CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES BETWEEN A REPRESSIVE AND A LIBERAL STATE.

QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES BETWEEN DEINSTITUTIONALISATION AND EUROPEANISATION IN BULGARIA

(EXTRACT FROM A PHD THESIS)

VERA RADEVA

SCIENCES PO PARIS

ABSTRACT

This paper draws on the effects of the Europeanization process over domestic policies identifying Europeanization as an additional condition of the domestic political process in Bulgaria. As the object of this transformation we will explore the deinstitutionalization political reform, which aims to close large-scale institutions for children and to promote the creation of community based care services. Representing a shift in the centralised social policy mechanisms of childcare, this reform is situated in larger-scale institutional and social transition brought by the accession period.

However, if the deinstitutionalization reform takes more than twenty years in order to be initiated as a political priority we need to examine what were the unexpected difficulties and social forces in place, which obscured the implementation of European strategic requirements in relation to child protection.

Key words: Social Policy, Europeanization, deinstitutionalization, path-dependency, post-communist transition, child welfare
INTRODUCTION

The irreversible harm and long-lasting damaging effects of institutional child care as practiced today have been largely researched and recognized in the academic and professional literature from the past decades.\(^1\) At stake is not only the future of millions of children doomed to a life with persistent physical and mental health issues but also the economic and political growth of the respective nations that care for them\(^2\). Nevertheless, the number of children living in large-scale institutions throughout the world has been conservatively estimated by the UN to exceed 8 million \(^3\) (see annexe 1).

In Europe, the use of large-scale institutions continues to rise. This is especially true for Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union where the “rate of children placed in institutions rose by 3% between 1989 and 2006”\(^4\). Paradoxically, this is also the region where 98% of the children living in residential care have one or both parents’ alive\(^5\) (see annexe 2). Since many of these countries are either already members of the European Union or are currently undergoing the process of European accession, there is a growing need to analyze the role of the European Union in establishing effective child care policies and in reorganizing the existing practices in its newest constituents. The resistance of institutional care to the European conditionality and non-discriminative protocols twenty three years after the collapse of communism compounds the need to investigate these issues. Who are the actors who can change the preexisting child care structures? Should the Union have a universal agenda for the closure of large scale state run institutional care?

To explore in detail the complex interaction between the European Union and individual states, this thesis focuses on Bulgaria as a relevant illustration of the child-
care development patterns in Eastern Europe. The country is a particularly befitting case-study of the reforms and social processes taking place in the region as it recently launched the deinstitutionalization political reform intended to close all childcare institutions and replace them with community based services. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the existing theoretical debates concerning the economic and political role of the Union on Bulgarian social policies, with special focus on the field of child protection. In addition, it acknowledges the need to investigate the Europeanization process in the context of the historical and cultural idiosyncrasies of Eastern European countries as a complement to the existing wealth of analysis pertaining to Western Europe. This study also aims to gain insight into the theoretically underdeveloped impact of Europeanization on the transformation of child-care policies and practices in Bulgaria from the perspective of the actors operating on the national level - rather than from the standpoint of the respective EU agencies - and examines their efforts to adapt to the accession conditionality. Furthermore, the brief historical overview included in this work revisits the changes implemented throughout the transition period (1989-90) and differentiates them from the processes that were set in motion after 1997 as a part of the country's efforts to comply with the compulsory EU requirements presented in the Acquis Comminautaire.

This thesis investigates the role of Europeanization in the evolution and democratization of child care services in former communist states, and to analyze the unanticipated obstacles and the social forces that arose during the implementation of the international strategic plans. Through theoretical and empirical research, it aims to establish if the European integration requirements in the social sphere were appropriate and justifiable, and if Bulgaria, as an aspiring accession country, possessed the capacity to adapt them accordingly. This work is built around two main assumptions: on one hand, it presupposes that European liberal child care principles were overshadowed by the dependence of local agents on pro-communist child protection ideologies; on the other hand, it goes beyond the path-dependency theory

---

and questions whether the implementation of European practices was at all feasible within the country's national and political context.

**CASE STUDY SELECTION**

As a post-communist state and a European Union member since 2007, Bulgaria represents an interesting laboratory for analysis of the political and social transformations in question, and serves as a pertinent platform for comparing the local political and social dynamics with those in Western Europe. In addition, Bulgaria is currently undergoing a series of fundamental social policy transformations, that demonstrate a genuine political will to prioritize the individual needs of abandoned children and to break away from the post-socialist inertia of institutional care. This coalescence of historical circumstances further support the choice of the country as a case study for this thesis. For Bulgarians, it is also a pivotal opportunity to defy the passivity of the old status-quo and participate in the evolution of European liberal standards for child protection.

A reform that *de-institutionalizes* and *re-Europeanizes* Bulgarian social policies, the creation of community based services undoubtedly provides grounds for unique scientific contemplation. While Bulgaria's long and painful transition to capitalism took place in conjunction with two preeminent world powers -- the Bretton Woods organizations and the European Union -- the effect of the preceding socialist ideologies on the policies in the region continued to cast a shadow over the growing Bulgarian liberal state. Thus, as the global neo-liberalism and the European Union urged complete reconstruction of the political, economic and cultural identities of the country, social policy regulation became one of the points of controversy for local political agents and the Western powers. This research examines the issues at the center of the associated discourse.

At the foundation of the new social policy model, which departs from universal provision of services and moves towards individual care, lies a need to create practices that can be adapted to Bulgaria's specific cultural and social national traits. This study aims to provide a larger historical and social framework of the reform and lay the foundations of a strategy for the ongoing social policies evolution in Eastern Europe.

---

8 The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank
EUROPEANIZATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF POST-COMMUNIST CHILD CARE

A basic premise of this thesis is that European integration affects domestic policies. The paper challenges the preset expectations for the outcome of the interaction between national states and the European Union, and focuses on developing domestic political and social processes and reform implementation mechanisms in coordination with the integration procedures, formulated by the respective European institutions.

The scope of this research also includes a range of models exploring the impact of Europeanization on national states. It posits that any transformation of non-compliant practices into successful working models needs to be carried out as an ongoing collaborative process, continually informed by simultaneous top-down and bottom-up efforts. Referring to the work of scholars who adapt the top-down approach and define Europeanization as “European Commission’s political and economic dynamics becoming part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy making”⁹, this thesis studies the interaction between the EU and the individual national states, their relation to regional legacies, and the role of domestic actors in the execution of European regulations presented in the *Europeanization as a transformation model*. The latter is particularly relevant to the Bulgarian context in the current stage of the country’s development.

Although the sphere of social policy conversions is not as often the focus of accession discourse as are the debates on political and economic performance, and it has arguably been the least influenced by the dramatic changes of EU accession, it deserves equally prominent degree of examination and commitment from both EU and local organizations. Reflecting on the role of the state in the formation of social policy norms, this work aims to analyze the impact of the Europeanization process on the transformation of post-communist child care institutions into community based services. This transformation signifies a shift of state policies from public to individual approach towards children’s needs and thus foreshadows a collision between the Soviet system of child care and the liberal one. Thus, throughout this study, the Europeanization process serves as a laboratory for the analysis of change in institutions, values, and norms in regard to child welfare.

