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PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND SOCIAL WORK DEVELOPMENT IN BULGARIA FROM 1934 TO 1944

Abstract: *In the present article, problems of the development of public assistance and social work in Bulgaria in the period from 1934 to 1944, which is characterised by certain dynamics in social, political and professional aspect are analysed. During this period intense upgrading and development of the social legislation is carried out and conditions for the realisation of the statutory and targeted social assistance activities by the state are created. Its efforts are supported by the active work of civic and charitable organisations, Bulgarian Orthodox Christian Church, the processes of professionalization and institutionalisation of social work and the education and training of competent and qualified social workers. Although certain political changes are carried out, the country is dragged into World War II and administrative centralization measures are taken, at the same time important governmental initiatives in the field of social politics and social legislation are carried out. Among them with its importance, the Ordinance-Law for Public Assistance stands out. Through it normative regulations for public assistance are introduced and the organisation, management and functions of the new territorial structures are provided. The basis of foster care are laid, as well as the Ordinance on the placement of orphans in families. The state actively supports the social work education and creates conditions to provide competent and qualified social workers to the system for system of public assistance. The work of charitable organisations is centralised and controlled by two national organisations. Despite from these restrictions they carry out numerous initiatives helping children and elderly people in a disadvantaged situation. The Bulgarian Orthodox Christian Church is one of the main subjects of the social support activities throughout this whole period. Its distinguished representatives are the inspirers and organizers of many initiatives to help the needy.*

Key words: public assistance; social work; social legislation; social work education; charitable activities; Orthodox Christian Church activities.

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Introduction

The period from 1934 until 1944 in Bulgaria was associated with intensive development of the social legislation, implementation of statutory and purposeful social support activities by the government, which were also supported through the activities of charitable organizations and the Orthodox Christian Church, moreover it was associated with the processes of professionalizing the social work and laying the foundations for the education of the social workers. This period is defined by Prof. Iliya Yanulov

as a point of “state social policy”, because it is characterized by the activation of the state in terms of upgrading and developing the social legislation, constructing social policy and implementing public support [9; 10; 11; 12]. From a political point of view, the period is associated with many major events, some of which are the establishment of dictatorial regimes in the context of a crisis of parliamentary democracy, dynamic political changes in the direction of authoritarianism, centralized government structure, governmental public organizations, orientation

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towards national socialism and Bulgaria's involvement in the Second World War on the side of fascist Germany. Decree law is formed whereby regulations – laws are passed, adopted by the government and approved by the king, on the basis of art. 47 of the Tarnovo Constitution. Subsequently, the Tarnovo Constitution was abolished, the parliament dissolved, political parties and organizations banned and their property confiscated. Measures are being taken to administratively centralize the country, with the management of the territorial units directly determined by the cabinet. The role of the government in the economic life is gradually being strengthened by taking measures to eliminate the effects of the economic crisis and until the beginning of the Second World War some economic development is achieved. The economic linking of Bulgaria with Germany does not improve the situation of people and many families live in poverty and face serious social problems.

Government initiatives in the field of social policy and legislation, social work of charitable and civic organizations and the Orthodox Christian Church.

During the analysed period administrative and household changes in direction of centralization were introduced, they in turn lead to the rejection of the existing model of municipal self-government. As a result, municipalities are limited in their ability to act autonomously and to support people from vulnerable groups. In this context, questions arise regarding the impact of the strict centralization on the ability of municipalities to respond to current social needs, such as problems of their residents and the funding opportunities for the public assistance.

At the beginning of 19.05.1934 – 21.05.1938 the government takes action to resolve certain social issues, for example, exemption from additional school fees for pupils and students who are children of war invalids and war victims; implementing enhanced monitoring of compliance with the requirement for duration of the workday and workweek in some manufacturing industries; provision of employment through the establishment of road work groups and other infrastructural facilities in order to overcome unemployment; free treatment of poor patients in governmental and municipal medical establishments and usage of governmental and municipal mineral baths; normalisation of the price of medications; updating and taking into account the social situation of texts of important normative acts (Law on unemployment and providing work, Law on Occupational Health and Safety, Social Insurance Code), in connection with this an Ordinance-Law was issued to unite health services which are under the supervision of the Directorate-General for Public Health.

