



Bulgaria at the dawn of 2018

Report of a Listening Post held in Sofia on 21 January 2018

PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND 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.

1. Of a just graduated therapist, making her first steps in the field. Cannot rely on a professional support to find a job as a therapist. Must create his/her own circle of support. The therapist feels dependent upon an almost endless professional training.
2. Of a looking for job and professional development therapist before the dilemma – private practice or a public job.
3. Of a citizen: how you collude to the state in breaking of the rules/laws.
4. Of a national subject: should I stay or should I go (emigrate).
5. Of a parent: how to provide an environment for the development of your children in a society where there is not much of it. A private or a public school to choose?
6. Of a citizen who cannot accept the so called 'third gender' concept. This concept will create further ambiguities (what about pronouns or the new public toilets for the third sex/gender people?)
7. Of a psychologist in a school who must break the confidentiality rule because an underaged girl informed him that she had been raped. Must he tell the parents, provided they 'lack parental capacity'?
8. Of a friend of a successful entrepreneur who claims he is not interested at all in local politics – he doesn't vote at elections, doesn't feel socially engaged in any way. Not interested in fighting corrupt politicians. 'I have no

power, no energy to follow these issues, the friend says. They all (politicians) are corrupt.' Such kind of people feel as if outside society. They believe that everything they have achieved in life is a result of their own and only their success or is dependent to a very small circle of acquaintances around them. For them those who have failed in life are just lazy. A kind of libertarians: the smaller the state – the better. You can feel slightly alone and lonely in their company.

9. A paper in 'The Guardian' speaking about the so called bored-out syndrome. People, bored out of jobs they feel artificial, inauthentic. They believe in the structure yet the overall job experience lack some vital meaning.
10. Of an academic in the humanities who feel rather useless with his knowledge

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

1. About a lack of personal support and of supportive community.
2. About one's responsibility as a citizen
3. Hesitations, insecurity, uncertainty.
4. Split between the public and the private.
5. Overall feeling of injustice
6. About differences and tolerance to them
7. New minorities appear
8. Separation, alienation, inability to live together
9. First steps, debuts, minorities. Humanitarians, engaged with jobs, and tasks they don't feel competent to accomplish and resolve
10. Humanities are in crisis of their social applicability
11. Mistrust and disappointment of the state (the state is trying to screw its people).

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.

Analysis and Hypothesis

In a state of experienced lack of individual support, lack of supportive community our responsibility as citizens erodes. This leads to hesitations,

insecurities, uncertainties that we defend against at the price of a kind of a split between the private and the public domains. The following insecurity contributes to an overall (feeling of) injustice. As a result, our tolerance towards differences and different in society weakens. New minorities appear, which can be seen as a result of the reigning cleavages, inequalities and inabilities to live a common, interconnected life. Humanitarian domain, which is expected to provide for connectedness through respect for the vulnerabilities and for the minorities is in crisis and in retreat. In this circumstances the state's attempts to fix injustices and to reconcile differences relies on bureaucracy, power, and control. One of the problems citizens face is the way society manages dependency needs of its members – of belonging, and of authorities as well as of connectedness between generations. Parental responsibility conflicts with the needs for care and support of parents themselves. Thus an overall feeling of failure, and shame are easily provoked and a kind of oversensitivity and over-vulnerability to the Other is established. When it comes to dealing with isolation, people tend to believe in technology (therapy included) more than in community (interdependence) or common causes.

Convenor: Rumen Petrov, MD, PhD