

## ЛИЧНОСТНИ ВЪЗПРИЯТИЯ ЗА (НЕ)СИГУРНОСТ

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**Резюме:** В тази статия са представени основни резултати от изследването на сигурността на българските граждани в съвременното ни общество. Персоналната (личната) сигурност на човека, сигурността на социалните общности в обществото се интерпретира в съвременното нетрадиционно разбиране – сигурността се разглежда в контекста на комплекс от фактори – икономически, социални (социално-психологически), политически. Сигурността на гражданите в демократично общество и правова държава се разглежда като функция на легитимни действия и взаимодействия на институциите – икономически, социални, политически, управленски, резултатите от които формират конкретна обективна реалност - икономическа, социална, политическа. Заложената в изследването концепция за сигурност се верифицира с резултати от проучване на личностни възприятия и оценки за състоянието, проблемите и тенденциите в развитието и въздействието на факторите за сигурност в българското общество и държава.

**Ключови думи:** сигурност, национална (общностна) сигурност, среда за сигурност, фактори за сигурност, възприятие за сигурност.

## PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS OF (IN)SECURITY

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**Abstract:** This article presents the main results of the study on the security of Bulgarian citizens in our modern society. The personal (individual) security of the person, the security of the social communities in the society is interpreted in the modern unconventional understanding - security is considered in the context of a complex of factors - economic, social (social-psychological), political. The security of citizens in a democratic society and the rule of law is seen as a function of legitimate actions and interactions of institutions - economic, social, political, managerial, the results of which form a specific objective reality - economic, social, political. The concept of security embedded in the study is verified with the results of a study of personal perceptions and assessments of the state, problems and trends in the development and impact of security factors in Bulgarian society and the state.

**Keywords:** security, national (community) security, security environment, security factors, perception of security.

### Introduction

**Security** of citizens in our modern society (in the world today), is research, politically and a management problem that attracts the attention of scientists, politicians and statesmen, public

figures. The arguments for this growing interest are in **the fundamental importance on security as an initial need** (individual, group, community, public) and related **the need to ensure national security** understood such as “... *condition on society and the state in which the territorial integrity is protected, sovereignty and the constitutionally established order of the country, the institutions and the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens, as a result of which the nation preserves and increases its well-being and develops, as well as when the country successfully defends its national interests and realizes its national priorities.*” [4] When people perceive and appreciate the environment in which they live as **stable and “the behavior” of the factors in it as predictable and controllable feel satisfied and gain confidence** in your core life choices, in its social integration and realization. **The feeling of insecurity** generates tension, anxiety and loss of perspective for the realization of basic life goals, influences the choice of important for their life path patterns of behavior and presupposes negative social processes.

**Security** of citizens in a democratic society and the rule of law **is guaranteed through a system of legitimate and interacting institutions**– economic, social, political, managerial. The effect of their actions and interactions is in „...*ensuring human security and protecting the freedom and dignity of the citizen...*“ [1] Thus, „... *security is associated with a sense of lack of risk, threat or danger to the life and health of people or property, as well as the availability of opportunities to protect them.*“ [5] **The personal perceptions and evaluations** for the condition, problems and trends in the development and impact of security factors in society and the state **are the subject of this study**. In the course of data registration (the survey in accordance with the purpose, tasks, and subject of research) I came across a unique research situation. The study aimed at measuring attitudes towards institutionalized factors the security of citizens in our society **was held in January 2020**. The pandemic **COVID-19 (from March 2020) is turned out serious challenge for the actions and the behavior of institutions guaranteeing the security of citizens in a crisis situation**. This fact provoked my research curiosity and guided me to the second stage of the study - personal opinions measurement and ratings for the activity of the institutions related to the security of the citizens **in a crisis pandemic environment**.

## **Conception and security concepts**

**The understanding of security and national security** occurs in different interpretations. **Security** is perceived such as **state of the society and personality**, characterized with: lack of dangers and threats from political and economic coercion; protected basic interests, rights and freedoms of citizens; subjective state of man in which he feels confident and calm; living in conditions that do not endanger his physical and mental balance and health. In his research „**Security, safety and public order - theoretical aspects**“, Dr. Vasil Kostadinov defines security as „... a state expressing the public perception of the absence of dangers and threats in all spheres of public life, the existence of which allows the realization of personal, group and social needs, interests and values.” [5]

The understanding of **National Security** it is also interpreted as a state of society and the state in which they are protected territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of the country and the democratic functioning of the state and the citizens structures is guaranteed, as a result of which the nation improves its well-being.