The imported activities are confirmed by certain normative acts. One of them is the Ordinance focused

on the organization of working groups of unemployed people, which would then carry out construction activities on buildings, roads and more (1934). It enables the Directorate-General for labour service to organize temporary employment groups for the unemployed in the construction of buildings, roads and other sites. Applicants are recruited by the Labour and Social Security Directorate on a voluntary basis. Mostly preferred are men who are wage-earners of poor families between the ages of 20 and 50. They receive food, a fixed daily allowance, health care and free insurance record books. In the event of an accident, the temporary workers are compensated by the Public Insurance Fund. The working day is standardized and lasts 8 hours.

Another normative act of significant social importance is the Ordinance on free treatment of poor patients in governmental and municipal hospitals (1934). According to its provisions, every person who meets certain criteria in terms of income and financial status is entitled to free medical treatment. For families living in rural areas, additional criteria for determining their gross income are presented.

The most important achievement in socio-political aspect during the considered period was the Ordinance-Law for Public Assistance, prepared by the government of the Military union and the political organization “Zveno”, adopted by decree No. 201 on November 28, 1934. [9; 12]. The Ordinance-Law clarifies the concept of “public assistance” and formulates the purpose of public assistance, which is related to two main aspects: support through specific resources and facilitation of the existence of people in need; empowering people in need to meet their needs on their own. The term “in need” is defined, according to which “person in need” is an individual who cannot alone or with the help of his or her relatives satisfies his or her own needs, or because of physical or mental disability, cannot maintain his or her existence and does not use support from charities. The support consists in providing temporary or permanent assistance with funds or payment in kind. The Ordinance-Law regulates the accommodation and support of people in the public assistance establishments. An essential point regulated in it is the observation of the person in the process of assistance in order to identify and eliminate the factors causing difficulties and problems. In the light of unmet needs and emerging problems, the nature and amount of support can be changed. The Ordinance-Law defines the establishment of an Office of Public Assistance within the Ministry of Interior and public health. As a central authority, it assumes the functions of leadership and control of all territorial services and public assistance activities. The Office of Public Assistance commits to regionalize all public assistance establishments, addressing any public assistance issues that have arisen, opening, merging and closing public assistance establishments. It has the

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authority to draw up a report on the basis of which the Minister may close existing social assistance institutions if they do not fulfil their obligations. The Ministry of Interior and public health establishes the High Council for Public Assistance, which is a body with public consultative functions. It is attended by representatives of the Ministry of Interior and public health, the Office of Public Assistance, the Directorate-General for Public health, the Labour Directorate, the Ministry of Finance, the Holy Synod, the Mayor of Sofia and representatives of law-legitimized organizations (Bulgarian Child Protection Union, Union for the fight against tuberculosis, Union for assistance to the disadvantaged, disabled and in need of public support people, Bulgarian Red Cross). The High Council agrees and coordinates the activities of all public assistance agencies, votes on the budget and assists the Minister of Interior and public health. In a certain section of the Ordinance-Law is regulated the organization, management and functions of the public assistance and their officials in the territorial structures. Each municipality is obliged to take care of the public assistance of its residents, to provide immediate care and supervision of those in need. The municipality should establish and maintain free soup kitchens, night shelters, day-care shelters for children whose parents are employed, orphanages, retirement homes and more. The funds are to be provided by the municipal budget or by the Public Assistance Fund. The Ordinance-Law stipulates the mandatory transition of all charities to two state-controlled union charities. The first is the Child Protection Union, which covers those who support individuals up to 18 years of age, and the second is Union for Public Support, which includes organizations that support adults. The existence of companies whose statute is not approved by the Ministry of Interior and public health is prohibited. Charities that are not members of these two structures are closed down in mid-March 1935. The approach taken to centralize, regulate, and place under the strict government control of the activities of charitable organizations restricts not only their activity, but also the distinctive tendency for the whole period of a strong presence of charitable social assistance in solving problems of citizens in need and their families. Charity fundraising actions are prohibited, except in national days defined by the Ordinance-Law – Children’s Day, World Sight Day, the Rose Festival, charity day in support of the Bulgarian Red Cross and War Victims Day. The mission of international charities operating in Bulgaria is regulated. With the Ordinance-Law on Public Assistance, a Fund for Public Assistance is set up and a regulation for its functioning is introduced – financing, manner and procedure of using the financial resource. The funds received are distributed between the governmental Office of Public Assistance and its territorial structures - the municipalities (35% of the funds are allocated to the municipalities), the

