

## **SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF ADAPTATION IN CHILDREN WHO ARE LEAVING BULGARIA**

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**Abstract:** We are leaving in a global society marked by a global tendency – serious migration processes of different communities take place who are looking for new professional goals and a new way of living. This process is the objective result of quite equal communicative standards between large groups of people with different ethnic, language, and cultural status. The process becomes real and possible due to the motivation of the migrants – they want to find the best possible living conditions for their families, parents and children alike. To achieve the best possible effect from these migration processes, it is necessary that the freedom of travel be accompanied by a real adaptation to the new environment in the new country – in professional, social, language, religious, and cultural terms.

This applies to that part of emigrants who in their infant age accompany their parents leaving their country of origin. A lot of countries (Bulgaria included) show tendencies which aren't positive when it comes to integration into a new environment. Those who are leaving our country are young people (students or young specialists). Some are married couples; others are looking to find ways to integrate themselves into the new environment where they intend to build up a family. The essence of the problem is that they become parents in a new country, and their children are involved in this process.

Here is my thesis:

1. The adaptation problem with Bulgarian children abroad is very serious, and scarce research is done by now. This adaptation problem can have very grave consequences for every person and his/her social functions.
2. Special approaches for children in order to better adapt to the new environment, to avoid the adaptation crisis, and form new adaptation skills should be developed.

When leaving Bulgaria, a child needs support to overcome the adaptation crisis where losses dominate over gains. Up to this moment, there isn't a specialized governmental or a non-governmental institution existing which can provide specialized support to children or families with specialized knowledge on what they can experience and how to live in a new ethnic, language or cultural setting. Bulgarian schools do not provide leaving children with any kind of information or materials on the country where they are going to stay for an unknown period of time, and schools do not offer any possibilities for schoolboys and schoolgirls on how to stay in touch with schoolmates or even with teachers.

**A concept on how to create a preparatory model for children leaving Bulgaria in order to live in a new social environment (draft)**

**Goal of the Process:** To create conditions which enable children to accept and to adapt to the new environment.

1. To establish reflexivity towards the decision to change the environment;
2. To establish basic features supporting the new reality – recollections of Bulgaria, a certain number of objects which should be transferred into the new environment, forming new rules about social contacts with the expanded family, and skills to maintain contacts on-line, etc.
3. To build up, enrich and enlarge knowledge about the new environment – history, geography, and people, how to communicate within the new environment, social rules and behaviour, school customs, etc.
4. To elaborate and develop scenarios about typical social situations in the new environment (family, school, friends, etc.)

**Socialization methods:** role plays, talks, consultations, research activities, etc.

**Forms:** individual and group activities (familial in an expanded family).

**Keywords:** child, emigration, adaptation, losses, gains, conceptual model

## СОЦИАЛНО – ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКИ ПРОБЛЕМИ НА АДАПТАЦИЯТА В ЧУЖБИНА НА ДЕЦА, НАПУСКАЩИ БЪЛГАРИЯ

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**Резюме:** Живеем в общество на Глобализация, което е белязано от една всеобща тенденция – сериозни миграционни процеси, придвижване на хора от различни общности, в търсене на житейски и професионални цели. Този процес, който в основата си е продиктуван от обективните условия на изравнените комуникационни стандарти между големи групи от хора с различен етнически, езиков и културен статус, става реален и възможен и поради мотивацията на емигриращите и имигриращите да намерят най-добрите условия на живот на своите семейства – родители и деца.

За да бъде постигнат максимален ефект от миграционните процеси обаче, е необходимо свободата на придвижване да бъде съпроводена от реална възможност за пълноценно включване в живота на страната – приемник, да се извърши адаптация в новата среда – професионална, социална, езикова, религиозна и културна.

Това особено много се отнася за тази част от емигрантите, които са в детска възраст, когато напускат страната си и придружават своите родители в друга страна. Опитът на отделните страни и в частност на България показва някои не особено позитивни тенденции в условията на включването в новата среда. Преобладаващата част от напускащите страната са млади хора (студенти или млади специалисти), някои от тях са със създадени семейства, други се ситирират в новата среда и там създават такива, но всички те родителстват в условията на собствената си професионална презентация и адаптация, едновременно с партнирането на собствените си деца в процеса на тяхното включване.

Тезата на настоящото изложение:

1. Съществува сериозен проблем на адаптацията на български деца в чужбина, малко изследван, който може да има трайни последици за личността и нейното социално функциониране.
2. Необходимо е да се създаде типова технология за подготовка на детето за новата среда, преодоляване на кризата на адаптация и за създаване на умения за включването му в новата среда.