---

THE DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION REFORM AS A TOOL OF THE EUROPEANIZATION

The fall of Communism is still perceived as the pivotal moment of dramatic changes in Eastern Europe’s political and social arenas. Acknowledging the extreme importance of the period, this thesis studies the consequences of yet another important transformation induced by the acceptance of Bulgaria into the European Union - Europeanization. Somewhere in the space between these two transitions, child priorities in the country were neglected, leaving 44.6% of the children today at risk of poverty. Of those, 7,000 are accommodated in less than 127 institutions regardless of their physical and mental disabilities. As recently as 2010, 2,508 children aged 0-3\textsuperscript{10} lived in such conditions. The genesis of this paper is grounded in the controversial resistance to change of large scale institutions, despite European involvement in the country’s political and social transformations. The central questions addressed by this analysis review the internal and external factors that stimulate political changes in the sphere of child care throughout the Europeanization process, as well as the important preconditions for long term solutions of the problem.

The degradation of child institutions was rarely present in the media until 2007 when the foreign TV channel BBC screened worldwide\textsuperscript{11} the documentary “Bulgaria’s Abandoned Children”, shocking the country’s political authorities and empowering its European critics. The film instigated not only social but also significant political pressure from European institutions on the Bulgarian state to change its policies towards abandoned and handicapped children. As a recent member of the European Union at the time, the Bulgarian government was forced to exert considerable effort and take prompt steps towards changing its child care provisions.

By presenting the historical context of childcare development in Bulgaria, this study probes whether, at the moment of EU accession and voluntary adoption of the Acquis Comminautaire, the Bulgarian state - both through the institutional and social prisms - was influenced by pre-existing interest groups and long-term historical arrangements. In order to comply with EU conditions, Bulgaria was pushed toward

\textsuperscript{10} Data from the State Agency of Social Support, May 2011; www.asp.government.bg/ASP_Client/jsp/main.jsp
\textsuperscript{11} Bulgaria’s Abandoned Children, documentary directed by Kate Blewett, released on Tuesday 11 December 2007 on BBC Four Documentaries; http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/documentaries/features/bulgarias-children.shtml
decentralization of power and modifications in its provision of social services. Most of the newly adapted child welfare practices diverged fully from those in place during Communism. This change in political direction represents a precondition for the reconstruction of power relations between local actors and the new international groups based in Bulgaria.

One of the reforms associated with the decentralization of specialized social services since 2000 is the deinstitutionalization of children accommodated in large scale institutions. It is defined by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy as the “closure of all child care institutions and their replacement with the development of community based social services” and is identified as a government priority. This reform also embodies a reconstruction of the legal and financial framework of social services (explained in chapter three) and the establishment of a public-private partnership through the greater participation of the nongovernmental sector and the beneficiaries of services (shown in chapter four). Furthermore, it anticipates the adoption of Western models of alternative care (such as foster care, community based centers, etc) that provide abandoned children with an opportunity to reintegrate in the family environment. These transformations stipulate a fundamental change in the position of the child - from a mean of state policies to an independent agent with a legitimate right to individual (political and social) treatment. The analysis of the deinstitutionalization reform aims to present critically the impact of European standards on national norms so that both sides can acknowledge and rectify the problem areas of this interaction in relation to social policy.

CORPUS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to produce various aspects of the account of European Union over the development of community based services for disadvantaged children placed in large-scale state run institutions in Bulgaria, we consulted a large range of academic works which investigate in detail and from various perspectives the process of Europeanization. The academics most frequently referred to in this analysis are, Featherstone and Radaelli (2003) who, in their work Politics of the Europeanization,

---

develop the concept and improve the conceptual framework of the subject, investigating not only how European politics is created but also what its specific impact on domestic politics is; in the same work Borzel & Risse (2003) further synthesize the “goodness of fit” as a factor which would determine the degree of pressure towards national actors; also regarded by Risse, Cowels and Caporaso (2001); Lenschow (2005), focusing on the nature of Europeanization and domestic change. Accession dynamics (EU regulation) and their impact on candidate countries and institutions were further investigated through the findings of Schimmelfening and Sedelmier (2007), together with Palier and Surel (2005) bridging Europeanization with the theory of comparative policy, Beichelt (2008) with the different models bearing the different meanings of the Europeanization and Bafoil (2006) with his focus on transfer of institutions in Eastern Europe since 1989, comparing the Europeanization processes in Central and Western Europe. The historical development of institutional care in Bulgaria referred also to the elaborate investigations of eminent Bulgarian professors such as Kriviradeva, Balutzova etc.

As primary sources we used data from official policy reports and analysis of the Bulgarian government including documents from the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) together with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. Legal definitions and state positions were largely taken from the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSRSPSI) 2008-2010; The National Strategy for the Child 2008-2018. International policy reports relevant to our study include those of the European Commission (Child Poverty and Wellbeing in the EU; European Coalition for Community Living, (March 2010) and UNICEF’s Innocenti’s Research Center. Policy papers of nongovernmental organizations active on the field were also regarded (eg. Save the children; Every Child; Social Activity and Practices Institute (SAPI); National Network for Children etc). We also consulted the UNICEF’s database for various statistics on children in Bulgaria as well as its specific programs in support of the deinstitutionalization, such as “Family for Every Child”, which aims to develop new social and health services and measures to supplement the ones currently running on the territory of the region. Where Bulgaria stands in human rights violation and UN convention implementations is analyzed through reports by the representative of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee responsible for the Activities in Protection of the Rights of Children in Institutions Legal Studies for the Fundamental Rights Agency.
The methodological approach of this research combines strong qualitative analysis constructed on the basis of sets of semi-structured interviews conducted with fifteen important players and observers involved in the process of the deinstitutionalization in Bulgaria, together with quantitative data based on governmental statistics. It should be noted that our attempt to provide descriptive statistics for the number of children in institutions revealed some discrepancies in the data. Since there was no individual treatment of the children until very recently, statistics for institutionalized disabled children in institutions for Bulgaria were either absent or outdated. Furthermore, we referred to objective statistics at European level that enable comparison between countries and regions where provided by the Eurostat.

**Course and Specificities of the Qualitative Analysis**

This research was guided through sets of semi-directive interviews - one of the most common types of interviews in sociology -- according to a previously prepared interview guide (see annex 3). Contrary to the technique of the non-directive interviews, where one applies only one direct question at the beginning of the conversation, this technique encourages the researcher to accompany the reflection of her interviewees and stimulate thoughtful responses.

The interview guide, or the *question grid*, corresponds to specific groups of questions that are of interest to the objectives and hypotheses of the research. In order to construct our guide properly and complete my research, we spend a month in the field, doing direct observation of the institutions. This approach helped us to perceive the multiple facets of the context and clearly identify the problematic areas in the question topics. Since there is an open conflict between representatives of the government and members of the civil sector, and almost none with the academic community, our role and interest in the project was perceived, to a great extent, positively. Being part of an academic institution outside of Bulgaria helped us gain distance from the interviewees and remain objective in the analysis. Following Beaud and Weber recommendations we tried to stay “engagé lors de l’événement et détaché lors...”

---

13 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/
15 BEAUD., WEBER. *Guide de l’enquête de terrain*, Paris, La Découverte
Our role as a mediator between the varieties of agents in the reform, as well as our desire to raise awareness of the obstacles in front of the reform in child protection, contributed significantly to the cooperative spirit on behalf of the interviewees.