Child Protection Union, the Union for Assistance to the disadvantaged, disabled and in need of public support people and the Bulgarian Red Cross. Funds are envisaged for “improving the protective care for the moral and health strengthening of the youth according to the budget of the fund”, as well as a reserve untouchable fund in the amount of BGN 50,000,000 [9; 12]. The mechanisms for monitoring public assistance and sanctions for non-compliance with the established regulations are presented. Despite some of its shortcomings, the Ordinance-Law on Public Assistance is one of the achievements in the social law-making in Bulgaria in the period after the Liberation in 1878. It demonstrates not only the active role of the country in the creation of modern legislation in the field of public assistance, but also the taking of specific steps towards: formation of a legally established system of public assistance with certain functional and organizational- management parameters and territorial structures; introduction of fund-establishment in the social activities; establishment at central level of a body with public consultative functions through which to coordinate the interaction with other departments, institutions and organizations; assigning responsibilities to the municipalities with regard to the establishment of a public assistance infrastructure that responds to the needs and problems of the population living in its territory.

It’s interesting the experience of the Sofia Municipality in implementing the Ordinance-Law on Public Assistance in the work of the department performing this activity. Initially, organizational changes were made whereby the existing until then Social Welfare Bureau acquired the status of an independent unit. The number of employees working there is increasing, with eight of them being visiting nurses (public health nurses) who, were in direct contact with the people in need so they can examine their necessities and social status. Visiting nurses are charity nurses who have been trained in special additional courses for health and social work with families and mothers [5]. They are specialists in the fields of: public health, methods for researching the social and health status of the family, work of charitable organizations, record keeping and more [6]. Their participation in service of the department remained for three years until 1936, when the title of their position was replaced by the name “social counsellors” and graduates of the Higher Social School, established by the Bulgarian Women's Union were campaigned to pursue such career. A head of the new structure for social assistance has been appointed and is supervised by the assistant mayor of the municipality. With the new social assistance regulations changes are introduced, by creating a Public Care unit, composed of the following departments: Visits, inspections and examination of poor families; Reporting service; Supervision of

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private/community activities for public assistance. The department employs visiting nurses, who since the beginning of 1936 receive an official name “social counsellors” [5]. In the beginning, they were eight, but rather incredibly doubled as their workload increased. They separated into an independent department under the supervision of a senior social counsellor. Requirements for education, personal and professional qualities of the social counsellors are introduced. The newly created unit for Public Assistance begins its operations by identifying the number of people in need, by the end of the year 5,300 poor families were registered through visits and immediate contacts, differentiated into two categories - first and second level. In the first level are included the extremely poor, which the municipality supports to the best of its ability. Level 2 covers citizens who only benefit from free medical care, free medication and easy access to other health care, exemption from school fees and the right to receive scholarships and other education-related benefits. In the period 1938 - 1939 there was a significant increase of the people in need in both categories. Following the outbreak of World War II in 1939, in view of the expected military mobilization and increase in the number of families in need, the municipality appointed several more social counsellors, with internships from the Higher Social School being accepted as well. Orphaned children are given priority among vulnerable groups of people, by setting up appropriate social establishments for each age group - nurseries for children up to 2 years of age, municipal orphanage for children from 2 to 7 years, municipal orphanage for children from 7 to 18 years. The capacity of each orphanage is from 120 to 140 children. Through this approach, the municipality manages to gather into its social establishments part of the orphans of all age groups. In this activity, the municipality is actively supported by civic and church charities by opening orphanages on their behalf. In 1939, the financial support and care of 541 children, including those with health problems and criminal acts, was taken over by municipal funds [7]. Although this is how the Public Assistance is executed in one of the large municipalities in the country during these years, it presents relatively clearly the functioning of the newly created public assistance system as a whole in the larger cities in Bulgaria too.