Traditional views on security are set out in concepts and theories that focus on **political and military issues**, on **military threats** and power policy such as **means of defense and defense**. In the modern **non-traditional understanding of security is considered in the**

**context of a broader framework (complex) of factors** - financial, economic, social, environmental, hybrid wars and cyberattacks, with factors with transnational, global impact and factors with national manifestation. The Eighties of the last century mark process of rethinking of traditional views for security and justifying a broader understanding that goes beyond the notion of national security as a lack of military threat and ready for military defense. In a number of research interpretations Security is seen in the context of a wide range of factors: **military** ("*Military security*"); **political** - related to the ideologies, the establishment and maintenance of order in society and the state, the system of governance and the organizational stability of the state ("*Political security*"); **economical** - access to production and financial resources, to markets guaranteeing economic prosperity and quality of life ("*Economic security*"); **social and social-psychological** guaranteeing the cultural identity of social communities in the society (ethnic, religious, regional, national, "*Social security*"); **environmental** - related to the protection of the natural environment ("*Environmental security*"). **Broadening the understanding of security** is observed adequately to the realities.

In his quatrain "The Five Levels of Security" the renowned researcher and expert on security issues Prof. Nikolay Slatinski adopts and argues "scheme of the five levels of security", structure, which has not only cognitive but also methodological significance for the empirical study of personal perception (feeling) of (in)security. The five levels of security, according to Prof. Slatinski are: "1.) *Security of the Individual*. 2.) *Security of the Group of individuals*. 3.) *Security of the State*. 4.) *Community security from countries*. 5.) *Security of the World*." [9] These levels in the security structure are internally connected and dependent. This raises certain methodological difficulties for any attempt at empirical research - the subject of research is complex and dynamic - requires a comprehensive approach and inevitable limitations.

The focus in modern interpretations of security is gradually shifting from "State-centered notion" of human security, of social groups, of society. In his paper „**Social construction of a current theoretical security paradigm**“, Mimi Kornajeva states: „*The concept of human security was introduced with the United Nations Development Program after the end of the Cold War. Four characteristics have been identified for human security: (1) human security is a universal problem; (2) aspects of human security are interdependent, (3) problems must be solved at an early stage; (4) focus on the individual. A consensus was reached that seven groups factors threatening human security - economically; nutrition; health; environment; individual; community; political.*“ [6]

In his study "Five levels of security" Prof. Nikolay Slatinski adopts the following main components of human security: „(1) *economic security (eg freedom from poverty)*; (2) *food security (eg access to food)*; (3) *health security (eg access to health care and protection against disease)*; (4) *environmental security (eg protection against hazards as pollution and environmental depletion)*; (5) *personal security (for example, physical protection, ... from wars, criminal attacks, domestic violence, drug use, suicide and even road accidents)*; (6) *community security (for example, survival of traditional cultures and ethnic groups ...)*; (7) *political security (for example, respect for civil and political rights and freedom from political oppression)*.“ [9]

**Security is basic human need**, the satisfaction of which is an important condition for personal formation and development, for a full personality integration, identification and social realization (personal realization). Security is also interpreted as **value**, without awareness and internalization of which the life of the man, of men in society is unthinkable. From ancient times until today, security is understood as the protection of every person and

his environment from threats and dangers. Thus the **problem security** is of particular importance to man, to human communities and its specific decisions structure (determine) the relationship “person-society-state”. [7, 15-21]

**The perception of (in)security** of a man (an individual) structures the relation “man-society-state” and positions it as **psychological (social-psychological) research problem**. **The security of the Individual** (often referred to as “individual security”, “personal security”, “human security”) is an expression on **human need and human right to a good quality of life** (education, healthcare, work and professional career, personal, family and public life, etc.). [9] Personal perception and evaluation of security factors is particularly important for the choice of life goals, strategies, patterns of behavior, for individual and family life planning. [9]

### **Security environment (factors)**

In the modern world there is an obvious trend of increasing dependence between environmental factors - global (global), regional (international), national and security of citizens, communities, society. The “security environment” is defined by societal processes that take place on a global, regional and national scale and that influence the protection of interests and the realization of individual, community and societal goals.[8]