Since the subject of this thesis is the creation of community based services, it was of an extreme importance to us to visit and observe childcare institutions. Previously to the interviews, we had to obtain written permission from the director and always be accompanied by one of the social workers employed by the respective institution. In order to preserve their anonymity, the conversations inside the orphanages were not recorded. Although such restricted access influenced to a certain extent the ambiance of the interviews, this field experience helped us gain personal impression of the institutions from inside and grasp the point of view of those whose interests needed to be protected through the reform. In total, we got access to two institutions – Dom Maika i Dete in Sofia and Kniaginia Nadegda in Varna.

All interviews were face-to-face and were conducted in three major Bulgarian cities -- Sofia, Varna and Ruse. The cities were chosen as representative points for the development of the deinstitutionalization reform – Sofia as the capital city; Ruse – the municipality city of Mogilino village, where, after a big media scandal, one of the worst degraded social care homes for neglected children in the country was closed; and Varna as representative of a problematic region with delay in the reform process where Lumos -- a UK non-profit organization working with children -- launched a pilot project for deinstitutionalization. Although the cities were identified as major points of interest prior to the interviews, we remained open and willing to travel anywhere convenient for our interviewees. In other words our choice was guided by the personal preference of the interviewee and his or her role in the process, and not by the location of the city in which they were employed.

16 BEAUD., WEBER. Guide de l’enquête de terrain, op.cit.
17 Medico Social Care home for children from 0-3 years old and Home for children deprived parental care from 3-18 (only boys).
18 There are approximately 500 children living in 9 institutions in Varna and Dobrich regions, including two institutions for babies, two for children with disabilities, two for children aged 3-7 and three for children and young people aged 7-18
19 Lumos is an international NGO, founded by J K Rowling, which works with children in the European Region, including Bulgaria, Moldova, Czech Republic.
Actors

Initially we found that it is extremely difficult to categorize and divide the actors in separate groups because of their ambiguously defined goals and unsynchronised priorities and actions. Precisely this lack of coordination became one of the leading goals of our research. Once the interviews were conducted, it became clear that the most adequate way to split the actors for the analysis would be according to their role and impact on the reform in the past ten years. This categorization let to the formation of three major groups of actors: First, those on the national level (the Bulgarian government, Ministries, state agencies); second, actors present on the local level (municipalities, Bulgarian NGO’s, staff of the child care institutions, foster care families); and third, representatives of the international level (EU agencies, UN agencies, Lumos\textsuperscript{20}). Through the prism of those groups, we aim to cover the whole spectrum of perspectives in relation to the change of focus and development of childcare services in Bulgaria within the European framework after 1989.

The snowball sampling\textsuperscript{21} (or chain-referral sampling) method was used in order to capture and include other activists who were relevant to the study from the point of view of the political actors themselves. Since the thesis focuses on the analysis of the collective action in Bulgaria and the development of children’s rights since 1989, it includes historical information from both before the start of the accession period, and over time. The research was conducted with a contemporary group of players (national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations), analyzing the present situation of the reform and contextualized in the specific historical backdrop of the country after the fall of communism. Realizing the danger of limited methodological approaches, we insisted on contacting the various actors in diverse environments and power-relation settings.

For the research to be accurate, we tried to include the outlook and strategies of actors involved in the process and hear as many different perspectives regarding the obstacles facing the reform as possible. In a further stage of this study, our work will include at least one more country for comparative analysis as well as additional UN organizations and institutions/agencies on the European Union level.

\textsuperscript{20} Lumos is an international NGO, founded by J K Rowling, which works with children in the European Region, including Bulgaria, Moldova, Czech Republic.

1 Europeanization as a Metamorphoses

In order to answer one of the main objectives of this research and understand how the products of Europeanization process coalesce through the deinstitutionalization reform in former communist states we need to differentiate attentively those two distinctive concepts.

While the Europeanization concept refers to a process which embodies imposition of European norms (through conditionality) over nation states, the deinstitutionalization reform is one of the tools of this process through which the new member states will get “Europeised”. This paper draws on the effects of the Europeanization process over domestic policies identifying Europeanization as an additional condition of the domestic political process in Bulgaria. Throughout the chapter we will explore in detail the Acquis Communautaire as the main European instrument of pre-accession conditionality and the European social model illustrating European desire to promote sustainable economic growth and social cohesion simultaneously. As the object of this transformation we will explore the deinstitutionalization political reform, which aims to close large-scale institutions for children and to promote the creation of community based care services. Representing a shift in the centralised social policy mechanisms of childcare, this reform is situated in larger-scale institutional and social transition brought by the accession period.

However, if the deinstitutionalization reform takes more than twenty years in order to be initiated as a political priority we need to examine what were the unexpected difficulties and social forces in place, which obscured the implementation of European strategic requirements in relation to child protection. The reasons for this delay will come to light by the critical examination of the impact of Bulgarian post-communist background and transition period to democracy on the outcome of the implementation of European mechanisms in the formation of childcare policies throughout the analysis.
1.1 What does the Europeanization stand for as a theoretical concept

Europeanization is a largely discussed concept among Western scholars with multi-layered definitions. Imprinted already in the linguistic meaning of the term, “the combination of the core term Europe with the suffix “-eanization” stands for a process of something becoming European”. However, the non-identified “something” that may be Europeanized leaves authors to debate the meaning, the scope and the mechanisms through which it will become European. One of the first definitions of the process linked European dynamics with the transformation of domestic policy norms where “political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national policies and policy making”. Using it as a starting point, many authors built upon Ladrech’s definition of Europeanization as a process of downloading top-down European procedures which influenced domestic processes and institutions. However, with every new discussion of the subject, scholars note the necessity of diversity of approaches towards Europeanization which embrace the dual interaction between the EU and member states, and not just the impact of the EU on domestic changes.

In order to categorise the variety of definitions, Beichelt used three models which tend to summarise the different meanings of the Europeanization process over nation states- the “misfit model”, “the macro model” and the “Europeanization as a transformation model”. In order to see, which model best describes the transformations in Bulgarian child welfare, we will briefly explain the extent to which all three models bear the core meaning of Europeanization in themselves.

**The misfit model (top-down model)**

The “misfit hypothesis” exemplifies a domestic change as response to the Europeanization, which occurs when there is some degree of “misfit” or incompatibility between European-level processes, policies and institutions, on the one hand, and

---

24 LADRECH, R. The Europeanization of Domestic Politics and institutions, op.cit.
domestic-level processes, policies and institutions, on the other”27. Following the rational institutionalism, the top-down model emphasizes that „Europeanization causes the assimilation of certain „outside“ policy processes but not without deviating at least in part from existing policies”28. The process of adoption and then adaptation of EU rules depends to a great extent on the level of “openness or closure of institutions (an institutional fit or “misfit”) or in terms of capacity of certain groups to thwart or facilitate any process of adaptation”29.

The macro-process model of the Europeanization

Part of sociological institutionalism this model perceives the impact of the Europeanization process through the lens of “socialization and collective learning process resulting in norm internalization and the development of new identities”30. The assumption behind this process is that the interaction between the European Union and nation states is not a linear but a mutual one and that cognitive components of policy making are equally important. Radealli targets these components in addition to Ladrech’s definition- including in the definition of Europeanization all “formal and informal procedures as well as shared beliefs and norms”31. National actors in this framework are considered to be not only part of domestic policies but also important figures in the global European arena.

