93). After the collapse of communism, this trend has been remained and another child-care support such as fostering and adoption has not been popular.

### **3. Justification of the research**

Women and children are always seen as the most vulnerable groups in society when the government is in crisis such as conflicts, wars and changes of economic and political systems, in which CEECs are no exception. Personally, children have to carry the burden of transition that is still falling into oblivion under eyes of the policy-makers as well as the contemporary power-holders.

Experiences gained during working with children in the orphanage, “Rada Kirkovich” in the summer of 2001 have urged me to be interested in this research. Therefore, I want to look at what exactly ‘social orphans’ are facing and what kinds of collective action can be mobilized to ensure children’s well being. Ambitiously, this research aims to find out the root-causes why children have been pushed into institutions as ‘social orphans’.

Furthermore, the findings of this research partly contribute to the policy-makers to take needs and voices as well as rights of ‘social orphans’ into the process of decision-making.

#### **4. Research objective**

Given the above contexts, the research aims:

- To analyze causes of increasing 'social orphans' during the transition period;
- To analyze forms of care for children, their sustainability and suitability;
- To analyze children's experience with institutional care.

#### **5. Research question**

1. What are the main causes of the rise of 'social orphans'? How did changing gender regime within household, labor market and the state affect this rise?
2. What kinds of collective action have been taken to address the needs of children in institutional care in Bulgaria? And how effective are they in responding to children's needs and voices?
3. What perspectives do 'social orphans' have to improve their situation? What are their expectance and desire?

#### **6. Research hypothesis**

Based on above context, there may have two major hypothesis as bellowing:

- a) 'Transitions' could be the main causes of the rise of 'social orphans' because the structural change might bring about an increase of vulnerabilities (e.g. unemployment rate and reduction of social assistance subsidized by the government)
- b) Main objective of collective actions is to reduce the number of children in institutional care. However, I suppose that these collective actions have not taken children's voices into account.

#### **7. Methodology**

Analysis of this research was based mainly on primary data and information collected through a series of interviews with different related target groups. Secondary data,

information and related materials that were used in this paper were also collected from some organizations based in Bulgaria and the Netherlands physically and electrically.

Analysis of macro situation during the transition period is needed in order to find out root-causes of the increase in “social orphans”. This research focused on analyzing the changes at macro level during this period in terms of labor force, social expenditure, real wage, and configuration of family (e.g. crude marriage rate, general divorce rate and share of non-marital birth rate). I mainly used statistical data of the transition period 1989-2002 collected by UNICEF Innocenti Research Center.

Field research through a series of interviews with the EveryChild Bulgaria, an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) based in Sofia was conducted in August, 2004. This field research aimed to understand what, how such organization has carried out its activities to help children, and how far effectiveness of this intervention is getting to its target groups.

**Table 1: Three dimensions for analyzing the case study**

<b>Material well-being</b>	<b>Psychological well-being</b>	<b>Psycho - Social well-being</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nutrition</li> <li>• Health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-identity as being ‘social orphans’</li> <li>• Self-confidence</li> <li>• Sense of affinity with other children, staffs and parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumption</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Prospect for future</li> <li>• Perception about family</li> <li>• Their desire</li> </ul>

In order to understand children’s situation in institutional care, I use a case study of one orphanage in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The research methods were based mainly on



participatory observations and informal interviews with 14 in total 27 children, and teachers. Interviews with children and participatory observations were based on three dimensions: material well-being; psychological well-being; and social well-being (see in table.1 above).

## **8. Limitation of this research**

Firstly, it is language barrier during collecting information from the government organizations such as the Ministry of Finance and National Statistical Institute, and interviewing with children. Therefore, collected information may not reflect exact children's voices.

Secondly, as the limitation of time and other conditions, the research (interviews and participatory observations) was conducted in only one orphanage among many others. As we all know, the background of children before living in orphanages, reasons why they have to be there, and environment and conditions where 'social orphans' live are diverse and complex. "Rada Kirkovich" is one of the best orphanages in Bulgaria. Therefore, the finding of the research may not fully reflect the real situation of Bulgarian 'social orphans'.

The last one is an analysis of ethnic minority (particularly, Roma minority) among 'social orphans'. It is said that much more children with Roma minority are living in institutional care than those from another ethnicity (Bulgaria State Agency for Child Protection: 35). As the report by the Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection (SACP)<sup>5</sup> points out that the data of children from ethnic minority is not available, it is difficult for my paper to analysis the phenomenon of 'social orphans' among ethnic minority.

## **9. The structure of this paper**

This paper consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 is followed by:.

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<sup>5</sup> This country report was prepared for the conference, "Children and residential care", in Stockholm in 2003.

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Chapter 2: Introduces concepts of 'social orphans' and their situation and analyzing cause of the rise in 'social orphans' from the view of gender and transition.

Chapter 3: Presents some collective actions for the needs of 'social orphans' and their effectiveness that supported and operated by the State, the World Bank, and an INGO.

Chapter 4: Illustrates lives and voices of social orphans', based on my participatory observations and interviews with children living in "Rada Kirkovich", an orphanage in Bulgaria.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

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## Chapter 2. Post-Communist, Gender and 'Social Orphans' in Central and Eastern Europe

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The event on November 9, 1989 - the collapse of the Berlin Wall, was historic for the world in many ways, especially for Europe. The event has led to an abrupt shift from the communist regime to democratic and capitalist rule in almost parts of Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs). Speed and efficiency of this shift so-called 'transition' is not uniform because it has depended on specific condition of each country. Some countries have succeeded in promoting economic growth and political stability. Subsequently, they became members of European Union (EU) (e.g. Czech, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia etc.). Reversely, others are still facing their economic difficulties and trying hard to harmonize the government frameworks in order for joining EU in three years (e.g. Bulgarian and Romania). Moreover, all of these countries are struggling with social problems, notably the increasing number of children in institutional care. Almost of them are not 'orphans', but 'social orphans' whose parent(s) are still alive.

This chapter aims to expose root-causes of why many children cannot live with their family and how this rising trend of 'social orphans' is related to gender issues in Central and Eastern Europe.

### 1. Phenomenon of 'social orphans'

#### 1.1. 'Social orphans'

In general, 'orphans' are considered as children whose parent(s) has/have passed away. 'Social orphans' mean that their parent(s) is/are still alive. UNICEF (2001) defines 'social orphans' as:

*"Children whose parent or parents are still alive, though these are unable or unwilling to provide care in the short or longer term because of parental illness, abandonment, imprisonment, or harmful or neglectful parenting."*

*UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (2001:94)*

Contemporarily, there are three care options for children who cannot live with their parent/parents: being taken care of by their relatives, being adopted or fostered by another family, growing up in institutions subsidized by the government, which are sometimes called orphanages. In CEECs, institutional care or “out-of home care arrangement” as defined by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (2001:94), has been used as a popular option for such children since the communist period. During this period, the governments had been nationalizing not only the area of economy, but also that of social services including childcare service. Herczog (1997) notes that:

*“[N]o private or charitable organizations were allowed to be involved, because taking care of children was supposed to be the state’s responsibility”*

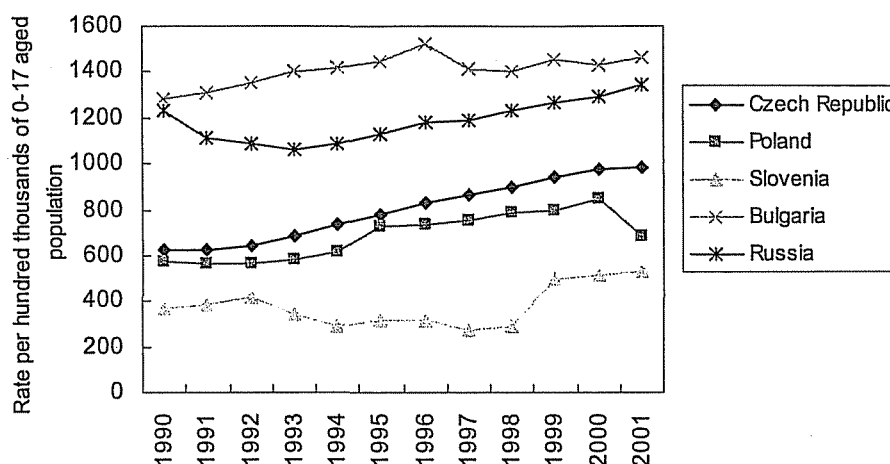
*George and Oudenhoven (2002:57) cited by Herczog, 1997:112-113*

This communist trend has resulted in the fact that many social orphans are living in institutional care currently, while new childcare systems such as foster care and adoption have been introduced during the transition period.

## **1.2. Children in institutional care in Central and Eastern Europe**

According to the UNICEF report, as many as 5 million children have been living in institutional care in CEE countries (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2001:93). The absolute number of children in institutional care has been decreasing during the transition period because of reduction of fertility rate. However, rate of children in institutional care has been increasing in the same period. The rate of children in institutional care in four selected countries in CEECs (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Bulgaria) and Russia is illustrated in Figure 1. The rate of children in institutional care has been increasing more or less since the start of the transition period in all countries mentioned above. Czech Republic shows the most dramatic increase. Bulgaria has the highest rate among this region since the beginning of the transition.

**Figure.1: Rate of Children in institutional care**



*Source: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2003:84*

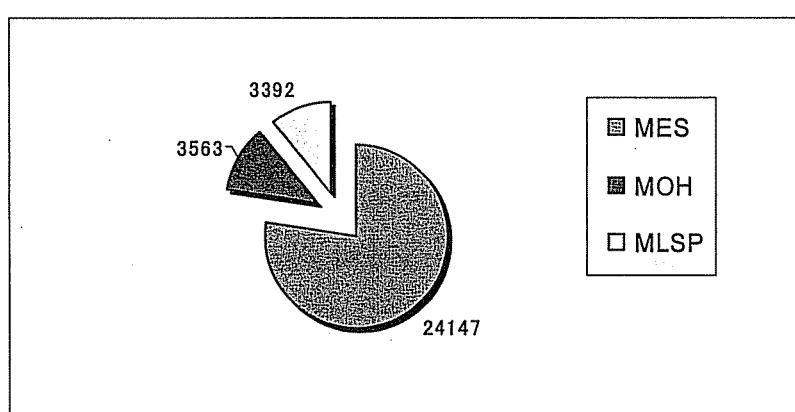
Almost children in institutional care are ‘social orphans’. For example, Czech Republic has only 3 percent of orphans in institutional care (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2001: 110). The diversity of ‘social orphans’ can be reflected through children’s backgrounds. Reasons have why children become ‘social orphans’ vary, but mainly are abandonment, large-sized households, single parent households and poverty. Abandonment is considered as a striking reason in this region. Romania has high rate of abandoned children, 17 children per 1000 live births (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2001: 108). This situation is closely related to the increase in the share of non-marital birth and that of teenagers. Another reasons are poverty concerned issues and dysfunction of family.

### 1.3. The case of Bulgaria: High rate of children in institutional care

In 2001, the total number of children in institutional care is 31,202, which is referred to 1.93% of total children in Bulgaria (The Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection (SACP): 33). Bulgaria has 332 institutions for children. These institutions have been operated by the government. Three Ministries such as Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Education and Science (MES), and Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MOLSP) are responsible for institutional care for children. This system of institutional

care is similar with that of the former Soviet Union. Each of them has different target groups of children. MOH supports 32 institutions for infants and children who have not been in primary school yet. MES is in charge of 244 institutions where children aged 3-18 years old are living. MOLSP has 56 institutions targeting at children aged 3-18, but special children with disabilities (SACP: 37). The number of children in each institution is demonstrated in Figure 2.