The interdependence between global, regional and national factors for the security of citizens, communities and society is obvious and indisputable and their distinction is in a sense conditional. The internal (national) security environment (despite its historical predestination and traditions) is increasingly formed and developed under the influence of global and regional economic and political processes, from energy, transport, communication projects with transnational and transcontinental dimension and significance, etc. In the annual report of the State Agency for National Security (2010), the security environment is defined as “...*a set of dynamically changing external and internal conditions in which the state operates, realizes its political priorities and protects its national interests, and society and the individual citizen exist and develop ... The state and changes in the environment, on the one hand, are a source of opportunities for realization of national interests, on the other hand, are a generator of risks and threats ...*” [2] In **external** (global, regional, transnational) **security environment** a number of factors (which are not in the field of this study) are observed, but which unconditionally **affect and “model” the internal environment** for the safety of citizens and society (usually through the pressure they exert on factors they of the internal environment). In the updated national security strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2018) the following factors are qualified as “external”: variable balance in international relations, which strengthens the existing and causes new risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Bulgaria; shifting the center of economic growth from West to East, the growing impact of non-state structures - economic, religious, migration, environmental, social inequalities; growing poverty and inequality, which generate frustration with the political system and increase the number of supporters of extreme political formations and national movements; international terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (asymmetric threats), regional conflicts; cross-border organized crime - drug production and trafficking, human trafficking and exploitation, forgery of identity documents, mugging, etc.; migration and migration pressure such as threat to the economy and social systems of democratic societies in transit and host countries; proximity to major crisis regions, escalations and conflicts worldwide; environmental problems generated by industrial accidents with emissions, waste treatment and trans-boundary pollution of air, water, environment; spread of infectious diseases, epidemics and pandemics worldwide (global, regional), which puts at risk health and

life of citizens and their security; attempts at ethnic and religious opposition of communities in societies and regions; cybercrime, which hinders or blocks the functioning of important information for the government information-communication systems. [1]

**The internal environment** for the security of citizens and society is determined by **the state, problems and trends** in the development and interaction of **many and different factors**, who for the purposes of this research is characterize and structure as: economic, social (social-psychological), politically.

### *Economic factors*

The state and trends in the development of economic factors characterize appearance of the economic environment and affect perception for economic security of citizens and communities. The economic security environment can be assessed with using indicators such as: functioning market economy; stable economic growth and financial position state; business environment, stimulating entrepreneurial activity and attracting investments; work places, decent price at work, stabilized social-demographic situation in the country; presense of basic income from wages or social benefits; nutrition - providing physical and economic access to food; purchasing and ability and distribution of food; the gray economy, money laundering, the pressure on market mechanisms; violation of the principles and rules of free competition; restricts the business initiative and consumer rights.

### *Social (social-psychological) factors*

Personal (individual) and community social Security is of particular importance for everyone, for social groups and communities and is guaranteed by the state of the effectiveness of health, education, social protection and social assistance. The social security environment (health, education, personal, community) is characterized by indicators and indicators for: healthcare policy; organization of health activities and medical services; access to quality and effective health activities and medical services; health and prevention and counteracting the unhealthy lifestyle and protection from diseases; healthy status of Bulgarian citizens, on separate social categories and social groups; demographic situation - birth rate, mortality, life expectancy; threats for health security and timely medical assistance to usually poorer people in rural areas; access to clean resources - water, air, food; the quality of the educational products, its compliance with the needs of the labour market and opportunities for employment, professional and economic realization of labour; migration pressure, the perception of the country as a transit destination, which creates conditions for an increase in crime related to the transfer of people across the border who are not interested in integrating into Bulgarian society; risk for the life and property of the citizens (domestic crime).

### *Political factors*

**Personal and social-group perceptions of security are related to the adequate and effective implementation of the functions of civil society, the political system and state institutions related to:** protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens; guaranteeing the right of citizens and society to good governance and a dignified life; protection of the constitutional right of education, on labour, professional and career development; guaranteeing the right to healthy working and living conditions; guarantee the right of fair through the rule of law; participation of citizens and civic structures in governance and self-



government, in the prevention and counteraction of corruption in government and administration.