При напускането на България детето се нуждае от подкрепа за справяне с кризата на адаптацията, тъй като както стана ясно, пасивите първоначално преобладават пред активите. До този момент няма институция, от държавния или от неправителствения сектор, която да предоставя специализирана подкрепа на деца или семейства при подготовката за преход в нова етническа, езикова и културна среда. Не съществуват добри практики и в българското училище по отношение на процеса на подготовка на детето за заминаване, предоставяне на информация или материали за съответната държава, за създаване и поддържане на връзки „от разстояние” със съучениците и учителите.

**Концептуален модел на подготвителен процес за подготовка на детето за преход в нова социална среда, в условия на напускане на Родината (предложение)**

Цел на процеса: Да се създадат у детето условия за готовност за преместване и адаптация в новата среда.

Задачи на процеса:

1. Да се създаде у детето рефлексивност към решението за промяна на средата.
2. Да се създадат подкрепящи базисни „установки” за новата реалност – спомени от България; предмети-посредници, които се пренасят в новата среда; нови регламенти на социалните контакти, особено в разширеното семейство; умения за поддържане на контакти on line и др.
3. Да се създадат и обогатяват основни познания за новата, приемаща среда – знания за природата, населението, комуникациите, правилата, училище и т.н.
4. Да се разработят и апробират сценарии за типови социални ситуации в новата среда – семейна, училищна, приятелска.

Методи за социализация: беседа, ролева игра, консултиране, собствена изследователска дейност и др.

Форми: индивидуални и групови (семейни и в разширено семейство).

**Ключови думи:** дете, емиграция, интеграция, адаптация, „загуби”, придобивки, концептуален модел.

We are leaving in a global society marked by a global tendency – serious migration processes of different communities take place who are looking for new professional goals and a new way of living. This process is the objective result of quite equal communicative standards between large groups of people with different ethnic, language, and cultural status. The process becomes real and possible due to the motivation of the migrants – they want to find the best possible living conditions for their families, parents and children alike.

To achieve the best possible effect from these migration processes, it is necessary that the freedom of travel be accompanied by a real adaptation to the new environment in the new country – in professional, social, language, religious, and cultural terms.

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The importance of the problem as discussed further displays one very specific feature – generation, family, and clan ties are influenced by very strong emotional bonds. Therefore when it comes to make a decision to stay or to leave the country the problem is marked by emotional rather than by rational considerations. The partition is shaped by strong emotions for both sides – for those leaving and those staying. These are strong stress reactions for the children, and they leave their mark on their future - if the children do not become competent support, the traumas last lifelong.

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Here are some considerations which are of great importance - the fact that the child is leaving Bulgaria and is going to settle down in another country – permanently or for a certain period of time.

1. The “fait accompli” – the decision to leave the country is made by his/her parents, not by the child. S/he becomes a passive agent who is acting under the pressure of others. S/he isn't aware of the reasons why should s/he leave the country, to leave a familiar world of friends and close relatives. This act seems to be not motivated and uncalled for. Future benefits are too abstract, far and wide – they mean nothing and can't be personal reasons for the emigration.
2. When emigrating, a bond conflict emerges – even leaving the country accompanied by his/her parents, the child destroys all bonds – to the extended family, friends, and schoolfellows. This becomes a major problem of emotionality for the child as well for his closest relatives. This is some kind of a trauma with grave consequences, thus it needs a very specialized and professional support – in most cases it isn't offered to the child.
3. The new environment consists of a series of losses and gains.

#### Losses

- Close relatives – a highly emotional partition, accompanied by a series of affection reaction: drawings, poetical verses, etc.;
- Personal space – the markers of his/her personal space like toys, pets, etc. could not be transferred to the new environment;
- School – the specific childish atmosphere and the learning process can't be properly continued after the arrival ;
- Security and confidence to the new environment – the new language, culture, and social environment put the child into a confidence crisis;
- Rites and rituals, interdictions, taboos, models of behaviour, etc. – they bring risks for failure because they are new and unknown.