**Figure.2: Number of children in institutional care in 2001**



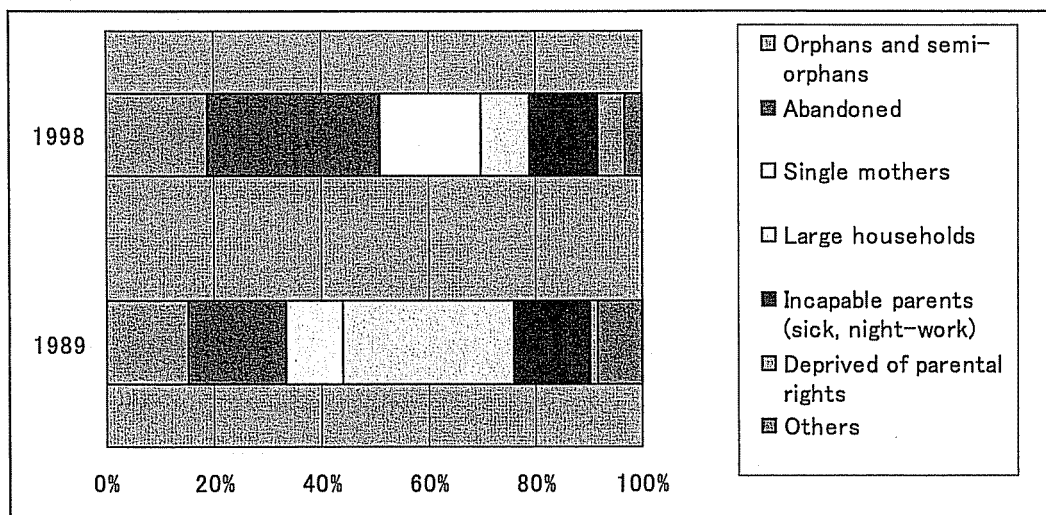
*Source: SACP: 37*

In CEECs, Bulgaria has highest number of children at age under three in infant homes. This number has been grown up rapidly during the transition period, while Bulgaria had had high number of infants in institutional care during the communist era. The childcare system of the former Soviet Union used to transfer children from infants home to orphanage when they reach 3-5 years old (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2001:99). The increasing number of children in infant homes could lead to swell that of children in orphanages.

Reasons pushed almost 'social orphans' to have been living in institutional care are similar to those of other countries in this region. The fact shows that the share of 'orphans' is between 1 and 3% (SACP: 33). As well, the major reason is abandonment that has been dramatically increasing between 1989 and 1998. Another reason which has

become noticeable during the transition period is an increase of single mother households (See Figure. 3).

**Figure.3: Reasons of institutionalization**



Source: Gantcheva and Kolev, 2001:54

Nonetheless, the phenomenon of ‘social orphans’ is related to the situation of family (e.g. economic status, female-headed family, and young age of mothers). The swelling number of ‘social orphans’ might show that family is affected by some policies implemented during the transition period.

## 2. Gender and Transition

Crisis in the family, regardless to whatever reasons, could push their children to become ‘social orphans’. The family has been victim from dramatic socio-economic restructuring. Before reaching this point, I want to describe the situation under the transition period such as the concept of transition, focusing on economic policy, and impact on production (represented by labor market) and on reproduction (represented by social services) in terms of gender.

## 2.1. The concept of transition

Post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have been called 'transition' for 15 years. The transition has been implemented in terms of politic, economy and social services. Castanheira and Popov (2000) examine the transition in economies is

*"[M]arketization (i.e. elimination of the central planned economy, production quotas, rationed supply of resources and regulation of prices), and mass privatization"*

*(Castanheira and Popov, 2000: 1).*

They also refer to 'transition in countries' as "Process of Larger-Scale Institutional Change", quoted from Dewatripont and Roland (1997), including "the creation of new institutions, (property) rights, government, administration" (Castanheira and Popov, 2000: 1).

According to Castanheira and Popov' explanation (2000: 2-3) about initial conditions in the post-communist countries, main components of transition policy could be characterized as followings:

- ✦ Establishing a market price system (Price liberalization);
- ✦ Privatization of property;
- ✦ Reallocating resources and;
- ✦ Setting up democratic, market institutions and administration.

First three components are seen as instruments for economic reform. Among them, privatization could be considered as the key economic policy because its objective is:

*"[M]uch broader and involves, as a fundamental component, the improvement of microeconomic efficiency".*

*(Sheshinski and Lopez-Calva, 2003: 187)*



Sheshinski and Lopez-Calva (2003) describe four objectives of privatization programs, which are:

- ✦ *To achieve higher allocative and productive efficiency;*
- ✦ *To strengthen the role of the private sector in the economy;*
- ✦ *To improve the public sector's financial health and;*
- ✦ *To free resources for allocation in other important areas of government activity (usually related to social policy).*

*Sheshinski and Lopez-Calva (2003: 187)*

## **2.2. Change in labor market: Impact on female workers**

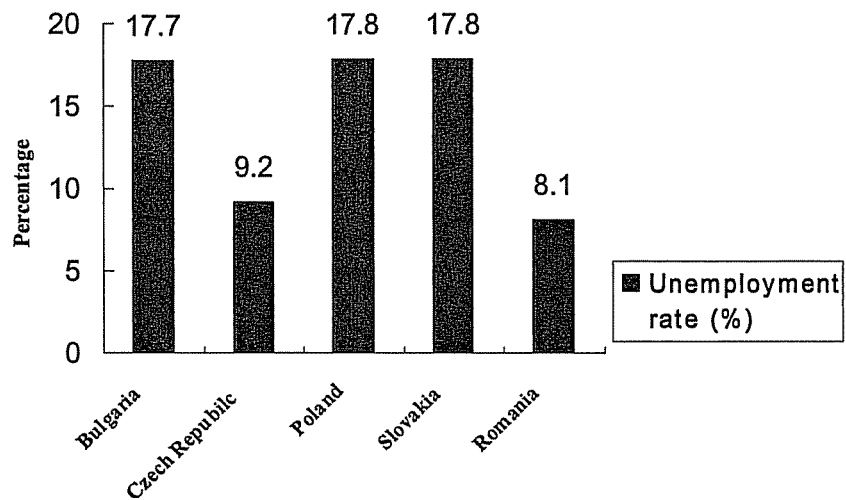
Economic policies under the transition have negative impact on labor market. Castanheira and Popov (2000) describe how price liberalization leads to the increase in unemployment rate. Sheshinski and Lopez-Calva (2003) note that privatization results in negative impacts on employment in the short-run and positive impacts in the middle and long-run. The negative impact on employment could be:

*“[S]hrinking the public sector in which workers have achieved the highest levels of organization and wages, job security, and decent working conditions”*

*(Cook and Murphy, 2002: 2)*

In CEECs, high unemployment rate is one of significant problems during the transition period. Figure.4 shows annual registered unemployment rate among selected countries in CEECs (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania) in 2002. In particular, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia mark high registered unemployment rate. These countries might have higher unemployment rate if they include those who have not yet registered.

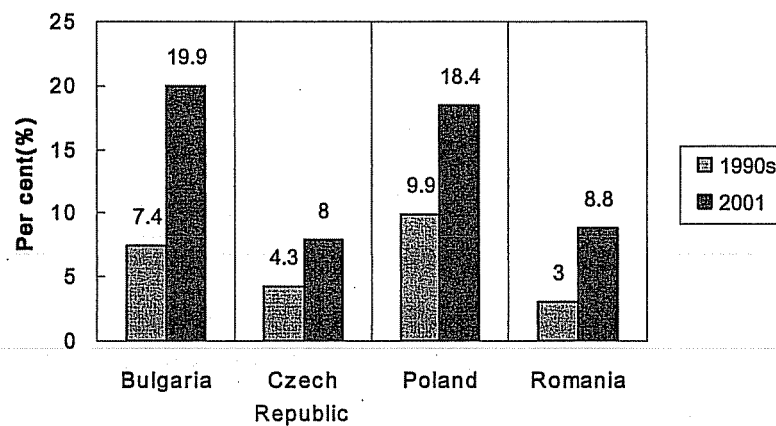
**Figure.4: Annual registered unemployment rate in 2002**



*Source: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004:94*

Almost of these countries, except Slovakia, has grown unemployment rates rapidly during the transition period. Unemployment rate has been expanding almost double. In case of Bulgaria, it nearly reaches triply (See Figure 5).

**Figure.5: Unemployment rate during transition period**



*Source: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004:19*

Moreover, Tisheva argues that privatization has negative impacts on women's participation in labor market. According to her report, female unemployment has been

spreading for the last three years in Bulgaria. This counts for 53 percent of all unemployed (Tisheva: 5<sup>6</sup>). The communist states encouraged equality between women and men in paid work because rapid industrialization needed to have large labor market. For example, Bulgaria showed the dramatic change in share of women in labor force during the communist era, which increased from 29 percent in 1948 to 50 percent in 1989 (Kostova, 1993: 97). Swelling women's participation in labor market resulted from the new image of women defined by Marxist ideology, which is "the socialist Amazon- a woman-android, the mechanical woman, woman-heroine of a socialist modernization project" (Kotzeva, 1999: 83). However, women's participation in labor force has been lower than that of the communist period (World Bank, 2002:23).

Moreover, women tend to be long-term unemployed. Tisheva assumes that the reason why it became hard for them to enter the labor market is discrimination against women in the process of hiring (Tisheva: 5-6). Employers are unwilling to hire women, especially women in young fertility age (25- 34), because working women at this age need to be provided social benefits such as maternity leaves and child benefits, which are considered as the burden for employers. These social services have been less provided by the government during the transition period.

### **2.3. Change in Social Services: Impact on 'care economy'**

Elson argues that social policy still tends to be seen as an afterthought in macro economic policy. She defines three key social biases in current macro economic policy as deflationary bias<sup>7</sup>, male breadwinner bias<sup>8</sup>, and privatization bias (Elson, 2002: 4). Countries in CEECs also have experienced not only the privatization of 'productive works', but also the privatization of 'care economy'. 'Care economy' consists of reproductive work and voluntary community work which are:

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<sup>6</sup> This document does not mention the year of publication.

<sup>7</sup> "A bias that gives too high a priority to low inflation, low public debt, low public expenditure, low taxation and low deficits; and too low a priority to full employment, high public investment and realizing the full potential for improvement in the availability of goods and services" (Elson, 2002:5).

<sup>8</sup> "the bias that comes from assuming that the unpaid care economy is articulated with the market economy of commodity production through an income which is paid a male breadwinner and which is assumed to be large enough to provide for the cash needs of a set of dependents (women, children, elderly people, sick people" (Elson, 2002:6)

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*"[V]ital in developing and maintaining the health and skills of the labor force; and in developing and maintaining the social framework: the sense of community; of civic responsibility; the rules, norms and values that maintain trust, goodwill and social order."* (Elson, 1999: 6)

Elson also mentions that works in 'care economy' are not paid, though they might be provided for by transferring payments from the state, for example pension, maternity leave and child benefit (Elson, 1999: 7).

CEECs have faced the change in the confines of 'care economy'. The following comment by Lenin (1965) shows the basic approach to 'care economy' under communist state:

*"We are organizing community kitchens and public dining rooms, laundries and repair shops, crèches, kindergartens, children's homes and educational institutions of every kind."* (Gardiner 1997: 72 cited from Lenin 1965: 115)

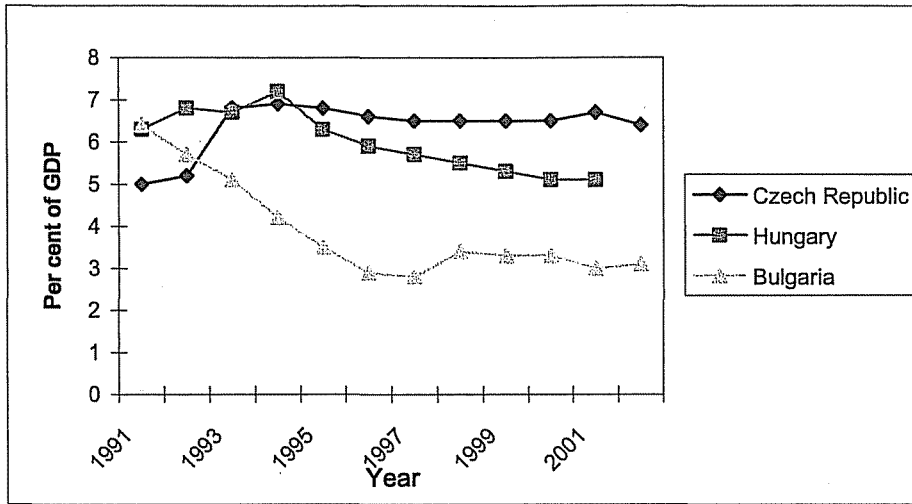
The communist state needed to socialize domestic work in order to help women to enter labor market easily. McKinney (2004) mentions the combination of the state and family for rearing children during the communist period. She also introduces Goldman's idea of social policy implication cited in 1993 as:

*"If the state was serious about women's liberation, it had to implement policies to abolish wage differentiation, to raise wages, to establish broad social services, and to socialize household labor."* (McKinney, 2004:38 cited from Goldman, 1993:48)

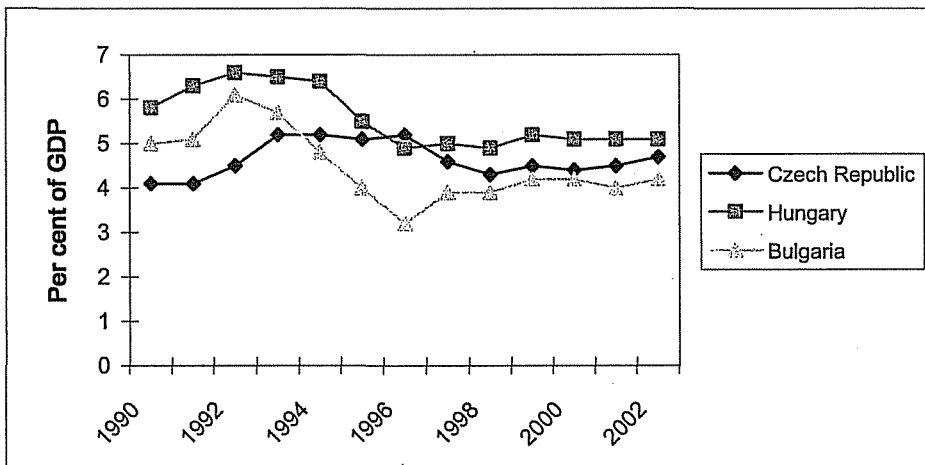
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As their comments showed, social services such as education, health and childcare had been provided by the state in CEECs during the communist era. However, public expenditures on these social services have been cut down during the transition period.