This brief overview of modern concepts of the security of man and human communities in society gives rise to at least two main findings: first, security is a complex social and social-psychological phenomenon, the scientific study of which suggests and requires **complex approach and complex interpretation in a multifactorial context**; second, the understanding of security is formed and developed under the influence of classical traditional and modern non-traditional views and scientific theories. In this case, the meaning in the reference to accepted views about security and the factors that determine it is in **construction on the conceptual interpretive frame of the specific research of personal perceptions of (in)security**. **Perception** is a subjective process and may differ and not correspond to the objective reality. Given this circumstance, the study adopted the „reality - perception“ approach. The objective reality is revealed on the basis of statistical data and expert analyzes and findings. Subjective perceptions are based on research of opinions and evaluations of participants in the research.

### **Perception for economic (in)security**

In **Annual report 2019 “Economic Development and Policies in Bulgaria: Assessments and Expectations”**, developed by collaborators on Institute for Economic Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences it is noted that in economic terms 2019 looks calmer, **“but there were no problems.”** *“There was (albeit unjustified) civil dissatisfaction with high fuel prices and the general cost of living. Demands for a better standard of living, higher wages and pensions, although socially just, are economically unattainable at this stage.”* [3] Scientists-economists find the explanation of this finding in the level of productivity of both labour and capital, in the serious lag behind these indicators from the developed European economies. *“Foreign direct investment is insultingly small and decreases with each passing year. Even more unpleasant, however is that the main reasons for the declining inflow of foreign investment (shortage of skilled workers; poor infrastructure; cumbersome judiciary; inefficient administrative services; a sense of pervasive corruption) are beginning to become a sustainable feature of the economy.”* [3]

The condition of the economic environment **as an important condition for economic security of citizens** (of social groups and social communities of society) is constructed and developed under the influence of external factors (regional and global). The global economy is still having the effects of the global financial crisis (2008). Evidence of this claim can be seen in the difficulties facing the economies of the United States, China and the Eurozone. Negative trends are emerging in the economic forecasts, which are obviously deepening as a result of the outbreak in 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The global and regional economic environment provides influence on the state and trends in the domestic (national) economic environment **and the economic security of Bulgarian citizens**. „As a small and highly open economy, Bulgaria is highly dependent on the development of external factors. More specifically, Bulgaria is subject to the economic cycle in the Eurozone as the ECB's monetary policy shifts in our country quickly and almost mechanically through the mechanisms of the currency board, the integration of the banking sector and the high trade commitment. Unfortunately, there are enough arguments to argue that the main Eurozone trading partners (primarily Germany and Italy) are entering or will soon enter a negative phase of the business cycle.” [3]

At the end of 2019, the forecasts for the economic development of the country are positive the at the same time relatively high risks associated with problems in the external environment (changes in external demand) are not underestimated, as well as internal risks, given problems in the political environment. Despite understanding “For generally positive economic prospects“, forecasts of economic growth rates and economic security of citizens are careful - **convergence with the average per capita income in countries from The European Union remains for future; the achieved economic growth has no tangible impact on the reduction of poverty, economic and social inequalities; the economic instruments used exacerbate these inequalities.**

The pandemic COVID-19 stresses the world and European economies and generates heavy economically and social consequences. The economic environment and perceptions of economic security of Bulgarian citizens are changing dramatically under the influence of the COVID-19 crisis. The “Spring Economic Forecast - 2020” of the Representation of the European Union in Bulgaria provides deep recession and uncertain recovery. *“Given that the pandemic has affected all Member States, the turmoil in the EU economy is symmetrical. However, both the decline in production in 2020 (from -4.5% in Poland to -9% in Greece) and the recovery rate in 2021 are expected to differ significantly. The economic recovery of each Member State will depend not only on the development of the pandemic in that country, but also on the structure of its economy and its ability to respond to stabilization policies. Given the interdependence of the EU economies, the dynamics of recovery in each Member State will also affect the recovery of the other Member States.”* [12] The main expectations in this forecast are for: **a strong blow to the development and growth of the economy** of the European Union as well as the national economies of the Member States (the pandemic affects consumer spending, industrial production, investment, trade, capital flows and the supply chain); **increase in the number of unemployed and serious pressure on the labour market** (despite part-time anti-crisis policies, for subsidized wages and other government support for companies to restrict job losses); **increase in the budget deficit and government debt of the member states of the European Union** (anti-crisis policies and concrete measures to implement them will increase costs and increase the overall budget deficit of the Eurozone and the European Union); **extremely high degree of economic uncertainty.** [12] In the expectations of European Commission the decline in the Bulgarian economy will be 7% and the recovery - slow. *“Domestic demand declined due to weaker private consumption and shrinking investment. Economic indicators reported a sharp decline in the second quarter of 2020. Since March, the significantly worsened external environment has hampered exports of goods, while travel restrictions have led to a sharp decline in trade in services.”* [13] The experts expectations at the beginning of the covid crisis are private consumption to recover in the second half of 2020 and investment and exports to return to positive growth next year. According to the forecasts of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the decline in the Bulgarian economy in 2020 is 5 % (against 6.2 % according to the forecast of the World Bank and 4 % as projected by the International Monetary Fund). The significant decline in the consumption of durable goods, according to experts forecasts affects small and medium enterprises.