Other important normative acts in the social area, adopted during the period 19.05.1934 - 21.05.1938, are:

- Ordinance-Law on the scholarships and grants for the students/ pupils (1935); Legislation on the labour contract (1936);
- Ordinance-Law on the collective labour contract and the settlement of labour conflicts (1936), which refers to two basic institutes of the collective labour law: conclusion, action and termination of a collective labour contract; occurrence and settlement of the collective labour disputes. The Ordinance-Law

prohibits labour strikes and their organizers may be held criminally liable or imprisoned [2];

- Ordinance-Law on the disability pensions (1938).

In 1937, the Higher Social School for the preparation of social workers receives the status of a semi-higher school from the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment. In the context of the growing role and function of the country in the formulation of social policy, the creation of better social legislation and the pursuit of a well-functioning public assistance system, this act is an expression of a responsible attitude to the issues of ensuring adequate education and qualification of the social workers, as well as for sustainable professionalization of the social work.

During the mandate of the XXV Ordinary National Assembly (February 24, 1940 – September 9, 1944), coinciding with World War II and characterized by a limited government initiative in the social area, several important laws in the field of Public Assistance and Social Security come into force: Law on Illegitimate children and Adoption (1941); Law on the Social Security Institute (1941), Law on the Juvenile Courts (1941) Law on Assistance to Municipalities Affected by Airstrikes (1944).

Regardless of the social and political situation related to the preparation of Bulgaria for participation in World War II, the ongoing work for opening public assistance establishments continues by creating maternity homes for poor mothers and funded by the municipal public assistance agencies food kitchens for children from poor families. With Order No. 1821/ 1-11 of September 30, 1937, the Minister of Interior and public health orders the raising and bringing up of children who are orphans to be performed in pre-selected families of medium financial status. The monthly sustenance allowance of a child is BGN 600, and a special supervisor gives guidance to the foster parents and oversees if everything is in order. In 1940, this order was repealed by the Ordinance on the placement of orphans in families, approved by the Minister of Interior and public health with Order No. 7338/ 08.08.1940. It sets the legal foundations for foster care in Bulgaria. The Ordinance defines: the procedures for selection of children and families who will take care of their parenting and upbringing; a special official (accommodation supervisor) conducting family surveys and supervision of the living conditions and well-being of the placed child; the maximum length of placement; continuous supervision of the provided care by the competent official; keeping records of each placement of a child, reflecting his/ her condition and development; obligations of the family and the consequences of their failure; the monthly allowance for the child from a special paragraph of the Public Assistance Fund and the amount thereof, determined by order of the Minister of Interior and public health; monthly monitoring of the health of the child through medical

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examinations at a health counselling station and entering the data in a health record [3]. The Ordinance on the placement of orphans in families of 1940 adapts the experience of countries with good law-making and foster care experience. In normative and methodological terms, it corresponds to the current trends in the development of child protection during these years. With the political changes of 1944 its operation was cancelled and the practice introduced by it was terminated. This moves our country away for several decades from the opportunity to develop and promote a social service of high social and human importance.

The scope of public assistance during this period includes the care for people with disabilities. In December 1937, the Minister of Interior and public health approves a special provisional ordinance on the provision of benefits. With this provisional ordinance, monthly benefits are granted to registered poor blind people, who are prohibited from begging on the streets or to be a member of an aid collection organization. The able-bodied blind individuals are housed in specialized homes-workshops where they have the opportunity to learn a particular profession. People with visual impairments were united at the time in the organization "Union of the Blind in Bulgaria", founded in 1921. The organization is committed to promoting mutual assistance and performing cultural, educational and charitable functions.

In July 1934, the Union of the Deaf in Bulgaria was established in Sofia, which helps people with this type of disability and protects their rights. On December 22, 1937, a home-workshop for the deaf at the Petropavlovskiya Monastery was set up, in which 60 boys took up a profession, with 15 of them successfully passing the exam for journeyman carpenter. The facility was closed in 1945 and in its place a labour-educational institute for woman who performed sexual activities for money was opened, it was also guarded by police officers.