**Figure.7: Public expenditure on health**



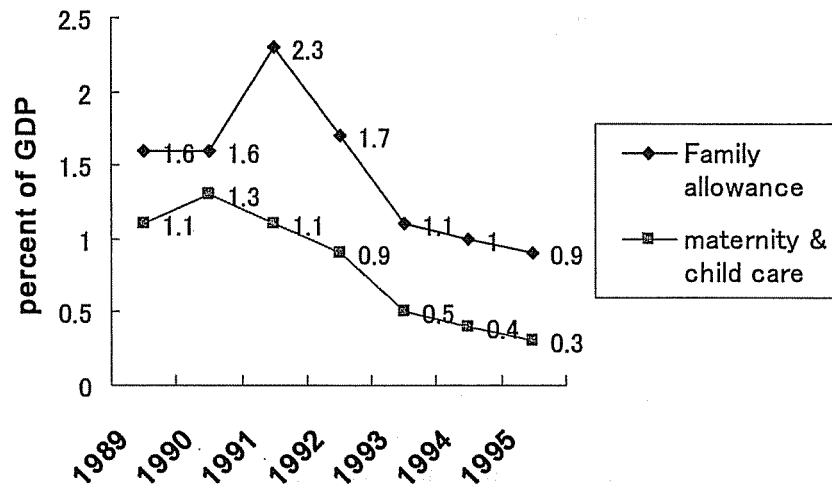
**Figure.8: Public expenditure on education**



*Source: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004: 82, 85*

Figure 7 and Figure 8 show the change in share of public expenditures on health and education of Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria during the transition period. Only Czech Republic has more public expenditures on health and stable expenditures on education. In the Bulgarian case, both public expenditures have declined dramatically during the transition period.

**Figure.9: Public expenditures on family allowances, maternity benefits and child care in Bulgaria during transition period**



*Source: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 1997: 95*

The communist states also provided working women some social services such as maternity leaves, child allowance and child benefits. However, the process of economic reform made the budget of these services shrinking (See Figure 9). These social services are still protected by law, though in practice many women cannot receive these social assistances due to the privatization of the state-run enterprises (Kotzeva, 1999: 88).

### **3. Family in Transition: Changing of externalization and internalization of family**

#### **3.1 Change in configuration of family**

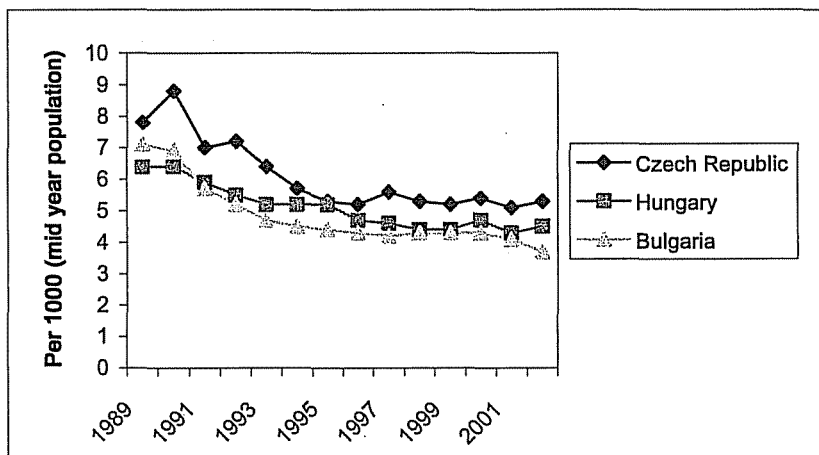
As mentioned in the previous section, women in CEECs were urged to participate in labor force by the communist states. That is why many women had jobs in reality. Western industrialized countries show that high female employment tends to occur with later age at first marriage and diversification of family forms such as single parent. However, in the communist countries women got married at a young age, for instance, an average age at first marriage in Bulgaria was 21.5 in 1989 and that of Czech Republic was close to this age, 21.2 (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004: 75). The average

age at first marriage has been getting older since the collapse of the communism, 24.8 and 25.5 in 2002 respectively (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004: 75).

Through referring how family form is changed, we might see macroeconomic impacts on family. Configuration of family in CEECs during the transition period shows macroeconomic policies have negative impacts on family.

Figure 10 demonstrates crude marriage rate per 1000 mid year population in Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria and Czech Republic, the marriage rate has been decreasing by almost one and half, compared to that of the communist era.

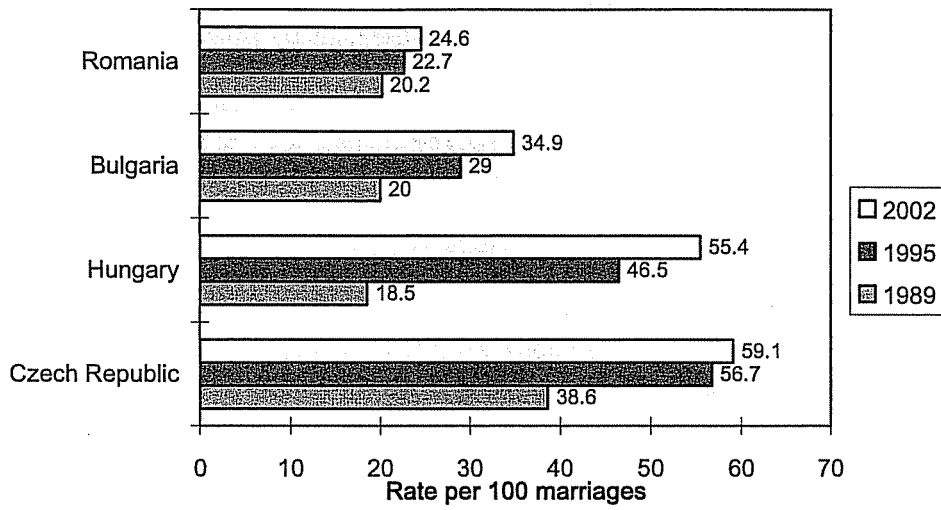
**Figure.10: Crude marriage rate**



*Source: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004:75*

Figure 11 shows a negative trend among family during the transition period in Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. In all of these countries, the divorce rate has been increasing constantly since 1989. Particularly, Czech Republic and Hungary have been facing dramatic increase in the divorce rate.

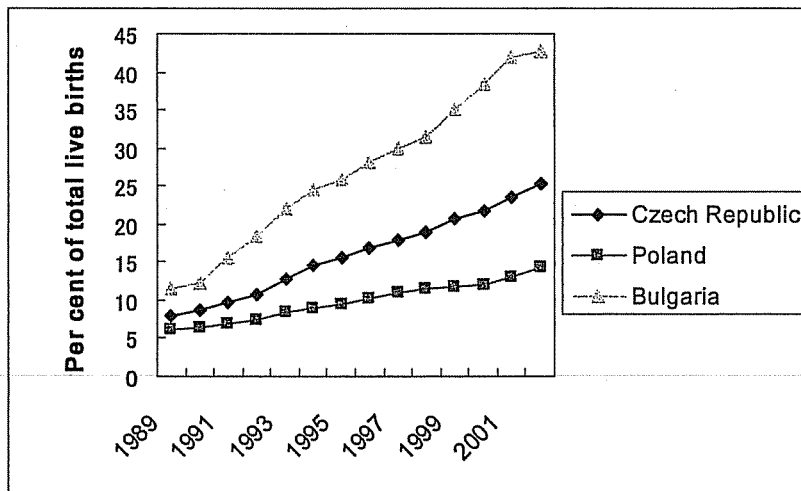
**Figure.11: General divorce rate**



Source: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004: 77

While the marriage rate has decreased and the divorce rate has been grown, many women choose an alternative as being-mothers without marriage. This is clearly described in figure 12.

**Figure.12: Share of non-marital births**



Source: UNICEF Innocenti Centre, 2004: 62



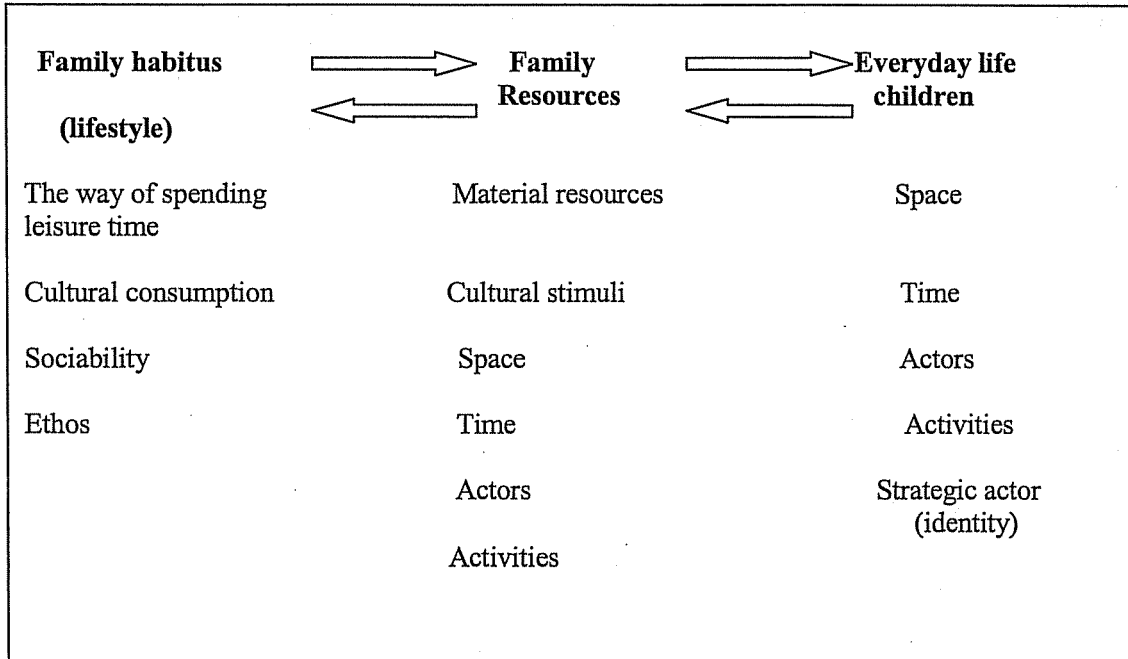
The share of births without marriage in Bulgaria has increased around four times as much as that of the pre-transition period. Another fact, which should be alarmed, is high share of non-marital births to teenager which is visible in all of these three countries, Czech Republic, Poland and Bulgaria. In 2002, the share of teenage births without marriage was respectively 76.8%, 50.1% and 80.4% of total teenage births, which is much higher than that of 1989, 16.6%, 19.3% and 30.7 % (UNICEF Innocenti Centre, 2004: 63). While total teenage births out of total live births has been decreased in the same period.

These indicators show configuration of family become more diverse than the pre-transition period. The report by UNICEF notes this change in family form results from both positive and negative impacts of transition policies. The former is that young women have more opportunities to establish their careers and desire to have different life under more freedom society. The latter is negative consequence on economic situation like unemployment (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2001: 22). However, it does not seem that the reason of the decrease in crude marriage rate would be derived from greater choices for women's future such as high educational level and employment, since women in the communist countries had already had high educational level and opportunities to get jobs as much as women in Western industrialized countries. Meanwhile, the number of female-head household has been increasing since the beginning of the transition. This fact is described not only by the data of share of non-marital births, but also by that of general divorce rate. It is usual for children affected by divorce to separate from their fathers (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 1997: 35). The change in configuration of family makes women's lives harder, that is, they have to earn money for their family, particularly children, while it is hard for them to get jobs and social assistances from the government because of the privatization of production and reproduction.

