AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY

Bulgaria and the World at the Dawn of 2017
Report of an OPUS Listening Post®
held in Sofia on 15 January 2017

PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES

In this part, the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experiences in their various social roles, be they: in work, unemployed or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, voluntary or leisure organisations; or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives': the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part 2, the aim collectively was to identify the major themes emerging from Part 1.

1. Participants associated with and identified several social roles providing an important experience

- Of a resource teacher evaluating pupils' needs – facing opposition and mistrust from fellow colleagues when conducting the tests
- Of a job leaver feeling anxious when becoming a job seeker
- Of a university student in clinical discipline – complaining about the unfair distribution of clients from instructors amongst students
- Of a therapist – missing a supportive professional environment, enabling confidence when making first steps and allowing for mistakes and successful learning from the experience
- Of a parent – worried by the rigidity and harshness in elementary schools
- Of a son of a mother who works in a large state scientific research institution in constant struggle for funding yet being unable to make some successful steps towards organizational transformation
- Of a social worker in a crisis center – experiencing isolation and lack of connection and interest amongst his professional environment from global worries such as Brexit, Donald Trump's presidency etc. Now he works as social worker in a refugees' center, and feels much more comfortable because of the space available for activities.
- Of a community dweller – feeling helpless before the unwillingness of local administration to remove abandoned cars from the streets allowing more parking space

- Of someone who decided to leave social networks in favor of face to face meeting with friends. Resisting the 'virtual'.
- Of an entrepreneur making her first autonomous steps wishing 'to leave the role of a trainee'
- Of a parent of a pupil – supportive to her child's schoolmaster who fall under public attacks recently following a malevolent leak of his personal photographs on the school's website

2.   Themes identified

- Abuse of human rights, power abuse
- Professional community / supportive community
- Virtual versus real – does an experience exists outside the social networks of sharing and publicising. Vanity versus modesty.
- Helplessness, and kind of expectancy for some kind of cathartic catastrophe to happen
- Pseudo-changes occur in some important public policy areas. 'From above' there is no changes implemented, 'from below' – feeling of helplessness.
- Escape into the global out of helplessness locally

PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In Part 3, the participants were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 2, with a view to collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here, participants were working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal' world: their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them.

Hypothesis 1: A general feeling of some transition from the role of a dependent and submissive party to that of a more independent one (nationally and individually) is felt and a need of some important 'knowledge' is felt. Figures of teachers and authorities appear.

Hypothesis 2: Support for transition seems to be an almost shameful and covered need. Probably (any) transition needs support and this seems to be an unacknowledged and unmet need throughout society and communities in Bulgaria. This support is not just knowledge about where to go and what changes /losses/ one must entertain, but also some emotional support throughout the journey.

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