Despite the centralization of the activities of charitable organizations with the provisions of the Ordinance-Law on Public Assistance of 1934, these organizations continued to be active. In 1935, 18 of the 25 orphanages established in the country were by organizations. As of 1938, out of 52 homes for the elderly, 19 were run and maintained by Orthodox Christian brotherhoods, and 18 by women's charities, 9 by branches of the Union for Public Support, 3 by municipalities, and 3 by diocesan spiritual councils. As a result of the extensive public charity and donations, many student soup kitchens, summer camps and playgrounds have been created.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Christian Church has been one of the important subjects of social assistance activities throughout the whole period considered. Its distinguished representatives are the inspirers and organizers of many initiatives to help the people in need. Metropolitan Mihail of Dorostol and Cherven is

one of them (1884 – 1961). In his work as a church official, he chairs the branch of the Bulgarian Red Cross in Rousse, Rousse Charity Committee, which was transformed in 1934 into a branch for Public Assistance, the city branch of the Child Protection Union, and a committee for assistance to beggars and infirm. Metropolitan Mihail founded church orphanages, homes for the elderly, day care homes for children, summer camps for pupils. Directs the work of the Christian brotherhoods and the Christian youth organizations. He was a great leader and inspirer of people, and immediate participant in charitable initiatives important to the city, among which is the construction of a building for tuberculosis patients in 1934, he was also part of the opening of homes for children, the elderly and physically disabled, as well as a maternity hospital and city playgrounds [8].

During the wartime period 1941 – 1944 the active work of public and charitable organizations in the field of public assistance continued. Among them are the Bulgarian Women's Union, the Bulgarian Red Cross and the Child Protection Union. The Child Protection Union has around 2000 branches in the country, opens and maintains many institutions, such as a distributor for minor offenders, day nurseries, kindergartens, orphanages, boarding houses, shelters for mentally ill children; institutions for the deaf and blind, school canteens, summer playgrounds, camps and children's counselling. At the same time, it plays an active role in changing the social laws and banning child labour. The Bulgarian Red Cross opens hospitals for poor people with about 4,500 beds and orphanages in buildings, which were received as donations. On its initiative and together with the Child Protection Union or school boards, 20 free school canteens are being opened, 14 of which are in cities and 6 in villages. Some of the school canteens also function as public kitchens, which distribute food free in the evening to poor, sick and those in need.

On September 9, 1944, after the political changes in Bulgaria, the Ministry of Social Policy was established with a decree, representing a central institution engaged in the implementation of the social policy of the government of the Bulgarian Fatherland Front.

Professionalization of the social assistance activities and beginning of the social work education.

The Bulgarian Women's Union, as a feminist organization, is the main factor that shapes the conditions and environment for the professionalization of the social work in Bulgaria and for the establishment of a school for social workers. The first school for training social workers in Bulgaria, was called Higher Social School, it was established by the Bulgarian Women's Union in Sofia in 1932. At its opening, three basic educational tasks

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were emphasized with a feminist focus, which must be achieved through its activities:

- to prepare the girl or woman for a social worker;
- to educate the girl or woman to be a conscious citizen and public figure;
- to educate the girl or woman about the proper understanding and fulfilment of her duties as mother, housewife and spouse.

The founders of the school stick to the feminist position that a well-prepared woman in the role of mother, housewife and public woman will have valuable qualities as a social worker in the social care facilities for children, the elderly or in other social care institutions [1, 2]. The director of the school is Rayna Petkova, who is a graduate of the Social Women's School in Berlin, Germany and former student of Alice Salomon.

Only applicants with secondary education are admitted to the school. The training lasts two years. The curriculum was designed after a thorough study of the educational documentation and experience of leading social worker schools in Germany and Switzerland and in other European countries. In accordance with the accepted concept and tasks, the subjects included in it are selected, which are differentiated into the following main groups [4, 10]:

- subjects for social work training - sociology, social policy, social care, social education, social ethics and psychology, social diseases and hygiene;
- maternity and home education subjects - hygiene, general with anatomy and special, hygiene for the woman, raising a child with basic knowledge of childhood infectious diseases, childhood psychology, therapeutic pedagogy, children's literature, home accounting and management, nutrition science (dietetics);
- subjects for civic culture and schooling - historical development of the European public consciousness, history of the country, family law and a foreign language of choice from the specified French, German or English.