### **3.2 Impacts of crisis on 'Family Habitus': Focus on family in Bulgaria**

I hypothesize that 'transition' affects not only on externalization of family (referred to configuration of family), but also on internalization of family (referred to family habitus). This section presents how family habitus has changed during the transition period by using Tomanovic's framework (2004).

**Figure 13: The relation between family habitus and children's everyday life**



*Source: Tomanovic, 2004: 355*

This framework demonstrates the relation between family habitus, family resources and children's everyday life (Figure.1). She argues that lifestyle is an externalization of family habitus derived from economic capital (material resources and space), cultural capital (cultural stimuli and activities) and social capital (space, time, actors and activities) (Tomanovic, 2004: 343). Family habitus "defines the allocation, distribution and the use of family resources", as noted in her article (Tomanovic, 2004: 356).

Traditionally, a Bulgarian family was composed of three or four generations, so-called extended family. Bulgarian family is strongly patriarchal system, in which an oldest man has absolute power and respected by every member because of his long living span<sup>9</sup>. This traditional family value and the religion as Eastern Orthodox and Muslim, characterize paternalistic society in Bulgaria (Macek, 1998: 2). In parallel with these traditional values,

<sup>9</sup> Source: <http://www.country-data.com> Access date: 11/02/2004

the communist state had introduced the new family value. Kollontai (1920) who was one of communist feminist defined family as:

*“A union of affection and comradeship, a union of two equal members of communist society, both of them free, both of them independent and both of them workers.”*

*(Kollontai, 1920)*

All countries in CEECs have followed this family theory, equity between women and men within family during the communism. One of the principles in Bulgarian Family Code mentions “equality of husband and wife” (Family Code, Article 3). While the state proclaims equality of men and women (husband and women), Bulgarian traditional masculinist might have still existed during the communist era and the transition period. The fact shows that most working women (wives) do not want to earn money than men (husbands) do (Haas and Wallace, 2004: 10-12). Another unchanged family value is that a woman should be a mother and a housekeeper. Even women under communist state considered that “one can live a full life only if one has a family”<sup>10</sup>. It is not popular for women in Bulgaria to be voluntary childless still now, since in traditional society childless or infertile women were identified as “an evil in the house” (Todorova and Kotzeva, 2003:141).

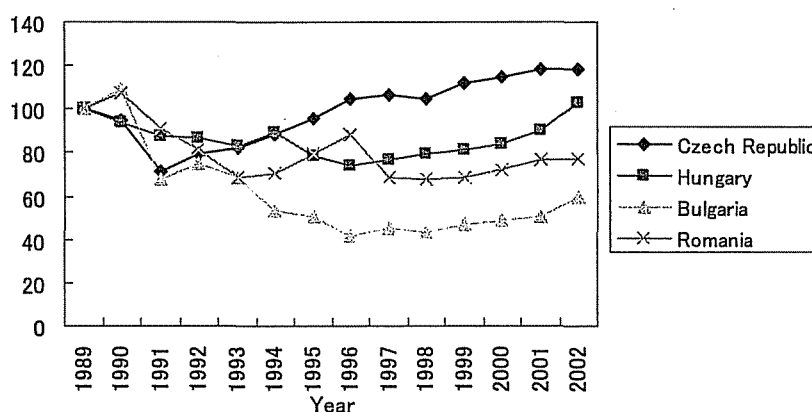
Attitudes towards children in Bulgaria have two incompatible ways: children as “one of the supreme” in family value, which shifted to “the basic value and the main reason for the existence of the family” during the communist era; and children as a part of family, a group with needs to be protected (Todorova, 2000: 42-43). These traditional attitudes towards children might result in unpopularity of fostering or adoption among family at risk of upbringing their children.

Family habitus is interlinked with family resources. Family resources would be damaged due to macro economic policies during the transition period. One of the visible changes is real wages in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria (see figure 14).

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<sup>10</sup> Source: <http://www.country-data.com> Access data:11/02/2004

**Figure.14: Real Wage (index, base year 1989=100)**



Source: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004: 95

This change has big difference between countries. The figure shows that only Czech Republic has constant increase in real wage during the transition period, while Bulgaria and Romania have been facing lower real wage than that of the communist period. The decrease of real wage has led to a decline of household income.

In case of Bulgaria, share of wage and salary of monetary income of the household is 51.4% in 2003. This share is stable during the transition period (National Statistical Institute, 2004<sup>11</sup>). Household income has started depending on social assistance by the government since the collapse of the communist regime. For example, share of unemployment benefits and pensions has been increasing in monetary income of households in Bulgaria between 1995 and 2002 (Figure 15).

**Figure. 15: Share of monetary income of the households by sources (%)**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Unemployment benefits	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.6	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.1
Pensions	20.9	21.6	22.4	23.1	22.3	26.5	28.4	26.3

Source: National Statistical Institute Bulgaria, 2004

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nsi.bg>

Unemployment and decrease of real wage lead to great impacts on family income which decides family resources, for example material resource (food consumption and clothes), free time to spend and space to live. As Haas and Wallace noted, many people in Bulgaria prefer spending time at work to in the family due to lack of finance in household (Haas and Wallace, 2004: 15). As focused on space, lack of family resources would lead to crisis of family habitus. The survey by Household, Work and Flexibility (2003) shows housing conditions in Bulgaria. For example, 80 per cent of a four-member household – as one of the major household structure in Bulgaria- lives in a house that does not have enough rooms for household members (Kovacheva and Pancheva, 2003: 368). Tomanovic points out the negative impact on family with overcrowded housing space such as anxiety and frequent conflicts within families (Tomanovic, 2004: 345). In fact, the number of domestic violence has been increased for the last ten years. For example, a survey by Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF) in 2000 shows that 68 per cent of the respondents are victims of domestic violence (WAVE Network, 2002b<sup>12</sup>). Another survey by Aminus Association Foundation notes 50 per cent of victims of all violence are women and children (WAVE Network, 2002b). Increasing domestic violence could be related to high unemployment rate among men. One of reasons of domestic violence is unemployment husbands' jealousy towards wives who have jobs (The World Bank, 2001b: 268). Considering traditional family value towards children, violence against children would not be prevailed, and actually traditional attitudes to children in Bulgaria is lack of "cruel and purposeful violence" (Todorova, 2000:43). According to The BGRF, the adolescents perceive violence through media, in particular television (WAVE Network, 2002a<sup>13</sup>). Media could be identified as one of cultural stimuli, which is directly related with cultural consumption. People in Bulgaria can freely consume new culture from western countries during the transition period. As a consequence, new family values and ethos are spreading over the Bulgarian society.

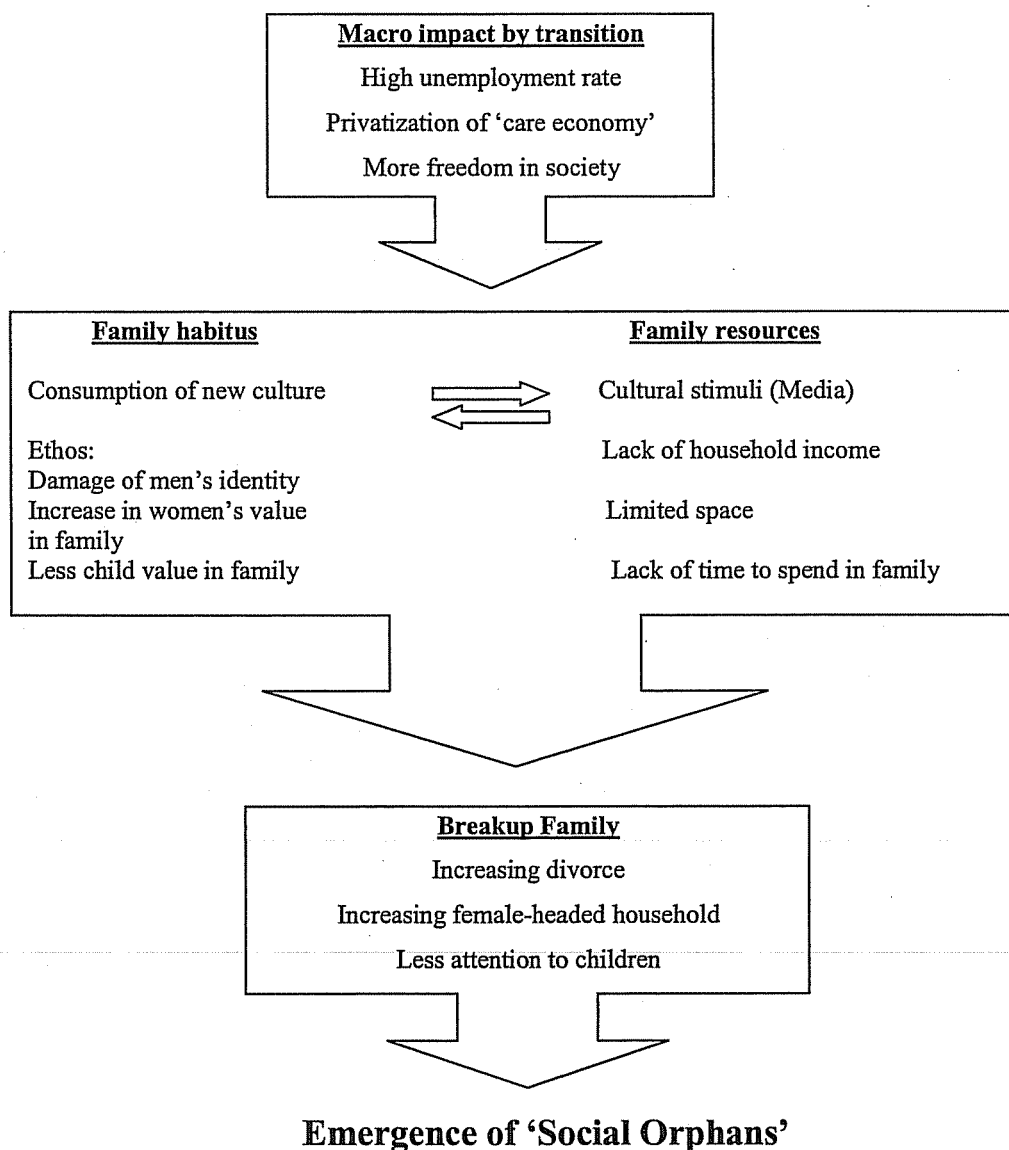
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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.wave-network.org/db/artdetail.asp?ID=837&sektion=res>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.wave-network.org/db/artdetail.asp?ID=780&sektion=res>

Family habitus in Bulgaria has been affected by policies during the communist state and the transition period through family resources. This change in family habitus and family resources is the major reason of the increasing number of ‘social orphans’. I summarize how ‘social orphans’ have been increasing during transition period, following Tomanovic’s framework (Figure.16).

**Figure 16: Summary of background on emergence of ‘social orphans’**



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### Chapter 3. Collective actions to address the needs of 'Social orphans'

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The term collective action refers to actions taken not only by the government, but also by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Non Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and communities. This chapter introduces an overview of collective actions for 'social orphans' in CEECs, followed by a discussion on Bulgaria. Collective actions in this country are supported by The World Bank, the government and 'EveryChild', an INGO from United Kingdom. These interventions have strongly focuses on needs of children in institutional care as well as those at risk of being separated from their parents. This chapter concludes with a discussion on how institutional interests influence the framing of children's needs in ways that may not correspond entirely with children's experience.

#### 1. Overview of collective actions for 'social orphans' in CEECs

Since collapse of the communist regime, many countries in CEECs have tried to restructure their child welfare system by following those of Western ideologies. The first step was to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This has brought about more active actions at both local and central government level. Subsequently, there have been the major areas of improvement of children welfare in every country in CEECs:

- ✦ *Overhauling legislation;*
- ✦ *Creating new types of services and benefits;*
- ✦ *Increasing local-level responsibility;*
- ✦ *Launching pilot initiatives;*
- ✦ *Creating new partnership and models and;*
- ✦ *Stretching the information and knowledge base*

*(UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2001: 112)*

According to UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (2001: 111), this region shares not only improving area of child welfare, but also targeted issue which includes the expansion of the supply of family-based out-of home care options, the improvement of the standards of care in the institutions, and the development of targeted family-support services. Regarding to these targeted issues, actions by NGOs in CEECs could be classified into three major areas as bellowing to address needs of 'social orphans'.

- Improving the quality of institutional care, including providing material goods (clothes, toys, infrastructure etc.), training social workers and staffs working in institutional care, and shifting from large-scaled institutions to small-scaled and 'family-based' ones;
- Promoting alternative care which includes fostering care or adoption and;
- Reintegrating 'social orphans' into their biological families by providing financial support and counseling to their families.