Transformation model of Europeanization

The Europeanization as a transformation” model describes the transformation of policies through the influence of the EU induced adaptation process and the “importance of domestic factors for domestic change”32. In contrast to the top-down model and the macro-model, this model portrays the nature of changes in post-Communist societies (such as Bulgaria) which were faced with the dual challenges of transition and accession and for which the pro-socialist legacies and interest groups drastically influenced the result of European regulations on the field33. Acknowledging the complexity of the

28 Cerami & Stanescu, 2009), Risse (2001) and Börzel (2005 Börzel
29 BAFOIL,F Central and Eastern Europe,. Europeanization and Social Change, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009,p.9
30 BÖRZEL,T, RISSE,T. When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change. op.cit.
31 BEICHELT,T. Dimensions of Europanization, op.cit p.44
32 Idem, p.33
33 HUGHES,J.,SASSE,G.,GORDON,C. Europeanization and regionalization in the EU”s enlargement to central and Eastern Europe. Houndsmills; Palgrave, 2004
domestic changes as a phenomenon which would be hardly explained by only one model, this paper tends to implement the Europeanization as a transformation model in its quest to analyse the role of the Europeanization process over the formation of social policy in Bulgaria. Here are some main restraints between the misfit model and the macro-model, which we consider important for the scope of our research. On the one hand, if one adapts the theory of rational institutionalism in the Bulgarian context in order to see how the conflict between European and domestic policies affects political actors, we should assume that the Europeanization process provokes the redistribution of power and thus leads to the empowerment of actors. However, our empirical research (chapter four), puts on the surface some of the issues (such as corruption, institutional rigidity, economic instability, path dependency) which question the extent to which institutions and actors could benefit from the liberal transition immediately. On the other hand, mechanisms of social institutionalism do not yet fit the Bulgarian political platform where imbalance between the European and local actors is still very visible. We assume that social learning is a necessary stage of the European integration process which Bulgaria wants to take but is yet not taken because of the heavy Communist heritage which still dominates the cognitive components of policy making (shown in chapter four). The child reforms will prove to be one of those areas where the impact of the accession shakes not only domestic institutions but also social (family) norms and beliefs.

1.2 The impact of Washington consensus and the Copenhagen criteria on social policy reforms

By pointing out what was the impact of the European criteria (Copenhagen criteria) on the transformation of the social policies in Bulgaria in comparison to the global (Washington consensus) strategies we aim to situate the Europeanization process in Bulgaria within the globalization. The object of Europeanization has been perceived by scholars as a different phenomenon in the East and West: “the norms concerning the (Central European National) “self” and the (Brussels European) “other”

---

34 BÖRZEL, T, RISSE, T. When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change. op.cit.
35 Copenhagen criteria stands for the criteria of European union membership laid down at the June 1993 European Council in Copenhagen
36 Washington consensus was coined in 1989 and stands for a set of ten relatively specific economic policy prescriptions of the “standard” reform package, based in institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the US Treasury department
differ much more than in Western Europe”\textsuperscript{37}. Since we are going to talk about the transition of policies from West to East, during the accession period of Bulgaria to the EU, such difference in the meaning of the process becomes crucial. Immediately following the collapse of the Soviet regime, Bulgarian state was inundated by powerful neo-liberal actors (such as the WB, UN agencies) who wanted to guide the country’s transition from communism to capitalism. Eastern European countries were faced with the dual challenge of accession and transition.

On the one hand, first on the field were the Bretton woods institutions that guided by the Washington Consensus invested mainly in primary education, primary health care and infrastructure investment. On the other hand, the European Union acted through the European accession standards formulated in the Copenhagen criteria. Brust and Stark point out that in comparison to the Washington Consensus, and its reform packages imposed as conditions to the state for receiving loans from the IMF and the World Bank, the Copenhagen criteria demands increased state capacity which is defined as a “capacity not simply to regulate but to adopt specific regulations emanating from Brussels”\textsuperscript{38}. It is very important to note that, European membership is not only subjected to the regulation of financial loans (like the one from the WB) but signifies multi-layered interactions and transformations of both actors and institutions. Although the European Union was present during the country’s transition period, its obligatory pre-accession conditions started in 1997 when the Acquis Communautaire was adopted.

Within the framework of European accession social policy was often considered a sphere of “soft” influence where the “budgetary constraints and public policy orientations created conditions for law level of social protection and very limited choice that would deem the realm of social policies irrelevant for EU intervention”\textsuperscript{39}. In numerous publications Deacon at al., have indicated that in comparison to the World Bank the European Union impact on transformations of social policy in the majority of Eastern European countries “ is not as strong as it could be and indeed this shortcoming

\textsuperscript{37}BAFOIL, F. BEICHELT, T. Elements of comparing Europeanization processes in Central and Western Europe, and beyond, In L’Europeanization D’Ouest en Est, p.18. 2008


\textsuperscript{39}Nacu, 2008; Deacon, 1997; Bafol 2006
was in part due to the EU’s lack of clarity over what social policy it was selling”. Lendvai also asserts “that the very few projects that were related to the social sector focused on the social Acquis but did not contribute to more general requirements for actual reforms of social policy”. Such haziness in the EU plan foreshadows that even among themselves European countries may not agree upon a unique social policy plan. The ambiguous promotion of European Social Model to candidate countries and the fact that the European Union avoids conflicts with pre-existing social policy standards foreshadows part of the reasons for the survival of childcare institutions even after the admission of Bulgaria into the European community.

1.2.1 The Acquis Communautaire as the main instrument of European conditionality

The French term Acquis Communautaire (The EU as it is) means that the new member states have to adapt to the EU as they find it regardless of the member country’s internal policy. Procedures which affect Europeanization are thus a kind of normalization – a process of meeting norms and standards numbering in the ten of thousands”. The normalization of Europeanization is mostly perceived as a set of legal regulations, presented at the Acquis Communautaire. “It is precisely with the Acquis Communautaire that the European Union imposed itself as the central actor which will control all opening and closing and evaluation of the chapters”. Once the country is driven by the incentive of adhesion throughout the accession period, the EU influence let to some drastic changes, for instance with the regularizing free movements of people, goods and services and decentralization of power. Not only did the CEEC’s have to legally implement the whole body of EU policies before being allowed to join, they also had to put in place the legal and administrative infrastructure to apply and enforce EU policies”. New member states were faced with the challenge of adaptation and implementation of more than 80,000 pages of European legislation, containing more