In December 1936, the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment granted the school the status of a semi-higher school. This act reflects not only the assessment of the quality of the educational movement, but also the recognition by the government of the need for appropriate education and qualification of social workers.

The social work students conduct their practical training in: public assistance institutions; public assistance agencies managed by municipalities; industrial establishments with a predominant number of women; police directorates in the departments of care for the public moral and work with children and young girls at risk; schools and pedagogical polyclinics for a social research of students with mental disabilities.

Through the education of specialists in the field of social assistance (primarily women) in the Higher Social School in the 1930s and 40s of the 20th century, the foundations of both the education and professionalization of the social work in Bulgaria were laid. This creates the conditions for institutionalizing the name of the profession - social worker - and its introduction into the practice of the social services through the unit and activity of the social counsellors. The separation of the professional field of the social work during this period is carried out in two directions:

- taking into account the integrative links with close scientific and professional fields (social medicine, sociology, law, pedagogy) and at the same time highlighting the specificity of the new professional activity and the field in which it is carried out;
- separation from charitable social assistance activities, such as informal and non-relying on special vocational education and training, but at the same time representing some of the important actions and directions with which the public assistance actively partners and relies on its resources to solve the problems of those in need.

Throughout the analysed period, religious, national and international humanitarian organizations and associations have contributed to the training of assisting professionals by preparing their own volunteer associates for charitable and social institutions work.

Leading in this path are the Child Protection Union, the American Middle Eastern Association and the church.

The development of the social work profession and the related to it education has been supported through the publication of periodicals. After the adoption of the Ordinance-Law on Public Assistance from 1934, begins the publication of the magazine "Public Assistance" – official publishing body of the Ministry of Interior and public health and the magazine "Public Support" – published by the Union of Public Support. The radio and cinema screenings feature sections on social topics that inform the public and have a motivating impact.

Discussion and conclusions

The analysis of the initiatives implemented by the government in the field of social legislation and social policy in Bulgaria during the period 1934 - 1944 reveals the active role of the country in relation to the creation of the necessary normative basis, the organization and realization of public assistance. At the same time, public and charitable organizations defend the rights of the vulnerable groups in the community and fight for social, and legislative changes. The Bulgarian Orthodox Christian Church is also active in those years.

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Important normative acts have been adopted relating to public assistance, employment and free medical care of the poor, social security, raising and educating illegitimate children and adoption of children, care for orphans, establishing courts for minors, etc. The assistance provided is based on a certain system of criteria, with a significant place in the fund-raising in the public assistance for financing and co-financing social activities at regional, district and municipal level. In almost all municipalities, social establishments are opened in accordance with the needs of different target groups. Orphans, children from poor families, people with disabilities, the elderly, poor unemployed and poor ill people take priority. The placement of orphans in families is legally and methodically established, thus laying the foundations for foster care in Bulgaria in accordance with the experience in European countries and the USA. The state is beginning to devote great importance to the education and qualification of social workers as an important prerequisite for the implementation of quality public assistance. An expression of this position is the granting of the status "semi-higher school" to the established by the Bulgarian Women's Union school for training social workers. Despite the legally established centralization of the activities of charitable organizations and the limitation of their work, the Child Protection Union, Bulgarian Women's Union, Bulgarian Red Cross,

organizations of people with disabilities and others are highly active in the field of public assistance. Independently or together they open many social institutions for children and the elderly. The Bulgarian Orthodox Christian Church is one of the important subjects of the social assistance movement and the creator of a number of social and health institutions. Its prominent members are initiators of many initiatives to help those in need. At the end of this period, due to a change in political power and in the state government, the country transitions to socialist type of legislation and social policy. As a result, Bulgaria ends its European orientation in the social area and gradually moves towards a paternalistic type of state social assistance.

Conclusion

The actions of the state and municipal institutions for social assistance, of charitable and religious organizations and associations in the 1930s and 40s of the XX century present the general picture of the professional field of social work, its content and the process of professionalization and development. They are characterized by intensive integration of achievements and good experience in the practice and education in social work from the developed western countries, and at the same time the specific national image of the social work in Bulgaria is formed.

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