The June report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development on the effects of COVID-19 is dominated by *“(...) alarming warnings: the world economy will see the biggest collapse in peacetime for the last 100 years, the recession will be 6 percent of world GDP, and next year there will be growth of 5.2 % - a rapid recovery, but provided that the wave of corona virus is not repeated; that means to return to the level of 2019 there can be hope only for 2022.”* [14] According to her findings the provisions of this report, in 2020 Bulgaria is facing the most serious economic contraction since the late 1990s. *“If the corona*

*virus epidemic ends at the end of the summer (in 2020), the contraction will be 7.1 % and this is a positive scenario. In case (...) that this does not happen and in the fall there is a second wave of infection, the economy will sink by 8 % this year and by another 0.3 % next year. Unemployment will double to 8 % comparing the end of 2019, and a speedy recovery does not seem likely given the continuing in measures for social distancing, insufficiently protected households from the crisis, constant insecurity and weak demand for Bulgarian goods and services abroad, especially in Europe.” [14]*

The “contraction” of the economy, the decline in economic growth is reflected in a decrease in the number of jobs, an increase in the number of unemployed **and generates economic insecurity for citizens**. According to the National Statistical Institute, the number of unemployed in the country is growing - the level of registered employment in May 2020 reached 9 %; in June remains high – 8.3 %. *“The newly registered unemployed reached a little over 218 thousand people for the period from February 5 to July 12. For the same period those who came to work of the registered in the labor offices are nearly 122 thousand people, or 96 thousand increased the number of unemployed by mid-July.” [15]* The economic analyzes of the labour market highlight its obvious dynamics and the expectation of a “second wave of unemployment” in September - October 2020. The forecast of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy at the end of the year is that unemployment will remain at 6.5 %, and of KNSB - 10%. *“Unemployment at the end of the year will reach a level of 10 percent instead of the current 6 percent, which means 330 000 unemployed. (...) According to the trade union, the projected 3 % decline in GDP in the worst-case scenario seems optimistic and needs to be reassessed.” [16]*

Despite some differences in the expert analyzes and forecasts of different institutions, it is absolutely clear that the world economy, the economy of the European Union, the national economies of the EU Member States (including the Bulgarian economy) are facing a crisis that has accelerated sharply with the onset of the pandemic COVID-19 and which **structured risk economic environment and economic insecurity for citizens**. Anti-crisis policies and government programs must rely on the adequate behavior of democratic institutions, a functioning market economy and the rule of law, and the stabilization of economic growth and the financial condition of the state. However, in an economy in crisis, it is possible to develop the negative impact of such factors as the gray economy, „money laundering“, corrupt practices that violate the principles and rules of the market economy and free competition; restricts business initiative; worsens the investment climate and the business environment.

***What is the assessment of the Bulgarian citizens participating in the survey for the economic environment and economic security in the country?*** In January 2020 (before the coronavirus crisis) two-thirds of the respondents (76.2 %) share the view that the economic environment and economic growth in the country are **unstable**; 55.2 % perceive business environment such as **no favorable for entrepreneurial activity**. For 82.5 % of the respondents **economic uncertainty of citizens** deepens from lack of work; 88.1 % assess the income of employees as „low“ (working poor). Almost every second of the respondents (45.5 %) estimates that **foreign investment** present steadily in the Bulgarian economic environment (for every third – 34.3 % - they are decreasing). During the „second lockdown“ (November, 2020) **the feeling of economic uncertainty explainable grows** - the relative share of survey participants who perceive the economy and economic growth as unstable increases by 17.6 % (93.8 %). With 28.2 % the share of those who evaluate is growing **business environment as unfavorable for entrepreneurial activity**, and by 31.8 % - those who evaluate **business environment as unfavorable for attracting foreign investment**. The relative share of



respondents who say that it is observed **decline in foreign investment is growing with 16.7 %**; that **there are no jobs and incomes are low - by 13.4 %**.