Foster care and adoption have become popular in this region. George and Oudenhoven (2002) define foster care as two orders of care:

- ✦ *First order foster care, referred to the day-to-day responsibility for children and the basic relationship between foster parent and foster child and;*
- ✦ *Second order foster care, referred to social workers and the agencies, other professionals such as doctors and schoolteachers, legal framework for foster care, the courts and other legal bodies, state structures and the social consensus.*

*(George and Oudenhoven, 2002: 16-17)*

George and Oudenhoven (2002) note that former socialist countries, including CEECs do not provide 'second order foster care'. However, they are trying to lay the groundwork for implementing foster care, in which NGOs become key actors.



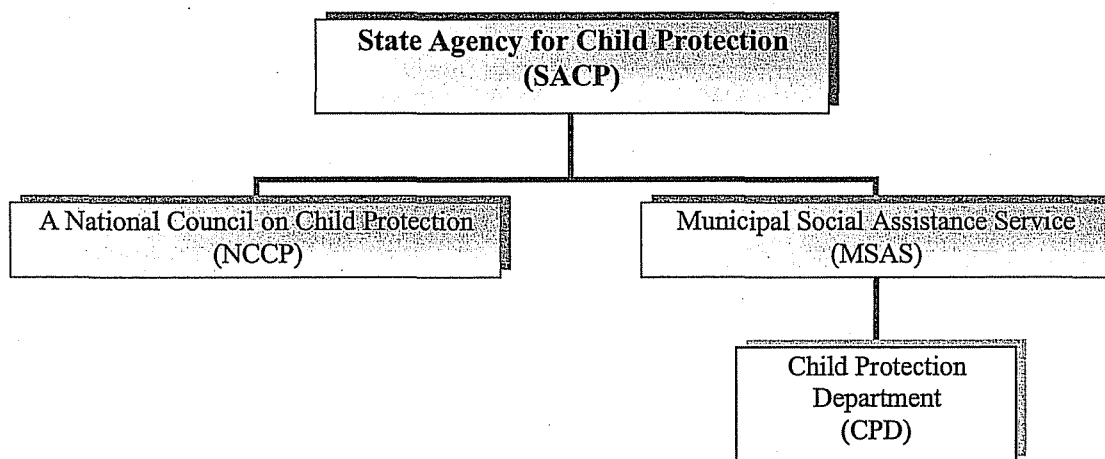
## 2. Collective actions for 'social orphans' in Bulgaria

Bulgaria has tried to reform its old child welfare system in order to improve situation of children including 'social orphans'. Two levels of actions such as administrative reforms and direct supports to 'social orphans' and children at risk will be presented in this part.

### 2.1. Administrative reform on child welfare

Since 2001, a new administrative agency, so-called 'State Agency for Child Protection' (SACP) has been taken into account towards child welfare. The establishment of this new state agency is defined as capacity building, one of four components of 'Child Welfare Reform Project'<sup>14</sup> supported by The World Bank, European Council and United Kingdom technically and financially (The World Bank, 2001a: 1). Followed by this reform, the new legislation, Child Protection Act (CPA), was amended in 2000. This structure of the new child welfare administrative system is illustrated in figure 17.

**Figure 17: The structure of child welfare system in Bulgaria**



*Source: CPA, 2000*

<sup>14</sup> This project has started since 2001 and will be closed until 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2005. The objective of this project is "to improve child welfare and protect child's rights in Bulgaria through promoting community-based child welfare approach" (The World Bank, 2001a: 2/36). Four components are: capacity building; De-institutionalization; Abandonment prevention and protection of children's rights; and street children services (The World Bank, 2001a: 37-41).

CPA composes of three main parts: Rights of a Child; Child Protection Bodies; and child protection measures. Rights of a Child includes rights to protection, protection against violence, rights to freedom of expression, information and consultation, protection of religious beliefs, participation in procedures, and confidentiality of information (CPA, Article.10-16).

SACP is “a specialized body at the Council of Ministers in charge of the governance, coordination and control of child protection activities” (CPA, Article. 17.1). It has eight functions, some of which are organizing and coordinating the implementation of the government policies for child protection; preparing and bringing into effect national and regional programs to ensure child protection by providing the necessary financial resources and allocating them amongst the child protection departments; and encouraging child protection activities of non-profit legal entities (CPA: Article.19).

NCCP is “a consultative body of SACP and is put into practice pursuant to the Child Protection Act and the present regulations” (Regulation of the Action of the National Council on Child Protection, Article.2.1). NCCP has four functions such as implementation of cooperation between state bodies and non-profit legal entities for child protection and suggestions priority points in the state policy on child protection (Regulation of the Action of the National Council on Child Protection, Article.2.2).

MSAS is “a specialized body in charge of conducting child protection policies within the municipality” (CPA, Article.20.1). MSAS has 16 functions, for example implementation of the present practical activities of child protection within the municipality, provision of assistance and support to the parents and families of children in needs, and responsibility for foster care system (CPA, Article 21).

Activities for child protection by these institutions have been funded by the government resources and others<sup>15</sup>. According to the Report by Save the Children Bulgaria (2004), SACP still places financial dependence on the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP). This leads to the weak authority of SACP (Save the Children Bulgaria, 2004: 8). Child Protection system in Bulgaria is considered as complex because of too many actors involved (Commission of the European Communities, 2004: 24). In fact, child protection activities are involved by five ministries<sup>16</sup> and two agencies (SACP and the Social Assistance Agency) at the administrative level. In addition, as showed in Figure 1, there is one department working at the local level, which is directly influenced by the administrative confusion. The discussion focuses on the efficiency of child protection under this complicated structure. The report by Save the Children Bulgaria recommends that child protection should be in charge of “one single, well-resourced” administrative body (Save the Children Bulgaria, 2004: 2).

## **2.2. The government action – “De-institutionalization”**

In 2000, the Bulgarian government set up an action namely “De-institutionalization” for child protection, focusing on children in institutional care and those at risk of being put into institutional care, in accordance with Child Welfare Reform Project by The World Bank. The government argues that children should be brought up in the family environment and this is “the best interest of the child”<sup>17</sup>. This action consists of prevention of children’s institutionalization, reintegration to biological families and foster care. The action needs visible indicators in order for people to see the result, for example, reduction of the number of residential care institutions, 20 percent of reduction of children entering such institutions for three years, and provision alternative child care for 25 percent of children in institutions, since reduction of the number of children in institutional care (The World Bank, 2001a: 86). These aims are one of the main criteria to

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<sup>15</sup> Child Protection Act states the “child protection activities are financed from: 1) the republican budget; 2) the municipal budget; and 3) other sources” (Article 44)

<sup>16</sup> They are Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and MLSP.

<sup>17</sup> This is one of four principles of UNCRC, the rest of which are non-discrimination (Article.2), survival and development (Article. 6), and the right to participate (Article.12).

join EU<sup>18</sup>. However, the report by Save the Children Bulgaria (2004) mentions that the number of children in institutional care reduced slightly during the period 2000-2003, while the government borrowed 7 million US Dollars as a loan from The World Bank and EU for this action. Currently, the government is taking a new action so-called “The National Child Strategy”, which shares similar objectives with the previous action.

Both of these actions are parts of “Child Welfare Reform” project financed by The World Bank and EU. In fact, this project would be finished by 2003. However, it will be continued until 2005 (The World Bank, 2004<sup>19</sup>).

### **3. Actions by INGO, focusing on the project by ‘EveryChild’**

As CPA states that “(The municipal social assistance services) works in cooperation with state bodies and non-for-profit legal entities, whose purpose of activity is child protection”(CPA, Article 20.2), NGOs and INGOs are key actors when the children welfare reform is taken into account. This section provides the collective action by one INGO namely ‘EveryChild<sup>20</sup> in Bulgaria. This INGO is working for child protection, particularly vulnerable children and their families, and children in institutional care. ‘EveryChild Bulgaria’ is the “associated member of the National Council for Child Protection (NCCP)”. This organization has two strategic goals: guarantee for the rights of every child to grow up; and the development of a family or family type environment where the child will be cared for by his/her own community. This INGO has many projects in two areas of child welfare such as providing alternatives to institutional care and primary education<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> See the document of Commission of The European Communities (2003)

<sup>19</sup> World Bank Website: <http://www.worldbank.bg/external/default>, updated November 8, 2004

<sup>20</sup> ‘EveryChild’ is the international non-governmental organization working in 18 countries all over the world, whose headquarter is in London, the United Kingdom. They have started working in Bulgaria since 1992 (EveryChild website).

<sup>21</sup> Introduction paper of EveryChild Bulgaria

I will introduce two projects of this INGO, one of which is called “Children and Families projects” and the other is “Children’s House” based on an interview with Mrs. Rada Treneva, a Public Relation staff in EveryChild Bulgaria.

### **3.1. Description of two projects by ‘EveryChild Bulgaria’**

These two projects had/have been implemented in Plovdiv, the second largest city in Bulgaria. These projects are alternative care for children in large-scaled institutional care and children at risk of being put into the institutional care, which are called “Children and Families projects” and “Children’s house projects”. The first project was organized with some orphanage homes in Plovdiv, one of which is “Rada Kirkovich” where I conducted the research.

#### **a) “Children and Families projects in Plovdiv and Haskovo”**

This project had been implemented by the European Children’s Trust (ECT) during 1998-2002 (Carter, 2002: 5/9). The project was designed according to a practical study to assess services to children in institutional care by ECT. This study has two components. One is “Routes into care, a study of the way in which children entered the state care system in Bulgaria”. The second is “Sent home, a study of what happened to children who were returned home from institutions” (Carter, 2002:8)

Through findings of the study, they proposed three elements of the child care as key elements of all projects for “developing new type of community-based services for vulnerable children and families as alternative of the institutional care”. These three elements are followings:

*Prevention - To support vulnerable families who are at risk of placing their children in institutional care and to provide the necessary support to enable them to stay together; the support provided can be emotional, practical or financial.*

*Reintegration – To identify children who are living in institutional care who may be able with the appropriate help to return home to their family, and then providing that support to ensure that their return home is permanent*

*Foster care – To provide an avenue for children who, for whatever reason, cannot live with their own family*

*(Source: Carter, 2002:9)*

The projects were implemented by a team of social workers in each city. They had contract with the Municipal Office of Social Support (MOSS). They were also trained and supported by a Technical Adviser from the UK (Carter, 2002:10).

Significant outcome of this project is an alternative care for children in institutional care, so-called 'foster care'. The legislation system for 'foster care' just started in September 2004, which is called "Regulation on the terms and procedure for application, recruitment and approval of foster families as well as placement of children with foster families". In this regulation, 'foster care' is defined as:

*"Raising and bringing up of a child in a family environment, who is placed under the terms of the Child Protection Act in a family of two spouses or of a separate individual pursuant to a contract."*

*(Regulation on the terms and procedure for application, recruitment and approval of foster families as well as placement of children with foster families, Article 2)*

According to Mrs. Treneva, 'foster care', which was conducted during the period of this project, is short-time foster care whose length is from one year to two years. She commented that permanent contact with children's biological parents is the most significant point of 'foster care' conducted by this project, which is stated at Article 33 in CPA.

During the visiting time in one state-run institution for children aged 6-18, "Rada Kirkovich", I found out that some of children could visit families temporarily such as only weekend or Christmas Eve night. I asked Mrs. Treneva whether these services were included 'foster care' by the project. Her answer is "No". She explained the difference between 'foster care' defined in this project and the practice of this orphanage. According to her, children can visit a family (which is called 'family friend' by teachers in "Rada Kirkovich"). Because of that, family can directly contact and negotiate with the director of this institution. This kind of service is not legal one. The service in Christmas holiday is part of "Take me Home" campaign, which is held in all areas of Bulgaria. Only on Christmas Eve night people take children from institutions to their home. However, this campaign is difficult to become 'real' adoption or fostering. Actually, 'foster care', which was set forward as a part of this project, had very rigid procedure to be 'foster family'<sup>22</sup>. According to Mrs. Treneva, candidates cannot decide the type of a child such as age, ethnicity and gender. A criterion of selecting children to be provided 'foster care' is whether they have special needs to live in family environment or not. Many children are living in institutional care or at risk of placement of this kind of care. That is why it is important to be clear how a child can participate in the procedure of 'foster care'. Unfortunately, when looking through this new legislation, I hardly saw children's participation.

Another problem is a suitable solution for children who cannot go on their 'foster care' after finishing contract and unwillingness of their foster families to continue contract. Mrs. Treneva told me that they have looked for other new foster families in order for such child to be cared in family environment again. The procedure of becoming foster family is complicated (see footnote 22). Social workers have to maintain contact with foster families regularly and make sure of their intention to continue 'foster care' in order to avoid children's back to institutional care to wait for the next round. However, there is the last solution to return such children to institutional care.