---

41 LENDVAI,N. The weakest link? EU accession and enlargement : dialoguing EU and post-Communist social Policy. op.cit.
43 BAFOIL,F Central and Eastern Europe,. Europeanization and Social Change, op.cit.
than 1000 directives\textsuperscript{45}, which would “regulate anything from drinking water quality to equal treatment at workplace (…)”. It would be impossible to generalise the capacity of all the different member states but to a great extent we may assume that “this process was set to be fast, rigid and regardless of sectoral policies and administrative capacity”. According to the top-down approach, the more the country candidate is deprived of its own mechanisms and resources (institutional, legislative, civil) the more it would be open to implementing exterior regulative mechanisms without demonstrating a conflict of interests\textsuperscript{46}. Börzel emphasises the fact that “institutional and policy effects of Europeanization over the CEEC’s has been more immediate and comprehensive than in the old member states because of accession conditionality but at the same time the long term outcome might be much shallower and also reversible”\textsuperscript{47}. If one looks at the implementation of the Acquis as the footprint of European policies in new member states, it becomes hardly negotiable that the Europeanization process demands legal and administrative capacity of nation states to change pre-existing institutions and their targets. If there are not enough preconditions for the creation of such institutional capacity then in most situations the national state may even adopt a norm which is in conflict with its own economic interests and regulations. For example, in order to comply with the European standards for the protection of the environment, the Bulgarian state closed a nuclear power plant (NPP Kozluduy\textsuperscript{48}) and following some quotas reduced the production of many agricultural products (yoghurt, wine etc). Bruszt and Stark even illustrate a positive correlation between the involvement of ECE countries into European competitive economies and “the pressure on their governments to use regulation more as a means of adjustment to the short-term requirements of increasing global competitiveness and less as a means to create newly enlarged more inclusive alliances coordinating diverse local considerations”\textsuperscript{49}.

For instance, even as members of the EU, we would assume that for Bulgaria there is still a discrepancy with the extent to which the European framework was adopted by


\textsuperscript{46} BÖRZEL, T., RISSE, T. When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change. op.cit.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48} Regulation (Euratom) No 647/2010 of the Council of 13 July 2010 on financial assistance of the Union with respect to the decommissioning of Units 1 to 4 of the Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant in Bulgaria (Kozloduy Programme)

\textsuperscript{49} BRUSZT, STARK. Who counts ? Supranational Norms and Societal Needs. op.cit.
domestic governance structures. The most striking example of such duality of the de jure and de facto is in the judicial system. Despite the adopted European legislative mechanisms for human rights protection, the decisions of the Bulgarian courts have been questioned and condemned by the European Union’s courts of justice of the. Lack of justice and the increased level of corruption in 1997, were not a solid base for the unavoidable acceptance of EU constraints. In Bulgaria there were neither strong social or political actors nor financial resources for the country to initiate such transformation only in its own capacity. In reality the Europeanization process to a great extent resembled more a “unilateral adjustment, a strategy rewarding adaptation to EU requirements with progress in association and accession negotiations” 50 . The explanation of those discrepancies could be explained by internal incapacity of collapsed economy and the “top-down” imposition of models which were not adequate for the specific context. “The concept of Europeanization can be seen as a beginning of a process, connoting simultaneously both the initial condition and the process as a whole”51.

Therefore we may presuppose that Acquis pressures will not be enough precondition for the “fit” of policies after the accession. The situation of Bulgarian institutional care foreshadows that legal pressures represented one of the factors which would trigger change in child protection but (as we show in chapter 3) would not at all be a sufficient motive to close large scale residential homes (from 1997 to 2010). The increased political will of actors to close child care institutions can be seen as a culmination of efforts of new emerging actors52 who either transferred new models or adapted the pressures to the Bulgarian context.

1.2.2 THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL AS THE EUROPEAN ALTERNATIVE TO GLOBALIZATION

The European social Model (ESM) is used to describe the “European experience of simultaneously promoting sustainable economic growth and social cohesion”53. Definitions among scholars of the concept are loose and controversial, foreshadowing critiques to the Social Dialogue of being too formal, “unclear in nature” and

51 BRUSZT,L., STARK,D. Who counts? Supranational Norms and Societal Needs. op.cit. p.34
52 Bulgarian non-governmental organizations, civil actors and experts who studied abroad
“superficial”\textsuperscript{54}. Despite those critics, in 2003 the Commission states that “there is no doubt that the social dialogue will be one of the keys to the success of the enlargement and the challenges to be met within the renewed European Union”\textsuperscript{55}. We may assume that social institutions and their role in governance is different than the legal, welfare or economic institutions because they „contribute to the formation of people’s beliefs, which are then translated into specific political and economic orientations”\textsuperscript{56}. The deinstitutionalization reform demands not only change in the Low on the rights of the child but a reconfiguration of power and counter powers and their policy interest. At the beginning of the Acquis period in 1997, for a different social model to be implemented the muted silent civil actors had to be woken from more than 40 years Communism and transformed into the new social actors whose power would be independent from the state. Breaking the monopoly on administrative pressures and legal framework of the Europeanization, the process takes the form of a more cognitive change where “shaping and reshaping of the perceptions of and attitudes towards social problems and the way to tackle them”\textsuperscript{57}. The closure of institutional care is an example of social policy reform where new member states, will adopt a Western policy for child care.

1.3 THE THEORIZING OF THE DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION AS A POLITICAL REFORM

By taking as a case study one of the few fields of social policy where the EU had a significant influence\textsuperscript{58}- the one of child protection (health care and social assistance) we will follow the development of the deinstitutionalization reform throughout the accession period and over time under the implication of the social model as a part of the process of EU enlargement. Since this paper analysis the reform of “deinstitutionalization” and its complex implementation, allow us to contextualise the reform and present it with its official definition. In 2010, twenty years after the collapse of the Communist Regime and three years of European Union membership, the

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid.; Avdagic 2001; Nowak 1999


Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched a pilot project aiming to put an end to the institutional care and to create community-based services as an alternative for abandoned children\textsuperscript{59}. This reform of „deinstitutionalization” is defined as “a process of replacement of institutional care with a family and community based alternative. It is a process of preventing institutional care as a whole and creating new child and family policies”\textsuperscript{60}. The successful implementation of the reform foreshadows a new direction of state policy, which gives birth to an individual approach towards children. The successful implementation of the deinstitutionalization process demands integrity in the approach of actions. It is a reform which does not only relate to the closure of child institutions or their reduction but most importantly aims for a general reform of child services in Bulgaria. Up to 2000 the only care option that children received from the state was the institution model; not because it was the best one but because it was the only available one. The reform can be taken as a platform for a system that adapts to children’s needs and not a system where children need to adapt to the system in order to survive. New legislation, and social action is needed for a change of standardized mechanisms regardless of the individual situation of the child and his parents (presented in chapter three).

**The unquestionable negative impacts of institutional care**

Different historical, ideological and cultural perspectives among the European nations and North America influenced various definitions of “institutional care”\textsuperscript{61} and the following reforms for and against it. Although institutional care is defined differently depending on the cultural context, for the purpose of this paper we will use the definition of the European Union’s Daphne Program\textsuperscript{62} where “Institutional care” is understood as “a residential, health or social care facility of eleven or more children regardless of age”\textsuperscript{63}. However, the literature on residential care for children and youths over the past decades reveals some prevailing evidences that “the effects on large scale residential institutions on development of children are damaging. Effects include delays

\textsuperscript{59} « Abandonment » is not clearly defined in the literature , in our research « abandon » children will be those left with no parental care (parents may be alive or dead)

\textsuperscript{60} National vision for deinstitutionalization of children of republic of Bulgaria, adopted on 24.02.2010 by Council of Ministries

\textsuperscript{61} In this context Institutional care will be equal to “residential care” and “state care”

\textsuperscript{62} Research carried out in 31 European countries, not including those that were Russian speaking (Browne et al., 2005; Browne et al., 2006; Chou and Browne, 2008; Johnson et al., 2006).