The pandemic COVID-19 generates **anxious public expectations** to bankrupt businesses, close jobs, reduce the number of occupied and increasing unemployment, reduction and freezing of wages, increase in prices of goods and services and other social-economic factors for personal and community security.

### **Perceptions for social (in)security**

The COVID-19 pandemic put to serious tests the healthcare system in our country. The difficult access to health services and medical care; inadequate territorial location of the medical establishments and their insufficient provision with medical specialists; the quality of health activities and medical services put on the agenda again the issues related to policies in the organization and management of the health system. *„Although health care costs in Bulgaria are still relatively low comparing to the other EU member states, they have been steadily increasing over the last 15 years. However, the increase in healthcare costs is mainly due to direct payments by consumers. Currently, the healthcare system actually relies almost equally on private expenditure and public funds as sources of revenue, with the share of public funding (52 %) declining in recent years. This trend raises concerns about equity in access to health care, especially for low-income people.“* [17] The structure of private health care costs is dominated by the cost of medicines, followed by the costs of outpatient care. Informal payments in the form of „cash donations“ to doctors represent a significant proportion of direct payments from patients. There are large differences in not satisfied needs and between high and low income groups, with costs remaining the most frequently cited reason for refusing medical help.

**How the participants in the study perceive and assess the state of health care in the country?** For the majority of respondents – 91.6 % (January, 2020 - before the COVID-19 crisis) a real threat to the security of citizens in our society is **„the transformation of health into a commodity and of health establishments into commercial companies“**; 92,3 % perceive as a security threat **corrupt practices in use of medical services and misuse of funds on The National Health Insurance Fund**; 86 % see a threat to the quality of health care in the trend for **„Leakage“ of doctors and other medical professionals** to countries providing better working conditions, wages and professional development; 72 % appreciate **the organization of health care as inefficient and difficult access to health services** of those living in small settlements. Opinions of respondents during the second lockdown (November, 2020) are less critical - by an average of 4.2 % decrease in the negative attitudes and by 2.5 % increase in the relative share of those who indicate the presence of difficult access to health services. The pandemic **changed in a positive direction the attitude towards medical professionals and brought to the fore the problem for access to health services for those living in small and remote villages**. The uneven territorial location of the medical establishments in the country makes it difficult for the people living in the villages and in the depopulated areas to access health services. Access to health care is also limited in scope of citizens in the health insurance system. About 14 % of the population of Bulgaria is not covered by health insurance (2019) - permanently unemployed, unemployed Roma, people living in depopulated areas. The shortage of medical professionals (especially general practitioners and nurses) is a problem in the provision of primary care and health services in small settlements and depopulated areas. **The health status on citizens** in a society and **life expectancy** are indicator for efficiency and quality healthcare. And although the average life

expectancy of Bulgarian citizens has increased by 71.6 years in 2000 at the age of 74.8 in 2017, it is the lowest compared to the countries in the European Union. Women in Bulgaria live an average of 78.4 years (the lowest average life expectancy among the countries in the European Union), and Bulgarian men live an average of 71.4 years (the lowest life expectancy). The reasons for this are found in the health profile of the country for 2019 (developed by the European Commission), namely **insufficient development of prevention and outpatient care**. According to expert analyzes, prevention and outpatient care are relatively underrepresented and this fact explains **high preventable mortality rate**. Preventable with timely and good treatment mortality in Bulgaria is the highest in the European Union, *“which shows that the health care system as a whole fails to treat patients efficiently and in a timely manner. Approximately one-fifth of inpatient procedures could be performed in outpatient care, while one-tenth of hospitalizations and related procedures could be completely avoided if better outpatient care is available.”* [17] Behavioral risk factors are not negligible prerequisite for the health status of citizens and the effectiveness of the healthcare system. Smoking, consumption of large amounts of alcohol, unhealthy eating are behavioral factors that challenge the healthy status of citizens in our society. *“Despite the slight reduction of tobacco use, the level of smoking among adults is the highest in the EU, reaching 28 % in 2014 (36.4 % among men). Smoking is also common among adolescents. Consumption of large amounts of alcohol in 2014 is slightly below the EU average for adults, but is increasing among adolescent boys. Although the adult obesity rate is slightly below the EU average, the problem among children is growing, with one in five children being overweight or obese.”* [17]