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<sup>22</sup> Mrs. Treneva told me this procedure by using Borisova's definition (2003). Roughly, there are five steps able to become 'foster family' (Borisova, 2003:70-75). It takes from a few months to a year.

As mentioned above, there are still many children living in institutional care and facing risk of placement of institutional care who need seriously to live in family environment. It would take time for all of such children to have 'foster care' service. This means that they and their families are still dependent on institutional care. The following project is another type of alternative care for children living in large-scale institutional care.

#### **b) "Children's House"**

This project has started since 2001 in cooperation with Plovdiv Municipality and Plovdiv Municipal Social Assistance Service. The aim of this project is "to demonstrate a model of new alternative service for children" (small group home of family type). This house helps to temporarily provide individual residential care to children of different risk groups until a long-term community-based solution is found". This house has capacity for 17 children at age from 3 to 12. 14 staffs are in charge of taking care of children for 24 hours. The big difference to large-scale institutional care is that this service brought about "the organization of space and work with children to create family-type care"(EveryChild Bulgaria<sup>23</sup>). Outcomes of this service are summarized as followings:

- *Decreasing the number of children living in the institutions by reintegration in their own family, expanded family, family of adopters or foster family;*
- *Decreasing the number of children living in institutions by preventing the placement of children from high risky families in them;*
- *Creating conditions of family environment, supporting the philosophy of the UN Convention that the children should live in their own family or in family environment.*

*Source: EveryChild Bulgaria*

#### **4. The Effectiveness of collective actions in Bulgaria – Who are their targets?**

First, while children very much require having the daily needs to help them to escape their vulnerable situations. The programs of the World Bank just only targeted at the

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<sup>23</sup>This information is referred from 'Children's House' project of EveryChild Bulgaria. It is available on EveryChild website: <http://www.everychild.org.uk/projects.php?id=24>



macro-levels. This program provided technical advises to establish the national and municipal agency for child welfare by referring the Western models. Objectives of the Bulgarian government program as 'De-institutionalization' that supported by the World Bank emphasize two quantitative indicators. One of them is the number of children entering institutional care. The other is the number of institutional care institutions. Unfortunately, during the program implementation (2000-2003), the rate of children in institutional care has hardly changed (Save the Children Bulgaria, 2004: 6).

Reversely, actions by EveryChild were implemented at micro-level. Their target groups were children, families, social workers, orphanages' staffs and orphanages. They also transferred technical scheme for child welfare system, social workers, and staffs in orphanages and families who had children in orphanages or intend to send their children to there. It is essential to bring people to work or live with children closely and familiar with this new way of child welfare, especially families and staffs in orphanage. During the transition period, they had been familiar with the child welfare that a child entered an orphanage, if his/her family could not afford to take care of him/her. In particular, the concept of 'foster care' is pretty new for people in Bulgaria. It might be hard for them to adapt to this new concept in short time. The evaluation of 'Children and Families' projects shows that total number of implementing foster care was seven in two areas between 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1998 and 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2001 (Carter, 2002: 43). The document of evaluation states that this project is sustainable because trained social workers can train other one (Carter, 2002: 13). One concern that mentioned in the document is financial issue in order to make this project sustainable. Only half of the financial support to this project was from ministries, and another half was supported by donations and humanitarian aids (Carter, 2002:31).Bulgaria is still facing the financial difficulty, and actually "the new Child Protection Departments are under-funded, as are the municipalities as whole – and the institutions themselves are also under-resourced" (Carter, 2002:31). As a result, the government has started to provide a monthly subsidy for 'foster family', around US\$ 60-80, recently (Council of Ministry, 2003<sup>24</sup>). However, it might be hard to prevail 'foster care' among people in Bulgaria, since one survey

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<sup>24</sup> <http://government.bg/English/print/1535.html> , Access date: 08/11/2004

shows that over 50 percent of respondents is not willing to be 'foster family' (Dimova, 2000: 27). Dimova also mentions that almost of all respondents willing to be 'foster family' are identified themselves as rich (Dimova, 2000:27). It means that the government provides financial assistance to the rich rather than the poor. Among 'social orphans', their parents cannot live with them and take care of them because of lack of financial resource even if they are willing to do that. Why does not the government provide social assistance to such families?

Another possible argument of 'foster care' is the frequency of contact with biological families. One of the main factors during 'foster care' is that fostered children should or can keep contact with their biological families. The frequency with contact depends on social worker's decision, as noted by Mrs. Treneva. In case of orphanages, this decision would be depended on directors. If a director of an orphanage had flexible attitude towards families' visits of children, they could contact each other quite often. I presupposed that if a child was fostered once, he/she would become harder to keep in touch with his/her parent(s), compared to during living in orphanages. In terms of the maintenance of familial ties, orphanages could have more flexible attitudes towards them.

Both actions are first indispensable steps to improve the situation of children. Bulgaria is listed in lack of experience of universal child care system according to Western approach. However, I cannot affirm that this universal concept of child care is apt to every 'social orphans' in Bulgaria. How should they respond to children who do not want to live with their parents any more, those whose parents work outside Bulgaria with their parental authority, those who cannot adapt to foster care, those returned to orphanages by foster parents and those who prefer to live in institutional care? It is necessary to know the situation of 'social orphans' for improving child welfare system more. In next chapter, I will describe lives and voices of 'social orphans' by using interviews to them.

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## Chapter 4. Voices from children in institutional care:

### Case studies of children in “Rada Kirkovich”

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This chapter illustrates the experience of ‘social orphans’ based on primary data which I collected in summer 2004. Following Tomanovic (2004: 354), my illustration is based on the perspective that children’s everyday lives are formed by “family habitus and lifestyle as it is externalized in the use of space, the organization of time and cultural tastes”. And ‘family habitus’ has influence on different kinds of capital for/by children, which leads to create different childhood practices (Tomanovic, 2004:356). Tomanovic (2004) defines ‘habitus’ not only as “the reflection of structure” but also as individual identity which we can see “in appearance, speech, behaviour, manners and tastes” (Tomanovic, 2004: 343). In case of ‘social orphans’, many of whom live in institutional care, how are their everyday lives formed? How does ‘habitus’ in institutional care affect on children’s identity and their agency?

I will firstly highlight key features the social condition of children in institutional care in general. Next, I will present the situation of ‘social orphans’ in “Rada Kirkovich” which is one of the state-run and the oldest orphanage in Bulgaria and introduce their voices based on my interviews with children. These voices are supplemented by the views of their teachers and my observation of their lives during summer vacation when I joined them from 7 to 22 August 2004 at Boykovo village where children spent time because of the summer closure of the orphanage.

#### **1. Institutional care for children in CEECs: A material-cultural perspective**

In general, institutional care is considered as an unsuitable environment for children. Much criticism has been directed at ‘orphanages’ by children specialists. Ford and Kroll (1995) argue that:

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*“Long-term institutionalization in childhood leads to recurrent problems in interpersonal relationship, a higher rate of personality disorders, and severe parenting difficulties late in life.”*  
(McKenzie, 1999: 103 cited from Ford and Kroll, 1995:05)

Almost these critics, in particular those expressed by psychologists, conclude that children should grow up in family environment. And they, as Goodwin points out, might agree with this phrase: “The worse mother is better than the best institution” (McCall, 1999: 130 quoted from Goodwin, 1994:416).

The main reason behind this negative view on institutional care is the low quality. Sipos (1991) stated that problems of conditions in institutional care in Hungary would refer to those of all countries in CEE. These are followings:

- # *The condition of the buildings and the quality of equipment are at a very low level;*
- # *Professional qualifications are rather low and staff often have the wrong personality to deal with children;*
- # *In most institutions, very aggressive, authoritarian educational attitudes prevail, often with very harsh physical penalties;*
- # *Institutionalized children live in a subordinate position. They are a part of a special population rather than individual;*
- # *Juvenile delinquency is very high among institutionalized children;*
- # *Children reared by the state have to leave their institutions when they are 16 years old for an unknown world, without any preparation, supervision or advice; and*
- # *There is an increasing aversion towards the institutionalized children by the outside world*

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*(Sipos, 1991:23 cited from Ranschburg, 1990: 5-6)*

While there are many critics against institutional care, some people insist that institutional care do not always have impact on children negatively. Burr and Montgomery for example, mention that children do create and maintain “familial ties

among their peers and with staff who care for them” (Burr and Montgomery, 2003: 65).

They continue to note that:

*“[I]t is not unusual to find older children caring for those who are younger than them and for such close relationship to be formed that children would rather stay put than, for example, go into foster care.”* (Burr and Montgomery, 2003: 65)

These comments points to how children can network in institutional care. Children in institutional care are closed to caregivers and their peers, and the relationship with these two groups plays a very important role to determine whether children can be affected positively or not.

In case of institutional care in CEE, lack of resources leads to insufficient quality of care, especially quality of caregivers. Caregivers, including a director of each orphanage home, have great impact on lifestyle of orphanage homes, for example, “authoritarian educational attitudes” or “very harsh physical penalties” which are listed above (Sipos, 1991:23, Ranschburg, 1990: 5-6). These roles in institutional care make children’s everyday lives restrict, which causes children’s “subordinate position”. Ranschurg (1990) described this “subordinate position” in terms of their future: “typically the child’s goals, including for later employment, are determined by the institution” (Himes, Kessler and Landers, 1991: 18). However, caregivers might pay little attention to education for children’s lives after leaving orphanage homes. Children don not have “any preparation, supervision and advice” for living outside orphanage homes. Considering these points, supposedly, it is difficult for children in institutional care to have networks outside their orphanage homes. As a result, people in “outside world” tend to have wrong image to such children, and it leads to “an increasing aversion towards the institutionalized children”.

To sum up, as in the case of family habitus, the habitus in institutional care is constructed by a complex interaction between norms regulating orphanage and the practices of caregivers that may be structured by their concern for the children and the quality of care,

and how they allocate their budget to different activities. This directly has impact on children's social space, whether they can form and spread their networks and how they organize their time, including free time.

## **2. 'Social orphans' in 'Rada Kirkovich' in Plovdiv, Bulgaria**

### **2.1 'Rada Kirkovich'**

This orphanage provides living space and education for about 80 - 90 children who are aged from 6 to 18. They hold the summer camp in a village for children unable to go back to home every summer when this orphanage is closed. I have been in the village to join their summer camp three times including 2004. An average of 30 children has joined this summer camp every summer. Teachers noted that other children went back to stay their families or relatives. In summer 2004, there were 27 children spending summer vacation in the camp. I joined this summer camp to collect primary data, based on semi-structured interviews with children and teachers in "Rada Kirkovich" and participatory observation of their lives. In total, I conducted interviews with 14 children, of whose 10 are boys and 4 are girls, and 2 teachers, one of who is a sport teacher and the other is a social worker.

### **2.2. Profile of the children: Age, Gender, Ethnicity and family background**

When we focus on their society in terms of gender, we can see big difference in number of boys and girls, respectively 20 boys and 7 girls. In the previous year when I researched them, in 2003, there were also more boys than girls, 21 boys and 8 girls. I make the chart below to clarify their backgrounds clear by gender and ethnicity.