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
in cognitive, social and motor development and physical growth, substandard healthcare, and frequent abuse by both staff and older inmates”64. In every three months spent in institution, the development of the child decreases by a month; thus for a year the child will be four months behind his/hers normal development65. Taking into consideration those findings, we will not question the negative effects of institutional care over the development of children the negative impacts of institutional care and the desperate need for a re-socialization of those children in healthier conditions. Nevertheless our focus will be on the mechanisms through which the state will replace institutional care. Being present since the beginning of the Soviet regime, those state institutions greatly influenced the present outcome of Bulgarian social policy.

**Western instruments of the deinstitutionalization reform**

The reform of the deinstitutionalization illustrates a shift in policies in a variety of levels. Being part of the liberal ideology, which stands for the protection of the rights of the individual, the reform significantly opposes to the pre-existing patriarchal social state that delivers aid to its passive citizens. Probably one of the first signs illustrating the alteration is the change in the financial mechanisms of childcare. Triggered by the European Union's decentralised system, Bulgarian child welfare shifts from a system of universal social rights to a system where the state proposes different support for each susceptible group of people. In order to provide community based services corresponding to the individual needs of each child, the state disconnects with its past and shares its exclusive rights of social provision with third parties. The decentralization opposes the strong centralised traditions of the Communist state and embraces the cooperation of state, market, and civil sectors in the liberal open and competitive market of social services. Such decentralized provision foreshadows the development of a regional policy for state provision, which is based on the specific needs of its members. The extent to which the public- private partnership functions in regard to the municipalities and the 3rd sector will be analyzed in detail in chapter four.

---

65 Data from the National Network for Children
Starting with the conceptualization of the Europeanization process linked to the effect of European dynamics into the formation of domestic policy norms we may conclude that the process cannot be ultimately defined because of the unique social, political, and historical nature of its objects. The models which tend to summarise the varied meanings of the process—misfit, macro and transformation model, may be all relevant for different stages of social and political development of a state. The transformation model reviewed in this thesis describes most appropriately the transition of childcare policies and applies most closely the development of the Europeanization processes in present Bulgaria. The current deinstitutionalization reform of childcare institutions can be regarded as a result of both the pre-accession conditionality (through the Acquis Communautaire) and the impact (negative and positive) of national actors in the democratization and transformation of social institutions. Therefore, the Europeanization process is leading but not ultimate criteria for the transformations of domestic policies.

This theoretical conceptualization allowed us to explore the outcome of the Europeanization as a process, which is challenged and restrained by other unexpected external and internal factors. We perceived that, the deinstitutionalization reform provoked by the European accession, disclose the Europeanization process not as a simple copy and paste policy transfer from supranational institution to a nation state but as a more active mutual interaction where international practices have been modified at the national level following pre-existing social and political norms. Understanding the process in such manner helps us to identify four main factors, which influence the impact and development of the Europeanization process in Bulgaria and which will be at the heart of this analysis. First of all, we will regard the importance of history in the formation of current policies of the region and how that affects the successful implementation of different European practices of child protection after the fall of communism. Secondly, we will stress on the general weakening of the state in 1989 and lack of local actors who would adapt and materialize European practices immediately after the fall of the regime. This negative precondition will be strengthened by the lack of clear vision for European Social Model and cohesion of child protection policies. What was the result from the collision between previously established
institutional mechanisms of child support and the mechanisms through which Acquis Communautaire norms were adopted will be another important challenge to explore. The existence of those institutions even after the end of Communism can be regarded as a social policy paradigm to which both institutions and society conformed, and therefore.

**FINDINGS:**

The impact of the Europeanization processes on the transformation of child welfare in Bulgaria cannot be defined as a single linear process where “something becomes European” as a result of pre-accession conditionality. This study regards Europeanization as a phenomenon which is a part of the metamorphosis of Bulgarian society and its political spectrum, as well as a process which affects the evolution and democratization of post-communist child welfare in Bulgaria and whose results are yet to be seen.

As discussed herein, Bulgaria’s Europeanization has been accompanied by a variety of internal as well as exogenous challenges that have influenced the place of the child in public policy. On one hand, some of the fundamental internal determinants of change that interact with the European conditionality are hidden behind the institutional and social path-dependency deriving from the Soviet legacy. Because of its critical importance to child welfare policies, this path-dependency of institutions, individual agents, and ideas, with its respective scope and acuteness, is continuously revisited throughout this study. On the other hand, transformations in child care such as the deinstitutionalization reform are deemed to be a part of a supranational debate over child protection policies. Respectively, their successful implementation depends, among others, on the mechanisms through which European best practices and regulations are imposed (or not) on nation states. The lack of clarity and structure in the social policy model provided by EU authorities during the first years of the transition may be viewed as a critical factor in the survival of large-scale institutional care, neglectful of European and global human rights standards.

**The Bulgarian Europeanization Process as a Transformation**
Construing Europeanization as a transformation process in its own right reveals important findings that contribute to the more general debate on the multiple facets of the European adjustment process in post-socialist societies. Bulgaria’s case illustrates that, to a great extent, the successful integration of advanced European child policies depends on the capacity of nation states to adapt the corresponding practices to their respective domestic context and, eventually, benefit from them.

During the past hundred years, the Bulgarian state has undergone several drastic social and political transformations becoming a provocative case study in practically every integration-related sphere. For the purposes of this thesis, it is a particularly relevant platform for analysing how preexisting institutions and social policy targets for abandoned children persisted throughout the accession period and continued to function as a consequence of the old status-quo for more than twenty years. Informed by the numerous academic and political studies concerning the transition from communism to liberalism, this research builds upon the work that precedes it and examines the wide range of changes in child welfare that the Bulgarian state and society were compelled to undergo in their effort to comply with European standards. The list of transformations includes decentralization of power, privatization of services, closure of institutions and many others.

**Inapplicability of the Acquis to the country’s national and cultural identity**

First and foremost, as demonstrated by this thesis, through its new legislative framework and decentralised approach, the EU affected the modernization of policies in Bulgaria and, to a great extent, rattled the internal hierarchy of power relations and economic players. Driven by the incentive to join the European Union, Bulgaria was eager to comply with the *Acquis Comminautaire* as the ultimate set of membership criteria without truly appreciating the difficulties associated with materializing some of the conditions due to their essential inapplicability to the country’s national and cultural identity. Counter-intuitively, unlike the approach of the Bretton Woods institutions to Bulgaria’s financial reform, the European Union did not provide clear recommendations for the country’s social services transformation. Overall, international human rights, child protection and anti-discrimination practices were established primarily through a set of normative documents only, which are presently in the process of de-facto implementation.
Acknowledging the differences between the European child protection standards and the ruling pro-socialist criteria for social policy in Bulgaria until 2000, this study reviews in detail the grounds for the incongruity between European and domestic structures. The historical overview shows evidence that the endurance of institutional care in Bulgaria has been underpinned by a number of ingrained ideological reasons specific to the Bulgarian family traditions. Immediately following the collapse of communism, the supranational liberal practices were noticeably misaligned with the aptitude of the pre-existing political structures and the needs of society. Accordingly, the complete replacement of institutions was initially perceived as coercive European policy and the reforms were impulsively and collectively resisted on the local level. As a result, the successful implementation of the deinstitutionalization reform faces real difficulties whose resolution is contingent not only upon EU’s responsibility to provide the tools for transformation but also upon the capability and inclination of national actors to adapt the changes to the social sphere.