**The demographic situation in the Republic of Bulgaria is serious challenge to the prospect of the development of social environment and social security of communities in society.** In a research of experts on the demographic development of the country is proven a tendency to **continued population decline as a result of low birth rates, high mortality, increased emigration, changes in the family model and reproductive behavior of the family**. The deepening **demographic crisis** in Bulgarian society it emerges as a social and social-psychological factor with markedly negative effects in the development of the economy and social systems, **in reproduction and security** of the communities (age, settlement-territorial, ethnic, etc.). **The main conclusions** from the analysis of statistical data for 2018 and 2019 **confirm the outlined trends** in the development of demographic processes, namely: **the low and the declining birth rate** is an unconditional factor for the complicating demographic situation in the country – based on Eurostat data, the total birth rate (number of live births per 1000 people of the average annual population) for Bulgaria is 9.7 per thousand; **relatively high level of total mortality** - the total mortality rate in 2019 is 15.5 per thousand (at 10.3 per thousand average for the European Union); **aging of the population** - a trend that is determined by the scale of emigration, in the scope of which young people predominate; **reduction of the working age population and reduction of the country's population**. The increase in the average age of the population in the country generates negative consequences for development of the economy, the labour market and social systems, creates a feeling of social discomfort and social uncertainty.

The demographic situation in the country is dependent and from trends in the demographic processes migration and emigration. *“It has a significant impact on the number and structures of the country's population **mechanical growth** (...) In the period 2011-2017, 131 349 (immigrants) settled and 166 163 people (emigrants) moved, i.e. there is a negative mechanical growth - minus 30 092 people. The indicators for the mechanical growth of the population show the preservation of the tendency for increase of the external migrations, caused by the unsatisfactory economic situation in the country. The country is losing young*

people because of emigration. Every second person who left Bulgaria is between 20 and 39 years old. (...) 52.6 % of this age group (42 thousand) are women who most probably will give birth to their children abroad.” [10] These trends are confirmed in 2019. The National statistical institute offers forecast for the demographic development of the country in perspective until 2050 in three variants - **realistic** (compliant to EU regulatory requirements for the demographic, social-economic development of the Member States); **optimistic** (in case that demographic processes take place under more favorable social-economic conditions); **pessimistic** (in case of unfavorable social-economic processes). In all three variants of the demographic forecast **the country's population is expected to shrink and age.** [10]

**How is the demographic problem perceived and assessed, how and to what extent are demographic trends perceived as a threat to the security of citizens, social communities and society?** The participants in the study, conducted before the coronavirus crisis, perceive with the social-demographic situation in the country as disturbing and anxious, conditioned by **„Increased emigration of young Bulgarians to Western Europe, the United States and other countries“** (93 %); **„Aging of the population of Bulgaria“** (86 %); **„Low birth rate“** (84.6 %); **„Unemployment and low income“** (82.5 %); **„Collapse of natural growth“** (79.7 %); **„Deterioration of the health status of Bulgarian citizens“** (69.9 %); **„High overall and premature mortality“** (63.6 %). During the second lockdown due to the pandemic (November, 2020) naturally increases the sensitivity to certain characteristics of the social environment - by 17.0 % increases the relative title of these who claim that the health status of citizens is deteriorating (from 69.9 % to 86.9 %). The relative share of those who share the opinion that the total and premature mortality is high increased by 15.7 % (from 63.6 % to 79.3 %).

The healthcare system in the country is an essential element of the social environment and an important factor for social security of citizens. The current condition obviously causes dissatisfaction and uncertainty and requires the development and implementation of adequate health policy.