#### Gains

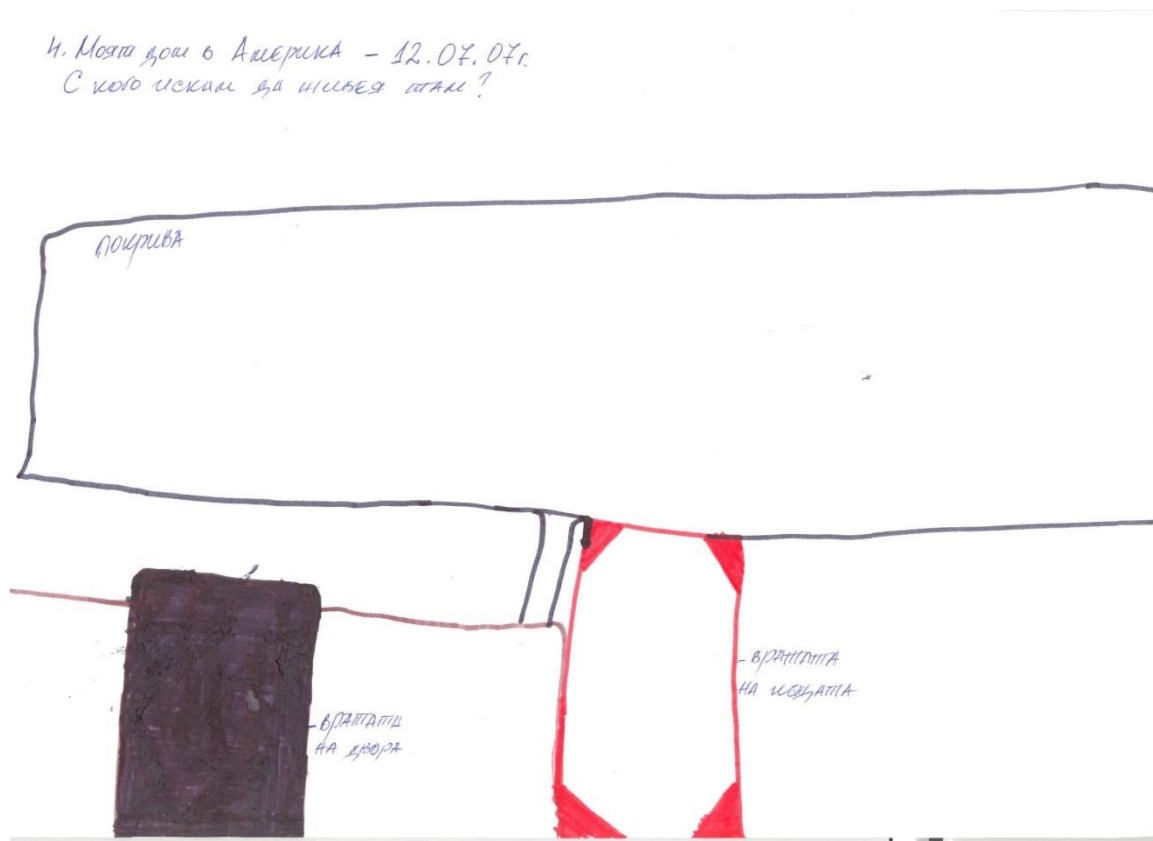
- New opportunities – chances to explore new territories, sports, arts, etc.;
- Acquiring a new language(s) – learning in a real linguistic environment, acquiring new rules of behaviour and a new language;
- New environment – new models of how to behave in a new and global model, a new standard of living.

4. When the child leaves Bulgaria for a longer period of time, the parents (and brothers and/or sisters – but they aren't a real support) form up the very close environment. This is due to the fact that they experience their emotional crises because of the adaptation problems – the responsibility of making the decision to emigrate, to take the burden of financial risks and familial responsibilities, the parting and leaving friends and relatives. In one case, a 7 years old boy in the US suffered from the adaptation crisis. This case showed his durable affection to life's realities in Bulgaria compared to his scarce image and emotions as experienced in the US. The boy had drawn 2 pictures of his Bulgarian home (picture 1) and his new American home (picture 2). The drawings show a clearly projection of his emotional acceptance and evaluation. Despite the fact that the boy had stayed for more than 2 years outside Bulgaria, he recollected a lot of details of his Bulgarian home marked with vivid colours. The drawing of his new American home is schematic, with little details – although the boy had lived in the US for the past two years. The discrepancies in the pictures are significant, and the analysis would be published in another article.

Picture 1:



Picture 2:



Analyzing the circumstances which go along with adaptation problems of children leaving Bulgaria it won't be correct if we do not pay attention to this very important fact – childhood's nature permits a very quick adaptation to new conditions, it develops new skills (language learning and adaptation to new social rules) for a new environment. This brings into being the optimistic forecast that a child can adapt and integrate successfully into a new environment in a new country.

When leaving Bulgaria, a child needs support to overcome the adaptation crisis where losses dominate over gains. Up to this moment, there isn't a specialized governmental or a non-governmental institution existing which can provide specialized support to children or families with specialized knowledge on what they can experience and how to live in a new ethnic, language or cultural setting. Bulgarian schools do not provide leaving children with any kind of information or materials on the country where they are going to stay for an unknown period of time, and schools do not offer any possibilities for schoolboys and schoolgirls on how to stay in touch with schoolmates or even with teachers.

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