The Totalitarian State versus the Modern State

The fall of communism can be regarded as a juncture at which external western pressures begin to assimilate the obsolete status-quo of the soviet regime and to reconfigure the role of the state in the provision of social services. In its nature, the deinstitutionalization reform contrasts two antithetical models of child protection – the Bolsheviks’ approach, which perceives social care as better than parental (linked to the full authority of the state in communism), and the liberal approach, which gives children individual status and prioritizes the importance of parental care for child development (associated with decentralised state policy). Although both systems consider children central to national preservation and progress, both contain latent dangers for child development. This study identifies the threats associated with each model by examining the differences in child-care practices before and after the fall of communism, and emphasises that both approaches incorporate features that require further analysis prior to being deemed definitive.

Throughout the communist regime, the state was the authoritarian provider of social services and, in order to achieve (Utopian) equality, dispensed large-in-scope and high-in-quality social and financial support to the population. However, albeit well maintained, the large-scale communist institutions were meant to serve as a soviet tool...
for isolation of all social groups that could not contribute effectively to the state's prosperity. These included orphaned, abandoned, illegally born and disabled children. Segregation and discrimination were means that justified the state's ultimate goal of protecting the public good and doomed the well being of millions of children who were deprived of adequate medical care, and suffered daily physical and mental abuse.

The changes in child protection since 1989 were largely eclipsed by the economic transformations of that period. Without any institutional or social break from the communist historical heritage, capitalist ideologies clashed with resistant communist resources and interests, such as passive civil society, domination of a minority elite, and a dysfunctional non-governmental sector. As a result, Bulgarian child care institutions resisted the decentralization of power until recently, and proved that not all Western practices can be applied effectively to the Bulgarian reality.

On the other hand, the general economic and political weakening of the state in 1989 and collapse of local institutions further aggravated the marginalization of the most vulnerable members of society. As we proved in chapter four, decentralised child care demands diverse range of actors to undermine their political and local power by introducing accountability and transparency of policy making. If stakeholders are not ready to undergo such changes and confront the existing institutional structure, than alternative community based centers may turn to be even more dangerous for abandoned children than the state run.

The severe degradation of the quality of child care institutions following the collapse of the communist regime can be viewed as the result of both the inadequate framework of the European social model as presented by European authorities, and the domestic institutional collapse combined with the lack of social motivation to repudiate the state monopoly on child care. The lack of a clear alternative in child protection and the weakening of the state as a controlling power resulted in deepening social inequalities within child care policies.

The competition between the West and the East child care models is still visible today in regard to family policies and cannot be reduced to the transition period of the country.

**European Legal Norms - Confronting Pre-existing Beliefs**
Bulgaria is not an exception to the “normalization” of European rules in new candidate countries and complies with the Union’s legislation in many spheres, including child protection. Compared to the dominant communist legislation from the period 1944-1989 (Chapter 3), the legal preconditions for the development of a new child care model through decentralisation of power and active participation of the third sector represent a central Europeanization mechanism.

With their own political agendas in the sphere of child rights, the European Union (through the Acquis) and the Bretton Woods institutions played controversial roles in the Europeanization of Bulgaria’s child care policies by portraying the deinstitutionalization reform as the only alternative to the established culture of institutionalism. Thus, conditioned within financial and economic constraints, the Bulgarian state was pushed to adopt a variety of mechanisms that led to the formation of new legislation for child protection in 2000, the vision of the deinstitutionalization, and the gradual creation of community based care. It is not a secret that the European Union participated in those transformations through a significant amount of European structural funds. What was not publicly portrayed, however, was the incoherent spending of those funds. Significant amount of the funding was invested in the maintenance of institutions and therefore perpetuated long term institutionalization (Chapter 3). As highlighted by this study, neither the EU had the capacity to follow the usage of its funds nor local institutions demonstrated genuine interest in preventing the investment of the funds in the renovation of the buildings (and not in the amelioration of care). Moreover, the increased amount of funds invested in the physical condition of the institutions prompted further opposition to the reform from local actors and provided greater incentives for corruption and implementation of the funds for anything else but the interests of the children. As the present economic crisis hinders the fight against corruption, the new independent services demand greater and more targeted investment of public capital as well as superior mechanisms for accountability of decentralised care.

Preconditions for the Success of the Reform

This research tests empirically the extent to which local constituents are ready to benefit from European resources (administrative structure, strong civil society, etc.) and play their role in the provision of social policy services along with the state. It concludes
that the interaction of supranational players and national institutions does not lead automatically to cognitive transformations, and that there are still strong internal and external obstacles that preclude Bulgarians from fully complying with the European standards. Identifying the groups of factors that thwart the process of adaptation to the European practices provided a concrete diagnosis for some of the most significant barriers to the reform and its conformance with the European timeline.

The administrative capacity of local institutions and national agents to adapt to the change in social policy provision poses a series of risks to the success of the transition. The reform demands the reevaluation of power relations and the involvement and cooperation of all spheres responsible for child development (including parents, children, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, experts, and civil advocates). One of the most important preconditions for the successful implementation of the state vision for deinstitutionalization is focusing on the prioritization of individual needs through the active participation of beneficiaries in the creation and development of services. However, the observations drawn from this study indicate that the empowerment of the public is not an instant process. Indeed, “revising power relations is the key and the weak link in achieving participation”66. The decentralization of power in social services would be at stake if there is no change in the education system and improved cooperation between responsible parties (private, public, regional and international). The interviews conducted as part of this research demonstrate that education is one of the areas that requires immediate transformation in order to respond to the needs of children with developmental disabilities. What other path of integration for the abandoned children could there be, if not the path of education that can transform them from passive beneficiaries of aid to active participants in their own future and the life of their country. The goal thus must be to upgrade the existing system so that it can adapt its methods to the child, rather than vice-versa. In order to carry out that discourse, the state must also increase the qualifications of teachers in public schools and of staff working in the institutions. Here again the transformation depends not only on defining the problem as a clear priority,

but also on the effective communication between civil sector representatives who work in the field and interact with the children, and state agents who have the legal capacity to initiate change. Amelioration of education qualities is not only an important precondition for the children who leave the institutions but also for the social workers who will continue to accompany the children throughout their life. Transfer of institutionalism can be avoided if the state establishes a common program for continuing education and professional development as well as greater remuneration for social workers. Such steps would help alleviate the severe disparities between the soviet methodologies still practiced in the institutions and their replacement with alternative community based services.