**Figure. 18: Gender and Ethnicity background**

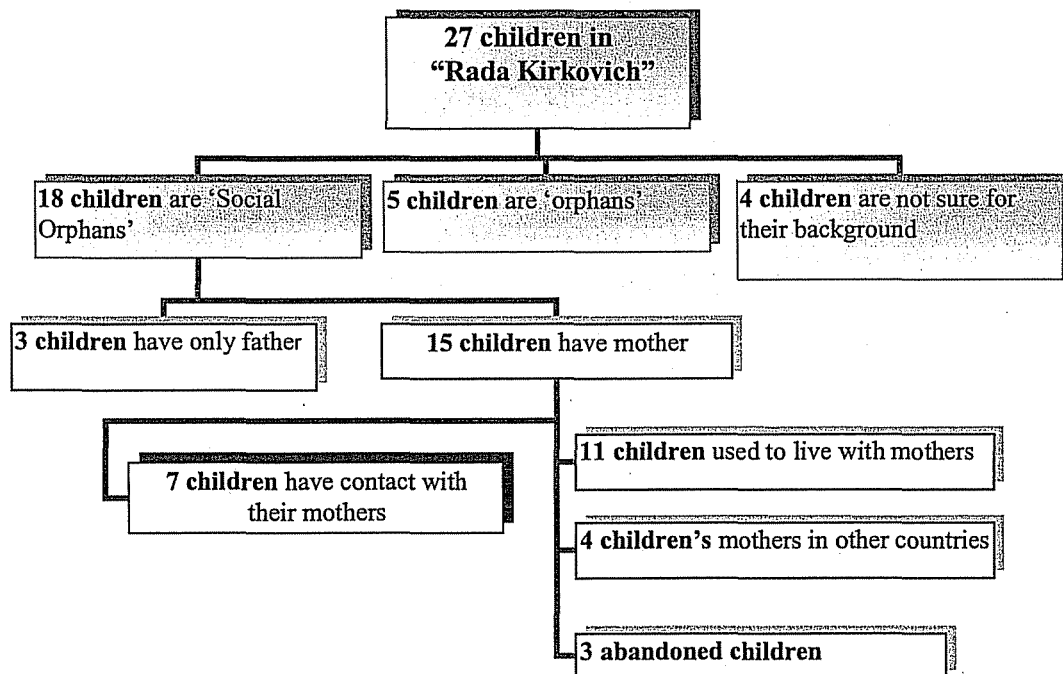
	<b>Bulgarian</b>	<b>Roma/Others</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Boys</b>	7 boys	13 boys	20 boys
<b>Girls</b>	5 girls	2 girls	7 girls
<b>Total</b>	12 children	15 children	<b>27children</b>

I classified ethnicity, based on their appearance (color of skin and their eyes), their answers of interviews and interviews to a social worker in this orphanage home. "Others" include children who have one Bulgarian parent. Almost interviewed children who look like Roma ethnic considered themselves as Bulgarian because they cannot speak Romani language.

In this summer camp, average age among them is 13-year-old. The oldest child is 17-years-old, and the youngest ones are 6-years-old.

Of the total number of children in "Rada Kirkovich" is around 80 to 90 children, more than half of them can go back and stay with their families or relatives during summer vacation. This practice suggests that they are 'social orphans'. Of the 27 children in this summer camp most are 'orphans' as well, according to my interviews with 14 children and two teachers. The following classification by family background illustrates this point.

**Figure. 19: Family background**



As we can see, more than half of them are 'social orphans', 18 out of 27 children. Only three children of the 18 'social orphans' do not have their mothers because of death or separation soon after childbirth. Two of these three children know their fathers, but both of their fathers re-married and have their new families. The majority of 'social orphans', 15 children, in this orphanage have their own mothers. Eleven children of 'social orphans' used to live with their mothers, and among them, seven children still have contact with their mothers. The way of contact is by phone, or visits by their mothers to the orphanage home or their visiting to their mothers' place of residence.

Of the four children whose mothers are living in abroad, three stated that their mothers are working in 'domestic services', which include baby-sitting, and housecleaning or dishwashers in restaurants or agricultural work. The countries where their mothers work are within Europe - Spain, Greece and Austria. One child stated that his mother has another nationality, and she has left Bulgaria to live in her native country.

### **2.3. The lives of 'social orphans' in 'Rada Kirkovich'**

This orphanage is located in Plovdiv, the second largest city in Bulgaria. It is the state-run with additional support from the government of the municipality. The orphanage is closed during the summer vacation. Children in this orphanage have their own beds and space to keep their belongings. Four children share one room and eight children share one big bathroom. This orphanage provides two types of education, depending on children's learning ability. Children with problem on learning ability go to a boarding school on weekdays. They only come to the orphanage on weekends.

Financially, this orphanage has suffered budget cut during the transition period. The teacher pointed out that there was the difference between the financial support for a summer camp under the communist state and that of the transition. They could get financial support enough to hold summer camps in a mountain area and a sea side area within two months during summer vacation. However, after the collapse of communism, this financial assistance has been reduced so that a summer camp is held only in a mountain area. And in 2001 and in 2002 they held summer camps organized with a



Bulgarian NGO in which many volunteers, including those from foreign countries, took part. However, this type of summer camp has also been canceled due to finance.

Children are taken care of by teachers, a social worker, cooking staffs, cleaning staffs and nurses. Some children have special mental and/or physical problems, and almost of them take pills everyday and are consulted by a psychologist about twice a month. This orphanage seems to encourage children to participate in activities held outside the orphanage, such as a sports competition and cultural festivals including a chorus contest. And they allow some children aged over 14 to have part-time jobs, and in fact, children are willing to work in order to make money for going to an internet café to play a computer game or for buying his/her own mobile phone.

Children have a good relationship with staffs and other children. And they have an opportunity to meet people from outside the orphanage, for example sons or daughters of staffs, a family who wants to host children and voluntary visitors like myself.

Although resources of this orphanage are very limited, they provide children much social space to move and much time organized by themselves. These flexible attitudes of this orphanage lead to enhance children's self-independence and their sociability. However, these attitudes also lead to children's extreme practice such as smoking. Almost half of children joining the summer camp in 2004 were smokers, one of who started to smoke when he was 10-year-old. The smoking habit is related to their psychological conditions. All children have suffered more or less mental anguish so that they need therapy for easing their unbalance. In particular, children with serious mentally and/or physically problems need to have therapy rather than to take pills everyday.

### **3. Narratives of children**

As we can see, 'social orphans' are the majority of children living in 'Rada Kirkovich'. Based on the information gathered, three types of 'social orphans' defined in terms of their relationship with their family and kin are identified:

- 
- Children who maintain contact with their biological family or relatives;
  - Children who don't have a desire to meet their family (especially mothers);
  - Children who have found 'surrogate family', called 'friend family' by a teacher in this orphanage home.

'Surrogate family (friend family)' is different from 'foster family' which I mentioned in the previous chapter. 'Surrogate family (friend family)' has not been found by official institutions such as NGO and the municipal social service. They negotiate directly with a director of the orphanage to be 'surrogate family (friend family)' of some children. This family invites children to their home and spends together on weekend, in summer vacation and/or Christmas holiday. The frequency and length of their hosting are dependent on the situation of the family.

The followings are stories of four children which are based on interviews with them and a social worker in this orphanage.

### **Voice 1: Anton's story**

Anton, 16-year-old boy, has been living in 'Rada Kirkovich' for half of his life. Before coming to this home, he had lived in another orphanage in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, where he was born. Before that, he had lived with his mother once for a short time. However, she refused to continue to take care of him after that. Now he has no contact with his mother any more.

He has quite good psychological well-beings: high self-confidence; positive self-identity; and affinity with others. His high self-confidence and positive self-identity might be derived from his prominent talent for singing and hair-styling which are admired not only by his friends in the orphanage but also by people in society. Actually, the reason why he moved to this home from Sofia is that a famous singer had tried to establish a chorus group in 'Rada Kirkovich' and she wanted him to be a member of this chorus group as a solo singer. This chorus group remains active and had won the first prize in many contests. And now he works as a singer in a restaurant on weekends, goes to a hair salon

to learn hair-styling a few days a week and sometimes works as an assistant in a show with his master. The public confirmation may result in positive impact on the process in building his confidence, which might have helped the erosion of feeling of discrimination on the basis of his self-identity as a 'social orphan'. When asked: "Do you feel any difference between you and your friends living with their own families?" he replied,

*"I don't feel any difference. I'm satisfied with my life now. I have different experience from other people, and it is useful for me to be a good singer."*

Although his appearance bears the features of a Roma and in fact his mother is Roma as noted by a social worker, he asserts his identity as Bulgarian based on his linguistic capacity:

*"I can speak only Bulgarian, that's why I'm a Bulgarian."*

His self-identity as a Bulgarian might arise not only from his linguistic capacity but also non-ethnic discrimination within children and staffs in this orphanage home. Although he has good relationship with children and staffs in the orphanage, his affinity with his mother has already faded away.

*"I don't want to meet my mother because I don't like her so much, and she has her own life now.... I don't want to disturb that."*

As we can imagine, this positive psychological wellbeing leads to give him clear objectives and future plan. And he believes his capability to help others who are under similar condition as he has.

*"I want to be a pop singer. And after I success as a singer and can make enough money, I want to have my own hair salon."*

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*“My desire is that I want to help children who are in orphanages like us and poor people.”*

When Anton has developed his identity and sociability through his singing and hair styling talent, the support by the orphanage home plays a very important role. They give him opportunities to find out his capability of singing and hair styling through allowing him to organize his free time and to spend in much space outside the orphanage. In fact, his free time is occupied by singing and learning hairstyling. And they provide him the good environment to live in this home without discrimination based on ethnic.

His story reveals the diverse reality among children in institutional care. He is different from a child whom many people imagine as those growing up in an orphanage home. However, he also shows his mental anguish by smoking, which he now eager to give up.

### **Voice 2 and 3: Varvara’s story and Snejanka’s story**

Varvara, 15-year-old girl, has started to live in this orphanage since last December. Her father is from Greece and her mother is Bulgarian. When she was a baby she had lived with her father in Greece. However, after her parents got divorced, she hasn’t had any contact with her father. Her mother is now working in Greece as a baby-sitter because she couldn’t find a job in Bulgaria. Although she had lived with her uncle who is her mother’s brother in her mother’s parents’ house for a while, he was not able to take care of her. The social worker mentioned that she sometimes lived on the street and that one day a police protected her when she was on the street.

Snejanka, 9-year-old girl, have been living in this orphanage for two years. She described her family as consisting of her mother, father, one big brother, one little brother and grandmother. However, it becomes apparent in our conversation that her mother and grandmother with whom she had lived are the main care taker. It seems that her mother gave birth outside of marriage, because each of the children has different fathers. Snejanka could meet her father sometimes when he visited her home to borrow money from her mother. Her mother doesn’t have job, and had to take care of Snejanka and the

grandmother who was ill. The reason Snejanka came to the orphanage was that her mother was no longer able to take care of her. On the other hands, Snejanka has another reason for coming to the orphanage, which is the protection from abuse by her mother. According to some volunteers in this orphanage home who had access the documents of the children's background, Snejanka had been occasionally abused by her mother, who was also abused by her own mother, and Snejanka's mother was also ill both physically and mentally. This view was confirmed by the social worker who added that Snejanka had lived with her uncle as well, and this man was not good person for a child.

These two girls share a similar social background notably being from female-headed family within insufficient resources to continue to take care of them. They have one thing in common that is one of psychological well-being, affinity with their mothers. Both of these children maintain regular contact with their mothers.

*"My mother makes a phone call to me so often."* Varvara

*"My mother visits this home to see me this home almost everyday."* Snejanka

And they seem to be proud of their mothers. Both of them introduced their mothers to me very happily. And they always look forward to her mother's visiting or phone call. During the summer camp, Varvara worked at a café in the village because she wanted to earn money to buy a mobile phone which enables her to contact with her mother more often.

However, there is a big difference between them in terms of not only material well-being (particularly health) but also psychological well-being and psycho-social well-being. In terms of health Varvara has mental problem and must take pills to control her anxiety almost everyday. Another way of easing herself is smoking. As focus on psychological and psycho-social well-being, this difference becomes much clearer. While Varvara has a negative attitude toward herself, education, friends and future plan, Snejanka has a more positive attitude.

*"I don't like myself so much. I want to be much cleverer. And I want to have luckiness. Luckiness means whether there are good people surrounding me or not. Until now I was sometimes lucky...I don't know who are good person or not."*

Varvara

*"My second desire is to have good friends, a nice boyfriend and nice family."*

Varvara

*"I like to go to school. I have nice friends there and I like to study...any subjects!"*

Snejanka

Varvara's low self-esteem might result from unsuitable relationship with her uncle. She told me that she had intercourse with her uncle. She didn't mention that he forced her to have such relationship with him, while we could take it into consideration that she was abused sexually by her uncle through her definition of 'luckiness'. She used this term 'luckiness' to explain whether she can meet good people or not, and she mentioned she sometimes met good people. Her comment could be read as implying that there were more bad people than good one in her life. She seems to lose her self-confidence of relationship with others. Her mental condition is very unbalance, which was noted by both teachers with whom I interviewed. According to the social worker, children such as Varvara are consulted by a psychologist about twice a month and they take pills everyday for easing themselves. However, this kind of treatment is not enough for children who have mentally problems. They need much time to be counseled and mend their wound through therapy such as drawing and singing. This orphanage needs to improve the way to handle such children.

Snejanka's comments doesn't show any sign of abuse by her mother or her uncle. And she doesn't have mental and physical problems, noted by teachers.

Both of girls told me their desires as followings:

*"I want to live with my mother in Plovdiv because I really love her. I want much enough money for our living."*

Varvara

*"I want to live with my mother and grandmother again. And I want my grandma to be healthy."*

Snejanka

#### **Voice 4: Ekaterina's story**

Ekaterina, 15-year-old girl, lives in this orphanage with her big sister whose name is Evangelina. She also moved from the same orphanage in Sofia where Assen lived. She has two brothers and one little sister as well. According to her, her mother is living in Sofia with her little sister now, and her father is in one city near the Black Sea. These two sisters had lives in different orphanage homes in Sofia. Evangelina was abandoned on the street, and Ekaterina was protected by a policeman when she was begging in front of a church.