In its annual report on Bulgaria (2020), the European Commission makes a comprehensive analysis of the social and economic situation of the country, incl. of education such as **strategic investment in the security of people in society**. Although the educational reforms and investment in education, the quality of the „educational product” is a challenge for government. *“In Bulgaria there is still room for improving the quality of education and training, their compliance with the needs of the labour market and their character. Bulgaria is one of the Member States where the social-economic situation has the greatest impact on learning outcomes. The inclusion of Roma in education continues to be a challenge, with the proportion of early school leavers being particularly high among them in rural areas.”* [11] Of particular importance for restoring and promoting sustainable growth, to build a stable social security environment is the provision of services in training for qualification, retraining and successful implementation and the labour market. *“The general level of digital skills of the population (16-74 years) is low, including among young people (16-19 years). Improving digital skills, for example through IT-level education and curricula, could help to adapt to the changes in the labour market resulting from digitalisation and to the need to work remotely in a digital environment.”* [11]

### **Perception of political (in)security**

Citizen security is guaranteed from the political system of society and the system of government. The personal security and the security of the communities in the society is guaranteed by the activity of the institutions, as structures of the society and the state, called

to protect the rights and freedoms of the citizens; to ensure their constitutional rights to quality health care and education, labour and professional realization, civic association and participation in social-political life and governance. The data from the conducted researches show that according to the majority of opinions **the principle of dialogue and cooperation between citizens and the state is not respected** (over 80 %); the principle of **rule of law** (over 65 %); are not protected basic rights and freedoms of citizens (as negative assessments increased from 59.4 % to 69.7 % in this crisis situation). On the question „**Are, in your opinion, the citizens and the society vital interests protected in the Republic of Bulgaria?**“ participants in the study before and after the COVID-19 crisis give close estimates: every second thinks „**Sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the country and the unity of the nation**“ are not protected; almost 80 % see no action for „**Overcoming the negative effects of demographic processes**“; over 40 % see a problem „**in the protection of national identity**“. The COVID-19 pandemic obviously influences citizens' perceptions and assessments: before the crisis 81.1 % of respondents shared the opinion that „**Health and blathe state of citizens and society**“ are not protected, at the peak of the health crisis this percentage decreased by 11.4 % (69.7 %); at the beginning of this ten-month period, almost every second of the respondents (49 %) perceived that the interests of citizens and society for quality general and vocational education were not protected, then at the end of the period this share increased by 13.1 % (62.1 %). Indicative for perceptions for the security of the citizens are their assessments for the work of the institutions as a factor in maintaining a stable and sustainable economic, social and political security environment. The work of 44-th National Assembly for Ensuring the Security of Citizens is approved by 10.5 % of respondents in early 2020 and by 9 % in the second lockdown (November, 2020); the work of the Government enjoys respectively with 11.9 % and 13.8 % approval. The work of the Ministry of Health during this period of uncertainty and unpredictability is approved by 14.6 % of respondents, and that of The Ministry of Economy - from 16.6 %. The approval for the work of the Ministry of Interior for the security of the citizens during this period increased by 10.7 % (from 19.6 % of 30.3 %), and the Ministry of Education and Science - from 25.2 % to 27.6 %. Citizens' right to good governance and a dignified life is highly threatened by corrupt practices. The civic sensitivity to this problem in our country is extremely high and no significant differences are found between the first and second stage of the study. Almost everyone in the study (99.3 %) is convinced that „**Corruption at the highest levels of government is a major problem in our society**“ and that „**Corruption threatens compliance with social, legal and moral norms, strengthens the potential of organized crime, undermines the authority of the authorities.**“ The reasons for the „corruption pandemic“ in the country are visible in: „**Lack of transparency in public procurement and spending of public funds**“ (97.2 %); „**Inadequate regulation of economic relations and inefficient control**“ (95.2 %); „**Increasing and complicating licensing and licensing regimes**“ (93.1 %). In that 86.9 % of the respondents share the view that anti-corruption institutions are failing in their mission, and 95.9 % that „**in our country the fight against corruption at the highest levels of government is imitated**“.

The perception of security is a subjective process and, as a rule, may not reflect objective reality. In this case, the perception of economic insecurity (economic crisis, declining employment, rising unemployment, low incomes); for social insecurity (health crisis, demographic crisis, problems in education) corresponds to a high degree to the assessments and conclusions about the objective reality in the analyzes of the experts. There are high levels of economic and social insecurity and low levels of approval of the activities of institutions as a guarantor of personal and national security. The perception (feeling) of insecurity is a mental state that can generate dissatisfaction, demotivation, tension, anxiety

and loss of perspective for self-realization, as well as negative processes for the functioning of society and the state.

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