How does the state plan to close all child care institutions prior to 2018 without having sufficient community based alternatives for the more than 7000 children who inhabit institutions at the moment? This alarming question has stayed in the focus of the current research in an attempt to decipher the reasons why the use of non-governmental organizations, as main providers of expertise to the regional authorities and the state, is still so problematic and under-recognized. Municipalities were identified as one of the most inflexible links in the system where dependence on the old status quo and clientelism was still very much alive. Since there are no legal sanctions for the insufficient provision of services, city councils continue to endorse community uses with no real beneficiaries and disenfranchise the creation of services identified as key by citizens (or the NGO’s in the field).\textsuperscript{67} It should be noted that the need for institutional care is still very present and probably, for some of the children with severe disabilities, it will remain the only option for survival. More than 2000 children with special needs will not be able to live in a foster care family or return to their biological parents because of handicaps that requires continuous special assistance and physical equipment (see figure 8). Precisely for the integration of this target group, municipalities need to establish specialised home-like centres adapted to the children’s individual requirements. Consequently, the closure of institutions should be recognized as just one of the stages in the deinstitutionalization process, and emphasis should be placed on the concurrent development of other phases such as abandonment prevention, return to the biological parents, the creation of alternative care, and last but

\textsuperscript{67} We showed some drastic examples for that in chapter four
not least, the development of foster care. Thanks to the significant involvement of UNICEF, Lumos, and other international organizations, the number of foster care families in Bulgaria has more than doubled since the beginning of 2010 and the tendencies for further positive development in this area are very promising. Nevertheless, keeping in mind that over the past year the number of abandoned children who entered the system increased proportionately to the number of new foster families, it is essential to realize that foster care is not and should not be regarded as the ultimate solution to the deinstitutionalization.

During the course of this empirical research, the influence of powerful Western organizations on the formation of social policies and the actual implementation of the provision of care emerged as palpably imbalanced in comparison to the role of Bulgarian experts. Eager to adopt the established European practices, the Bulgarian state unconditionally approved methodologies and programs proposed by dominant international actors, without giving serious consideration to its local context. Economic constraints and undeveloped civil sector back in the 1990’s were some of the crucial factors that led to the infusion of supranational agents in the Bulgarian political field. Where is the balance between allowing foreign expertise to improve local child welfare, without discouraging the cultivation of unique Bulgarian know-how? Unpredictable throughout the transition period, this clandestine competition grew as soon as the Bulgarian civil sector began to regenerate and started pushing for equal access to the European investment funds and aid. What would Bulgaria and its social policy landscape look like today had the EU and UN not intervened so prominently several decades ago? What is the likely role of these institutions in Bulgaria’s future? To what extent was the European conditionality a one sided directive failing to acknowledge that the conflict between national practices and the liberal model is rooted in Bulgaria’s pre-existing historical and social idiosyncrasies? All these questions are pertinent topics for further study on the subject and will be considered in the next stages of this work.

The fourth and final challenge to the success of the reform relates to the role of society in the implementation, or lack thereof, of European standards for child care. What if child care institutions resisted the transition for twenty years because they were indeed indispensable for society? What options, if any, were available after the collapse of communism to the marginalised Bulgarian families who could not provide for their
children’s survival, other than to leave them to the state? If society did not reject the old model by itself, should we expect from today’s public to be open and to apply European models without resistance? In addition to all the other impacts discussed in this research, the Europeanization process engendered major change in the social attitude towards children with developmental disabilities. Indeed, this change in perception has proved to be at the core of the reform and the foundation of its success. Most of all, as child care represents the basis of family models, it would be very difficult to change through top-down approaches of system designs. Long lasting transformations in social models seem possible only when there is an interaction between below and above so that changes are themselves envisioned, shaped, initiated and propagated.

Nadege Ragaru metaphorically describes the European Union as the “l’heureuse rivière progressant vers une ample destinée; voguent sur et vers elle des Etats, tous également désireux de rejoindre l’immensité vertueuse du vaste horizon bleu qu’elle propose”68. This metaphor describes the ambiguity surrounding the subjects and mechanisms of the Europeanization concept. Policy outcomes of Europeanization have proved to vary across member states and do not reflect either the well defined will of a unified supranational actor, or an automatic “pervasive problem solving rationality meant to increase the overall efficiency of European policy decisions in a context of a transnational independence of policy problems”69. Since the spectrum of this paper is too limited to define fully the role of the European Union in new member states, it focuses on illustrating an intriguing scenario of ongoing exchange between Western and Eastern national policies - the case of Bulgaria’s Europeanization. The issue at hand here is not whether the European Union affects domestic policies, but rather how it does so and specifically how it influences the country’s child care services. Intertwined within the greater debate about the place of the child in society, the complexity of the deinstitutionalization reform points at a much larger non-linear process that establishes the new relationship between children and state. Child rearing has largely moved beyond the boundaries of the private family realm to stand in the heart of public policy debates, while the position of the child in society is carefully framed by political regimes.

---

Invariably, both socialists and democrats take advantage of the child’s political assets in order to achieve their various goals.

The comparative analysis of child care practices represents a difficult challenge due to the precarious nature of such social policy and its dependence on historical circumstances, social paths, and welfare regimes among others. Claiming that any one political system has succeeded in setting up an impeccable child care policy or in managing a flawless child care model would be blatantly dishonest. While finding one unified child protection formula for all countries of the European Union is an unlikely scenario, it is nevertheless beneficial to analyze the Europeanization processes as a fundamental precondition for the amelioration of child care and to explore ways for improving the interaction between European and domestic political players. The three models of Europeanization - misfit model (top-down approach), transformation, and macro model -- prove relevant in different moments of social development. This is especially true for post-socialist societies who were confronted with the dual challenge of transition and accession.

Future stages of this analysis will explore how different welfare regimes adopt the concept of child care and will challenge both Esping-Anderson’s typologies of welfare regimes (1990) and Mahon’s models for transitions in the European welfare design (2002). As neither institutionalization nor deinstitutionalization are new concepts for EU members, capturing the extent to which models of child care circulate among countries and political prisms in their quest for perfection promises to be a fruitful and worthy endeavor. Studying the ways in which these practices get informed by and adapted to various political, social, economic and historical contexts will be a central part of the effort. Finally, the fact that liberal states such as England appear to be returning to universal childcare mechanisms, albeit in a widely modified and updated format, as a real possibility for new government direction and as a viable solution to child welfare needs will also be addressed in detail.

The Oxford Dictionary defines Metamorphosis as a “process of transformation, and change in the form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one”.

---

70 WINCOTT,D. Paradoxes of New Labour Social Policy: Toward Universal Child Care in Europe’s “Most Liberal” Welfare regime?. Special Issue: Perspectives on Child Care and Education in Eastern and Western Europe,Vol.13,n 2,Oxford University Press, 2006
Metamorphosis is precisely what the Bulgarian child care system has been continuously undergoing over the course of the past several decades. However, in contrast to nature where metamorphoses are mainly predictable, in politics the scope and mechanisms of change remain ambiguous.
ANNEXE 1 – Estimated numbers of children in institutions in selected countries

Source: This graphic is based on data from:
2. H Ghosheh, Children in Residential Institutions: Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco, Save the Children UK, 2001
5. Browne et al, Evidence-based Training to De-institutionalise Care Services for Young Children, Centre for Forensic and Family Psychology, University of Birmingham, and Nobody’s Children Foundation, Warsaw, 2003
10. DEPSOS, Save the Children and UNICEF, „Someone that Matters”: The quality of care in childcare institutions in Indonesia, Save the Children UK: Jakarta, Indonesia, 2007
ANNEXE 2 – Percentage of children in institutions with one or both parents alive, in selected countries

Source: This graphic is based on data from:

6. DEPSOS, Save the Children and UNICEF, „Someone that Matters”: The quality of care in childcare institutions in Indonesia, Save the Children UK: Jakarta, Indonesia, 2007