Ekaterina shows positive psychological well-being except sense of affinity with her own parents. She doesn't have contact with their parents any more. And she commented about her own family as the following;

*"I respect my parents, but I never want to live together. I had very terrible experience with them."*

Her terrible experience might be considered as physical abuse by her mother, as noted by the social worker. However, she seems to have good relationship with other children in the orphanage. She is liked by everyone in this orphanage home. She seems to be a leader of children's society in this orphanage home. And she has high self-confidence and clear objectives for her future as Anton does.

*"I want to be a doctor because I become very sad when I see many people suffering from disease. I want to help such people. So if possible, I want to go to a medical school."*

And she said that she wanted to get married with one man and to have her own child in her future. She could not have these positive well-beings without her older sister and one

family where she and her sister visit so often, which is called 'friend family' by the teacher in this orphanage. In fact, they left this summer camp because their 'friend family' invited them to stay together for a few weeks. Her comment shows the good relationship with them.

*"My best friend is Evangelina, my sister, and one family where we visit often. This family is very nice. I and my sister can talk anything, even our worry, frankly with them."*

She said that she was satisfied with her life now. And she is a typical teenager girl, for example she likes to make up and fall in love with a boy. She commented;

*"I like to walk in the forests, watch movies, dance and sing songs. When I do these things, I feel very happy, but how much happy I am depends on my love situation."*

Although she seemed to enjoy her school life during interview, she has complained to the social worker about teachers' attitude toward her in school.

She had terrible experience with her mother and even now she has uncomfortable experience sometimes. However, she seems to have overcome her terrible experience, to have capacity to think of others who need help, which are implied in her comments on three desires;

*"...the second desire is that everyone becomes healthy, and the third one is to decrease the number of children like us."*

#### **4. Voices from 'social orphans' : Diversity and commonality**

'Social orphans' in "Rada Kirkovich" have diverse ethnic and family backgrounds. This section provides the summary of the finding of primary data consisted of interviews with children and teachers and participatory observation. I'll describe commonalities and differences among children and then, discuss them in relations to the practices in the orphanage and of family relations.



One big commonality can be seen in their psychological well-being. One is their affinity with other children and staffs in the orphanage. All of children think that they have good relationship within this orphanage. As Burr and Montgomery (2003) noted, I could see “familial ties among their peers and with staff” in their society (Burr and Montgomery, 2003: 65). Older children often take care of younger peers and some children are willing to help staffs’ work such as washing clothes and dishes and cleaning. And almost interviewed children answered they had their best friends in the orphanage. The other is their self-identity. They seem to consider themselves as more confident than others, including me, expected. As asked to interview with, they were willing to be interviewed, with a comment like the followings:

*“I’ll be very proud that my name and comments are in Yuki’s paper!”*

I had not expected such response from children before I conducted the interviews with them because I supposed that many children didn’t want to tell their story, especially the reason why they live in the orphanage. However, they didn’t hesitate to tell others their background and thinking. This attitude might show they have self-confidence more or less.

Another commonality is psycho-social well-being in terms of prospect for future, especially their future family planning. All of interviewed children want to get married with someone and to have their own children in their future. This finding is contrary to the finding in The World Bank report showing that children in institutional care tend to see negative prospect for their future family planning<sup>25</sup>.

Children in this orphanage show the difference of their affinity with family. Half of them want to meet and/or live with their parents again, and the other does not wish to even meet their family. This difference may rely on the regular contact with their family. All children who want to live with their family again still have contact with their family even if he/she has never lived with their family before. It does not seem that affinity with their family is connected with children’s experience to live with their families. Some children

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Social assessment of child care’ within Report on Child Welfare Reform in Bulgaria shows that 17 percent of interviewed children consider creation of their family important and 5 percent of them want to have their own children (the World Bank, 200a1: 99).

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who have lived with their families (in most case, with mothers) never expect to live with their families again and they do not want to contact with their families any more.

Children and their families who want to maintain their ties need a flexible attitude of the orphanage towards visiting people from outside the orphanage home. As I have mentioned already, this orphanage is open to everyone who wants to contact with children, not only biological family but also candidates of 'surrogate family'. Through showing family ties outside and inside the orphanage, children can keep sense of family ties and this might lead to their positive prospect for their future family planning.

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## Chapter 5. Conclusion

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This final chapter describes the summary of findings based on my three research questions and provides some recommendations to improve situations of 'social orphans' in Bulgaria.

First, the phenomenon of 'social orphans' in institutional care and its increase in numbers are derived from a combination social change in three dimensions: traditional value towards children, which makes family (parents) unfamiliar with fostering or adoption to another family; communism socialized child care system, which provided family a new type of upbringing; and transition in family, which can be seen in terms of externalization (configuration of family) and internalization (family habitus). Traditional ideology in Bulgaria was strongly masculinist: men should work to earn money for their families, and women should work inside the house. A child was supreme value and one of their properties. During the communism era, child value in the family has become less important due to "the closed structure of society and the absence of significant personal perspectives" (Todorova, 2000: 42-43). The introduction of the new gender ideology under communism advocating equality between men and women has protected women's position in the labor market through the socialization of reproductive works, such as sufficient maternity leave and child care system at the work place. However, this form of gender equality remains incomplete, since women continued to face restricted choice of jobs and unequal wage as compared to men. Privatization during transition had negative impact on the labor market for men and women. For women, however, transition means that almost reproductive work has been privatized as well as productive work, and it forces women to "return to home" (Kotzeva, 1999: 88). Their identity as mothers and domestic care providers have become more emphasized. Whereas men's identity as breadwinners has not changed, the family habitus and family resources have followed the dramatic institutional changes since the transition era. This has led to much frustration and/or loss confidence among unemployed men during transition. Many women might have chosen to opt out of marriage as reflected in the rising divorce rate and rate of birth

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outside marriage. Changing family habitus could result in collapse of configuration of family.

Secondly, collective actions introduced in this paper are not child-centered, but bureaucratic-centered or society-centered. Action by the State that aims at changing and improving child welfare system with the support by of the World Bank covers areas such as legislation (the introduction of the new domestic child protection law) and bureaucracy (establishment a department for child welfare). Actions by NGO, particular by EveryChild, are more directed at the micro-level to lend direct support to 'social orphans' and children at risk of being 'social orphans'. Measures have included supporting vulnerable families ("prevention"), reintegrating children in institutional care to their own family ("reintegration") and prevailing "foster care" (Carter, 2002: 9). Among them, 'foster care' might be considered as one of effective solutions for 'social orphans', since the new legislation for 'foster care' was established and adapted, and the government would have started to subsidize 'foster family'. It appears that the main goal of actions for 'social orphans' is the reduction of the number of infants home or orphanages and children living in such institutional care. This approach leads to a generalization over 'social orphans' as a category based on the assumption that all of 'social orphans' have lost their tie with their families, lack of affinity with others, and wish to live with their families again.

Thirdly, the findings of this study on 'social orphans' in "Rada Kirkovich" are diverse. Each of the children interviewed has his/her own voice. Some children do not wish to live with, or even meet, their family. Other children want to maintain tie with their families even when they are living in the orphanage. Many children consider their relations within orphanages as good and precious. Some children have already developed their own vision and strategy to improve their situation. They are able to create 'new' familial ties in the orphanage, which help them keep their affinity with others and gain new perspectives for their future. All children interviewed wish to have their own families in their future, and many are actively trying to find relations with society outside the orphanage. They have a quite broad capacity to accept other people, even foreigners. These findings suggest that

actors engaged with social orphans need to reflect on the issue of marginalization and discrimination. It is often claimed that children in institutional care are marginalized by society outside the orphanages, and after leaving orphanages they would feel lonely. Who is accountable for marginalizing them and bringing them solitude in society? Seeds of are more likely found in society rather than in the orphanage as reflected in the voice of an 17-year-old boy:

*"I think I have good relationship within this home. But sometimes I feel difficult to have good relationship with people from outside."* Aleksandar, 17-year-old boy

Fourth, in applying the concept of 'social orphans' as defined by UNICEF, this study finds that the current definition is rather restricted. Whereas, the term 'neglectful parenting' is used to assign a characteristic to social orphans, in practice many social orphans report that their mothers are working abroad to earn money to support them. Rather than "neglectful parenting", children have reported that their mothers are trying to keep contact with them by telephoning or sending some presents to them so often. These mothers cannot take care of their children by living together under the same roof, due to the lack of employment opportunities in Bulgaria- a problem with structural causes rather than causes inherent in individual personality that leads to neglectful parenting. Even if these mothers do not work outside Bulgaria, they cannot take care of their children because of insufficient family resources, in particular, financial resource. In this regard, the concept of 'social orphans' should be redefined to take into account the reality of out-migration of mothers and mothers in poor family, who struggle to fulfill their parenting role the best way they could. With a definition that can address the diverse reality of 'social orphans', we may hope that solutions to this problem can be made more sensitive to particular needs of children.

Fifth, currently the drive towards establishing foster care needs to be analyzed more systematically. A key issue is the process of selecting children for 'foster care'. The criteria of choosing children who need to live in family environment or a 'foster family' remains vague. Furthermore, these seem to be no options for children who cannot continue to live with his/her 'foster family'. As the 'foster care' program has already

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become one of child welfare system of the government, it should be monitored carefully to ensure that children that fall out of the foster care programs do have options in the future.

Last, but not least, even if the research was conducted in only one among many other orphanages in Bulgaria, the backgrounds and psychological and psycho-social well-beings of 'social orphan' are diverse. However, in reality such things of 'social orphans' seem to have been generalized by some external aid interventions and the government programs with a name as "child protection" because of many different reasons. Therefore, the policy-makers as well as people who are involving in such interventions should be aware of such diversity in order to design suitable programs to meet the needs of every 'social orphan'. More crucially, the voices of children in general, 'social orphans' particularly must be taken into not the process of policy-making, but also daily activities, behaviors and attitudes of every society member.

As mentioned in the chapter 1, much more children with Roma minority are generally living in institutional care than those from another ethnicity. The study met a difficulty to focus on analyzing the phenomenon of ethnic minority 'social orphans' because the data of SACP is not available. Because of that, one of the important points in my further research will be focused on ethnic minority 'social orphans' in institutional care, in accordance with gender realm.

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**Annex A: Questions of interviews with children, by three dimensions: material; psychological and; psycho-social well-being**

<p><b>Material well-being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># nutrition</li> <li># Health</li> <li># Infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># Observation of menu</li> <li># If you have the magic lump and God in this lump can make THREE wishes for you, what are you three wishes?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Psychological well-being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># Self-identity as being 'social orphan'</li> <li># Self-confidence</li> <li># Sense of affinity with other children, staffs and parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># Tell me you birthday</li> <li># What is your ethnicity? / Do you think what ethnicity you belong to?</li> <li># Where is your family now?</li> <li># (If they know where their families now) how often can you contact with your family and how?</li> <li># Since when have you started to live in this home and why? ('this home' means "Rada Kirkovich")</li> <li># Before coming here, where did you live and with whom?</li> <li># What do you like to do? / What are you good at doing?</li> <li># When doing what you like, how do you feel?</li> <li># Do you like yourself? What point do you want to improve?</li> <li># Do you have best friend(s)? If you have, where does he/she live? In this home or outside?</li> <li># Do you feel any difference between</li> </ul>

	<p>you and your friends living with their own families?</p> <p># If you have the magic lump and God in this lump can make THREE wishes for you, what are you three wishes?</p>
<p><b>Psycho-social well-being</b></p> <p># Consumption</p> <p># Education</p> <p># Prospect for future</p>	<p># Do you like to go to the school? Why?</p> <p># What subject(s) do you like? Why?</p> <p># Until when do you want to continue education?</p> <p># Do you like your teachers in your school?</p> <p># What do you want to be in your future? Why?</p> <p># Do you want to live with your family again? If not, why?</p> <p># Do you want to get married with a man/woman and to have your own child in your future?</p> <p># If you have the magic lump and God in this lump can make THREE wishes for you, what are you three wishes?</p>

### **Annex B: Questions of interviews with teachers**

- # How old are you?
- # How long do you work in this orphanage?
- # What kind of work do you do in this orphanage?
- # How often do you work?
- # Do you know all children's name and their background?
- # Do you have any special attention to children while working with them? If you have, what?
- # Do you feel any differences between children growing up within their own families and children living in this orphanage? If you have, what is the difference?
- # Do you think that what is important for them?

